Work-related wellbeing in UK Higher Education - 2014

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Executive summary

When the 6,439 respondents were asked if they found their job stressful, almost eight out of ten (79%) agreed or strongly agreed. More than half (52%) indicated that their general level of stress was high or very high and a similar proportion (49%) often or always experienced levels of stress they found unacceptable. Few (15%) reported that they seldom or never experienced unacceptable levels of stress at work.

This survey has found that levels of stress in the higher education sector have increased in recent years, 73% of respondents to a previous survey conducted in 2012 agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'I find my job stressful' compared with 79% in the present survey.

Working hours remain high in higher education with most employees exceeding the 44 hour maximum stipulated by the EU Working Time Directive. More than eight respondents in ten (82%) reported that they regularly worked more than 40 hours a week, and more than one-third (38%) worked more than 50 hours a week.

The constant and fast pace of change in higher education, together with how it is handled, emerged as a key theme in the latest survey. One of the biggest rise in stress levels over the two-year period was in response to how change is managed and communicated in the sector.

This survey also found a high level of change fatigue in higher education. Almost six out of ten respondents agreed (24%) or strongly agreed (34%) that too many changes had been introduced in their institution. Respondents were almost unanimous in agreeing that a period of stability was required in the sector.

Control over the timing and pacing of work can help employees manage the increasingly high demands of the job. Nonetheless, the overall level of job control in higher education is gradually eroding over time with serious implications for wellbeing and work-life balance.

For the first time, this survey considered the extent to which higher education staff believed that they undertake unreasonable and unnecessary tasks as part of their job role. Half of all respondents from higher education reported performing tasks they considered unreasonable either often (35%) or frequently (15%). Only 2% believed they never undertake unnecessary tasks.

Respondents from higher education reported higher levels of anxiety, depression and sleeping difficulties than most other occupational groups. Many respondents were also showing signs of burnout, which can have serious consequences.

Almost eight out of every ten respondents (78%) felt pressure to come to work when they are unwell at least sometimes, while nearly half experienced such pressure either often (27%) or always (22%). A considerable majority (81%) work at home while they are sick at least sometimes. Pressure of work, lack of cover and a reluctance to let down students or further burden colleagues were among the most frequently cited reasons for this 'presenteeism'.

The work-life balance of employees in higher education continues to be poor. More than one-third (35%) of the sample indicated that they always, or almost always, neglect their personal needs because of the demands of their work. Almost eight participants from every ten (78%)

indicated that they usually felt worn out after the working day, more than two-thirds (69%) feel emotionally drained after work and a considerable majority (84%) find it difficult to unwind. Evidence was found that the overall level of work-life balance in the sector has worsened in the two years since the 2012 survey.

Only just over two in ten respondents were very (14%) or extremely (7%) satisfied with their job. Satisfaction with intrinsic factors (such as with fellow workers and variety in the tasks performed) was high while the lowest sources of satisfaction were with industrial relations, promotion opportunities and the way the organisation is managed. The overall level of job satisfaction was considerably lower than that reported by many other professional groups.

This report sets out mid and long-term targets for universities to alleviate stress and improve the health of the sector.

Introduction

Work-related stress can be defined as a harmful reaction to undue pressures and demands related to the job role. The most recent Labour Force Survey (LFS) estimated that stress at work affected an estimated 487,000 UK employees in 2013/14, with a total of 11.3 million working days lost (HSE, 2014). Sources of stress vary according to occupational and organisational factors but, in general, workload pressure, interpersonal conflict (including bullying and harassment) and the extent and pace of change are most commonly cited as the most stressful features of work (HSE, 2014). Work-related stress can have a wide-ranging impact on the wellbeing and functioning of employees. It has been linked to physical and mental ill health, work-life conflict, increased turnover, reduced job satisfaction, motivation and commitment and impaired job performance (Schnall et al. 2009).

For some time, a higher prevalence of work-related stress has been found amongst public sector employees, with teaching and educational professionals at particular risk (Carder et al. 2013; HSE, 2014). Education is now considered a priority area for the reduction of work-related stress (Tyers et al. 2009). Several studies commissioned by the UCU over the last decade or so indicate that work-related stress is widespread in further education (FE) and higher education (HE) institutions in the UK and that this is generally increasing with serious implications for the wellbeing of employees (Kinman, 1998; Kinman & Jones, 2004; 2008; Kinman & Wray, 2013a,b,d,c). Moreover, recently published European research indicates that British academic employees are, by a large margin, the least satisfied in Europe and the most likely to regret their choice of career (Hohle & Teichler, 2012[1]). Sixty-one percent of senior academics and 56% of junior academics from the UK described their job as "a considerable source of strain".

There is evidence that the rising level of stress in universities and colleges in the UK is due to the intense and wide-ranging changes experienced in the sector, which have resulted in increasingly complex, demanding and unpredictable working environments (Kinman, 2014). Working hours are also increasing with a high proportion of academic and academic-related employees working in excess of the EU recommended maximum (HMSO, 1998). A recent study of academic employees found strong links between work intensity and long working hours with negative implications for work-life balance (Hogan et al. 2015). Research findings also demonstrate that the features that traditionally protected employees working in universities and colleges against work-related stress, such as job control and support, have gradually eroded, thus exacerbating the pressure experienced by employees (Kinman & Wray, 2013).

Several reasons could be provided for the elevated level of work-related stress experienced by academic and academic-related staff. The demands experienced by employees have intensified due to a dramatic expansion in student numbers, increased requirements for efficiency and accountability from internal and external sources, and a more bureaucratic and less collegiate management style. In universities, in particular, the student population has become more diverse in terms of their social, cultural and educational background, with an increasingly 'consumed oriented' approach to their studies (CHERI, 2011). It has also been widely observed that HE and FE institutions have moved away from a culture that embraces consensual decision-making, co-operation and shared values towards a non-participative management paradigm, thus eroding employees' sense of autonomy (e.g. Fanghanel, 2011; Lloyd & Paynes, 2012). The job

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[1] On a scale ranging from 1 = very high satisfaction to 5 = very low satisfaction, academics from the UK averaged 2.61. Differences were found between junior and senior academics.

role for academic staff has also become more diversified; employees are expected to demonstrate excellence in teaching, research, administration and pastoral care, and frequently through external entrepreneurial activities. The recent Research Excellence Framework (REF) exercise also expected academic staff to provide evidence of application, impact and value of their research. The demands associated with each of these roles are likely to be onerous and have the potential to conflict, further compounding the potential for long working hours and work-related stress.

