

UCU Occupational Stress Survey 2023 Preliminary Findings



Overall themes

Employees are feeling overworked and stressed.

- 60% of respondents had their workload increase in the past year
- 44% reported it had greatly increased

This is a result of:

- Increasing expectations, particularly administrative and service
- Not enough employees to cover the work – everyone is overstretched
- Feelings of uncertainty (changing goal posts, unrealized plans)



Faculty still experience unacceptable levels of stress

Figure 1: How would you characterise your general or average level of stress?

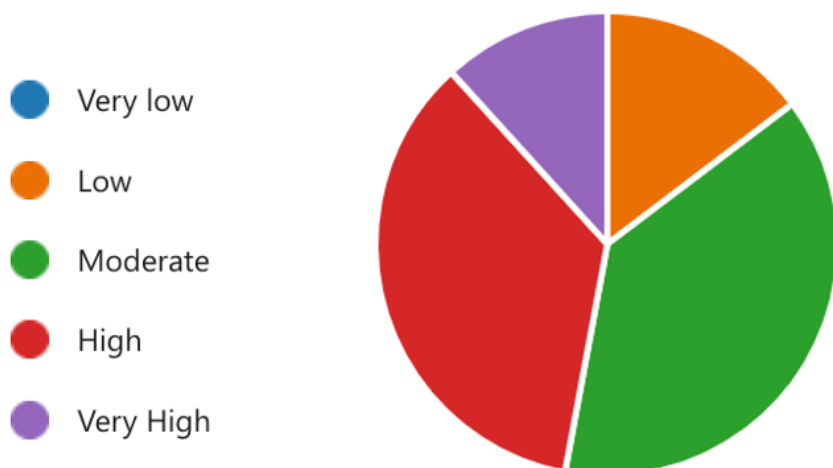
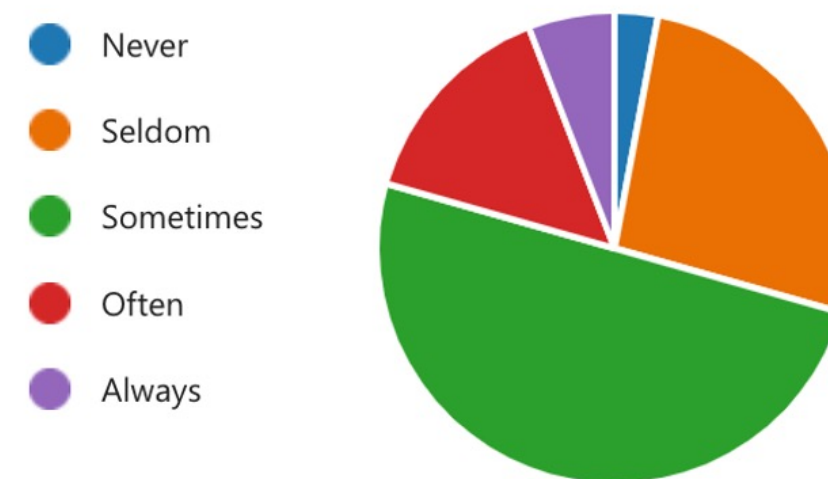


Figure 1b. Do you experience levels of stress that you find unacceptable?



Work-Related Stress



Item scores range from 1-5, higher scores relate to greater experience of each area of work-related stress

Demands of work are relatively high, showing a slight increase from 2021(26.73 to 29.20), however, organizational support at line management level remains good

Faculty remain reasonably autonomous in their work and have clarity over their role and the changes at Richmond (albeit slight increase from 7.95 to 8.32).

