**Executive Summary**

**University of Huddersfield**

**Quality of Working Life survey (May, 2013)**

**What is Quality of Working Life?**

Quality of Working Life (QoWL) is ***a measure of how good your work is for you***.

Quality of Working Life is more than just job satisfaction or work happiness, but the widest context in which an employee would evaluate their job.

**The QoWL Survey and Data Set**

The QoWL survey tool encompasses three important questionnaires:

1. The **QoWL Core scale**, which looks at the six core factors associated with Quality of Working Life, such as job satisfaction, work-life balance, and working conditions.
2. The **QoWL Workplace Outcome** scale, which provides data related to a variety of specific outcomes related to Quality of Working Life such as intention to stay, organisational communication, and pride in the organisation.
3. The **HSE Work-related stress scale**, which provides feedback on the stressor categories included in HSE’s Management Standards, such as demands, management support, and relationships.

In addition, in response to an open question, approximately 50% of respondents took the opportunity to suggest ways the University could improve Quality of Working Life for staff.

**The overall response rate was 50%.** 901 staff responded (62 on paper) out of 1773. Some responses were discarded due to less than half the questions being answered, giving a valid response rate of approximately 47%.

This report provides an initial summary and broad overview of the results found.

## Benchmarks Used

Two benchmarks were used in the preparation of this report. A university-sector QoWL benchmark was used for both the QoWL Core and QoWL Workplace Outcome Scales and HSE’s recently updated working population benchmark was used for the HSE Stress Scale.

The QoWL Quality of Working Life survey was distributed to staff at the University of Huddersfield during April 2013. The survey incorporated the QoWL Quality of Working Life and Workplace Well-being Outcome Scales and the Health and Safety Executive’s (HSE) Work-Related Stress scale. The key findings from the survey appear below.

**QoWL Core scale**

The table below compares summary scores for the current, 2013 survey (N=833) with the survey from 2011 (N = 890) and 2009 (N=972) and the QoWL University Benchmark sample which is derived from a sample of 5963 employees from across the UK University sector.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Descriptive Statistics for WRQoL Subscales and Overall question** | **2009****Survey****%Agree** | **2011****Survey****%Agree** | **2013****Survey****%Agree** | **QoWL BMARK****%Agree** |
| **General Well Being (GWB)** How much you agree you feel generally content with life as a whole. | 61 | 58 | **57** | 55 |
| **Home-Work Interface (HWI)**How far you agree that the organisation understands and tries to help you with pressures outside of work. | 63 | 64 | **64** | 58 |
| **Job Career Satisfaction (JCS)**How far you agree that you are generally happy with your ability to do your work. | 64 | 60 | **60** | 56 |
| **Control at Work (CAW)** How far you agree you feel you are involved in decisions that affect you at work. | 57 | 57 | **58** | 54 |
| **Working Conditions (WCS)**The extent you agree that you are happy with conditions in which you work | 72 | 75 | **74** | 66 |
| **Stress at Work (SAW)\***How far you feel agree you experience stress at work. | 41 | 40 | **42** | 45 |
| **Overall Quality of Working Life (Q65)**I am satisfied with the overall quality of my working life. | 69 | 65 | **66** | 60 |

Notes: %Agree: The percentage of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed to this factor.

Green at least 5% higher satisfaction than the QoWL Benchmark value. Red at least 5% lower satisfaction than the QoWL Benchmark value.

\*Negatively phrased factor, where higher agreement indicates less quality of working life.

**Comment (WRQoL factors, all staff):**

1. University of Huddersfield employees’ indicated higher QoWL than the university benchmark sample for all six factors.
2. 66% of University of Huddersfield employees agree that they have a good QoWL.
3. Employees report lower levels of Stress at Work compared to benchmark data, although this has increased slightly since 2011.
4. University of Huddersfield employees report substantially greater levels of satisfaction with Working Conditions than benchmark sample.
5. Other factor scores are close to those found in 2011.
6. Overall, the University of Huddersfield employees continue to reflect the higher QoWL than the university benchmark sample indicated in 2009 and 2011.

For the 2013 survey, additional WRQoL analyses were carried out to look at: differences between general staff categories; gender differences within staff categories; differences between Non-Academic departments, and; differences between Academic Schools (including staff categories). The main findings from these analyses can be found below.