There is evidence that the work-related stress experienced by employees in HE and FE has strong potential to impair their wellbeing. A review of the occupational health needs of universities conducted by Venables and Allender (2005) showed that employees in this sector are more likely than many other occupational groups to experience mental health problems. Several studies conducted in the 1990s and early 2000s found poorer mental health in university employees compared to other occupational groups and community samples (Kinman et al. 2006; Winefield et al. 2003), but little is known about the current position amongst UCU members. Research findings also indicate that employees in further, higher, prison and adult education frequently find that balancing the demands of their work with their home commitments is challenging and that this is a further source of strain (Kinman & Wray, 2013a,b,c,d; Kinman, 2014; Winefield et al. 2014). The findings of this research also indicated that the work demands experienced by UCU members can be exacerbated by the extremely high levels of involvement in and commitment to the work role that were found amongst respondents and lead to distress and work-life conflict (Kinman & Jones, 2009).

Previous surveys of work-related stress

Over the last ten to fifteen years, the UCU has commissioned several surveys to identify the features of work that are considered most stressful by members, the impact on their wellbeing, and the potential implications for job performance. A benchmarking approach advocated by the UK Health and Safety Executive is utilised to monitor key work-related hazards, perceived stress and working hours over time. As well as identifying trends, this approach also has the potential to inform interventions to enhance wellbeing by highlighting the job characteristics and working conditions that make the strongest contributors to strain in different sectors and groups of employees. The approach utilised in the research programme is discussed in the next section and the measures used in the current survey are outlined.

The HSE management standards approach

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE: the UK body responsible for policy and operational matters related to occupational health and safety) has developed a comprehensive process to help employers manage the work-related wellbeing of their staff effectively. A risk-assessment approach is advocated, whereby workplace stress is considered a serious health and safety issue, and stressors are measured and managed like any other workplace hazard. The HSE process is based around a set of standards of good management practice (or benchmarks) for measuring employers' performance in preventing work-related stress from occurring at source (Mackay *et al.* 2004). This reflects a body of evidence supporting the view that primary, or organizational-led interventions are considerably more effective than those that expect employees to be the focus of change (Donaldson-Feilder *et al.* 2011). Following extensive consultation, the HSE selected several elements of work activity (known as psychosocial hazards) that are: a) considered relevant to the majority of UK employees; and b) have a strong evidence base as the most critical predictors of employee wellbeing and organisational

performance (Mackay *et a*l. 2004). The specified hazards are demands, control, social support (from managers and peers), interpersonal relationships, role clarity, and involvement in organisational change.

The HSE has developed a self-report survey instrument to help employers measure the key hazards within their organisations and compare their performance with national standards. This measure has been used in several previous surveys of UCU members. The HSE Indicator Tool (Cousins *et al.*, 2004) comprises 35 items within the seven hazard categories:

- **Demands** includes workload, pace of work and working hours;
- **Control** measures levels of autonomy over working methods, as well as pacing and timing;
- **Peer Support** encompasses the degree of help and respect received from colleagues;
- **Managerial Support** reflects supportive behaviours from line managers and the organisation itself, such as the availability of feedback and encouragement;
- **Relationships** assesses levels of conflict within the workplace, including bullying behaviour and harassment;
- **Role** examines levels of role clarity and the extent to which employees believe that their work fits into the aims of the department and the organisation in general;
- **Change** reflects how effectively organisational changes are managed and communicated.

The HSE risk assessment approach is widely utilised by individual organisations, occupational groups and sectors to diagnose the most stressful aspects of work. The process allows employers to assess how well they are managing the different types of hazard within their workforce, and helps them develop preciselt-targeted interventions to protect and enhance the wellbeing of their staff. The HSE also provides normative data from a range of occupational groups, enabling employers to compare their scores for each of the hazards against these national benchmarks. Where scores are compared unfavourably, the HSE suggests interim and longer-term target scores to help organisations improve their performance over time.

The HSE approach: previous UCU surveys

HSE benchmarks

The HSE process has been recommended by the University and Colleges Employers' Association as an effective way of managing work-related stress (UCEA, 2006). Many universities and colleges in the UK have adopted this process to monitor staff wellbeing. Used at a national level, the HSE approach can provide important insight into how working conditions change over time.   In 2008, the UCU commissioned the first national survey of members working in higher education, further education, adult education and prison education using the HSE benchmarking approach (Court & Kinman, 2008a,b,c; *n* = 14,270) with a second survey conducted in 2012 (Kinman & Wray, 2013a,b,c,d; *n* = 24,030). The findings revealed that, with very few exceptions, respondents reported lower well-being than the average for the HSE's target industries, including the education sector. In particular, levels of wellbeing in relation to demands reduced markedly between 2008 and 2012 for UCU members as a whole (from 3.4 to 2.5 on a 5 point scale) and perceptions of job control and the management of change also worsened. Findings also showed that wellbeing in relation to support from managers and peers and role clarity generally remained stable over the four-year period, although both were considerably lower than the HSE benchmarks.

The 2012 study highlighted some key differences between respondents working in HE, FE and prison education. The biggest 'well-being gaps' in HE (i.e. the discrepancy between the mean score obtained and the HSE benchmark) were in work demands, change management, management support and role clarity. This was a similar pattern to that found in the 2008 survey, but the gap for demands and management of change, in particular, had widened indicating that these are areas where intervention is required. As in the 2008 survey, the level of control amongst respondents in HE exceeded the benchmark from the HSE's target group industries. Nonetheless, perceptions of work-related control in the sector worsened between 2008 and 2012 (see Kinman & Wray, 2013c).

Perceptions of work-related stress

The 2008 and 2012 surveys asked respondents to indicate the extent to which they found their job stressful. Comparisons of the findings demonstrated that levels of work-related stress had increased in the four-year period, showing that the increased levels of demand outlined above had been translated into longer working hours for many. Three-quarters of respondents to the 2012 survey (from all sectors) indicated that they found their job stressful, more than half (55%) reported that their general or average level of stress was high or very high, and 41% often or always experienced levels of stress they found unacceptable. The findings of both surveys indicated that working hours are high across HE, FE and prison education, with around 65% of respondents working more than 40 hours in an average week and 27% in excess of 50 hours. These findings demonstrate that a considerable proportion of UCU members regularly work in excess of the European Working Time Directive limit of 48 hours per week.

The work-home interface

Previous research commissioned by the UCU (and previously by the Association of University Teachers) highlighted the strong potential for academic work to impair personal life and the potential impact on wellbeing and job performance (Kinman & Jones, 2004). The surveys conducted in 2008 and 2012 (Court & Kinman, 2008; Kinman & Wray, 2013) found high levels of work-life conflict across all sectors. The 2012 survey introduced a new measure to assess the extent of work-life facilitation as well as conflict between the professional and personal domains. This is a process whereby experience or participation in one role increases the quality of (or performance in) the other role. The inclusion of this scale reflects recent findings that work has the potential to enrich non-working life as well as impair it (Grzywacz & Demerouti, 2013). The high levels of involvement and engagement in work found in previous research in university employees (Kinman & Jones, 2009) suggested that aspects of the job might enhance non-working life. Nonetheless, although many respondents experienced some degree of facilitation, the mean level of work-life conflict was considerably higher overall.