Nevertheless, the quantitative findings do not fully explain the unacceptable levels of stress experienced by faculty

Table 1: Six areas of work design (mean scores and reliability analysis)

Work design area	Number of items	Cronbach's Alpha	Total mean scale score	SD
Demands	8	0.93	29.20	8.73
Control	6	0.90	20.52	5.11
Support (HoDs)	5	0.85	18.28	3.31
Relationships	4	0.92	5.90	2.73
Role	5	0.88	18.60	3.61
Change	3	0.70	8.32	2.08

Note: Each domain scale was shown to be reliable with Cronbach's alpha scores greater than .7

Workload and Demands at Work

People are feeling the demands of work:

- Issue of constant changes with new expectations and demands (timetables, KPOs, etc)
- poor planning with things needed last minute

Experiences of changes in workload:

- Increase in service work major reason for experiences of increased workload
- last minute information/work requests
- increase in class sizes

At least a third don't feel they can do their job within the contracted hours, and indicate they need to work on the weekends and during annual leave

Workload and Demands at Work

Faculty report:

“More reports, moderation, meetings, and constantly changing expectations”

“...although the number of students has gone down the amount of admin is constantly rising, we're told we're teaching intensive but in many respects that is what I have the least time to focus on”

■ Never
 ■ Seldom
 ■ Sometimes
 ■ Often
 ■ Always

Different groups at work demand things from me that are hard to combine

I have unachievable deadlines

I have to work very intensively

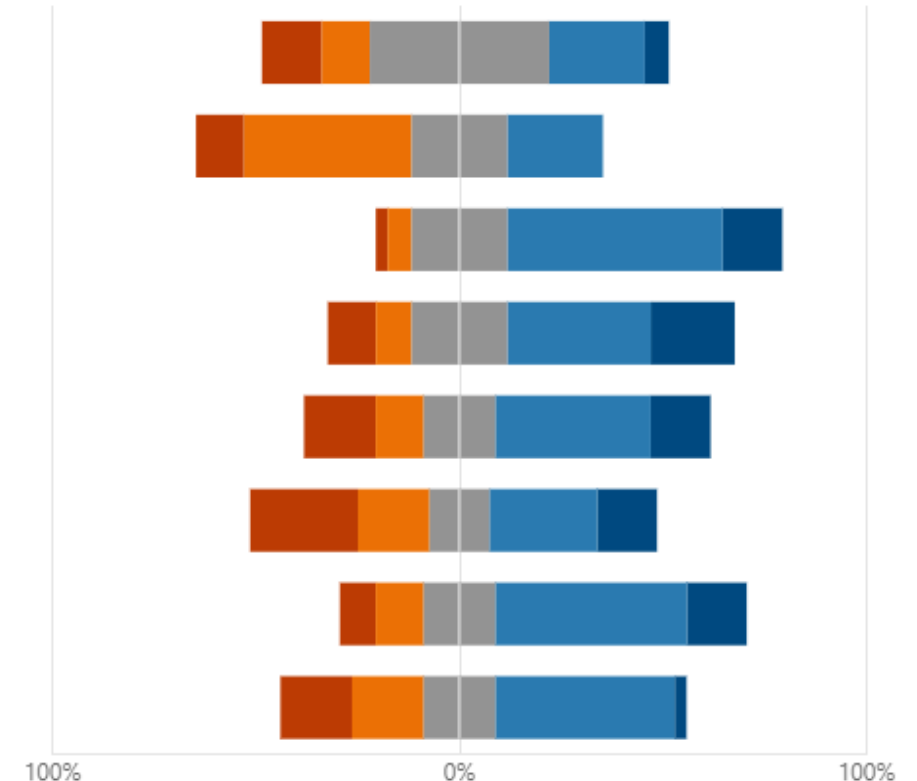
I have to neglect some tasks because I have too much to do

I am unable to take sufficient breaks

I am pressured to work long hours

I have to work very fast

I have unrealistic time pressures



Workload model is affecting stress and feelings of self-worth

- **75% disagreed** that "*The workload points model captures my actual workload very well as it incorporates all aspects of my role, and represents all I do.*"
- This perception can be further defined according to the three components (see table 2)
- **Half of respondents exceeded points** and half were in the expected range of the model.
- Workload model-related self-worth ranged from a low of 15 to a high of 35 (highest possible is 50), which indicates the model undermines self-worth.

