

A SURVEY OF ACADEMIC STAFF ON WORKING CONDITIONS AT DUBLIN CITY UNIVERSITY



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Foreword

I am delighted to introduce this survey of academic staff on working conditions at DCU carried out by the SIPTU Section Committee. As DCU moves towards the ‘incorporation’ of St Patrick’s College Drumcondra, Mater Dei Institute of Education and the Church of Ireland College of Education it is vital that the union benchmarks staff conditions as change (not always positive) will be the order of the day.

It is very significant that out of 470 academic staff at DCU (and 130 at St Pat’s) the SIPTU researchers obtained over 400 responses. This speaks towards considerable concerns about work load issues and relations with management.

What I see coming out of this survey, in the most general terms, is that DCU academics:

- Work extremely long hours
- Do not feel consulted about change
- Are sometimes subject to bullying and harassment
- Feel overburdened by administrative tasks
- Overwhelmingly find their jobs stressful

It is important that academics across DCU now engage actively with the union to pursue collective staff interests in terms of decent work and democratic management.

For our part SIPTU will continue to pursue with management our commitment to justice in the workplace and the recovery of pre - 2008 living standards.

Louise O’Reilly
Education Sector
National Organiser

Introduction

The Services, Industrial, Professional and Technical Union (SIPTU) represents over 200,000 workers from virtually every category of employment across almost every sector of the Irish economy. SIPTU provides the expertise, experience and back-up services necessary to assist workers in their dealings with employers, government and industrial relations institutions.

The DCU SIPTU Section Committee played a leading role in starting off the very successful campaign to defend the Irish university (www.defendtheuniversity.ie) which agreed a charter for action. It began by recognising that the Irish university is in crisis, through massive under-funding combined with commercialisation and managerialism. It stated that:

“The Irish university is a public good, not a private profit-making institution, and corporations or business interests should not dictate teaching or research agendas.” Amongst its concerns were that “All staff working at universities are entitled to a dignified and collegial workplace free of surveillance and control and the arbitrary degradation of working conditions.” And that “In the current crisis of the Irish university system, we need to stress the importance of academic freedom over a fear-driven consensus, creativity over blind compliance and collegiality over managerialism.”

The survey presented here seeks to capture the situation on the ground in one particular college but we suspect the issues reflected here are general ones. Given the representativity of our sample we are confident of the robustness of the data both in terms of its reliability and validity. It makes for sobering reading: can we have anything other than Zero Tolerance for bullying and harassment? Can we have a significant proportion of staff feeling under-valued and stressed in their working lives? Why should the majority of academics feel they are not being seriously consulted on the future of their academic institution?

So what next? SIPTU is an organising union, this means a strong emphasis is placed on recruitment of new members throughout the workforce and activity at all levels of the Union. At DCU we are particularly concerned to organise the vulnerable categories of non-permanent teachers and researchers who lack clear career progression and suffer most from the abuses of a managerialist system. We take very seriously indeed the poignant comment from one respondent that: *Being an academic has become almost unbearable in DCU*

Finally thanks to the 400 + DCU academic staff who filled in the survey questionnaire and shared their experience and opinions with us. This survey is for them.

Section Committee DCU (contact at section.committee@dcu.ie)

Executive Summary

Workload

Findings indicate that most employees have a clear understanding of their duties and responsibilities, of what is expected of them at work, and their role within DCU. While only a minority indicated that they frequently face unachievable deadlines at work, many respondents were still concerned about the high volume of work.

Comments made by staff show that:

- Heavy workloads are becoming extremely stressful and make staff constantly feel under pressure
- Heavy workloads seem to become the norm in DCU
- The increase in workload was caused by several key factors
 - a. an increase in the class size coupled with the philosophy of treating students as customers
 - b. incorporation of St. Patrick's College
 - c. deficient HR policies, particularly in relation to replacing staff who leave or retire
 - d. workloads contains tasks which they are not supposed to
- Apart from the significant volume of work which they have to perform, there is also invisibility of significant parts of their work
- Workload distribution is deemed by many respondents as unfair
- Significant gap seems to emerge between teaching and administrative tasks on one side and research and publications activities on the other side. Given the increased work pressures the latter are usually sacrificed in favour of the former

Promotion

Findings from the survey show that in many cases respondents saw little formal recognition in the workplace. Data also indicates that half of respondents find the promotion criteria in DCU to be unfair and to lack clarity.

The qualitative analysis of the comments mirrors the findings from the survey questions:

- Promotion is deemed to be very unfair, favouring some candidates while discriminating against others

- There is a sense of futility in working towards a promotion or applying for one. Furthermore this sentiment seems to strongly impact on the morale of the staff.
- Gap between teaching and administrative tasks on one side, and research and publishing on the other side: heavy workloads and the lack of time for research and publications make it even more difficult to achieve promotion
- Women and employees with a disability tend to be particularly discriminated against when attempting to apply for a promotion. Some also feel discriminated against in comparison with lecturers from other departments who have lighter teaching loads
- Lack of transparency in the promotion criteria and procedures adds to the general sentiment that the entire process is unfair and based on favouritism and nepotism.
- The promotion system in DCU does not reward its valuable employees.

Working Relations

It emerges that 40% of respondents seldom or never receive supportive feedback on the work that they do. Slightly more than half of respondents (52%) felt supported by other colleagues and management in the case of a personal issues (e.g. parenting, illness or bereavement). Data also showed that half of respondents did not feel that they are consulted about changes pertaining to their work. Last but not least, the analysis of survey questions revealed that personal harassment at work and bullying do not seem to constitute a problem for most employees but it does for some.

The qualitative analysis of the comments made by respondents casts further light on the topic:

- At the interpersonal level, they have very good relations with their colleagues who are described as friendly, supportive and helpful. The good working atmosphere in DCU is actually present in spite of the challenges posed and the demands made by the organisation's management
- Having a supportive workplace is considered by some respondents as key for making the heavy workloads and the intense work rhythm more bearable
- The perceived unfairness and discrimination inherent to the process of getting a promotion in DCU is strongly impacting on working relations
- Those who work part-time and those who are employed on temporary contracts are treated differently

- A few respondents described the increases in workload as constituting a form of bullying and harassment
- Harassment linked to sexual orientation
- There is very little done by DCU to address the problem of sexual harassment
- More policies and guidelines on dealing with various forms of bullying and harassment at work

Work-Home Balance

More than half of respondents find their job stressful and almost half of all staff participating in this survey specified that coming home tired from work and not being able to do the things one enjoys is happening often or almost always. It is clear that the high volume of work takes a toll on the personal lives of staff: 40% of respondents felt that their job makes it difficult to maintain the kind of personal life they would like. A similar percentage (41%) indicated that they had often or almost always neglected their personal needs because of the demands of their work. A smaller percentage (28%) mentioned that they often or always miss out on important personal activities due to the amount of time spent doing work. An even smaller percentage (17%) felt that their job is frequently or always giving them a better mood at home.

Many important aspects related to work-home balance mirrored the findings already discussed in the previous section on “Workload”.

Other Themes

Apart from the key themes of the questionnaire, several other important topics emerged from the comments made by respondents:

Job Security

- high stress levels experienced by those who are waiting to hear if being re-employed
- lack of clear communication from the management make the situation more difficult for contractual staff
- high level of uncertainty in relation to their job status has a deep impact in their lives: fear of losing one’s income, inability to prepare for parenthood, constant demand for mobility and relocation, no control over their careers and find themselves in impossibility to plan ahead

- In addition to a lack of security, many contractual staff are frequently stuck in low pay contracts although their workload is in some cases similar or potentially bigger than that of permanent staff

Management

- There is a general feeling that management and unions are not attuned to the real problems faced by staff and are often acting to the disadvantage of staff.
- There is no perceived support and no help from management in combatting unfair promotions. Management is believed to perpetuate the existing system
- Management has little regard for staff excluding them from the consultation process on matter which are important to them – high degree of disconnect between management and staff
- Lack of transparency in relation to key decisions
- The philosophy under which DCU is currently managed and all policies regarding workloads, pay and promotions are not beneficial for staff:
 - Management do not fairly reward staff and attempt to use technicalities in order to keep them from receiving a just retribution for their work level
 - Top-management in DCU are frequently taking advantage of contractual staff by delaying the issuing of their contracts and by failing to provide any support for them.
 - Lack of systems in place for replacing staff who are on sick leave or those who retire leads to an over-burdening of staff in the respective offices

Unions

- provide very little support for staff and very little communication

Survey Analysis

Methodological Note

This survey is based on an earlier one developed by the University and College Union which covered 14000 academics in UK HEIs. We have slightly abridged this version but we were happy to use a tried and tested instrument. In Ireland a previous survey of academics was conducted by Education International, IFUT and TUI in 2015. The report, entitled *Creating a Supportive Working Environment for Academics in Higher Education: Country Report Ireland*, can be found online [https://www.tcd.ie/Education/latest-news/assets/Clarke,%20Kenny%20&%20Loxley%202015\[2\].pdf](https://www.tcd.ie/Education/latest-news/assets/Clarke,%20Kenny%20&%20Loxley%202015[2].pdf). This study was restricted to IFUT and TUI members whereas the present study was open to all union and non-union members of staff.

The survey we report on here is the first comprehensive study of working conditions and staff attitudes in an individual Irish higher education institution. We believe it is also representative of the issues in the sector as a whole. It was designed as a pilot study for the Education Sector of SIPTU by the DCU Section Committee of the union. It was sent to all staff at Dublin City University (DCU) and the associated (now incorporated) colleges, principally St. Patrick's Drumcondra (SPD).

The survey was sent out on 5th October 2015. Within 24 hours it had been completed by 150 members of staff and by 48 hours there were 300 completed questionnaires on Google Form, the platform we used. The site was left open for a week and, after one reminder, there were 402 responses in total. Removing all non-permanent staff and all support staff we had 271 full time academic respondents which represents 40% of the total 'Core Staff: Academic' across the various campuses.

The results were analysed by a team of SIPTU and independent social researchers using SPSS and Excel software.

Profile of the Respondents

A total of 402 staff answered the online survey but, after checking for irregularities we kept 398 responses. Furthermore, given that in several cases the answers to particular questions were invalid or unclear, a decision was made to remove these discrete answers from the database. This explains why the total number of answers per each question in the survey is not always 398. The total number of answers for each question varies between 392 and 398.

Over half of respondents (57%) are employed in a teaching and research position, followed by those whose position involves academic support (24%) (Figure 1). Furthermore, 10% of respondents have a research-only position and 9% a teaching-only position.

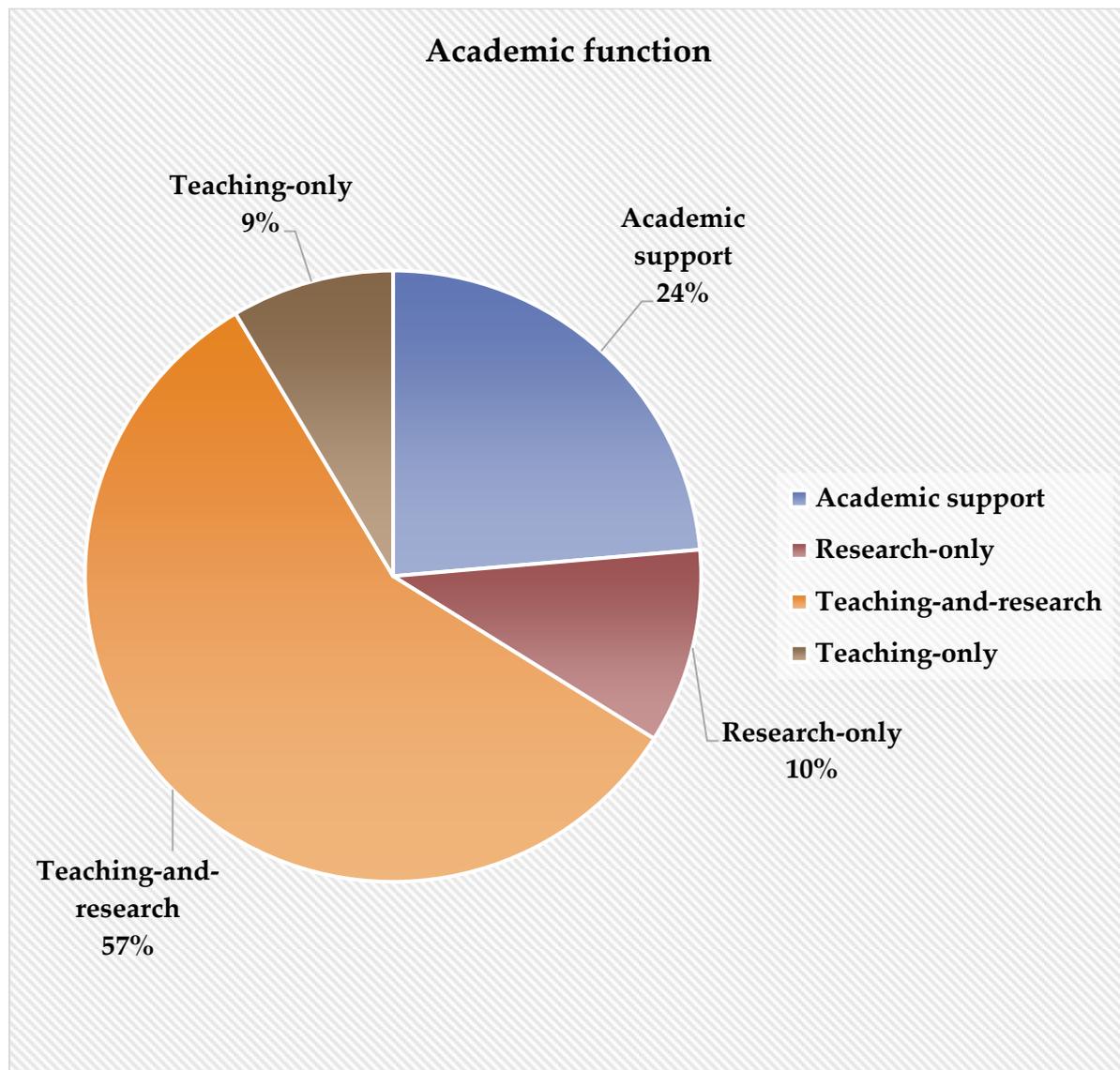


Figure 1 – Academic function

The majority of responses came from full-time staff (89%) while part-time staff and hourly-paid staff accounted for 6% and respectively 5% of responses (Figure 2).