The UCU 2014 survey of work-related wellbeing: aims and method

Perceptions of working conditions

The survey aimed to examine the work-related wellbeing of UCU members working in higher education in the UK. Firstly, it examined the extent to which institutions were meeting the minimum standards stipulated by the HSE for the management of work-related stress. The HSE's Management Standards Indicator Tool was used to assess levels of wellbeing relating to each of the dimensions discussed above (Mackay et al. 2004). Mean scores were calculated across all seven of the hazard categories, with higher scores representing more wellbeing and lower scores denoting more distress for each dimension. Comparisons were made between the mean scores obtained in this survey for each hazard with the target industries, including education, that were selected by the HSE because they had the 'highest rates of work stress-related ill-health and absence' (Webster & Buckley, 2008, p. i). Where mean scores for any hazards are compared unfavourably with benchmarks, recommendations for improvement are provided in terms of: a) interim targets (over the next six to 12 month period) based on the 50th percentile figures and b) longer term target scores obtained from the 80th percentile figures. Comparisons were also made between mean scores for each hazard obtained in the current survey with those found in the 2008 and 2012 surveys.

Perceived stress and working hours

The survey examined levels of perceived stress and the average number of hours worked per week, and compared findings with those obtained from the 2008 and 2012 surveys. The extent to which respondents worked more than their contracted hours was also examined.

The work-home interface

As in the 2012 survey, the extent of conflict and facilitation between work and personal life was examined using a questionnaire developed by Fisher et al. (2009). As previous research has highlighted the importance of maintaining boundaries between work and personal life for health and wellbeing, the 2014 survey also explored the extent to which respondents are able to 'switch off' from work-related worries and concerns. A scale developed by Querstret and Cropley (2012) was utilised to assess the extent to which respondents ruminate about work during their free time and can detach themselves from work issues. This ability to detach oneself mentally and physically from work is vital, as the lack of opportunity to recover from work demands has serious negative implications for health and job performance.

Other measures

The 2014 survey also introduced several other measures thought to be of particular relevance to working conditions in higher education. Some of these (i.e. the measures of psychological distress and job satisfaction) have been used extensively in studies of various occupational groups and a wide range of normative scores is available. This extends and strengthens the benchmarking approach used in previous surveys in the sector. The measures are described below.

Unreasonable tasks (Semmer *et al.* 2010). This scale assesses the extent to which respondents engage in tasks that they believe are either unnecessary, or do not conform to norms about what can be reasonably expected from employees. This scale is included to capture respondents' perceptions of the tasks associated with the increased diversification of roles within higher education.

Change fatigue (Bernerth *et al.* 2011). This measure assesses respondents' attitudes about the extent of change introduced within their organisation and their reactions to these changes.

Job satisfaction (Warr *et al.* 1979). This scale assesses overall job satisfaction as well as the extent to which employees are satisfied by intrinsic features (e.g. variety and opportunity for skill use) and extrinsic aspects of work (e.g. pay and promotion opportunities). There are extensive occupational norms available whereby researchers can compare their findings with other professional groups.

Psychological distress (GHQ-12: Goldberg, 1972). This measure is widely used in occupational settings to assess depression, anxiety, insomnia and decision-making capacity. As with the measure of job satisfaction described above, extensive occupational norms are available to facilitate comparisons with other occupational groups. The GHQ-12 has been used in previous national studies of the HE sectors in the UK and Australia (Kinman *et al.*, 2006; Kinman, 2014; Winefield *et al.*, 2003).

Burnout. There is some evidence that academics may experience levels of burnout comparable to 'high risk' groups such as healthcare workers (Watts & Robertson, 2011). A scale developed by Demerouti et al. (2003) measures two aspects of burnout: exhaustion and engagement. Engagement is viewed as the opposite of burnout: a positive, fulfilling, state of mind characterised by vigour, dedication and absorption.

Health. Several aspects of health were assessed. A single-item measure of perceived physical health was included. Respondents were also asked to indicate the number of days they were absent from work through sickness in the previous year (if any). They were also asked to estimate the proportion of these days that were stress-related (if any). The extent of 'presenteeism' in the sector was also explore, which examines the extent to which respondents continue to work when they are sick.

1   Biographical information

Sample

All active members of UCU were sent an email in October 2014 inviting them to respond to UCU's online survey of occupational stress. Retired members were excluded from the survey. Of the 9,029 respondents, 6,439 were employed (or principally employed) in HE.

Sex

In terms of sex, 57.2% of the sample was female, 41.7% male and 0.9% preferred not to say.

Age

The age profile of the sample is set out in the chart below. As can be seen, the majority was in the category 54 to 54 years.

Age categories of participants
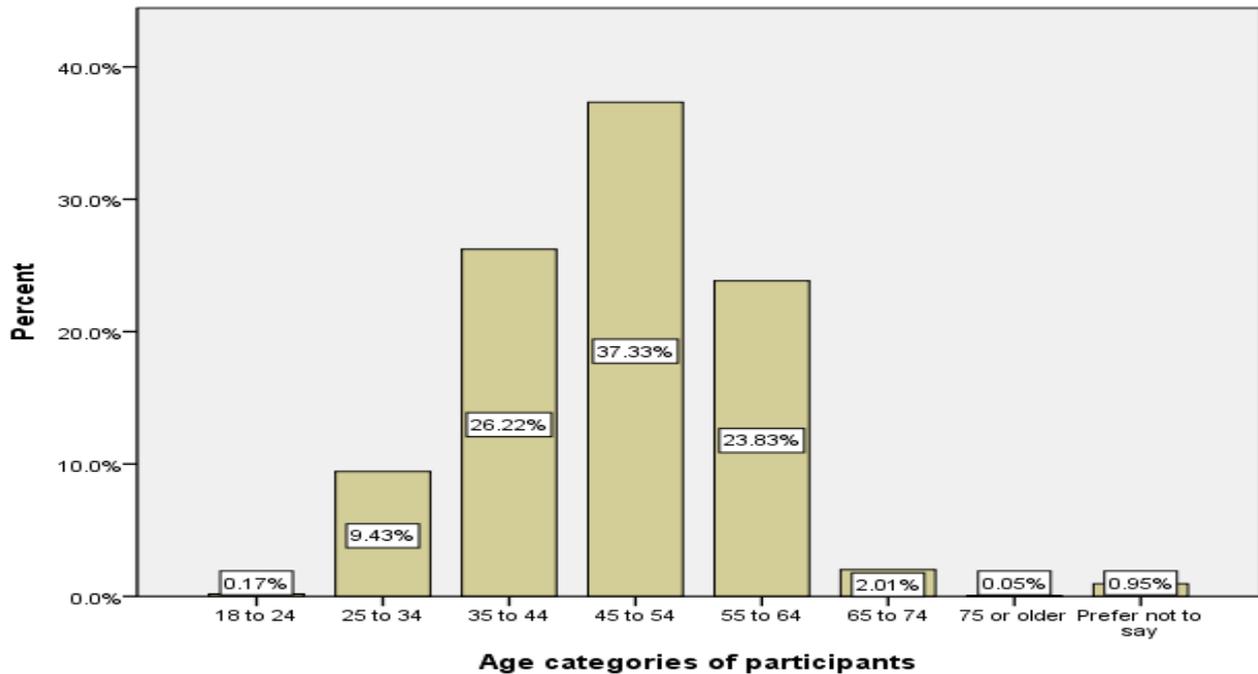
Sexuality

Regarding sexuality, 82% of respondents were heterosexual, 5% gay or lesbian, 3% bisexual, whereas 10% preferred not to say

Ethnicity

In terms of ethnicity, 72% were White British and 18% other White background. Five percent were respondents from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Backgrounds. A further 5% preferred not to say.