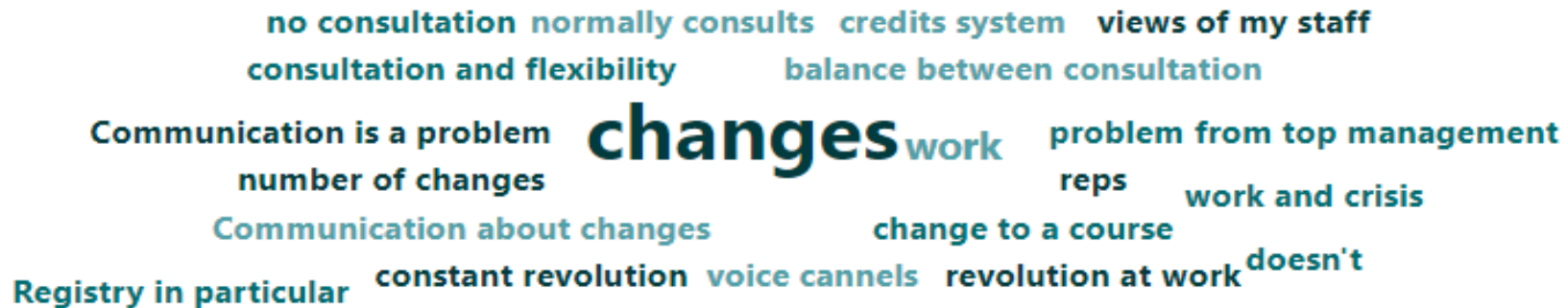
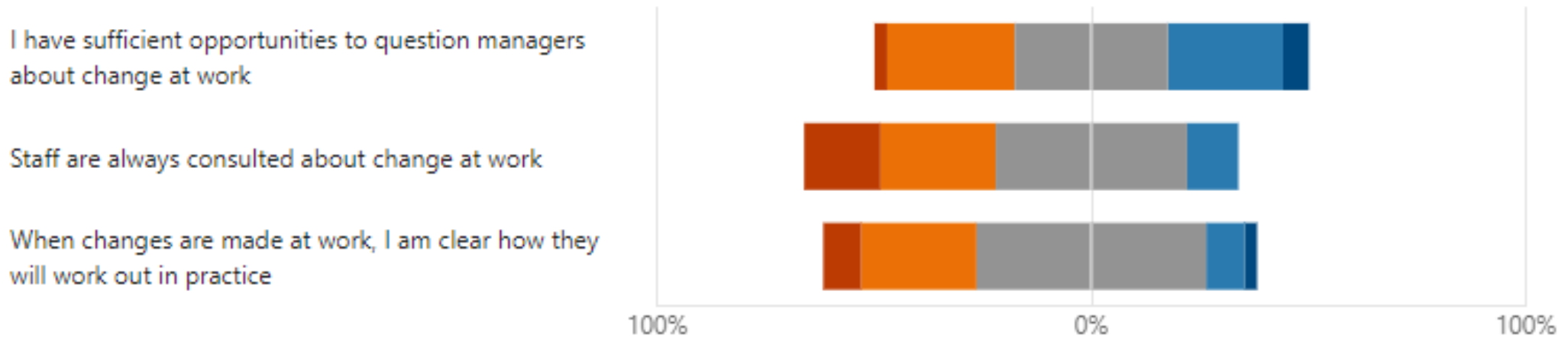
Table 2: Faculty rating of the appropriateness of the workload model for each component; Teaching, Service and RPE

	Generous	Fair	Unfair	Unsure
Teaching	0%	12.5%	62.5%	25%
Service	0%	50%	37.5%	12.5%
RPE	0%	37.5%	62.5%	0%

Faculty are negatively experiencing change at work



■ Never
 ■ Seldom
 ■ Sometimes
 ■ Often
 ■ Always



Silence doesn't mean everything is okay.