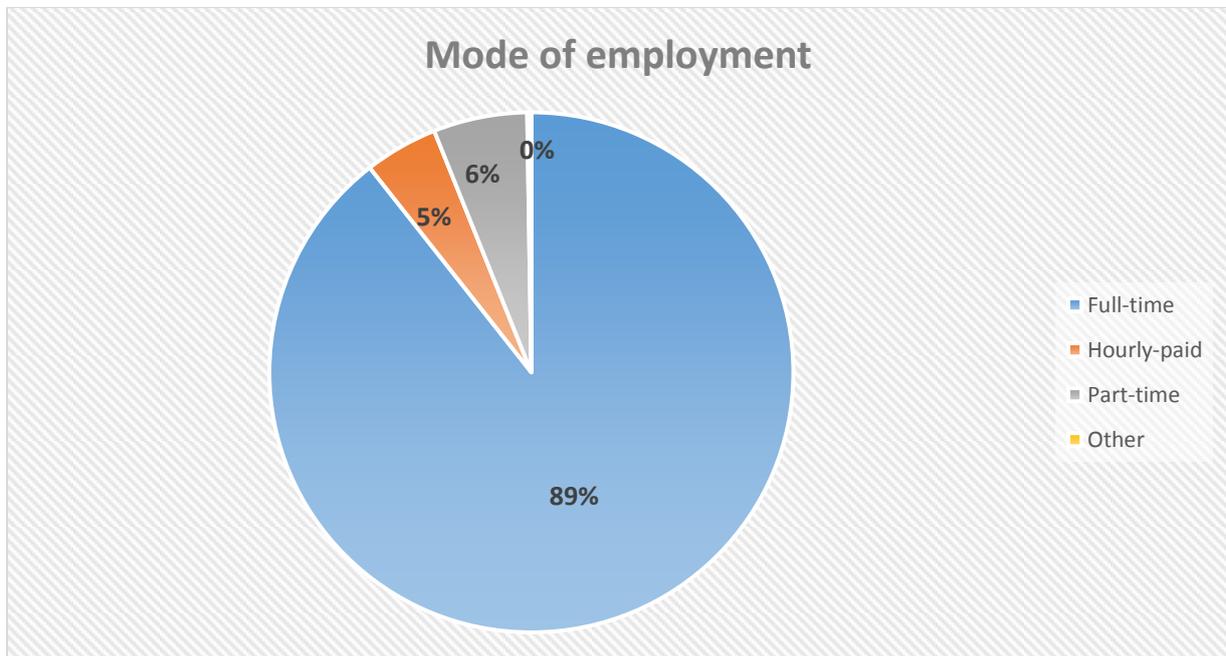


Figure 2 – Mode of employment

Figure 3 indicates that 59% of respondents are employed on open-ended permanent contracts, while 37% are on fixed term contracts. Less than 5% of those who responded are employed on variable hour contracts, zero hours contracts or other terms of employment.

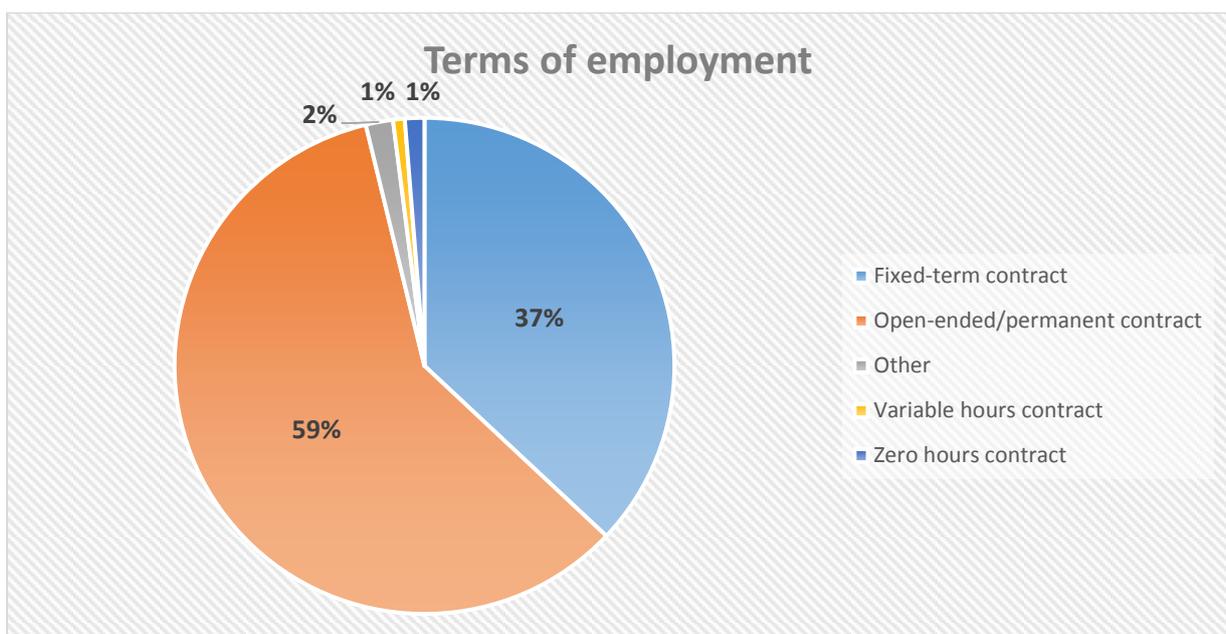


Figure 3 – Terms of employment

The percentage of respondents working under 40 hours per week is 12% (see Table 1). The highest percentage is in the 36-40 hours category (27%). However it is interesting to note that 19% of respondents stated that they work an average of 41-45 hours per week and a further 23% work an average of 46-50 hours per week. Last but not least, it is important to note that the cumulative percentage of those working over 40 hours per week is 60%.

Table 1 – Average number of hours worked per week (on/off site) during term-time

	Count	%
10-14 hours	14	4
11-15 hours	3	1
16-20 hours	7	2
21-25 hours	10	3
26-30 hours	4	1
31-35 hours	9	2
36-40 hours	106	27
41-45 hours	75	19
46-50 hours	91	23
51-55 hours	37	9
56-60 hours	16	4
Over 60 hours	21	5
Total	393	100

In relation to the age of participants to the survey, half of respondents are under 45 years. For a detailed breakdown see Table 2.

Table 2 - Age

	Count	%	Cumulative %
5-29	20	5	5
30-34	49	12	17
35-39	68	17	35
40-44	62	16	50
45-49	78	20	70
50-54	51	13	83
55-59	41	10	93
60-64	11	3	96
65 and over	7	2	97
Under 25	10	3	100
Total	397	100.0	

Slightly over half of respondents are females (53%), while 45% are men. A small number of respondents (2%) declined to declare their gender (Figure 4)

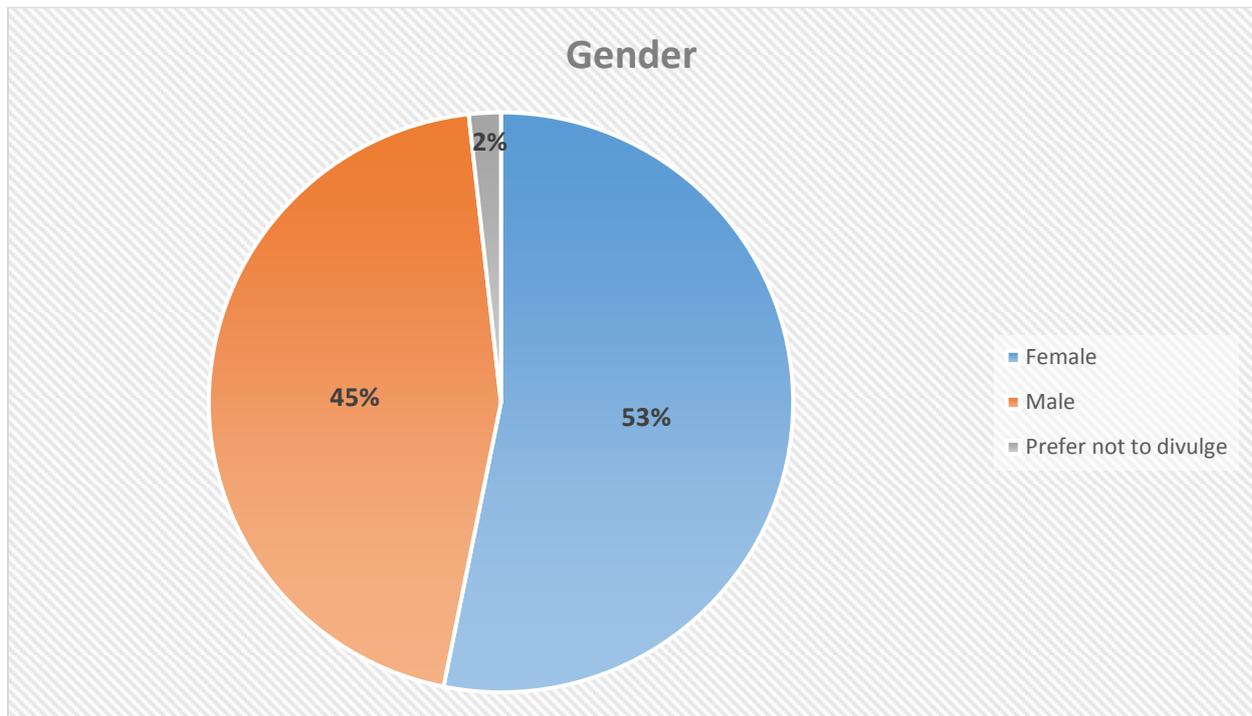


Figure 4 – Gender

Workload

Many of the survey's questions were aimed at providing insight into the perceptions that staff have in relation to their work and, in particular, their workload.

Most respondents felt that they are often (49%) or always (34%) clear about what is expected of them at work (see Figure 5). A further 14% are sometimes clear of these expectations. Only a small percentage of staff surveyed indicated that they are seldom (3%) or never (1%) clear about what is expected of them at work.



Figure 5 – “I am clear about what is expected of me at work”

The survey also highlights that the majority of respondents are often (51%) or always (26%) clear about their duties and responsibilities (see Figure 6). Furthermore 17% stated that they are sometimes clear about their duties and responsibilities, while very few respondents are seldom (5%) or never (1%) clear about their work responsibilities and duties.

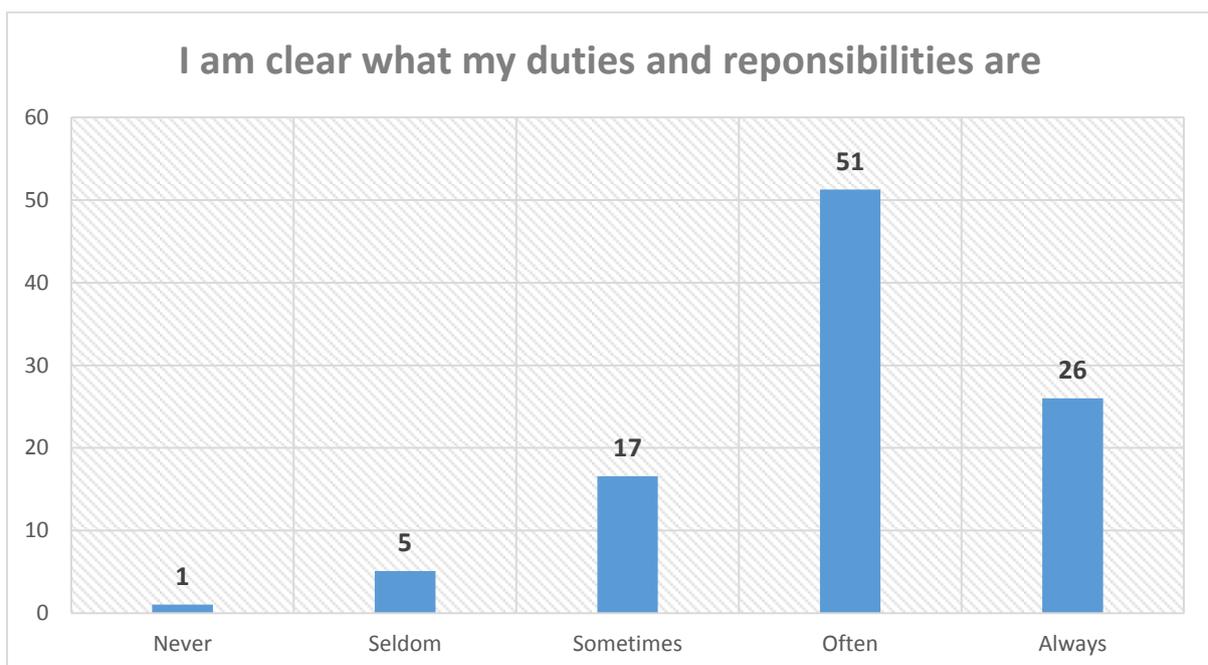


Figure 6 – “I am clear what my duties and responsibilities are”

The majority of respondents indicated that they often (41%) or always (28%) understand how their work fits into the overall DCU aims (Figure 7). A further 22% stated that they sometimes understand the role of their work within the organization. It is interesting to note that 7% of staff interviewed are seldom aware of this role, while 2% mentioned that they never understood how their work fits into the overall aim of the organization.

