

Dear all,

As many of you will know, we recently ran a Wellbeing survey of departmental staff, initiated and organised by Elisa Galliano.

The data are now in and collated, and attached is a digest of the returns. The full spreadsheets of data were discussed by the Management Committee – but these are not being widely circulated as they make some individuals identifiable.

Obviously, see what you think, but I would make a few points.

1. This has been a very useful exercise for the Department, and I am grateful to Elisa for initiating it. Hopefully respondents found it a worthwhile process, too.

2. The Department seems, at present, to be going quite well in providing the support its staff requires. However, staff vary considerably in what they need, and indeed the extent to which they can work from home.

3. In addition, many staff are experiencing considerable pressures from external sources – caring responsibilities, stress about the risks of the pandemic, the effect of the lockdown on productivity, ability to meet deadlines and their future career.

4. Timely, clear and inclusive decisions from the University, government and funding bodies would clearly be appreciated.

It is obvious that one of the Department's main roles will be in communicating clearly with staff as we move gradually towards new patterns of working. Many pressures faced by staff come from outside the University, and some important decisions about the future have yet to be made by external organisations. Thus uncertainty remains one of the biggest problems, and this is one reason why the Management Committee encourages everyone to attend the impending online discussions arranged for different PDN staff types.

As usual, if you have any concerns or just want to make contact with someone in the Department, please see the resources on:

[www.pdn.cam.ac.uk/intranet/human-resources/wellbeing/wellbeing](http://www.pdn.cam.ac.uk/intranet/human-resources/wellbeing/wellbeing)

David Bainbridge  
(chair of the Wellbeing Committee)

## DIGEST OF THE RETURNS FROM THE WELLBEING SURVEY – RESEARCH STAFF

Response rate was: 55

21 PI/lecturer	1 emeritus	24 postdoc
1 lab manager	1 research associate	1 research assistant
2 research technician	1 SRA (not all answered this question)	

How are you doing?

2 struggling  
14 50/50 good days and bad days (12/14 are postdocs)

Most comments related to motivation, home work environment and conflicting demands especially childcare

What do you feel like would help?

A variety of responses, although 23 indicated social or work-related interactions, and 6 said help with 'life responsibilities'

When asked "If you responded to the previous question, would you feel comfortable reaching out to someone in the department for help?", there was a range of responses. Many thought PDN was not in a position to help with "life responsibilities".

- *"I seek advice from people in my lab and it helps"*
- *"It's more interactions with the decision-makers beyond the department which I would like. I am frustrated that decisions about our educational provision are thrust upon us without consultation."*
- *"Some acknowledgement to the postdoc of the seriousness of the situation that they are in. There may have been communications going out to them but I think they are all anxious about their futures."*

Do you feel there is uncertainty in the following work-related areas (and that is causing you stress)?

Many responses, often relating to imminent or future deadlines, productivity and funding extensions.

How often are you working on lab-related tasks during [your traditional working] hours?

14 'as usual', 16 50-70%, 15 less than 50%  
Mainly writing, but some data analysis

Does your group virtually meet weekly for...?

All responses were positive, except for two who said they 'didn't have a group'. Generally the feedback on group meetings was positive, but

- *"the increased frequency of group and department online activities cause me more anxiety, since I associate screen time with work, and feel like I am obliged to turn up even though I'd much rather focus on writing or doing other activities around the house"*
- *"they are good. although, it is exhausting at times ... to keep the lab motivated and positive."*

Do you have 1:1 meetings with your line manager?

Only two people not having them, and would like to have them

Do you have contacts with your peers (via zoom or PDN chats or social media)?

6 said no

If you have any other comments...

- *"Big plus of this pandemic is that I've got more time to spend with my family than I had before :-)*
- *"I am out of time zone so unable to participate in almost all Dept on-line events so feeling quite remote but nothing much can be done about this.*
- *"I have found communication from the department to be excellent.*
- *"it would be good for my lab to start being able to come into work and resume experiments. other universities and companies have managed to keep work going through this period by adopting social distancing strategies*
- *"It would be helpful to hear from the department what resources might be available to help researchers who encounter difficulties during/following Covid lockdown (e.g. with bridging funding, ways in which groups might be able to help each other with reagents etc.). Also it would be helpful to know what the situation is regarding hiring/promotion. i.e. will it continue and will the criteria change?*
- *"It would really be good to know when as much PPE, tests and contact tracing apps could be available like in Asia*
- *"looking forward to all this being over and seeing everyone in person (even with a mask, I'd be happy still!)*
- *"Probably feeling a bit negative right now, perhaps it is the less good weather this week!*
- *"thanks for doing the survey!*

## DIGEST OF THE RETURNS FROM THE WELLBEING SURVEY – RESEARCH STAFF

Response rate was: 22

1 academic-related      7 admin                      14 technical

How are you doing?

0 struggling

3 50/50 good days and bad days

Comments were extremely varied – more so than for research staff

What do you feel like would help?

A variety of responses, although 5 indicated social or work-related interactions, and 3 said help with 'life responsibilities'

When asked "If you responded to the previous question, would you feel comfortable reaching out to someone in the department for help?", 5 said 'no', but their indicated concerns were 'life responsibilities' or 'social interactions' (i.e. not work-related)

- *"Although I don't need any assistance, I do find it difficult to contact people in their home environment. It feels a bit intrusive, even though I know they are WFH.*
- *"I have other colleagues I speak to and I think I would go to them first for help before approaching the department*
- *"we know plenty of people who would help with childcare if they were allowed to*

Do you feel there is uncertainty in the following work-related areas (and that is causing you stress)?

Many responses, often relating to imminent or future deadlines, productivity and career.

- *"Redundancies as part of the university proposed efficiency plans*

How much is the WFH scenario and overall uncertainty and stress affecting your normal working pattern?

2 working more than usual, 9 'as usual'-ish, 5 50-70%, 3 less than 50%

Admin/e-mail load seems *at least* as much as usual for many

3 are reading/learning relevant to their role

Do you have 1:1 meetings with your line manager?

13 said yes; none said no and that they wanted meetings

Do you have contacts with your peers (via zoom or PDN chats or social media)?

19 said yes, 1 said no (but said did not need them and was in other ways content)

If you have any other comments...

- *"Commuting to work" is a really good way to get started for the day. I've been more flexible about working hours - fitting lunch around child school timetable and doing some chores and good deeds in the day are a good break even if it means doing a bit outside the normal working day, and it means more quality downtime when I do turn the computer off!*
- *"I find all the online socialising and input incredibly distracting - I am struggling to focus enough between the national news, keeping the household going and trying to get*

*work done each day. I am also struggling with having the right furniture for my working environment...*

- "I have found myself thinking a lot more about my future past this crisis. I have spent more time concerned with my well-being, than I have done for a few years. In some ways, I am becoming healthier than I was before, but in other ways, I feel more anxious about my circumstances than I was before. Going to work is a great way to leave what goes on at home out of your mind. You still will think about home, but the less you are there - the less you see the details? When I'm at work - I'm more focused on work. When I'm home - I am more focused on home I suppose.*
- "I think PDN are doing good job at keeping in touch via newsletter and various emails and events*
- "The dept and everyone are doing a good job keeping everyone together while WFH*
- "This has made everyone I deal with more real. I have learnt things about people's lives and circumstances that would normally not be shared. The need for compassion, gentleness and kindness is starkly clear.*
- "This is a strange time and only being in the department for a short time I am very pleased at the regular contact with my team either on Teams, WhatsApp or Zoom.*