- People aren't reporting sickness
- People aren't taking annual leave

Figure 3: Level of reporting of working when sick

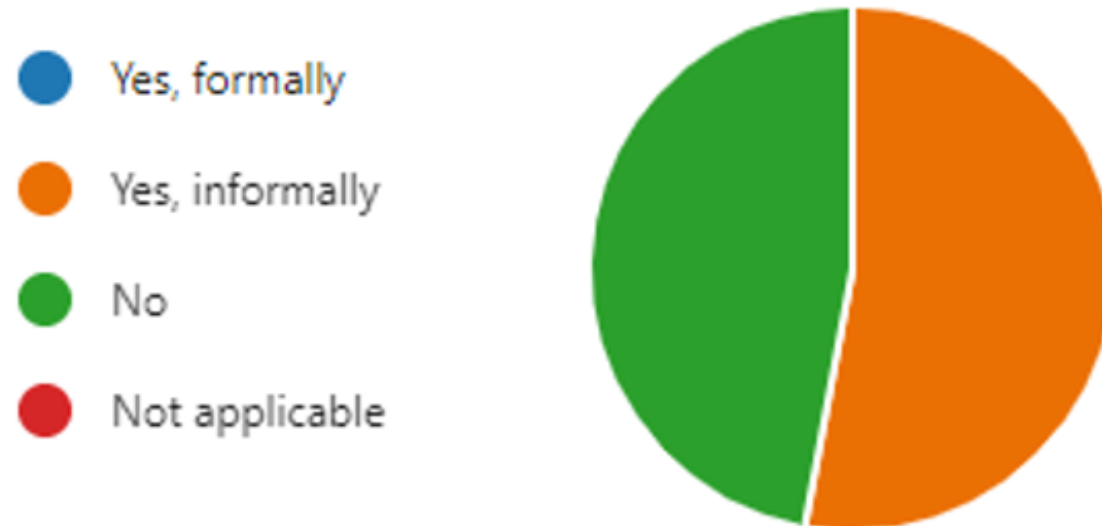
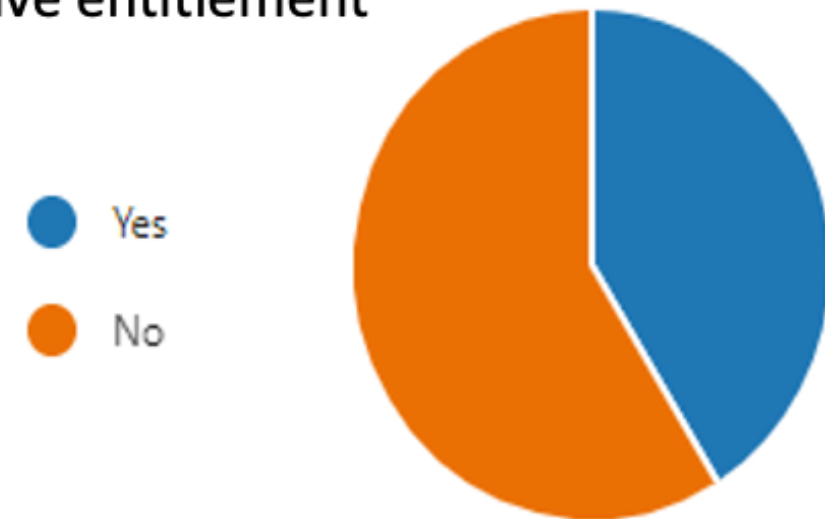