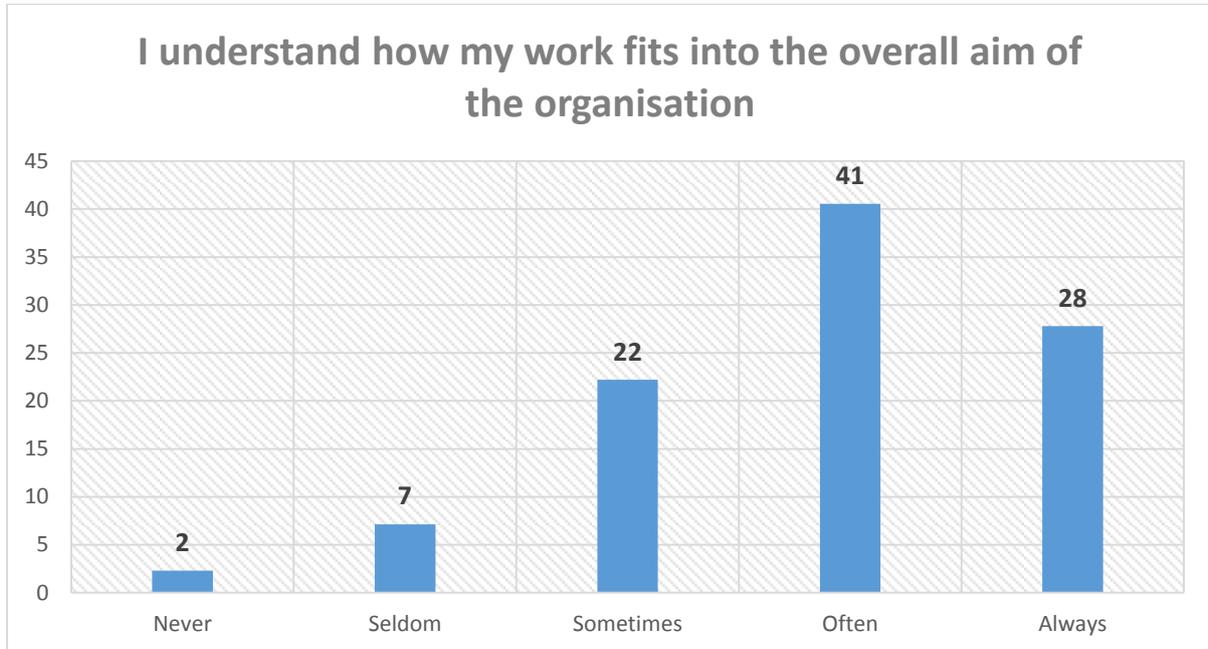


Figure 7 – “I understand how my work fits into the overall aim of the organization”

Respondents pointed out that they often (22%) or always (9%) feel that different groups at work demand things of them which are hard to combine. A further 40% were of the opinion that this is only sometimes the case. Last but not least, 29% of staff interviewed highlighted that this was either seldom or never the case (Figure 8).

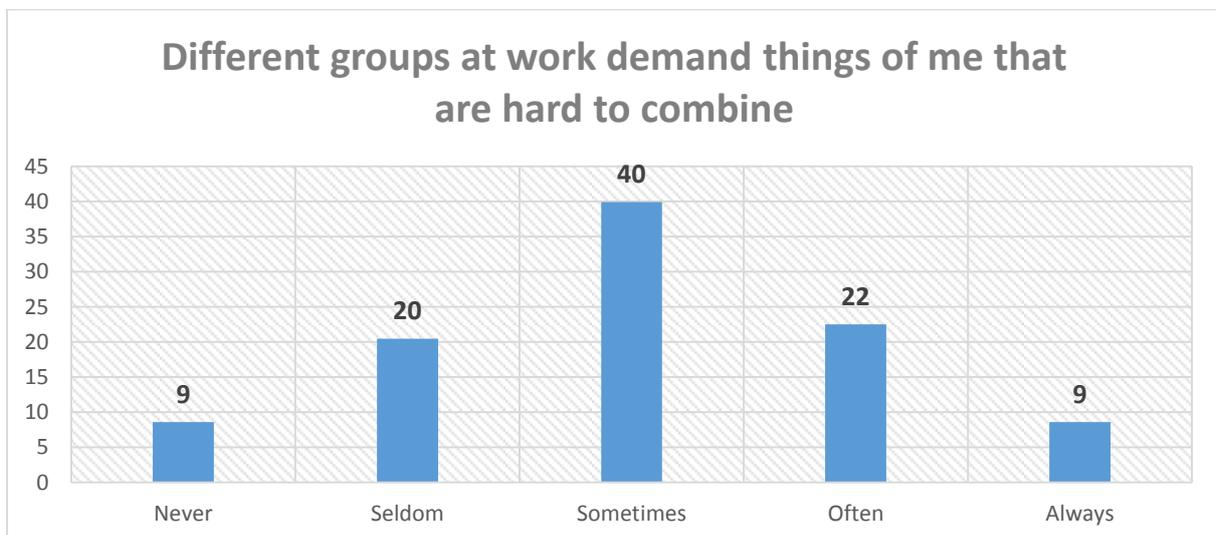


Figure 8 – “Different groups at work demand things of me that are hard to combine”

When asked about work pressures, slightly over half of respondents mentioned that they are never (17%) or only seldom (34%) confronted with unachievable deadlines at work (Figure 9). However 35% sometimes experience such unattainable deadlines. It is interesting to note that for 12% of respondents this happens often and a further 2% always confronted by unachievable deadlines in the workplace.

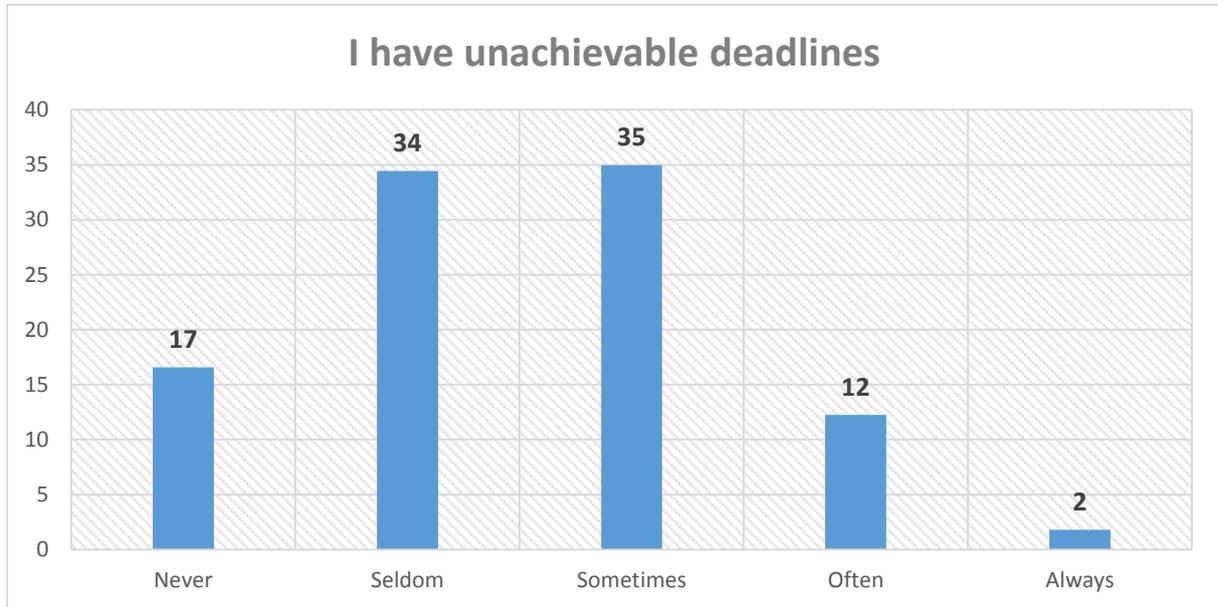


Figure 9 – “I have unachievable deadlines”

The majority of respondents stated that they often (48%) or always (21%) have an intense work rhythm (Figure 10). A further 27% specified that this is only sometimes the case. 3% of all respondents felt that they seldom work very intensively, while for 1% this was never the case.

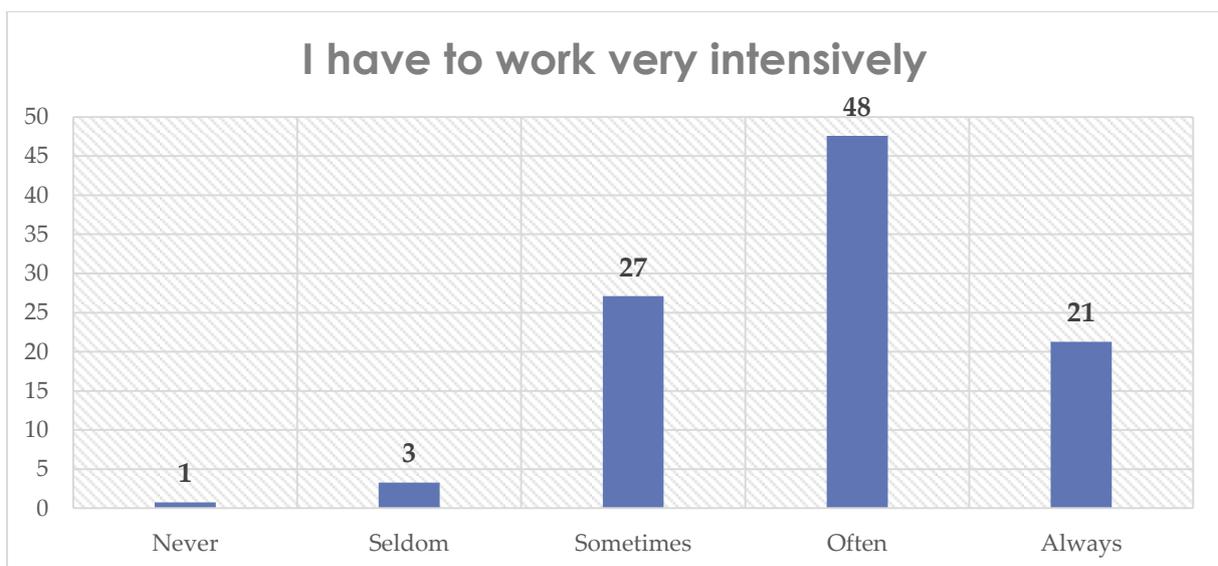


Figure 10 – “I have to work very intensively”

Figure 11 shows that 40% of staff interviewed mentioned that they sometimes neglect some tasks because they have too much work to do. A quarter of respondents (25%) stated that they often experience this, while only 6% always feel compelled to neglect some of their work task. Last but not least, data shows that 22% of staff seldom neglect some work tasks in favour of other tasks. Only 7% mentioned that this was never the case.

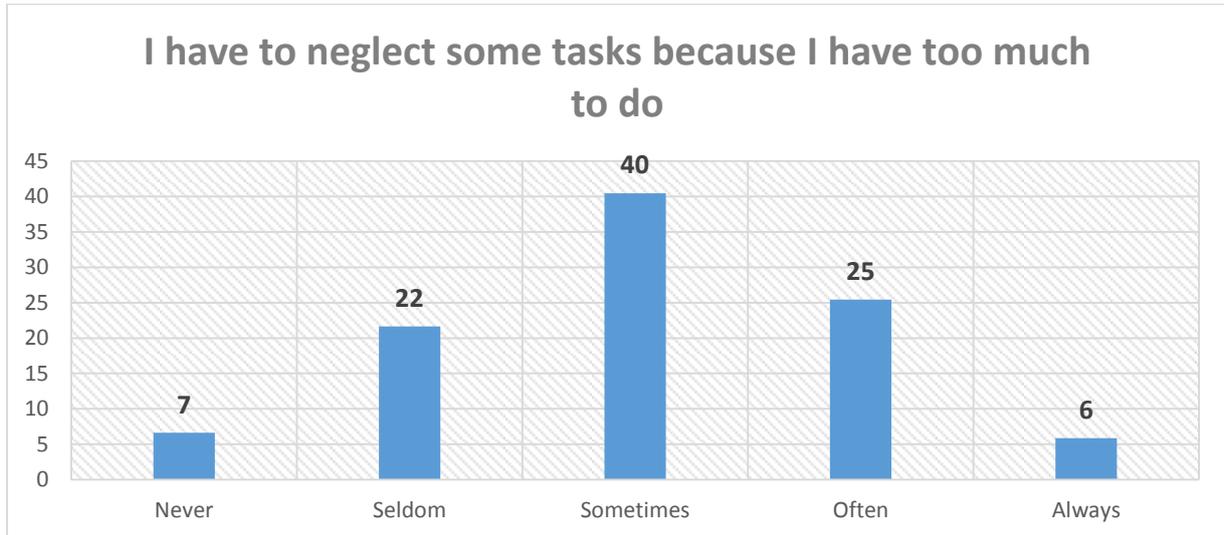


Figure 11 – “I have to neglect some tasks because I have too much to do”

Administrative tasks which accompany teaching and research activities constitute a challenge for many of respondents: 26% disagree and 11% strongly disagree with the statement that they are able to carry out all their administrative tasks alongside with their teaching and research activities (Figure 12). A further 21% agree and 3% strongly agree with the above statement. Last but not least, 39% of employees interviewed stated that they have a neutral position on the matter.

