

Report on Physics Wellbeing Survey, November 2020

Summary: A survey of Physics staff and PhD/Masters students was conducted online for one week 20-27 May 2020. We repeated the same survey for one week in 22-30 October. The intention was to capture a snapshot of wellbeing with the teaching term underway and as we operate with some return to normality, comparing back to May when far more restrictions were in place.

All groups of staff and students again engaged although the number of responses was overall lower, with the largest number of responses from the PhD/Masters students. All responses were anonymous unless individuals chose to give their name.

In this survey we see that a large number of respondents continue to report an impact on mental wellbeing with a shift from the concerns about loss of routine and social interaction early in the summer to significant worries about face to face teaching and a feel of losing touch with colleagues.

Survey analysis:

In October we had 72 responses, broken down here by staff/student group and gender:

Staff or student group	No. of responses by gender				Total
	Female	Male	Other	Prefer not to say	
Academic	4	12	0	2	18
Administrative	7	1	0	0	8
PhD/ Masters student	13	12	3	0	28
Prefer not to say	0	0	0	0	0
Research	3	9	0	1	13
Technical	0	5	0	0	5
Total	27	39	3	3	72

Compared to 104 responses in May for reference:

Staff or student group	No. of responses by gender				Total
	Female	Male	Other	Prefer not to say	
Academic	7	24	0	0	31
Administrative	7	2	0	0	9
PhD/ Masters student	10	18	2	2	32
Prefer not to say	3	0	0	0	3
Research	6	15	0	1	22
Technical	0	7	0	0	7
Total	33	66	2	3	104

Response to Q3: **Think about the changes in working practice that you have experienced since the last survey in May and how you feel now.**

Please state one change that you feel has had a positive impact on your mental wellbeing and one change that has had a negative impact on your mental wellbeing.

The most common answers are **highlighted**, comparing the two surveys.

Change that has had a positive impact (October)	Change that has had a positive impact (May)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Routines have become better established • Return to labs, seeing people, collecting data • Able to work in the office • Able to work from home • More interaction with colleagues • Better balance of workloads • Childcare available/schools open • Less stressful commute • Returning to f2f teaching • Online meetings and seminars working better • Able to attend conferences without travelling • Able to exercise in daylight • None 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No commute • No school run • More time to think • More time with family • More time outside • More flexibility to do hobbies, sport and other activities around working • Able to make more time for exercise • Less competitive than in the office • More involvement in home schooling/learning • More relaxed environment with supervisor/ line manager • More frequent structured contact with supervisor/ line manager • Improved working environment (in particular more natural light) • Able to take a proper lunch break • Opportunity to learn new ways of working and learning • None

Change that has had a negative impact (October)	Change that has had a negative impact (May)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stress and uncertainty caused by teaching-workload and concerns about f2f teaching. • Lack of social interaction • Feeling isolated • Lack of focus • Losing touch with colleagues • Anxiety about coming to campus • Technical issues with computers and ITS • Poor communication due to prolonged remote working • Parking charges • Restrictions still in place around childcare • Lack of international travel • Lack of sports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No separation between home and work • Missing social interaction • Balancing work and caring responsibilities, in particular child care • Uncertainty about the future, including job prospects • Working hours around other commitments mean early/late working • Loss of daily structure • Not being able to implement new ideas • Worrying about colleagues/ students • Lack of face to face meetings • Lack of informal interactions

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stressful to receive emails at all hours/days because of different working patterns are being adopted • No access to labs, unable to implement new research ideas • Missing family and friends • Not able to travel • Less work related stimulus • Poor desk/PC set up • More time sat in front of computer screen • Lack of motivation • Feeling under pressure to be productive all the time. • More frequent structured contact with supervisor/ line manager • Improved working environment (in particular more natural light) • Able to take a proper lunch break • Opportunity to learn new ways of working and learning • None
--	--

Response to Q4: **Have you been experiencing the following more or less than usual since we last ran the survey?**

OCTOBER 2020	No. of hits	% of total respondents	Academic	Admin	PhDs	Research	Tech
A little or a lot more stress than usual	53	74%	89%	63%	75%	62%	60%
A little or a lot more anxiety than usual	62	86%	72%	25%	68%	62%	80%
A little or a lot more low mood than usual	53	74%	67%	13%	50%	46%	80%
A little or a lot more sleep problems	45	63%	61%	25%	61%	46%	100%

Reponses where over 50% of a group answered with “a little more” or “a lot more” are highlighted.

Feedback from May here for comparison:

MAY 2020	No. of hits	% of total respondents	Academic	Admin	PhDs	Research	Tech
A little or a lot more stress than usual	63	61%	68%	56%	69%	50%	57%
A little or a lot more anxiety than usual	62	60%	55%	67%	72%	45%	86%
A little or a lot more low mood than usual	53	51%	32%	56%	72%	55%	43%
A little or a lot more sleep problems	45	43%	16%	56%	69%	36%	71%

Response to Q4a: **4a. If you have answered “a little more than usual” or “much more than usual” above, how much do you agree that any of the following changes in your working practice are contributing to you experiencing any increased anxiety, stress, low mood or sleep problems?**

(note the form did not stop anyone from answering this question even if they had not answered “a little more than usual” or “a lot more than usual” to any part of Q4)

OCTOBER 2020	No. of hits	% of total respondents	Academic	Admin	PhDs	Research	Tech
Change in workload is a contributing factor	49	68%	89%	75%	64%	46%	60%
Balancing work with homeschooling/caring responsibilities	20	28%	56%	13%	18%	15%	40%
Feeling isolated/ lack of social contact with colleagues	47	65%	39%	63%	68%	62%	40%
Worries about job security	25	35%	44%	50%	21%	30%	60%
Concerns about other team members/ colleagues	29	40%	72%	25%	36%	15%	40%
Lack of daily structure	33	46%	17%	25%	68%	38%	60%
Technological/administrative issues	30	42%	56%	50%	43%	23%	20%
Some other reason	15	21%	17%	13%	25%	15%	40%

Feedback from May here for reference:

MAY 2020	No. of hits	% of total respondents	Academic	Admin	PhDs	Research	Tech
Change in workload is a contributing factor	46	44%	55%	67%	34%	32%	71%
Balancing work with homeschooling/caring responsibilities	37	36%	42%	56%	22%	36%	57%
Feeling isolated/ lack of social contact with colleagues	68	65%	71%	67%	84%	36%	71%
Worries about job security	45	43%	48%	56%	34%	50%	43%
Concerns about other team members/ colleagues	49	47%	58%	56%	53%	27%	43%
Lack of daily structure	52	50%	32%	67%	75%	32%	71%
Technological/administrative issues	36	35%	45%	44%	34%	18%	43%
Some other reason	24	23%	13%	33%	34%	18%	29%

Response to Q5: Have you contacted the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) or Wellbeing Services whilst the restrictions have been in place?

Very small numbers reported contacting wellbeing services or EAP with most rating the services as good.

Response to Q6: Do you have any other comments about changes in your working practice?

Comments were on the whole negative and included significant stresses around delivery of face to face teaching, missing 'normal' working life and work/social interactions, loss of sense of belonging to a team, lack of guidance from central university on teaching and teaching software, difficulties of training new students and staff and specific to PhD students were concerns about finances, extensions and concerns about not being able to collect data.

Positives mentioned include enjoying working from home and balancing caring responsibilities, and appreciating the efforts of the department over the summer.