

# MATHEMATICAL INSTITUTE

## 2023 University Staff Experience Survey

### 1. Summary

The University runs a Staff Experience Survey every two years to gather an insight from staff about working at the University. The University Staff Experience Survey was delivered by People Insight and was open to all University employees from 25 April until 19 May 2023. At a departmental level it is a key source of information for understanding what we do well, to gauge progress or regress over the years to then assess whether the priorities set out within the Strategic Plan are aiming to make the right changes, and to plan next steps to address issues identified. This report identifies the overarching themes that emerged from responses, as well as more detailed analysis of academic faculty, early career researchers and professional services staff groups, and EDI themes.

### 2. Action required of the Committee

The Committee is invited to:

- a) consider the overarching themes that emerged from responses, as set out in section 3.4;
- b) discuss and agree the next steps set out in section 4; and
- c) note the more detailed analysis of responses from each staff group and, in particular, the overarching ED&I Themes highlighted in section 4 of Appendix A

### 3. Presentation of Results

3.1 This report presents a summary of results for the Mathematical Institute (i.e. everyone in the department who participated in the survey) with total sample size of 271 and a respondent count of **136** the department achieved a **50%** response rate and overcomes any non-response bias. This means the department has a good set of results to help inform action planning overall.

3.2 Of the 136 respondents the gender profiles were 43F/87M/6O, across 60 academic faculty, 37 Early Career Researchers (ECRs) and 39 Professional Services Staff (PSS). However, it should be noted that sample sizes for certain demographics were low (in particular, female faculty and BME staff) and follow-up work may be necessary to better inform future work and changes (e.g. via qualitative data gathering from these groups).

3.3 The survey was delivered by an external company, People Insight, and delivers a focused 'Engagement Score'. The key drivers of engagement in this survey include: having opportunities for career development; the usefulness of the department's induction; career development and opportunities available to staff; relationships within the department; feeling included in the department's social/networking activities; and agreeing that health and wellbeing is adequately supported. Overall the Mathematical Institute's engagement score is 79% (+9 compared to the rest of MPLS, and +8 compared to the rest of the University) but this score is down from 89% in 2021 – with the greatest reduction in satisfaction relating to pay & benefits (-18 since 2021).

3.4 The following overarching themes emerged across each of the three staff groups:

- 😊 Relationships are a key theme driving engagement within the department. There are good collegial relationships within the department with an overall response favourability of 81% across all staff groups, an improvement from 76% in 2021. 71% of staff feel included in the department's social/networking activities, this is up from 59% in 2021 and is also higher than the MPLS and University averages.
- 😊 Communication within the department is felt to be working well, with 75% agreeing that it is open and effective (+14 compared to MPLS and the rest of the university).
- 😊 Leadership scored favourably achieving 79% satisfaction overall, +9 compared to the rest of MPLS and the University. Staff agree the department is committed to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion, that individual differences are respected, and that clear expectations of behaviour are set.
- 😊 Staff across all three groups are offered an induction at the start of their current post and the satisfaction with the departmental provision is high at 83% across all staff groups, a score slightly above both divisional and university averages. There is an indication that staff find the induction offered by the University to be less relevant, with a 45% satisfaction rate.
- 😊 Concerns around how bullying and harassment reports were handled is satisfactory (86%), and staff are mostly confident about the seriousness with which such complaints will be dealt with within the department (84%). It is also noteworthy that a high number of staff (96%) are aware of the harassment policy and procedures that exist within the University, up from 89% in 2021.
- 😊 Career development records an overall 62% satisfaction among all staff groups, with 68% feeling there are opportunities to develop and grow within the department. Scores in this theme have declined from 2021, yet generally remain above the divisional and University averages. Only 56% of staff feel comfortable discussing training and development needs with their line manager, even lower among faculty with a 37% score. Satisfaction with regards to career development is generally lower among Faculty compared to PSS and ECRs, and of the 3 staff groups ECRs feel the most satisfied with the opportunities available to develop and grow.
- 😊 Overall, decision-making processes are considered somewhat clear and transparent with 53% agreeing (+11 compared to elsewhere), although the department falls in line with the rest of the University in terms of work allocation being fair and transparent with just 40% agreeing to this statement.
- 😞 There are general concerns around workload volume and excessive hours which is affecting work-life balance, with an overall the satisfaction score of 58%, similar to 2021 (54%). Just 36% of staff feel they can meet the requirements of their job without regularly working excessive hours (-12 against the university and -16 against MPLS). Faculty feel the most overwhelmed with workload, with 23% feeling satisfied with their work/life balance and only 13% feeling they are not required to regularly work excessive hours – both scores are significantly below the divisional and University averages for 2023. Faculty perceptions about workload remain similar to the 2021 survey.
- 😞 There is general dissatisfaction with pay & benefits among all staff groups. Satisfaction dipped to 37% in 2023, from 55% in 2021. It is important to note that much of the benefit package is within University control.