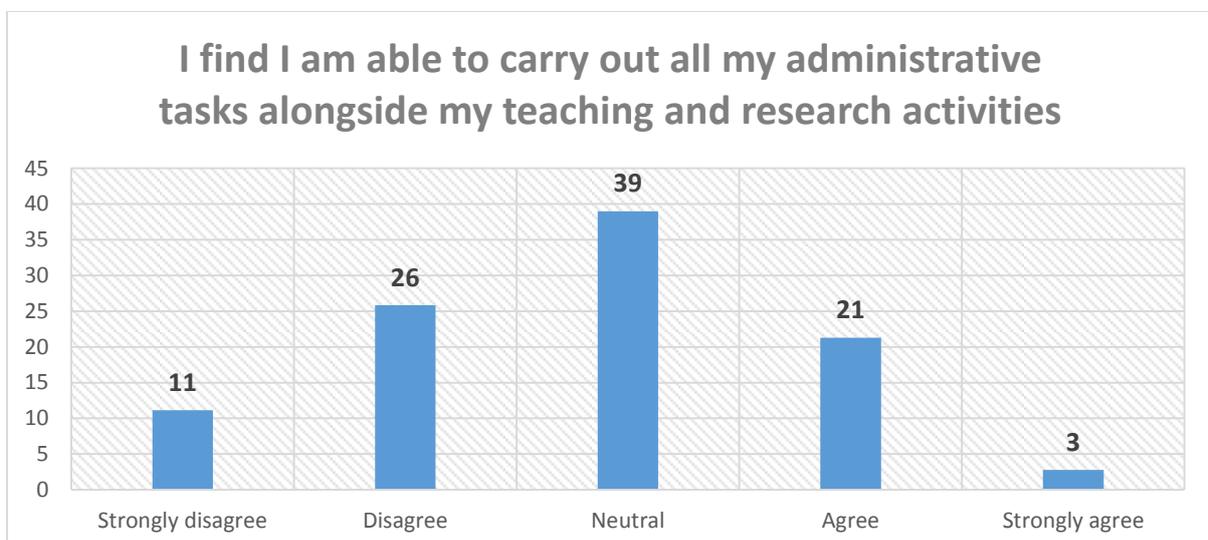


Figure 12 – “I find I am able to carry out all my administrative tasks alongside my teaching and research activities”

Findings thus indicate that most employees have a clear understanding of their duties and responsibilities, of what is expected of them at work, and their role within DCU. However, while only a minority indicated that they frequently face unachievable deadlines at work, many respondents were still concerned about the high volume of work. This insight is particularly reinforced by the qualitative component of this survey. Thus, out of a total of 116 comments included by staff in the survey, 36% referred to their workload.

For many of the staff, heavy workloads are becoming extremely stressful and make them constantly feel under pressure:

Work has become particularly stressful in the past 3 years. I get my work done because I work when I come home in the evenings and at the weekends. So my work has become a 7 day job. (female, 55-59 years)

It seems as though however much I work, I will never get everything done that I need to - there's always another grant or paper to write, or assignments to correct, or something. Even though I regularly work until midnight, I can't get through everything I need to do. (female, 35-39 years)

According to one respondent, routinely working long hours explains why staff don't usually see their work deadlines as "unachievable":

Can be 30+ hours sometimes but other times can be above 70 PW [per week]. Unachievable deadlines: they become achievable by working ridiculous hours (female, 45-49 years)

Furthermore, as one member of staff stated, the very heavy workload makes it nearly impossible for staff to take days off or Sabbatical leave:

"Annual leave is a joke; if you took the full number of days allowed, you'd just come back to an insurmountable mass of things to do. Similarly for sabbaticals [...]" (male, 45-49 years)

Staff also expressed concern that working long hours seems to have become the norm at DCU. According to one respondent this is particularly worrying for young staff with family obligations. The idea that younger employees find it more stressful to cope with the high volume of work was supported by another respondent who mentioned that, with age, staff learn how to prioritize their work tasks and thus feel less pressures:

The volume of work is way too high. It impacts on other parts of my life, but it doesn't stress me in the way it used to stress me when I was younger, [...] I'm old enough now to distinguish life and death issues from issues of over-work. (female, 45-49 years).

According to several participants to the survey, the increase in workload was caused by several key factors:

- a. One of the causes needs to be linked to the increase in the class size and also to the philosophy of treating students as customers:

Only lip service is seemingly paid to good teaching practice. The class sizes we have and the mollycoddling that many students seem to require are an exasperating demand on time. (male, 45-49 years)

I feel workloads have increased, especially the number of students in the classroom/modules without regard as to how a lecturer is going to have to cope with all the direct and indirect demands on his/her time [...] (male, 60-64 years)

- b. Many respondents also mentioned the incorporation and the change to courses as the lead causes for the increased volume of work.

The incorporation has led to changes in work and hence increased workload which has not brought any clear advantage. The change to [named programme] has led to change for change's sake with no research to back up changes and increased workload. (male, 45-49 years)

The new programme is an exciting development but resources have never matched the goodwill of those planning and developing and now teaching on the course. The good will and spirit in which this was done has been eroded. [There is] no recognition for this good will and [we are] being asked to do more and more. [...] Supposedly the new positions are meant to lighten everyone's load but that is not the case. More and more [is] being asked to be done in one's own time including supervision of students, extra school placement visits anywhere in the country; extra lectures, preparation and assessments due to specialisms and electives, not to mention trying to find time to do any piece of research. With an incorporation process going on [there are] lots of administrative changes. Loads of information emails which one cannot keep up with. Meetings to explain changes too but no time to go to them. (female, 50-54 years)

- c. There were also some opinions which attributed the increase in workload to deficient HR policies, particularly in relation to replacing staff who leave or those who retire:

[...] we have had three admin staff leave in the last 24 months who have not been replaced [...] We are given the same story that there is no budget for replacements. (female, 45-49 years)

Continual increase in workload without any additional human resources. This has escalated to an unmanageable situation in the past 12 months with workload leading to great personal stress. Along with many other staff I arrive to work at 7.30 a.m. and frequently do not leave until after 8 pm. This is in combination with working from home at weekends. (female, 60-64 years)

- d. Last but not least, several respondents argued that part of the problem is also the fact that their workload contains tasks which they are not supposed to do:

First, we do not have enough frontline admin staff dealing with academic programmes - academics end up doing things they are not supposed to (male, 35-39 years)

I genuinely have no idea what exactly many of the new management roles actually do... Over the past 10-20 years the academics in DCU have been very accommodating in terms of change, flexibility etc. and there is no respect or recognition for this. Academics need to be left to do their teaching and research and not bogged down in endless committees/meetings/"strategies" etc. (male, 40-44 years)

One respondent felt that this dramatic increase in workload is only going to get worse in the following years: "I'm at the point where I am thinking of retiring early to avoid further stress - this can't be healthy?" (female, 55-59 years)

It is important to note that, when discussing their workload, DCU staff did not refer exclusively to the significant volume of work which they have to perform. Several respondents made key points about the invisibility of significant parts of their work:

A lot of my work appears 'invisible' (e.g. dealing with students' problems - family breakup, mental health issues) and [this] can be emotionally draining (and unappreciated by other members of staff who don't 'deal with students') sometimes. Also, some of the admin stuff is also invisible, but if it didn't happen, things would be more chaotic. (female, 45-49 years)

I am concerned that the new DCU workload model will not take into account the significant amount of time it takes to supervise students on school placement around the country while also writing and delivering a heavy teaching load. (female 35-39 years)

[...] there has been an increase in stress related to admin around School placement receiving up to 10 emails and texts a day. Which I feel responsible to respond to in case a student is anxious. (male, 40-44 years)

I do feel that it is important to recognise the lecturing and teaching as well as the pastoral care that takes place in DCU. In my experience lecturers always go the extra mile in helping students and this could be affirmed by management a little more. I do feel part of teaching is to help learners reach their full potential. This is done in hundreds of little ways that all take time. (female, 45-49 years)

Another issue is related to workload distribution which is deemed by several respondents as unfair:

The distribution of workload appears to be permanently occluded and shrouded in mystery. A complete and utter absence of transparency appears to operate in regard to this area of life at DCU. (male, 45-49 years)

One of the perils of this demanding workload is the fact that a significant gap seems to emerge between teaching and administrative tasks on one side and research and publications activities on the other side. As some respondents argue, given the increased work pressures the latter are usually sacrificed in favour of the former:

[It is] difficult to find time for research (the admin and teaching have to be done / are timetabled - it is hard to carve out time for research (female, 50-54 years)

[...] 'research' is often personal and/or marginal to the core activity of the teacher/lecturer and is increasingly driven by budgetary concerns and the optics of staff profiles. (male, 60-64 years)

I manage my workload because I have prioritised teaching and administration (and neglected research). If I were to do a lot of research on top of what I am doing at present, my responses to this questionnaire would be very different. (female, 60-64 years)

According to staff participating in the survey, this gap has a further negative impact on their career prospects. This issue will be further explored in the following section which discusses respondents' opinions on the issue of promotions in DCU.

Promotion

It is interesting to note that only 14% agree and 4% strongly agree with the idea that promotions in DCU are awarded based on clear and fair criteria (Figure 13). A significant percentage disagree (24%) or strongly disagree (26%) with the statement. A third of respondents expressed a neutral view on this matter.

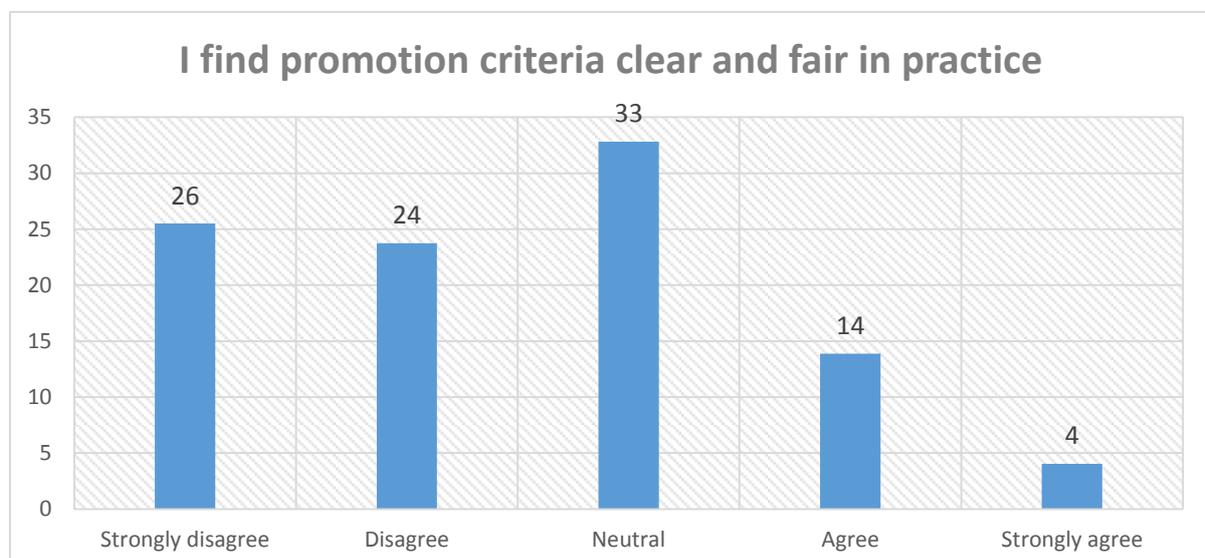


Figure 13 – “I find promotion criteria clear and fair in practice”

Data shows that 24% of respondents disagree and 15% strongly disagree with the statement that they get informal as well as formal recognition in the workplace (Figure 14). A further 29% agree and 5% strongly agree with the statement. A further 27% expressed a neutral opinion on this matter.

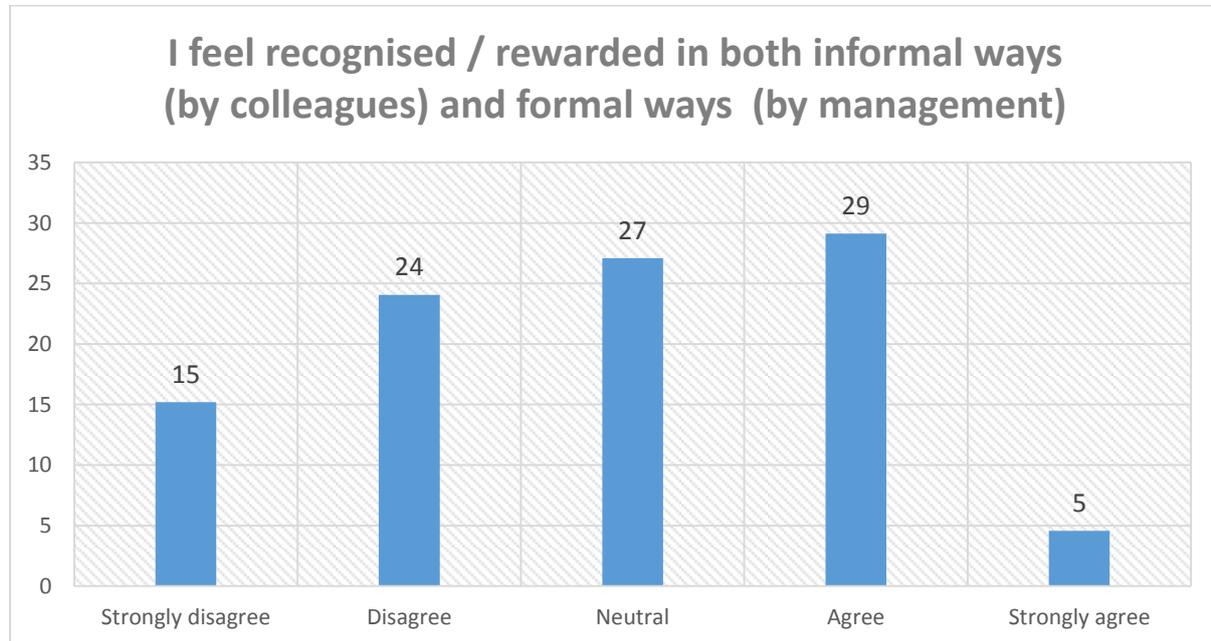


Figure 14 – “I feel recognized/rewarded in both formal ways (by colleagues) and formal ways (by management)

It is important to note that this question was a bit problematic for several respondents. Hence they made clarifications in the comments section of the survey that, while they often have a great relation with their colleagues, it is the management that is detrimental to their feeling of accomplishment

The separation of colleagues and management in the questions would have resulted in different answers to each question. The lower support levels come from management outside of the unit. (male, 50-54 years)

A total of 16% of comments emerging from the qualitative component of the survey referred to the issue of promotions in DCU. Survey data presented above (Figure 13) indicates that half of respondents find the promotion criteria in DCU to be unfair and to lack clarity. The qualitative analysis of the comments mirrors the findings from the survey questions. Namely, promotion is deemed by many respondents to be very unfair, favouring some candidates while discriminating against others:

It is clear to me that certainly within the department I work [...] there is regard only for a small few senior academics and their acolytes. There is

absolutely no prospect, for example, of a staff member like myself ever gaining promotion (male, 50-54 years)

The promotions issue in DCU is a long standing joke and based mainly on nepotism (promote your friends and ex-students) and raise cash (\$). (male, 50-54 years)

Promotion within DCU is next to impossible, it seems, unless one enjoys patronage, regardless of how much one works, publishes etc. (male, 45-49 years)

The previous quotes show that there is a sense of futility in working towards a promotion or applying for one. Hence, several respondents argued that, regardless of any efforts made in this direction, one is very unlikely to get promoted. Furthermore, this sentiment seems to strongly impact on the morale of the staff.