Disability

Eighty-seven percent of the sample did not consider themselves to be disabled; 9% identified themselves as disabled; and 2% were unsure if they were disabled. Two percent preferred not to say.

Job type

Of the 5,192 respondents from HE who identified themselves as academic employees, 23% worked in teaching or teaching-only positions, 6% in research-only and 71% in teaching-and-research. Of the 1,507 respondents who indicated they were employed in academic-related

roles, 44% were managers, 13% administrators, 12% computing staff, 7% librarians and 24% had 'other' jobs[2].

Mode of employment

In terms of mode of employment, 84% worked on a full-time basis; 14% worked part-time and 2% indicated 'other' modes of employment.

Terms of employment

A considerable majority, 85%, were employed on a permanent contract; 6% an open-ended contract; 7% a fixed-term contract; 0.3% a variable hours contract. Two percent indicated 'other' terms of employment.

Hours of work

Respondents were asked two questions relating to their working hours: a) how many hours they were contracted to work per week; b) how many hours they actually worked per week both on and off site. More than one respondent in every ten (16%) were contracted to work up to 30 hours per week, 17% between 31 and 35 hours; 63% between 36 hours and 40 hours. Four percent were contracted to work in excess of 41 hours per week. In terms of actual working hours, 82% of the sample who were employed on a full-time basis worked more than 40 hours per week, with 38%% working more than 50 hours and 12% more than 60 hours.

2   Responses to HSE stress questionnaire

1. Demands

A typical snapshot

Respondents said they often had demands from different groups at work that were difficult to combine. They often had to work very quickly and very intensively, often or sometimes under unrealistic time pressures. Respondents often neglected some tasks because they had too much to do and sometimes felt their deadlines to be unachievable. They often felt pressurised to work long hours, and were sometimes unable to take sufficient breaks.

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[2] These categories are not mutually exclusive as some respondents identified themselves as academic and academic-related, for example as both researchers and managers.

Q3: Different groups at work demand things from me that are hard to combine (n = 6,439) %
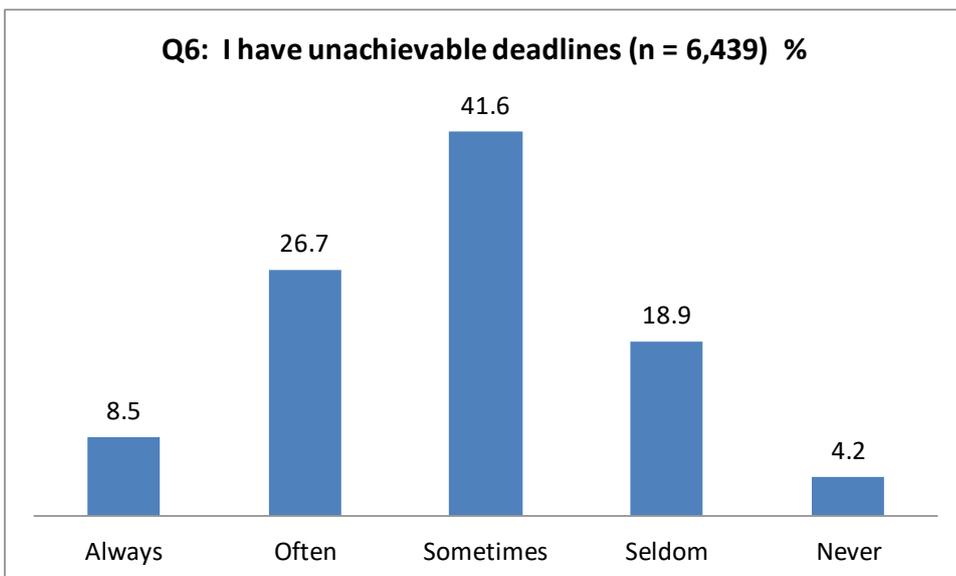
Always	21
Often	38.8
Sometimes	31
Seldom	8.2
Never	1.1

HSE scale out of 5
1=low well-being; 5=high well-being

q3

Higher education **2.30**

Q6: I have unachievable deadlines (n = 6,439) %

Always	8.5
Often	26.7
Sometimes	41.6
Seldom	18.9
Never	4.2

HSE scale out of 5
1=low well-being; 5=high well-being

q6

Higher education **2.83**

Q9: I have to work very intensively (n = 6,439) %

Always	31
Often	47.5
Sometimes	19.7
Seldom	1.5
Never	0.3

HSE scale out of 5

q9   1=low well-being; 5=high well-being

Higher education   **1.93**

Q12: I have to neglect some tasks because I have too much to do (n = 6,439) %

Always	20.7
Often	35.2
Sometimes	34.7
Seldom	8.1
Never	1.4

HSE scale out of 5

q12   1=low well-being; 5=high well-being

Higher education   **2.34**

Q16: I am unable to take sufficient breaks (n = 6,439) %

Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
11.2	26.8	30.3	22.7	8.9

HSE scale out of 5

q16   1=low well-being; 5=high well-being

Higher education   **2.91**

Q18: I am pressurised to work long hours (n = 6,439) %

Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
17.8	27.9	28.9	18	7.5

HSE scale out of 5

q18   1=low well-being; 5=high well-being

Higher education   **2.70**

Q20: I have to work very fast (n = 6,439) %

17.5	38.9	36.3	6.5	0.9
Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never