#### **4. Next steps**

- 4.1 A 'belief in action' question has been included in the 2023 survey for the first time. Within the Mathematical Institute 38% of respondents believe action will be taken as a result of the staff survey. Key to increasing engagement is identifying relevant actions, visible progression towards achieving them, and good communication of our response back to the department.
- 4.2 Various departmental projects and initiatives are in progress to address the issues highlighted in the 2023 survey, these include:
- i. The forthcoming departmental teaching stint review to help address workload concerns within the department (*see accompanying paper*).
  - ii. Launch of Career Development Discussions for faculty (*see accompanying paper*), and a review of CDR for ECRs and PDR for PSS is planned, to refine the processes and make best use of the SharePoint workflow to ease any administrative burden.
  - iii. The Vice-Chancellor has commissioned an independent review of the University's pay and conditions for all staff (<https://hr.admin.ox.ac.uk/pay-and-conditions-report>).
  - iv. A refresh of the induction process is ongoing, for example to digitise induction materials, to enhance the provision for faculty, and to provide a 'buddy' for ECRs from day one.
  - v. Termly lunches with Research Group Heads have been set up to explore questions of leadership, departmental culture, support for staff career development, etc.
- 4.3 Some actions are required to address relatively new emerging themes, including consideration of the following points:
- i. Support for managers and PIs (for example day to day management / HR processes and policy, running a successful research group, student supervision).
  - ii. A more consistent mentoring approach for all staff groups.
  - iii. To empower ECR Committee and further develop ECR engagement with Fridays@4 as well as the Research Concordat and the Researcher Hub / MPLS training team.
  - iv. Improved handling of informal and formal bullying and harassment complaints and alignment with the anticipated roll out of a University-wide 'report and support' system (*see Appendix A, 4.2*).

Appendix A Detailed analysis of responses from each staff group in MI to University staff survey

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## Appendix A Detailed analysis of responses from each staff group in MI to University staff survey

Each theme is scored via a number of detailed questions, designed to explore staff satisfaction in each area. What follows is a table summarising the theme scores for each staff group, and narrative analysis referencing particular questions and free text comments to better illuminate what we understand each staff group to be feeling.

### 1. Academic Faculty (60 responses; 7F/49M/4O)

Engagement Score = 77% (-4 compared to 2021; +8 compared to the rest of MPLS, +6 compared to the rest of the University)

Theme Title	MI academic faculty favourable responses	Comparison to academic faculty responses (2021)	Comparison to academic faculty across MPLS	Comparison to academic faculty across University
Induction			n/a	n/a
Being managed	41%	+8	-9	-14
Career development	55%	+5	-2	-3
<i>Career Development - Research staff (6 responses)</i>	38%	-11	-7	-6
Personal Development Review	41%	-6	-4	-7
Mentoring	36%	-8	-2	-2
Being a manager	79%	-2	+3	+1
Bullying and Harassment	87%	-2	0	0
Relationships	81%	+3	+7	+4
Wellbeing & Workload	46%	-5	-14	-16
Employee Voice	81%	+1	+16	+14
Communication	79%	+12	+7	+6
Leadership	84%	+3	+14	+14
Decision-making	51%	+3	+8	+6
Pay & Benefits	27%	-13	-5	-11
Engagement	77%	-4	+8	+6

1.1 In terms of **Relationships**, collegial relationships score very highly with 93% satisfaction, 81% of academic faculty feel integrated into their team, 85% feel they are able to be themselves at work, the score relating to feeling integrated into the department is 69% and higher than both divisional

and University average. The score relating to feeling integrated into a team is very high with 90% satisfaction.