This increased work load I gladly undertake, but promotion process in DCU is deeply flawed and unfair. It is demotivating [...]. There is no recognition of effort and success at DCU. (male 40-44 years)

The [union] committee also should look at how difficult it is to be promoted to senior lecturer, at least in some disciplines, especially compared to the norms in Irish HE institutions and internationally. Many DCU lecturers are effectively trapped in dead-end jobs due to the restrictive policy on promotion and the near-impossible criteria, while a few favoured insiders appear to have no such issue. (male, 55-59 years)

Promotion prospects are non-existent - due to the freeze on promotions for years, there is a huge backlog which is simply not being dealt with. This is discouraging as it makes it seem impossible to ever progress further, regardless of the amount or quality of work undertaken. (female, 35-39 years)

In addition to this, one respondent felt that staff in DCU have a much harder time getting promoted than staff at other universities, particularly Trinity College or University College Dublin:

[...] there is something clearly broken about promotions in DCU. For instance, with my CV I would have been at least one rank higher if I worked in Trinity or UCD. One SL promotion per year per faculty makes the process probabilistic as opposed to merit-based. (male, 35-39 years)

The gap between teaching and administrative tasks on one side, and research and publishing on the other side has also been mentioned in the context of the discussion around promotions. Staff mentioned that heavy workloads and the lack of time for research and publications make it even more difficult to achieve a promotion.

The whole system of teaching modules which require more intensive contact hours, naturally leaves less time to work on research projects. The lack of guidance and direction in this area [...] There is therefore no equity in comparison to lecturers who can spend most of their working week on research projects. There needs to be a better more fair system in place. Promotion in the academic environment is geared toward research output. Some lecturers do not get the time. This is a huge pressure in itself, guilt and feeling of inadequacy. (male, 40-44 years)

I would have concerns that promotional prospects will be unfairly distributed - in [named School] we have huge teaching loads (ca 20 hours a week at times) plus school placement supervision. It is not possible to publish prolifically within such a scenario. (female, 40-44 years)

As the above-mentioned citations reveal, several respondents feel that not only the criteria for promotion are unfair, but also the opportunities to do research and to publish are unfairly distributed. The remedy for this problem is, in their view, a change in the organisation's policies to allow criteria other than research to weigh equally as much in the process of obtaining a promotion.

Management of third level institutions generally should be made more accountable in regard to the relative value of non-'research' essential tasks in evaluation criteria for promotions. [...] some vital activities are accorded little status within the policy of staff promotions. This needs to be addressed urgently. (male, 60-64 years)

DCU does not have an effective system for identifying those academic staff who work hardest on its behalf. [...] Academics with sterling records in teaching, administration and management over many years are regularly refused promotion because those very activities prevent them building a research profile. Each of the four pillars of an academic career - teaching, research, admin and management - should be regarded equally. (male, 55-59)

It is commonplace that classroom teaching is grotesquely undervalued at this and many other universities, when put up against "scholarly publication", whether the publication is of any use to anybody or not. That's the nature of the beast. (male, 65 and over)

Respondents indicated that women and employees with a disability tend to be particularly discriminated against when attempting to apply for a promotion.

Why does the promotion process allow some male lectures without a PhD to gain increments when above the lecturer bar without any penalties while a female member of staff can be restricted to a low increment until a PhD is achieved? (female, 40-54 years)

Gender discrimination is blatant, rampant and horrifyingly taken as a norm in this institution. [detailed case study follows] (female, 40-44 years)

Some feel discriminated in comparison with lecturers from other departments who have lighter teaching loads and no school placements which ultimately allows them to publish more and thus increase their chances of obtaining a promotion (female, 40-44 years)

"I have grave concerns that, in this era of "new DCU", there is a massive gap between those who teach and those who research. A few "golden children", identified by professors, will be exempted from teaching duties in order to foster their research careers. Who then, will be asked to teach? The simple answer is that those who do not have patronage from on high will be given the "stick" of teaching, whilst the "carrot" of research will be reserved for an anointed few." (male, 50-54 years)

Lack of transparency in the promotion criteria and procedures adds to the general sentiment that the entire process is unfair and based on favouritism and nepotism.

Promotions opportunities are rare and lack transparency when they are offered (the way reviewing panels are decided is opaque, and there is no feedback at all after a scheme is finished). [...] (female, 55-59 years)

The prospect of promotion is non-existent, there is no clear pathway to promotion and lies totally in capriciousness of the institution. (male, 45-49 years)

In terms of discussion making at university level, the complexity built into the promotions process is farcical. This in my opinion is a deliberate attempt to confuse applicants and put them off applying. This process is not transparent and again is politically motivated. (male, 45-49 years)

DCU is a singularly ungrateful employer. It has no idea who its most productive employees are. The schemes it has devised in recent years to identify top-performing academic staff do not work. The executive dean system implements the worst sort of old-fashioned top-down control-freak management and is vastly inferior to the management structure previously used. Combined with massive reductions in salaries and substantial increases in workload over the last decade, this makes for a deeply unhappy workforce. (male, 55-59)

Respondents thus concluded that the promotion system in DCU does not reward its valuable employees. Given these challenges encountered in the process of obtaining a promotion, many respondents feel that getting promoted is simply unattainable. Many feel that there are no rewards for hard work. Given this high level of distrust in DCU's promotion policies, one member of staff mentioned that pursuing a promotion is not worth the effort: "I have no interest in promotion as that means more work!" (female, 50-54)

Working Relations

Figure 15 shows that 16% of staff mentioned that they have never received supportive feedback on the work that they do, while 24% have seldom received support. There is also a significant proportion of respondents (30%) who mention that they sometimes receive supportive feedback on their work. Last but not least, 23% indicated that they often receive this supportive feedback and for further 6% that is always the case.

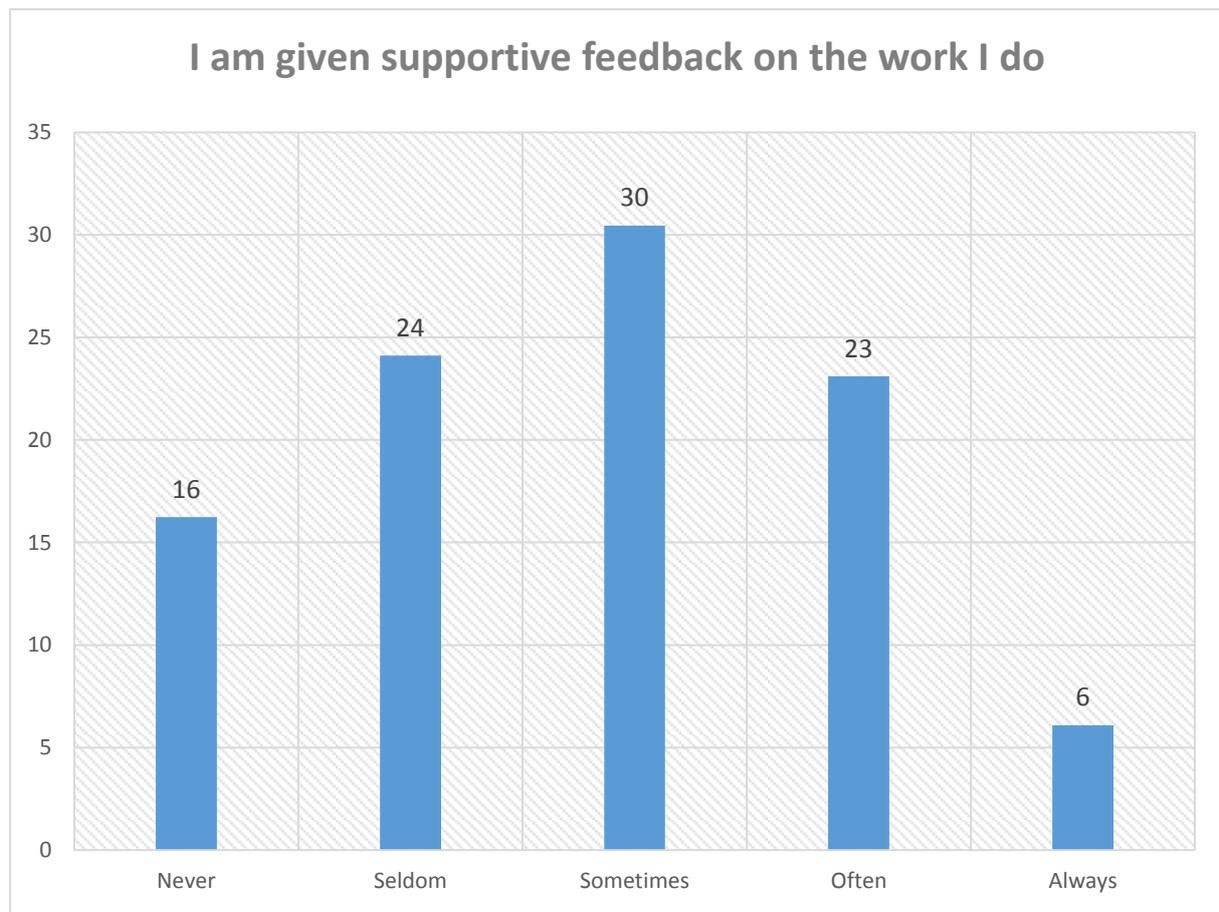


Figure 15 – “I am given supportive feedback on the work I do”

Survey data shows that half of respondents do not feel that they are consulted about changes pertaining to their work: 30% disagree and 20% strongly disagree with the statement (see Figure 16). In contrast, 18% agree and 3% strongly agree with the fact that staff are consulted about changes involving work. Furthermore 30% respondents have a neutral view on the subject.

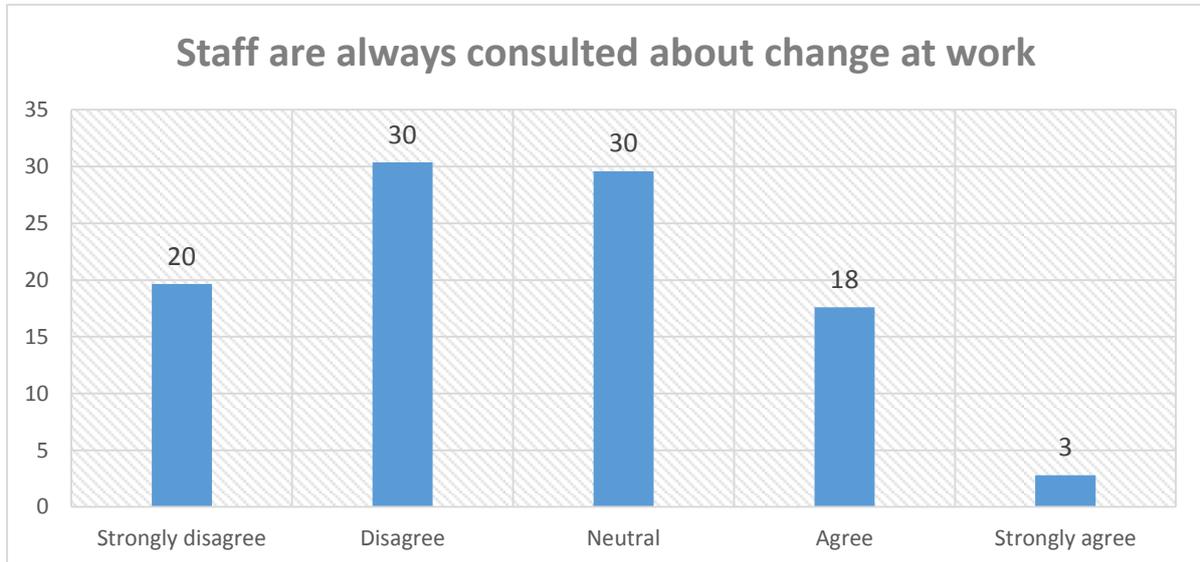


Figure 16 – “Staff are always consulted about change at work

More than half of respondents declared that they often (31%) or always (21%) feel supported by colleagues and management when certain life issues impact on them (Figure 17). Furthermore, a third of respondents (33%) mentioned that they only sometimes experience this level of support. A small percentage (7%) of staff interviewed indicated that they have not experienced this support at all, while slightly more respondents (8%) experienced it only rarely.