HSE scale out of 5
q20   1=low well-being; 5=high well-being

Higher education   **2.34**

Q22: I have unrealistic time pressures (n = 6,439) %

17.7	31.3	32.7	15	3.3
Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
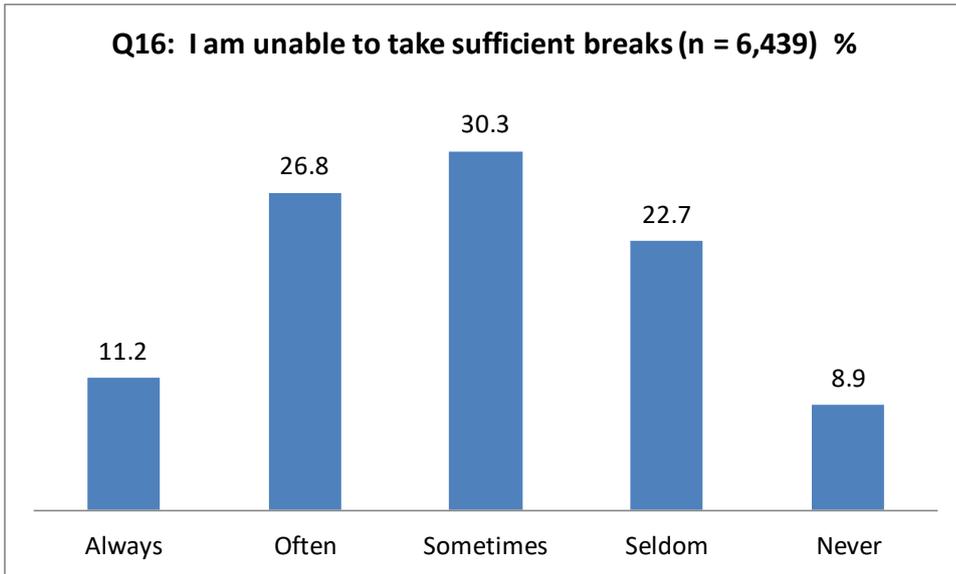
HSE scale out of 5
q22   1=low well-being; 5=high well-being

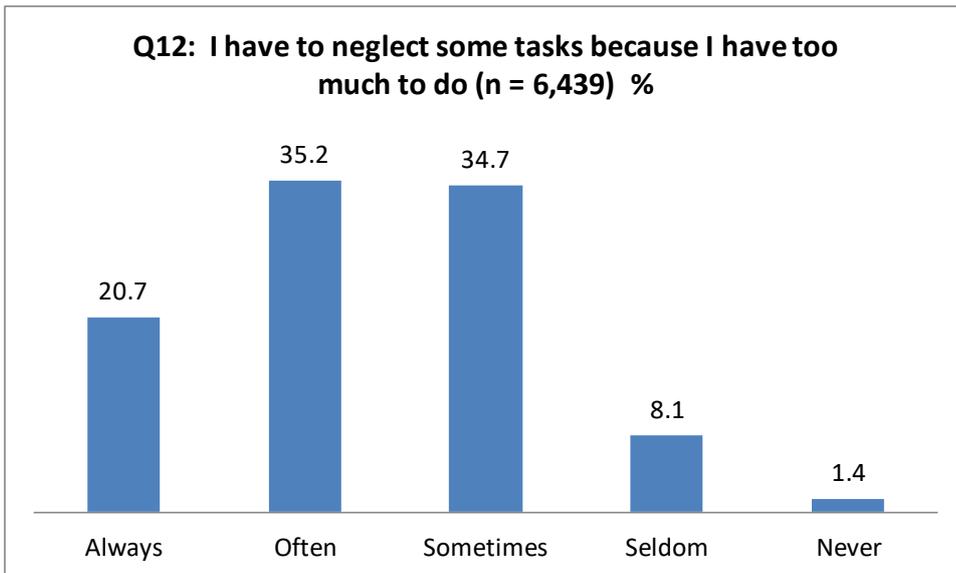**Higher education**   **2.55**

Demands: summary

Comparison of the UCU data with the results of the Health and Safety Executive's survey 'Psychosocial Working Conditions in Britain' indicated a considerably lower level of well-being in HE than the HSE target industries, including education, in relation to the demands made on employees. The overall level of wellbeing in relation to the demands placed on employees in HE

has reduced since the previous survey was conducted in 2012. The most notable change was in the proportion of respondents who indicated they had to work very intensively.

	HSE scale out of 5 1=low well-being; 5=high well-being
Higher education	**2.49**
HSE survey target group mean average	**3.44**

2. Control

A typical snapshot

Respondents said they only sometimes had control over their work pace, but could often decide when to take a break. They sometimes had a choice in deciding what they do at work but often had a say in the way they work. Respondents indicated that their working time was often flexible.

Q2: I can decide when to take a break (n = 6,439) %

Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
26.8	43.5	22	5.9	1.4

q2	HSE scale out of 5 1=low well-being; 5=high well-being
Higher education	**3.89**