- 1.2 **Being a Manager** demonstrates relatively high confidence (79%), aside from the application of HR policies when managing staff, where scores drop below divisional average to 46% agreeing, 54% neither agreeing nor disagreeing. However, 97% of faculty are confident recruiting staff, which is significantly above the divisional average.
- 1.3 In terms of **Leadership**, scores are relatively high with 84% satisfaction score, higher than the divisional average. The score is high relating to the department's commitment to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion (92%), and the department sets clear expectations of behaviour (86%). In terms of communication 68% agree that senior leaders listen and communicate with staff, and there is a satisfaction score of 90% relating to how the department respects individual differences (culture, workstyles, background, ideas). For **Employee voice**, 81% feel safe to speak up: the feeling of having a voice within the department scored 76%, increasing to 86% within teams.
- 1.4 46% felt their **Health and Wellbeing** were adequately supported at work while 54% neither agree or disagree. The satisfaction level is well below the divisional average. 64% felt the department considers their caring responsibilities when scheduling meetings but the department recorded very low agreement scores on **Workload** and striking a work/life balance (23%) and being able to deliver without working excessive hours (13%), down from 22% in 2021, This is lower than both divisional and University averages.
- 1.5 Within the **Decision-making** category, 62% agreed that there is a clear and transparent decision-making process within the department, but only 38% agree that there is a fair and transparent way of allocating work within the department.
- 1.6 In terms of **Career Development**, 63% agree that they have the opportunity to develop and grow in the department and 42% of respondents are clear about the training and development opportunities available to them similar to the score from the 2021 survey. Overall, 64% neither agreed or disagreed that they feel comfortable discussing training and development with their line manager/ supervisor. This score is 24 points below the MPLS average, and this may be because the department has no appraisal system in place as a framework for such discussions.
- 1.7 Under **Being Managed**, 34% agreed that they are actively encouraged to take up career development opportunities - though below the divisional average, this score is an improvement from 19% in 2021. 68% of respondents neither agree or disagree that they feel supported to think about professional development. However, 73% indicated they feel valued and recognised for the work they do and 32% feel supported to think about their professional development.
- 1.8 Since taking up their current role, 36% have been **Mentored** by someone other than their line manager, which would appear to be self-organised as only 4 respondents reported being offered a mentor by the department.

## 2. ECR (37 responses; 9F/27M/10)

Engagement Score = 83% (-8 compared to 2021; +14 compared to the rest of MPLS, +12 compared to the rest of the University)

Theme Title	MI favourable responses	ECR Comparison to ECR responses (2021)	Comparison to ECR across MPLS	Comparison to ECR across University
Induction	73%	+2	+3	-1
Being managed	74%	-2	+24	+19
Career development	72%	-9	+15	+14
Career Development - Research staff	49%	-9	+5	+6
Personal Development Review	70%	0	+12	+8
Mentoring	42%	-9	+9	+8
<i>Being a manager (6 responses)</i>	77%	<i>n/a</i>	+1	-1
Bullying and Harassment	84%	+3	+7	+7
Relationships	85%	+15	+11	+8
Wellbeing & Workload	62%	+3	+2	0
Employee Voice	68%	-7	+3	+1
Communication	79%	+8	+7	+6
Leadership	75%	-6	+5	+5
Decision-making	50%	-4	+7	+4
Pay & Benefits	29%	-33	-2	-9
Engagement	83%	-8	+14	+12

2.1 Good **relationships** with colleagues scored highly (95%) and the feeling of being themselves at work also scored well (86%). Feeling integrated into the department and team is relatively high (76% and 89% respectively) when compared to faculty colleagues and the divisional averages. 78% feel included in the department's social/networking activities.

2.2 90% were offered an **Induction** upon joining the department and 85% found it useful.