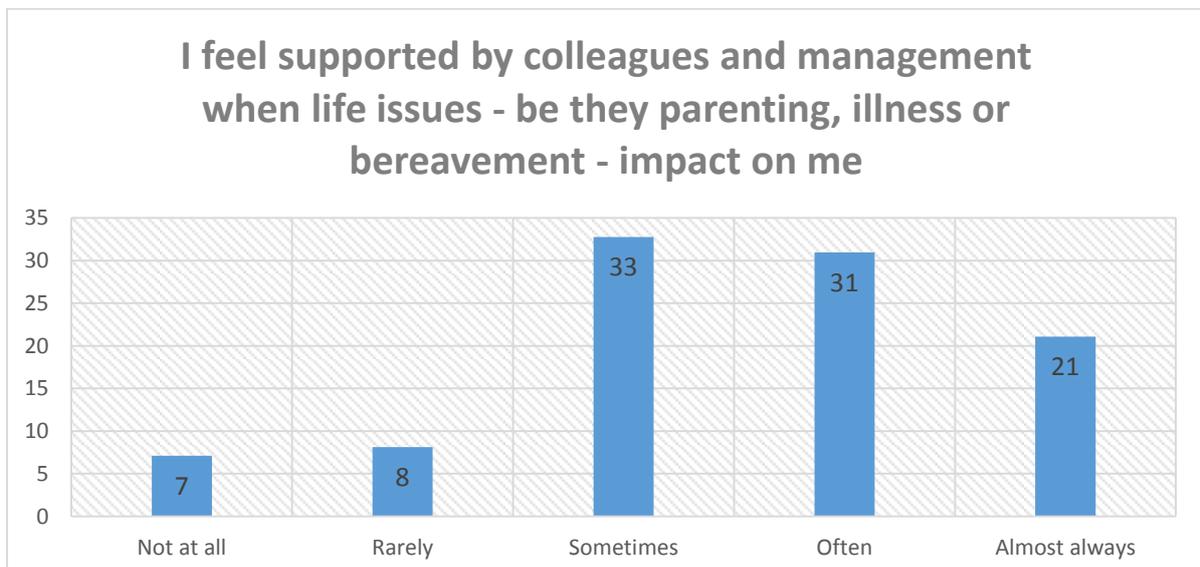


Figure 17 – “I feel supported by colleagues and management when life issues impact on me”

This question was also problematic for several respondents because it conflated the two different categories: colleagues and management. Hence respondents commented that while they feel supported by colleagues this is not necessarily the case about the management

The questions regarding colleagues and management [...] should be separated into two separate questions, one to address the colleague issue the other to address the management issue. More times than not I feel supported by my colleagues but not necessarily by management [...] (female, 40-54 years)

The majority of respondents mentioned that they have never (65%) or seldom (19%) been subject to personal harassment at work (see Figure 18). However, it is important to note that 11% of staff interviewed indicated that they have sometimes been the victims of personal harassment at work while a further 5% have experienced this type of harassment often (4%) or even always (1%).

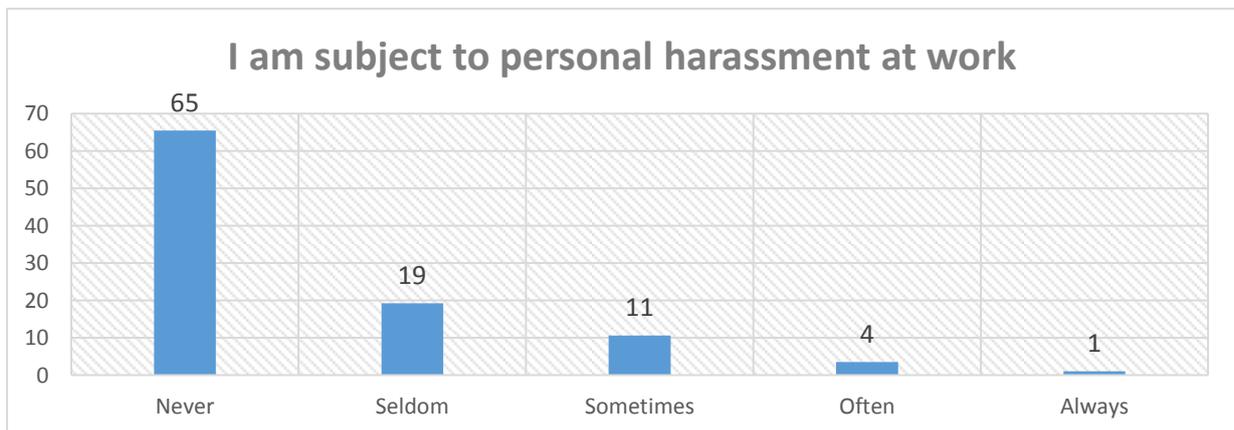


Figure 18 – “I am subject to personal harassment at work”

Figure 19 shows that a majority of respondents have never (71%) or seldom (16%) been subjects of bullying at work. A further 9% stated that they have sometimes experienced this, while 4% indicated that they experience bullying very often or always.

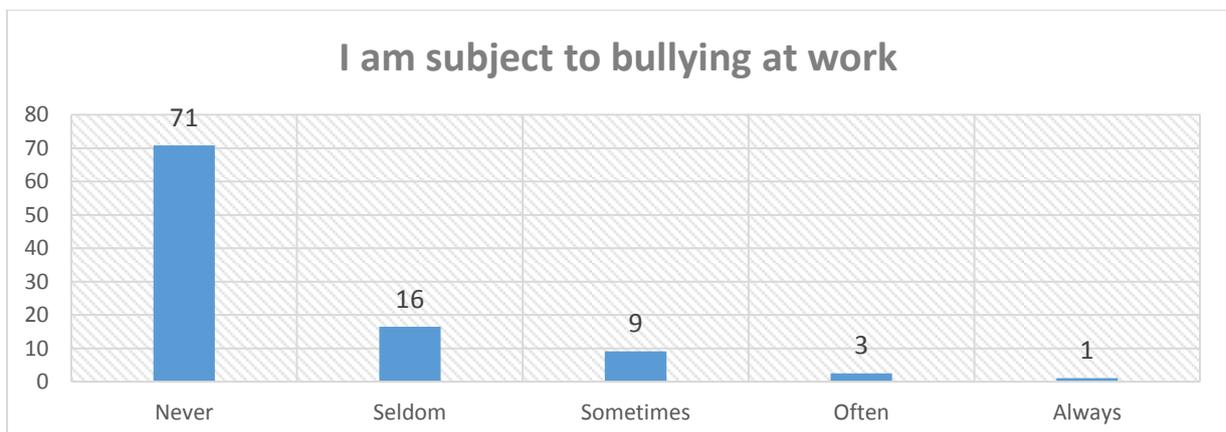


Figure 19 – “I am subject to bullying at work”

Summarizing the findings presented above, it emerges that 40% of respondents seldom or never receive supportive feedback on the work that they do. Slightly more than half of respondents (52%) felt supported by other colleagues and management in the case of a personal issues (e.g. parenting, illness or bereavement). Data also showed that half of respondents did not feel that they are consulted about changes pertaining to their work. This important finding will be further explored in a subsequent section of this report. Last but not least, the analysis of survey questions revealed that personal harassment at work and bullying do not seem to constitute a problem for most employees. However 5% of respondents stated that they often or always experience personal harassment, while 4% are often or always victims of bullying at work.

The qualitative analysis of the comments made by respondents casts further light on the topic. Findings show that, at the interpersonal level, they have very good relations with their colleagues who are described as friendly, supportive and helpful (female, under 25; male, 45-49 years). From this point of view, many of those surveyed agree that DCU is a good place to work.

DCU is a great place to work, much better than TCD or UCD in my experience (male, 40-44 years)

I am very fortunate to work in [department name] where the atmosphere is generally very supportive. (female, 55-59 years)

A great group of colleagues in a very supporting environment. (female, 35-39 years)

Several respondents also praised the heads of their respective departments for the support they offer to employees

I have found DCU an exceptionally good place to work. I am in the [name of the School] and I can honestly say that the Dean is an excellent leader, [...] clear communication to staff, and has both the toughness to demand work with the kindness to spend time listening to people. My contract has an end date and I will be sorry to leave. (female, 50-54 years)

My Head of School [...] is admirably supportive of personal issues -- health, family and so on. He deserves great praise for human decency. (male, 65 and over)

I find my colleagues extremely supportive and I find the current head of school excellent (female, 55-59 years)

Comments made by staff pointed out that the good working atmosphere in DCU is actually happening in spite of the challenges posed and the demands made by the organisation's management.

Yes [it is good], in spite of management (female, 40-54 years)

[...] interpersonal relations in the college are quite good, despite increasing demands by management, but we feel very harried. (female, 55-59 years)

In general, however, DCU is a good, supportive and positive environment to work although very little attention is paid to actually fostering post-graduate students via seminars etc. The creation of an academic or intellectual 'space' appears alien to DCU. (male, 45-49 years)

Having a supportive workplace is considered by some respondents as key for making the heavy workloads and the intense work rhythm more bearable.

Compared to other HEI's where I have worked I find the general work atmosphere and support in DCU very positive which makes it so much easier when you are required to work beyond the normal working week of 40 hours per week (male, 40-44 years)

However, the perceived unfairness and discrimination inherent to the process of getting a promotion in DCU is, according to several respondents, strongly impacting on the working relations:

I would love to feel more energised in my work but only certain people are given opportunities, assigned roles and ultimately fast-tracked for promotion. There is an almost complete absence of equality and transparency in my job. As a result collegiality and goodwill continue to suffer. (female, 35-39 years)

The extreme salary differentials across various grades in the same work category ensure collegiality is a thing of the past. (male, 55-59)

It is important to note that while the good working atmosphere and the spirit of collegiality applies to full time, permanent staff, those who work part-time and those who are employed on temporary contracts are treated differently. For example, one respondent argued that part-timers and hourly paid are often in isolation from the rest of the staff (female, 30-34 years)

My experience is that DCU "Employees" who are not permanent staff are treated differently to those who have permanent contracts in T&Cs, administrative and faulty processes and in the attitudes of permanent academic and administrative staff. (male, 45-49 years)

Several comments were made on the issue of harassment. A few respondents described the increases in workload constitute a form of bullying and harassment.

I feel that morale is low in ... at the moment as a result of the way the incorporation by DCU is being carried out. Academics generally are feeling harassed and bullied by management creep and a lack of appreciation of what we do. (female, 55-59 years)

Being an academic has become almost unbearable in DCU. We are subject to continuous harassment from students, admin staff and management. We are the "front line" in DCU as we do the teaching [...] Students have no respect for academic staff and this appears to be actively encouraged by management, who encourage students to behave like "customers". [...] (male, 40-44 years)

Another form of harassment experienced by some members of staff is linked to their sexual orientation:

Conditions for LGBT staff can be challenging at this institute, and were particularly trying around the time of the referendum, which is stressful and emotionally draining. I hope that this will change with the incorporation when the Catholic ethos of the college will no longer have an impact on staff in non-religious posts. (female, 30-34 years)

Several respondents mentioned the issue of sexual harassment and argued that there is very little effort done by DCU to address the problem

I totally feel that DCU, especially HR, higher Academic Management etc. have totally let me down and have led to my Psychiatric Illness. [...] DCU has basically destroyed my life, I have given 10 years of my life to DCU and now... (female, 40-44 years)

I know of many colleagues who are subjected to blatant sexual harassment. I know a number of students who are discriminated against because of their gender (there was no other variable that could explain it) and who are sexually harassed by lecturers and heads of school. All of this has to be addressed. (female, 40-44 years)

There have been periods in the past when I had issues with offensive behaviour by other members of the university. Although I reported this on several occasions, I received very little support (male, 50-54 years)

Respondents have called for more policies on dealing with various forms of bullying and harassment at work, while at the same time recognised that the process needs to start with a proper definition of what bullying and harassment are.

Please provide clear criteria on how to define bullying & harassment at work, and guidelines on what to do when we are facing bullying and/or harassment at work. It is not good to passively wait for staff to report this. Instead, the staff should be made aware that they are encouraged to talk about this (to whom? where? when?) if anyone feels being bullied or harassed at work. (female, 35-39 years)

Work-Home Balance

Just over half of respondents agree (38%) and strongly agree (13) with the fact that their job is stressful (Figure 20). A further 18% disagree and 4% strongly disagree with this statement. Almost a third (28%) of respondents have a neutral opinion on this topic.