Q10: I have a say in my own work speed (n = 6,439) %

Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
7.7	33.7	38.4	15.9	4.3

HSE scale out of 5
q10   1=low well-being; 5=high well-being
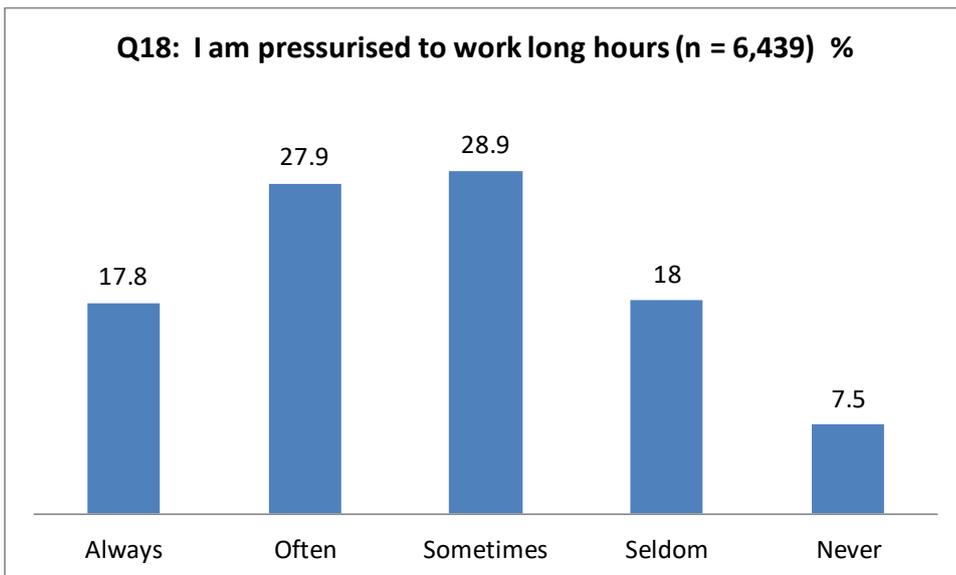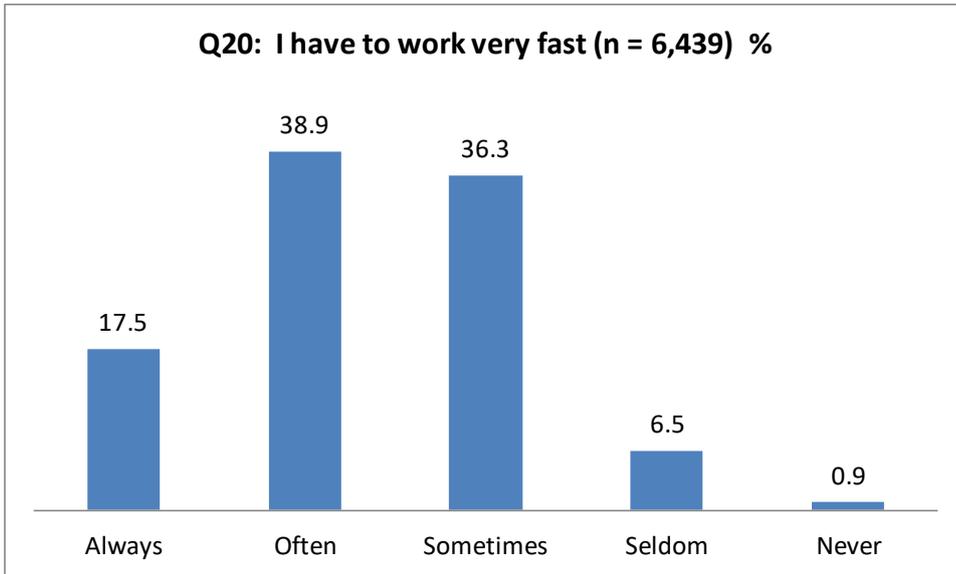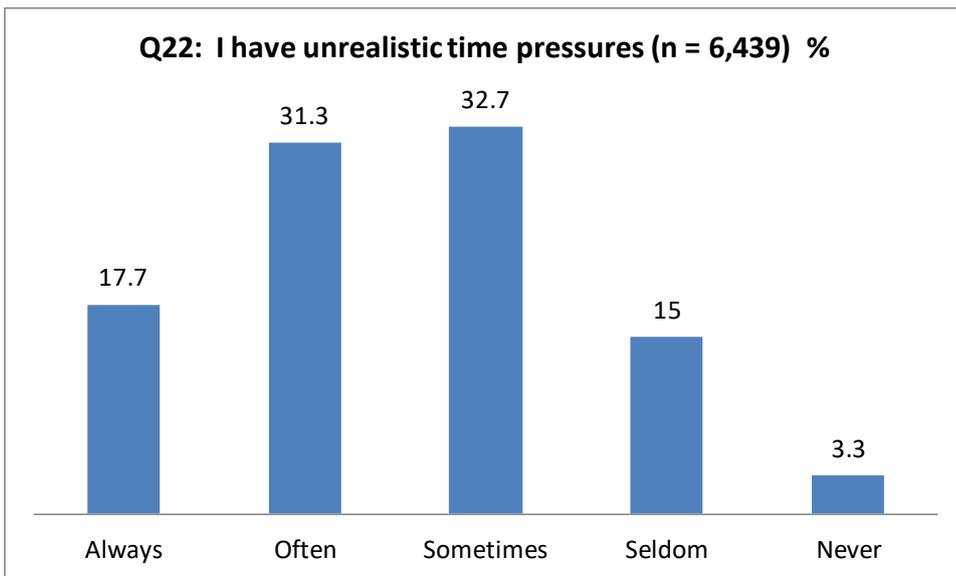**Higher education**   **3.25**

**Q15: I have a choice in deciding how I do my work
(n = 6,439) %**

Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
11.1	47.4	32.3	7.5	1.6

HSE scale out of 5
q15   1=low well-being; 5=high well-being
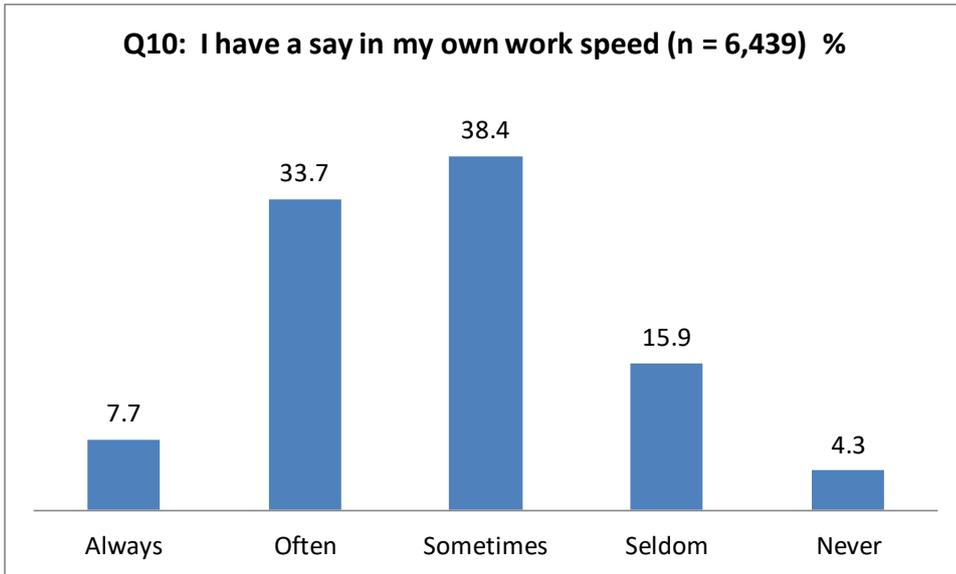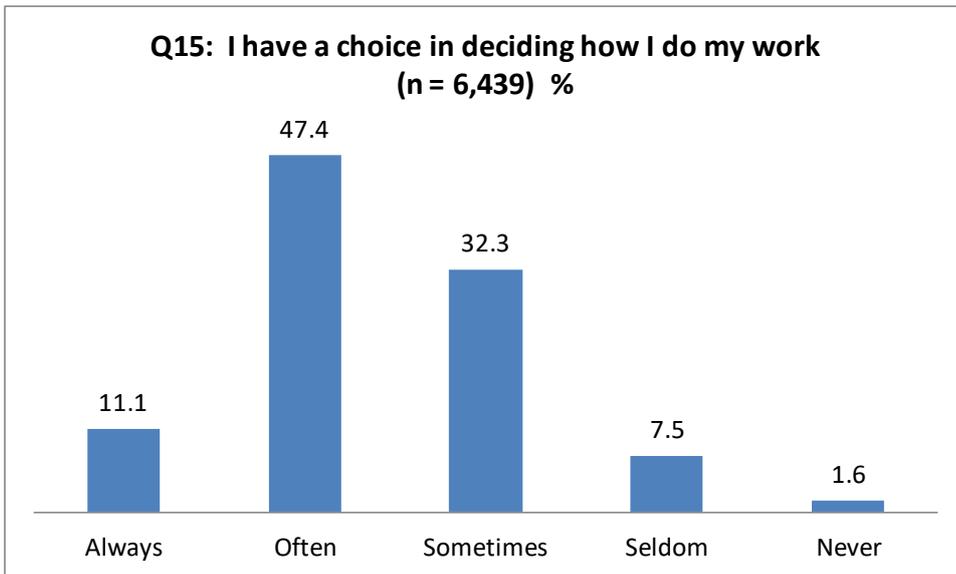**Higher education**   **3.59**