Figure 3b: People not taking all their annual leave entitlement



Working Space

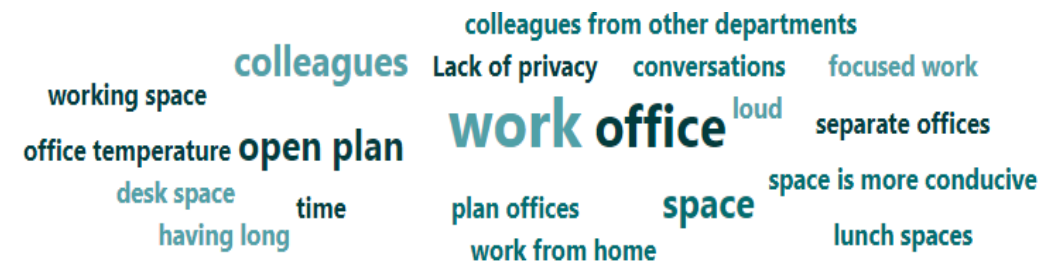
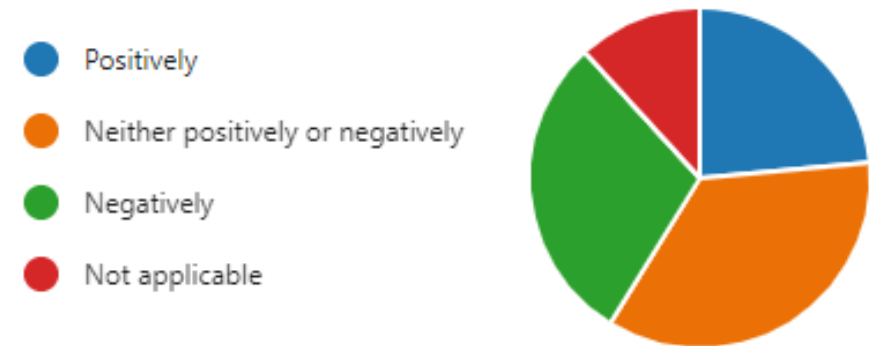
Inability to concentrate

- Loud
- Lack of Privacy

But better able to communicate/connect

“I enjoy teaching in the spaces, and the office is great for team building. However, meeting students in person is much more difficult. I also cannot do any work that requires concentration when on campus.”

Figure 4: How open-plan office space has impacted work-related stress



Comparison with 2021 Survey



Levels of unacceptable stress continue:

In 2023, 28% of respondents experienced **unacceptable levels of stress “often or always”**. However, 96% experience **unacceptable levels of stress**, with almost half experiencing it “sometimes”.

In 2021 the majority of faculty questioned (92.5%) experience unacceptable levels of stress, with 40% of respondents experiencing unacceptable levels of stress “often or always”.

Comparison with 2021 Survey



Faculty continue to work beyond their contracts:

- In 2023 84% of respondents worked beyond their contractual hours exceeding 35 hours per week, almost a third working 50+ hours.
 - *This represents a slight increase in reported hours worked overall from 2021.*

Comparison with 2021 Survey



Faculty are not achieving a work-life balance:

- When asked to rate their work-life balance (WLB) on a 1-9 scale (where *1 = My work and home lives are completely separate, to 9 = There is no separation between my work and home lives*) in 2021 **50%** of faculty rated between “**7-9**”, in **2023 this figure was 52%**.
- When asked for their ideal WLB rating, **88% of participants in 2023** rated between “**1-5**” as their ideal (in contrast to their experienced WLB).

Comparison with 2021 Survey



Faculty continue to not take their entitled leave:

- *In 2021 48% stated they were in work when sick, and 63% did not take all of their annual leave entitlement. In 2023 not much has changed with **50% working when sick and 59% not taking all their annual leave.***

Recommendations

- We need to hire more employees to achieve a reasonable workload. For faculty, this should focus on moving adjunct faculty to fractional and full-time positions
- More flexible work options for employees to enable a work-life balance
- Improved communication from the senior management ('you've said, we've done' as a model??) and meaningful consultation
- Improved training and information for new employees
 - "The university should have a much more structure approach to training new staff on systems and processes. There should be a file of documents available which addresses Blackboard, Self-Service and other processes related to setting up classes, recording results etc etc."