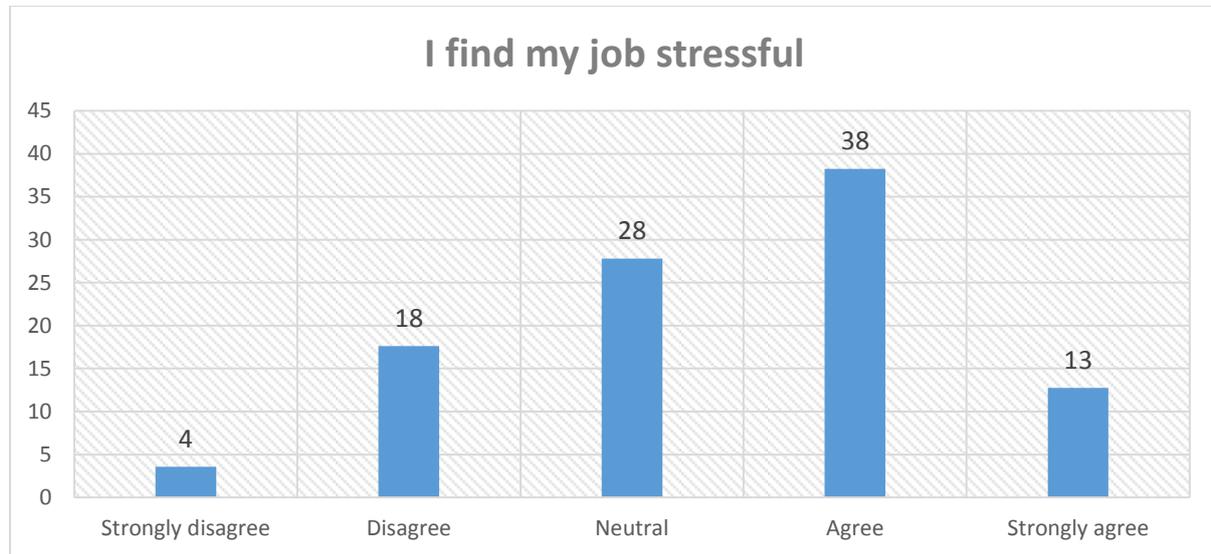


Figure 20 – “I find my job stressful”

It is important to note that only 3% of respondents highlighted the fact that they do not come from work too tired to do the things that they enjoy doing (Figure 21). A further 11% mentioned that this happens but rarely and 38% believe that this only happens sometimes. Almost half of respondents specified that coming home tired from work and not being able to do the things one enjoys is happening often (31%) or almost always (16%).

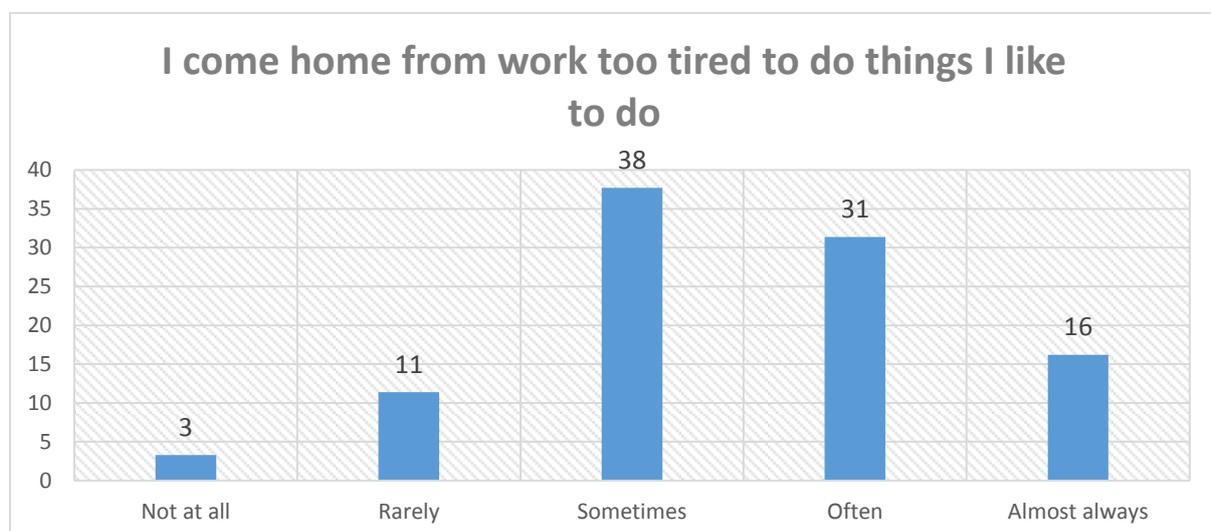


Figure 21 – “I come from work too tired to do things I like to do”

When asked whether their job makes it difficult to maintain the kind of personal life they would like, many respondents indicated that this happens rarely (22%) or not at all (9%) (see Figure 22). While 30% of respondents feel that this happens sometimes, the majority of staff that this happens often (25%) or even always (14%).

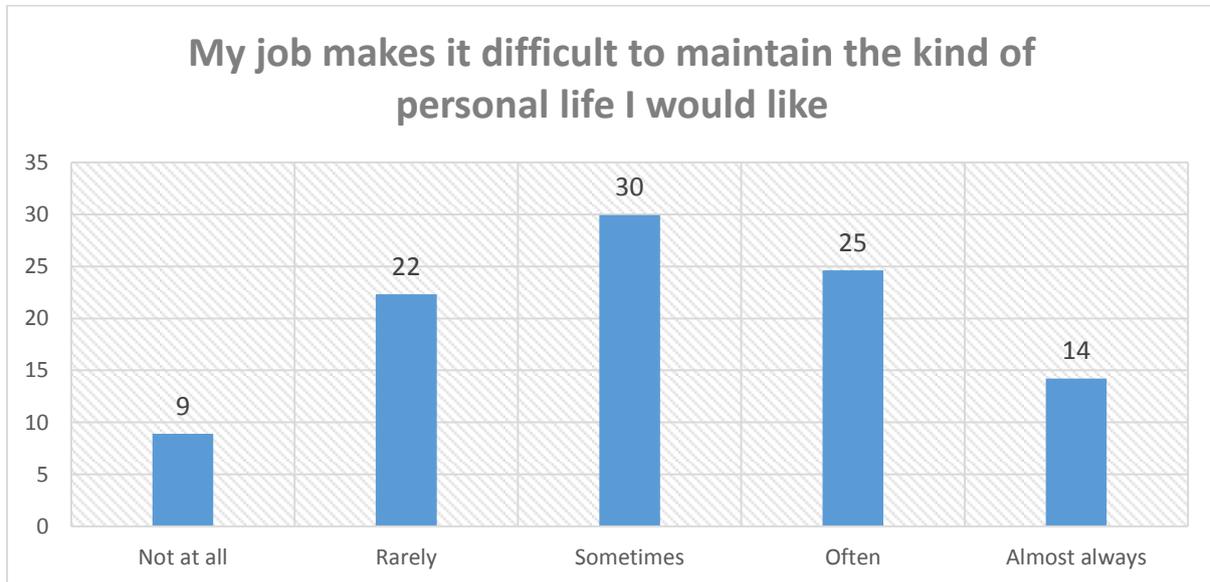


Figure 22 – “My job makes it difficult to maintain the kind of personal life I would like”

In a similar vein 29 % of staff would ‘often’ and 12 % ‘almost always’ neglect personal needs because of the demands of work. Furthermore one third of staff said they ‘sometimes’ sacrificed their personal needs to deal with work demands. For 19% of respondents this is ‘rarely’ the case and 7 % feel this is ‘never’ the case.

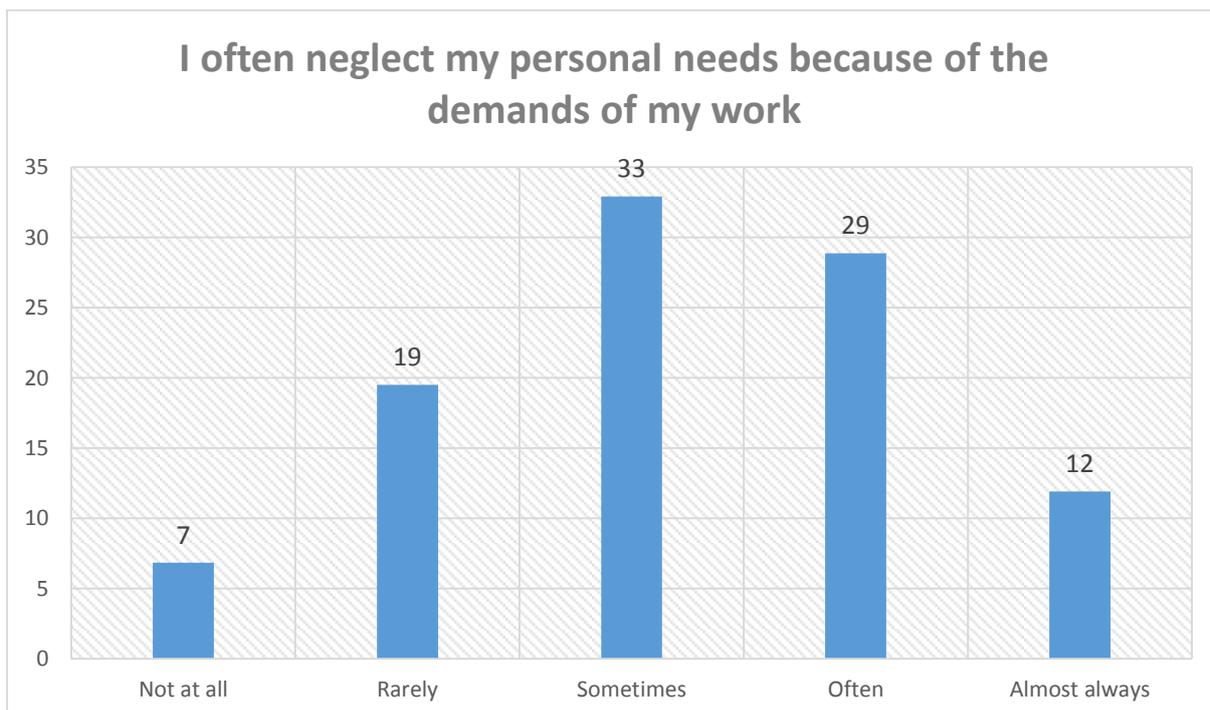


Figure 23 – “I often neglect my personal needs because of the demands of my work”

Slightly over a third of respondents (35%) mentioned that they sometimes felt that they miss out on important personal activities due to the amount of time spent doing work (Figure 24). A further 21% mentioned that they often experience this, while another 7% expressed that they almost always miss out. It is interesting to note however that for 37% of staff interviewed this was a rare or even non-existing occurrence.

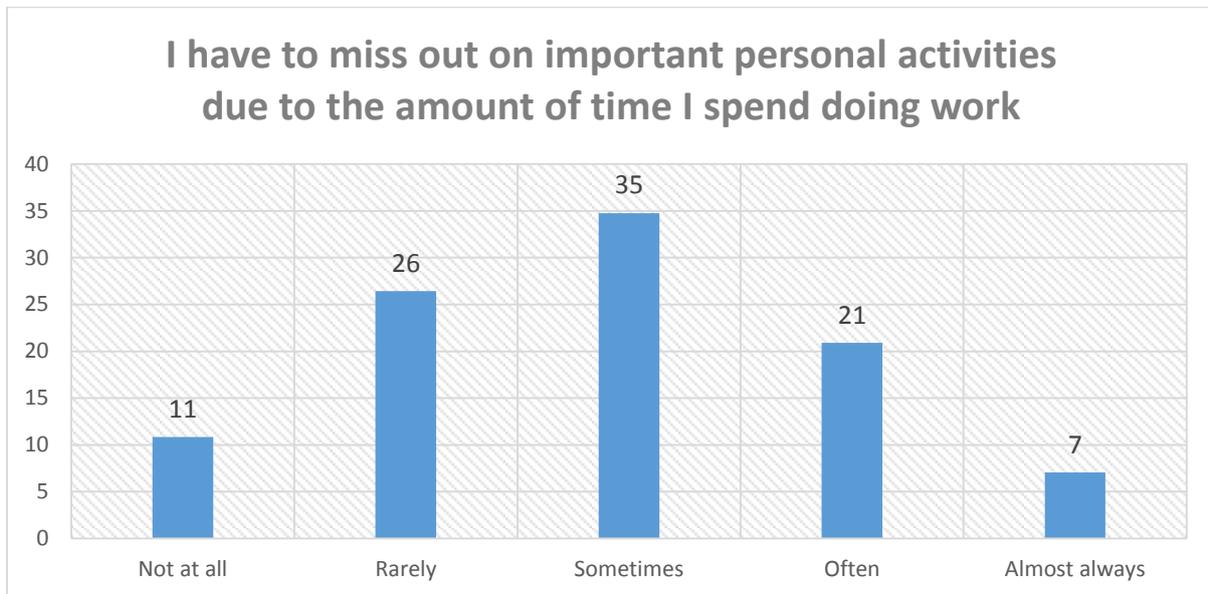


Figure 24 – “I have to miss out on important personal activities due to the amount of time I spend doing work”

Very few of the staff interviewed for this survey indicated that they often (13%) or always (4%) are in a better mood at home because of their job (Figure 25). For 42% of respondents this is only sometimes the case, while for others this is rarely (31%) or not at all the case (10%).