Q19: I have a choice in deciding what I do at work
(n = 6,439) %

Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
5.9	33.3	41.6	15.4	3.8

HSE scale out of 5
q19   1=low well-being; 5=high well-being

Higher education   **3.22**

Q25: I have some say over the way I work
(n = 6,439) %

Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
12.1	44.8	34.9	6.9	1.4

HSE scale out of 5
Q25   1=low well-being; 5=high well-being

Higher education   **3.59**

Q30: My working time can be flexible (n = 6,439) %

Always	11.5	
Often	39.4	
Sometimes	34.5	
Seldom	10.5	
Never	4.2	
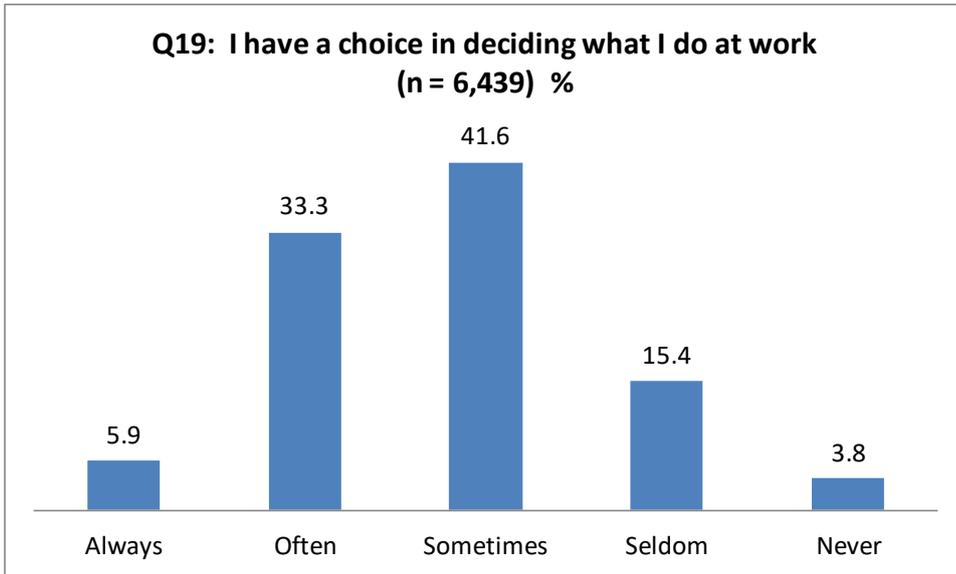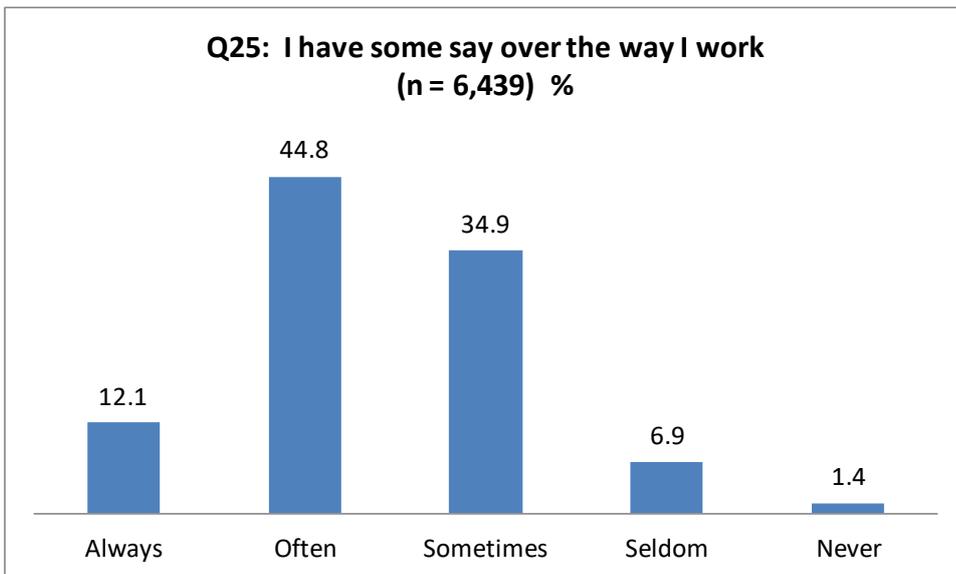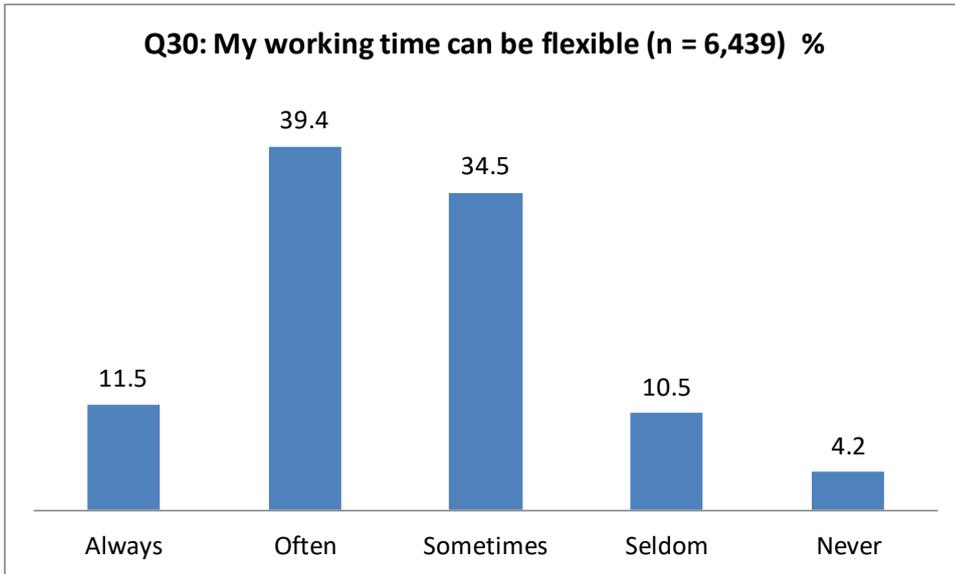
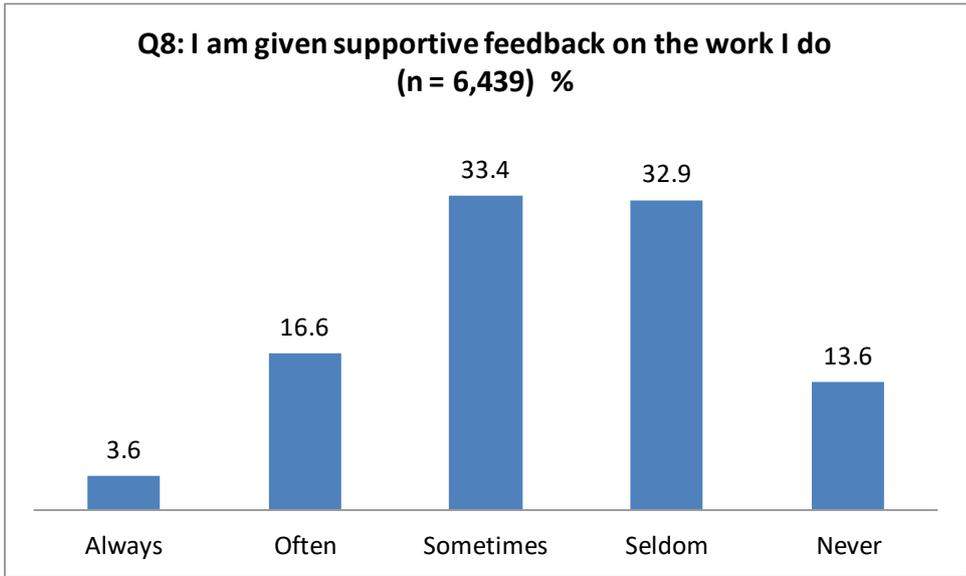|	HSE scale out of 5 1=low well-being; 5=high well-being
q30	
Higher education	**3.43**