- 2.3 In terms of **Being managed**, 73% feel actively encourage to take up career development opportunities, notably +33 compared to counterparts in MPLS. With regard to **Being a Manager** (n6), ECRs are less likely to formally line manage, hence the low response rate for this question.
- 2.4 Looking at **Career development**, 84% feel they have the opportunity to grow in the department, which is 29 points above the MPLS average. 73% feel they are actively supported to take up career development opportunities and 76% feel supported to think about professional development. 84% feel they take time to reflect and plan for their career development, and 76% have had a **Personal Development Review** over the last two years. These scores are all high against the MPLS averages.
- 2.5 Though 92% of respondents found mentoring useful, only 21% indicated they have been offered a **Mentor**, down from 55% in 2021.
- 2.6 In terms of **Employee Voice**, ECRs feel they have more of a voice on issues within their team (84%) than the department (49%); to address this there are plans to purposefully engage ECRs with ECR committee and implementation of the Researcher Concordat as well as departmental social/networking activities such as Friday@4 and Happy Hour. 65% feel safe to speak up and challenge the way things are done and 35% neither agree or disagree.
- 2.7 Similar to faculty views, ECRs show a good satisfaction with **Leadership**. 70% indicate that the department sets clear expectations of behaviour, respects individual difference (81%), promotes equality diversity and inclusion (81%) and 65% feel senior leaders make the effort to listen to and communicate with staff. 53% feel **Decision-making** is clear and transparent and, 43% agree that there is a fair and transparent way of allocating work in the department.
- 2.8 65% feel their **Health and Wellbeing** is adequately supported at work, but the department scores lower in terms of the right work/life balance, with 41% of ECRs feeling able to achieve this - a slight improvement from 26% in 2021. 65% are satisfied that the department considers their caring responsibilities and, 49% feel they can deliver **Workload** without regularly working excessive hours.

### 3.PSS (39 responses; 27F/11M/10)

Engagement Score = 77% (-8 compared to 2021; +8 compared to the rest of MPLS, +6 compared to the rest of the University)

Theme Title	MI favourable responses	PSS Comparison to PSS responses (2021)	Comparison to PSS across MPLS	Comparison to PSS across University
Induction	78%	+7	+8	+5
Being managed	63%	-4	+12	+7
Career development	65%	-4	+8	+7
Personal Development Review	67%	-4	+5	+2
Mentoring	30%	-3	-6	-7
Being a manager	78%	-8	+2	0
Bullying and Harassment	86%	0	+13	+13
Relationships	77%	-2	+4	+1
Wellbeing & Workload	72%	-5	+12	+10
Employee Voice	73%	n/a	+8	+6
Communication	81%	-8	+8	+7
Leadership	74%	+6	+5	+5
Decision-making	43%	-19	+1	-2
Pay & Benefits	62%	-7	+30	+24
Engagement	77%	-8	+8	+6

3.1 **Relationships** score high with 92% agreeing they have good relationships with colleagues and 85% feel able to be themselves at work. 87% feel integrated into their team, and 59% feel integrated into the department (for reference, in 2021, 79% felt integrated into their team, 70% into the department) and, 64% feel included in the department's social/networking activities.

3.2 93% of new starters (n14) were offered an **Induction** at the start of their current post and 77% agree that the departmental induction was useful.

3.3 With **Being a Manager** (n13), 83% indicate confidence in recruiting staff, and 77% are confident in applying HR policies, which is 17 points above divisional average. 77% feel confident conducting

probationary reviews and PDRs and a slightly lower score of 62% feel confident supporting staff to think about their careers – this is lower than the divisional average by 23 points.

- 3.4 79% have had a **Personal Development Review** in the last two years with 53% finding it useful. More broadly within **Career Development**, 59% agree that they have an opportunity to grow within the department. 69% are also clear about the training and development opportunities available to them, and this scores higher than the divisional average by 21 points. 77% are comfortable discussing their training and development needs with their line manager, which is also higher than the divisional average by 16 points, and 55% agree they take time for their own career development. 83% of PSS responded that they have not been offered a **Mentor**.
- 3.5 77% feel their **health and wellbeing** are adequately supported at work, which is above the MPLS average by 17 points. Regarding **Workload**, 62% feel able to strike a work/life balance, and 59% can meet their requirements of their job without working excessive hours. This score dropped from 73% in 2021. 89% agree the department enables flexible working.
- 3.6 The management and decision-making process in relation to how staff are consulted about changes scores 41% satisfaction among PSS, down from 65% in 2021. 50% agree they have the opportunity to contribute their views. 67% agree communication is open and effective.