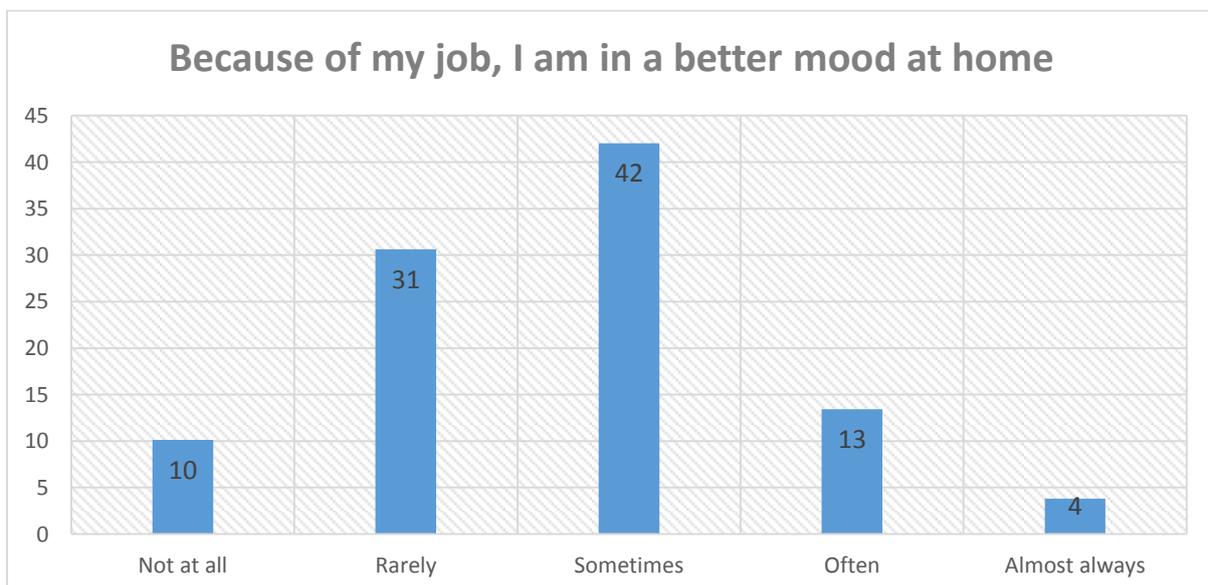


Figure 25 – “Because of my job, I am in a better mood at home”

In summary, data emerging from these questions on work-home balance show that more than half of respondents find their job stressful and almost half of all staff participating in this survey specified that coming home tired from work and not being able to do the things one enjoys is happening often or almost always. It is clear that the high volume of work takes a toll on the personal lives of staff: 40% of respondents felt that their job makes it difficult to maintain the kind of personal life they would like. A similar percentage (41%) indicated that they had often or almost always neglected their personal needs because of the demands of their work. A smaller percentage (28%) mentioned that they often or always miss out on important personal activities due to the amount of time spent doing work. An even smaller percentage (17%) felt that their job is frequently or always giving them a better mood at home.

Many important aspects related to work-home balance were already highlighted by staff when they discussed their heavy workloads and the intensity of working in an academic setting. Many respondents argued that because there is always a bit of work to be done, they often use the evenings at home or the weekends to get things done.

In spite of this general feeling, there is also one respondent who felt that working hard is not necessarily impacting on the work life-balance:

[...] speaking as a permanent academic employee I feel extremely privileged to hold an academic position. Yes I work hard but never feel fully stressed or that somehow my job with its flexible hours makes intolerable demands on my work - life balance. The reality is that being an academic with the privileges that brings is just about the best possible professional job for work - life balance and DCU is in general a pretty good place to work. (male, 45-49 years)

Other Themes

Apart from the key themes of the questionnaire, several other important topics emerged from the comments made by respondents.

Job Security

The status of contract staff raised the important issue of the high stress levels experienced by those who are waiting to hear if they are being re-employed.

It pains me to see so many good young academic staff working from contract to contract and often leaving while a large number of permanent staff remain and in lots of cases they are lazy and hard to work with. (male, 45-49 years)

Lack of clear communication from the management and emergent rumours make it even more difficult for contractual staff.

Uncertainty and continued lack of clear communication plays on people's minds. Rumour and conjecture are rife. Questions remain, such as: Are our contracts going to change when we consolidate with DCU? Are our conditions going to change? If so, precisely what conditions? (female, 55-59 years)

The high level of uncertainty in relation to their job status has a deep impact in the lives of staff employed on contracts

Because of the type of contract, I lack security - I never know until the last minute when I will have a job and thus what type of rental contract I can sign up for. So far I haven't been sick, but I'm sure that I will lose income when it happens and don't even dare to think how a pregnancy would affect my work situation. (female, 25-29 years)

Apart from the fear of losing one's income and the inability to plan and prepare for parenthood, the constant demand for mobility and relocation also constitutes a problem for some of staff affected by job insecurity in the academic environment:

I [am] highly qualified and a very experienced researcher and I know that the quality of my work is high. One of the biggest difficulties for me is continually being on fixed term contracts and having to move on from one job/university to another when my contracts runs out. This means that I have to start from scratch again to try and build up years in the hope that that I will eventually qualify for a contract of indefinite duration, but I never seem to get to that point. (female, 45-49 years)

Many of staff affected by the lack of job security feel that they have no control over their careers and find themselves in impossibility to plan ahead

I am entering the last year of my fixed term contract; this makes it very difficult to plan research and to target funding opportunities. In reality, I cannot afford to wait until the last minute to see if my contract will be renewed. If I cannot get some clarity on my position soon, I will have to start applying for other jobs after Christmas. I very much enjoy my job but after 5 years of contract work I would like some security. (female, 45-49 years)

Still for some this is preferable to working in the private sector

Despite the insecurity of tenure, I haven't tried to leave the university because I like my job and think it affords me a better work/life balance than I'd get in

the private sector. Job security and the lack of full control over my career would be my main concerns. (male, 40-44 years)

In addition to a lack of security, many contractual staff are, according to respondents, frequently stuck in low pay contracts although their workload is in some cases similar or potentially bigger than that of permanent staff.

Many researchers are stuck on fixed term contracts for many years on low pay, this is a major issues that needs to be tackled. (female, 45-49 years)

[...] I worked more than permanent full-time colleagues for a fraction of their pay. I was not entitled to sick leave. I did not have an office. I did not know how much work I was going to have from one term to the next. My colleagues did not know I exist (female, 35-39 years)

This does not take into account the amount of time spent searching for and applying for research jobs to ensure that I have continued employment when my contract ends. It is exhausting. (female, 45-49 years)

Management

Although the questionnaire did not include direct questions about staff views on either management or the trade union (discussed in the following section), almost half of the comments made are on this particular topic. The general feeling was that management and (to a lesser extent) the union are not attuned to the real problems faced by staff and are often acting to the disadvantage of staff.

Respondents stated that there is no perceived support and no help from management in combatting unfair promotions. Instead, the management is rather believed to perpetuate the existing system:

Complaints made at meetings and nothing done about it, no follow on at later meetings. (female, 50-54)

Were I to raise this, I have no doubt that my current head of school, backed by other senior management, would find mechanisms to prove that DCU was doing all in its power to ensure non-discriminatory practices were being followed. (male, 50-54 years)

Furthermore, in their view, management has little regard for staff excluding them from the consultation process on matter which are important to them, thus further highlighting the high degree of disconnect between management in DCU and staff.

I feel management ploughed ahead with the incorporation with little regard for the academic staff thoughts and needs. On the whole I am not enjoying work at this current juncture (female, 55-59 years)

Meetings are called to 'consult with staff', however it is clear that the decisions have already been taken and 'consulting' is taken to mean 'informing' (male, 45-49 years)

Communication around important changes taking place as part of incorporation are appalling, there is little or no consideration given to how this is effecting people. This is certainly causing a degree of stress and discontent among some staff. (male, 50-54)

The consultations which take place at the departmental level are not seen by respondents to be having a real impact on the top-level decisions.

Consulted about change: Always within the department but dreadful outside of that i.e. big organisational changes. (female, 45-49 years)

Lack of transparency in relation to key decisions was also identified by staff as a key problem. In particular, one respondent mentioned that there is no openness or transparency about how funds coming into the Faculty/School are being allocated or re/distributed (male, 60-64 years).

Apart from the lack of communication and consultation between management and staff, one respondent also signalled the condescending behaviour of some of the HR staff:

I find the HR personnel and processes arcane. As an illustration the Director of HR has turned up for a meeting 45 mins late with only a passing apology - and this is the model for success, professional behaviour and respect at work! It is all very sad. (male, 45-49 years)

In the view of several respondents the philosophy under which DCU is currently managed and all policies regarding workloads, pay and promotion, are not beneficial for staff

There is a thin veil of transparency at play particularly in the [name of Faculty]. Decisions are made in isolation by senior management with little regard to the consequences. The introduction on the [name of Faculty] workload model has actually taken all good will by staff away. People are doing elements of work which reward deeds with 'points', which values some activities higher than others. The points driven model goes against all performance management practices and disincentivises tasks that are student centred. The metrics used in the WL model in [the faculty name] is designed with a particular School in mind and takes into consideration no other cultures, norms and values of others and other schools. (male, 45-49 years)

I think that management have one philosophy of work and of the purposes of education and that this is being imposed on everyone. It is a philosophy based on utilitarian principles and the carrot being offered to staff is the possibility of titles and career advancement. [...] I'm also concerned that we are being increasingly removed from real contact with students (the notion of 'centrality of the student' is frankly a joke). I'm finding students crying on corridors, because they are so stressed. The amount of information they are expected to digest electronically is unsustainable. This must be addressed. We've now been told we can't contact students by phone, thus removing human contact even further. We teach them in groups of 400 thus removing any real possibility of getting to know them or their concerns. I even heard a leading management figure say that there will be no 'kudos' for teaching in the years ahead! Only publications will get you noticed in the new DCU. This ideology needs particular attention. I would call the culture that is being created a 'culture of disconnection': a culture of people disconnected from their own bodies; a culture of people disconnected from one another; a culture of the survival of the fittest where anyone who genuinely cares about their students will have to leave (female, 40-44 years)

Policies regarding pay also came under the scrutiny. Several respondents felt that management do not fairly reward staff and attempt to use technicalities in order to keep them from receiving a just retribution for their work level.

The issue of acting up in administrative roles needs addressing urgently. Acting up is not being used appropriately by the University. After a highly competitive interview process I am currently on an acting allowance with no opportunity for increments. If the University introduced 'acting senior lecture' roles there would be a huge backlash but there seems to be no urgency in addressing this for admin and support staff. (female, 35-39 years)

Use of ECF as an excuse for failing to seek better grades/additional duties/acting up allowances for staff who are going far beyond their pay grade is a serious issue. Out of hours is a key issue for some areas [...] work is expected to be performed out of hours with no policy or reward other than TIL which just cripples the department as staff then take time off at other times. (male, 35-39 years)

Some of the challenges faced by contractual staff have already been mentioned in the previous section which discussed "Job security". However, according to many respondents, top-management in DCU are frequently taking advantage of contractual staff by delaying the issuing of their contracts and their payments and also by failing to provide any support for them.

I'm on my fifth fixed term contract, yet my terms and conditions are the same. The college could be more proactive in converting staff to permanent positions. (male, 45-49 years)

HR in DCU is terrible: people work without contracts and don't get paid on time. This seems to be accepted by all departments. Week 3 of teaching and I have no contract (as usual) so I won't get paid for the work I have done. (female, 30-34 years)

The issuing of part time contracts by DCU is nothing short of illegal. It's an EAT matter waiting to happen and will be costly when it does. (female, under 25 years)

Those who work part-time in [name of the institution] are not very well supported. General lack of resources, lack of suitable spaces to work, limited opportunities to share experiences, to feel part of a community etc. As a part-time lecturer, you can have the responsibility of teaching 300+ students but no place to meet on an individual basis if needs be, no connection with the inside workings of [name of the institution] to know where to direct students to.. (NA, 35-39 years)

Moreover, according to comments made by staff, management are keen to take advantage of these contract workers while providing nothing in exchange:

The University does not seem to acknowledge the value of contract researchers beyond the overheads they bring in and the use of their publication and grant successes to further University PR. (male, 35-39 years)

Furthermore, one respondent felt that staff who are not on permanent contracts frequently face lack of communication and feedback, lack of opportunities for career development, conference funding, research money; lack of eligibility to apply for funding, lack of payment for preparation and not only contact hours (female, 30-34 years). The same respondent further added that

[...] if you carry on paying attention to permanent staff only, you carry out ignoring a growingly precarious labour force that actually runs the university, and without which even issues of work-life balance for salaried academics, for whose benefits you seem concerned, would need to be thought through (female, 30-34 years)

Several staff members pointed to the lack of systems in place for replacing staff who are on sick leave or those who retire.

I am expected to deal with a high volume of interruptions, as well as complete detail oriented tasks. The person who shares the office with me has been out sick since April, and no replacement has been hired to cover, though she is not expected to be back until November/December. As a result, I am required to deal with additional queries and tasks in areas that I am absolutely unfamiliar and don't feel qualified for. I constantly feel that I don't know what I'm doing. (female, 30-34 years)

[...] there have been a number of retirements and no new hires in our department, leading to a huge increase in our workload, which impacts upon our ability to do research. (female, 35-39 years)

Last, but not least, several comments were also made in relation to existing facilities in DCU, in particular the lack of car parking spaces during the term (male, 30-34 years) and the problematic access to printing (female, 45-49 years; male, 40-44 years).

Unions

There were also a few respondents arguing that the union provides very little support for staff and very little communication

[...] there was little support by Unions for All Hallows Staff who got text messages about their work place closing down, despite lifelong Union membership (female, 55-59 years)

Feel supported least of all by the union that is supposed to represent me- SIPTU focus only on lower ranked employees and consistently sacrifice "higher earners" to ensure benefits particularly to non-academic grades. SIPTU do not understand the academic role particularly in research intensive fields. In negotiating salary in Haddington Rd. etc. there is no recognition by SIPTU of the shorter earning life span of academics due to length of time in education and training or the fact that an academic will rarely have earned salary or have pension accrued before age 30 or the intensive demands of the role. We have lost many academics in our school because of huge decreases in take home pay due to cuts and pension levy with no improvements in sight (NA, 45-49 years)

I find it ironic and disappointing that SIPTU would send out this survey regarding work when they agreed to increase our hours of work without consultation in the Haddington Rd agreement. When are we going to see a reversal of these measures? I don't think people in SIPTU fully realise that workers are becoming increasingly frustrated with the organisation's constant series of concessions to the government. You have become detached from reality and that's a dangerous place for you to be. SIPTU used to stand up for workers' rights but now it appears to be simply the new HR department for the government! (male, 50-54 years)



DCU Section Committee

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