**Staff Analysis: General staff categories**

1. Results for Academic Staff indicated lower QoWL than the university benchmark sample for all six factors.
2. Academic staff reported much higher Stress at Work than both Researchers and Support Staff with 63% of Academics agreeing they experienced stress, compared to 28% of Researchers and 30% of Support Staff.
3. Stress at Work scores for Academic Staff were also much higher than the benchmark (42%) while those for Researchers and Support Staff were much lower.
4. The differences found between Academic Staff and the other staff categories were higher for Stress at Work than those found for other factors.
5. The highest scores for General Well-Being were found among Support Staff, these being higher than the benchmark sample.
6. Academic Staff report much lower satisfaction with the Home-Work Interface than the benchmark, while both Researchers and Support Staff staff reported higher satisfaction.
7. Satisfaction with Working Conditions was lowest among Academic Staff with 61% agreeing they are happy with their conditions compared to 78% of researchers and 80% of Support Staff.
8. The scores for Control at work were in line with the benchmark for both Researchers and Support Staff, while Academic Staff reported lower Control at Work.

**Staff-gender analysis**

This analysis looked at gender differences within staff categories. Academic and Research groups were combined for this analysis. Some interesting findings emerged:

1. Generally, female staff reported higher QoWL than male staff. This pattern was true for most WRQoL factors and across both staff categories analysed (Academic/Research and Support Staff).
2. The highest gender differences were to be found in Job Career Satisfaction and satisfaction with Working Conditions.

There were some exceptions to the pattern of higher reported QoWL in female staff:

1. No gender difference was found for Control at Work when considering scores for all staff. However, staff categories revealed different patterns in the staff categories with higher control reported by male Support Staff and the opposite pattern (lower control) reported by male Academic/Research staff.
2. For the Stress at Work factor, no gender difference was found in scores for either Academic/Research or Support Staff staff categories.

**Staff Analyses: Non-Academic departments and Academic Schools**

1. In general, higher QoWL was found across Non-Academic departments, with very high scores in several departments.
2. The picture across the Academic Schools was much more mixed with higher QoWL in some Schools and much lower QoWL in others.
3. The Schools with the lowest QoWL tended to be those with the greatest difference in scores between Academic/Research and Support Staff.
4. For 2 of the lower-scoring Schools, Academic/Research staff reported low QoWL across all WRQoL factors. In a third, Academic/Research staff reported low QoWL across 5 out of 6 WRQoL factors.

**QoWL Workplace Outcome scale**

This scale includes questions related to specific well-being outcomes. In line with previous surveys, the 2013 results generally show a positive picture of workplace well-being across the University. Some results and changes from 2011 are worth noting however:

1. Job security has increased substantially in 2013 with 55% of staff agreeing that their job was secure. This represents a major recovery from a low point in 2011 when only 26% felt their job was secure.
2. Pride in the organisation increased again in 2013 with 82% agreement, much higher than the benchmark for the sector. 81% of staff agreed that they would recommend their organisation as a good one to work. These are positive findings, indicative of high levels of employee engagement.
3. Satisfaction with organisational communication remains much higher than the benchmark.
4. Two health-related outcomes showed negative changes in 2013 (anxiety and sleep), which may be related to stress issues found in Academics and within certain Schools. Although the scores were close to the benchmark, the negative trend in these health outcomes is worth noting.

**HSE Management Standards Analysis**

1. On the whole, survey results have shown little change through 2009, 2011 and 2013. Scores are mainly similar to the QoWL University benchmark with strengths in the University around clarity of roles and the management of change.
2. However, care should be taken with interpreting these results given the differences found between staff groups and within some of the Schools (see above).

**Open questions**

Approximately 50% of respondents (valid responses) took the opportunity to provide comments in response to the open question: “How could the quality of working life be improved in your University?”

These 2013 survey responses yielded some interesting results and some changes from 2011:

1. 10% of respondents took the opportunity to praise the University as a great place to work. This represents a slight drop from 11% in 2011, but remains noteworthy and a very high figure. It is unusual to get so many positive comments.
2. There was a marked increase in comments about a clash between teaching and research prioritisation, up to 5.8% from 1.9% in 2011.
3. There were fewer comments than in 2011 about the need to improve management skills, although at 14% this remains an important issue for many staff.
4. Comments around the need for better career development opportunities increased to 8.6% from 3.6% in 2011.
5. Concerns about accommodation/facilities issues increased to 14.1%, up from 8.6% in 2011.
6. Comments related to stress increased in 2013, with 14.4% making comments about demands and staff shortages and 7.4% highlighting admin issues.
7. Comments related to communication and consultation dropped to 11.7% from 16.2% in 2011.

**Conclusions**

The 2013 survey again indicated that the University of Huddersfield has an excellent quality of working life, with high engagement and low stress for most staff.

However, this survey also highlighted lower QoWL and higher stress in Academic Staff, and especially so within certain Schools, where there were very large differences found between Academic/Research and Support Staff.

This may warrant further investigation internally to explore why these disparities in staff experience are occurring and how the quality of working life can be improved for these groups.

**Alan Bradshaw, Business Psychologist, June 2013**