#### 4 Overarching ED&I Themes

- 4.1 Overall, 85% of respondents feel able to be themselves at work, compared to 88% in 2021. 88% agree that the department is committed to promoting ED&I and 82% feel the department respects individual differences (e.g. culture, working styles, backgrounds, ideas). 50% feel the department is committed to supporting staff with mental health difficulties, which is below the divisional average.
- 4.2 Out of 5 respondents who have reported formally or informally being harassed or bullied at work, 80% have experienced bullying and harassment in the last year themselves (the remainder report having been witness), with 40% satisfaction of the way their report was handled. 85% of all respondents within the department say they know how to contact a Harassment Advisor with 85% satisfaction that complaints about harassment would be dealt with seriously in the department.
- 4.3 Comments across the equality strands follow, noting the small sample sizes. Follow-up qualitative data gathering is recommended to explore issues in support of particular pieces of work, for example arranging focus groups to inform the development of the departmental Race Equality Action Plan.

#### Gender

- 4.4 There are specific questions under the thematic areas that reveal a level of gender disparity within the department, some of these questions include: I have opportunity to develop and grow here (75% M/56%F), senior leaders make the effort to listen and communicate with staff (75%M,49%F) and there is a fair and transparent way of allocating work in my department (46%M/29%F).
- 4.5 The response favourability for Bullying and Harassment questions are similar for both genders, noting that of the 5 cases reported formally or informally, 4 were from women.
- 4.6 While there are general concerns about maintaining a work/life balance, no female faculty agree they can meet the requirements of their job without regularly working excessive hours and only

7% of female Academics and Researchers say that they are aware of the Carers Expense Fund to support conference attendance and how to apply for it compared to 38% of male counterparts.

4.7 Overall, most people are dissatisfied with the Pay and Benefits offered by the University. However, it appears that female staff (58%) are slightly more satisfied compared to their male counterparts (29%).

4.8 Free text comments from female staff discussed the need for clearer career pathways and express a desire for regular review of progress.

### **Disability**

4.9 Staff who disclosed a disability (n8) appear to be satisfied with their career development (71%), are clear about training and development opportunities available to them (75%) and have time to reflect on and plan for their career development (88%) – all scoring above the departmental average. However, they are less satisfied with aspects of Communication and Decision-making. The engagement score for communication in the department is 80% and 69% among persons living with disability. The decision-making engagement score is also lower with this same group, with only 13% agreeing that allocation of work within the department is fair and transparent compared to the 40% score within the department.

### **Sexual Orientation**

4.10 LGBTQ + staff appear to be more satisfied with their wellbeing and workload, a 70% satisfaction among LGBTQ staff compared to a 58% satisfaction rate within the department. 86% of LGBTQ staff believe that their managers promote an inclusive environment, this is similar to the score among straight/heterosexuals within the department (83%).

4.11 However, there seems to be lower levels of satisfaction among LGBTQ staff with regard to communication, 50% agree that communication within the department is open and effective while 75% of the survey overall are satisfied with the openness and effectiveness of communication within the department. Also, LGBTQ staff (58%) appear to be more sceptical about the department's ability to appropriately respond to bullying and harassment reports compared to the rest of the department (83%).

### **BME**

4.12 BME staff agree that the department is committed to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion (79%). However, they also feel less able to be themselves at work (63%) and feel less integrated into their teams (68%) compared to their White counterparts (88%).

4.13 Fewer BME staff report feeling they have a voice within their team, (68%BME/85%White). BME staff raise concerns about decision-making, where 21% BME agree they have an opportunity to contribute their views before changes are made, 57% of White staff agree to the same statement.

4.14 Significant dissatisfaction with Pay and Benefits among BME staff is noteworthy (18% BME /51% White).

4.15 Comments from BME staff generally touch on the need for clearer pathways for career development, there were suggestions for tailored career guidance opportunities and support to acquire internationally recognised certification in relevant skills for staff. Excessive workload and

stress levels were also discussed – with suggestions to cut down on administrative tasks for academics and to reduce commitments outside their scope of work being highlighted.