Control: summary

Comparison of the UCU data alongside the results of the Health and Safety Executive's survey 'Psychosocial Working Conditions in Britain' indicated respondents from HE had a higher level of control over the way they work than the HSE target industries, including education. Nonetheless, the overall level of wellbeing in relation to job control perceived by employees in HE has reduced since the previous survey was conducted in 2012. The most notable changes were in the flexibility of working time and the level of influence over the way work is done.

	HSE scale out of 5 1=low well-being; 5=high well-being
Higher education	**3.49**
HSE survey target group mean average	3.32

3. Managers' support

A typical snapshot

Respondents said they were sometimes or seldom given supportive feedback on the work they did, and could only sometimes rely on their line manager to help them out with a work problem. They indicated that they could sometimes talk to their line manager about something that had upset or annoyed them about work. Respondents stated their line manager sometimes encouraged them at work, but they seldom felt supported through emotionally demanding work.

Q8: I am given supportive feedback on the work I do (n = 6,439) %
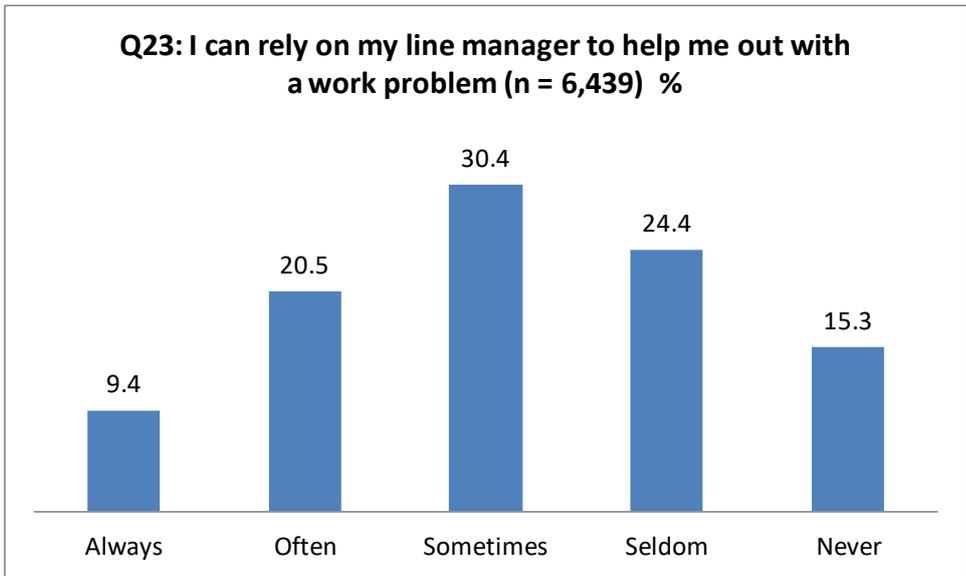
Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
3.6	16.6	33.4	32.9	13.6

q8   1=low well-being; 5=high well-being

Higher education   **2.64**

Q23: I can rely on my line manager to help me out with a work problem (n = 6,439) %

Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
9.4	20.5	30.4	24.4	15.3

HSE scale out of 5

q23   1=low well-being; 5=high well-being

Higher education   **2.84**

Q29: I can talk to my line manager about something that has upset or annoyed me at work (n = 6,439) %

	Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
%	13.4	23.1	26.5	22	15

HSE scale out of 5
1=low well-being; 5=high well-being

q29

Higher education   **2.98**

Q33: I am supported through emotionally demanding work (n = 6,439) %

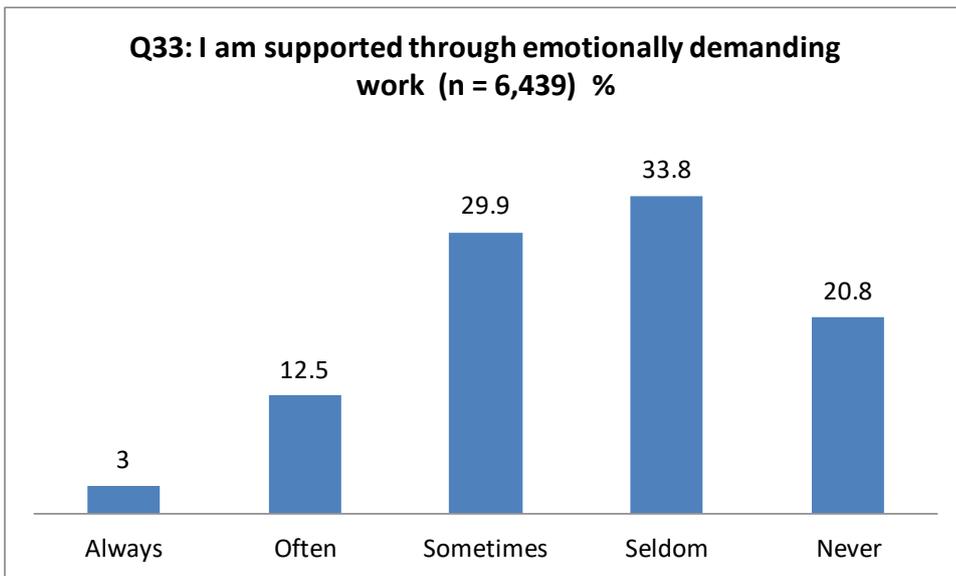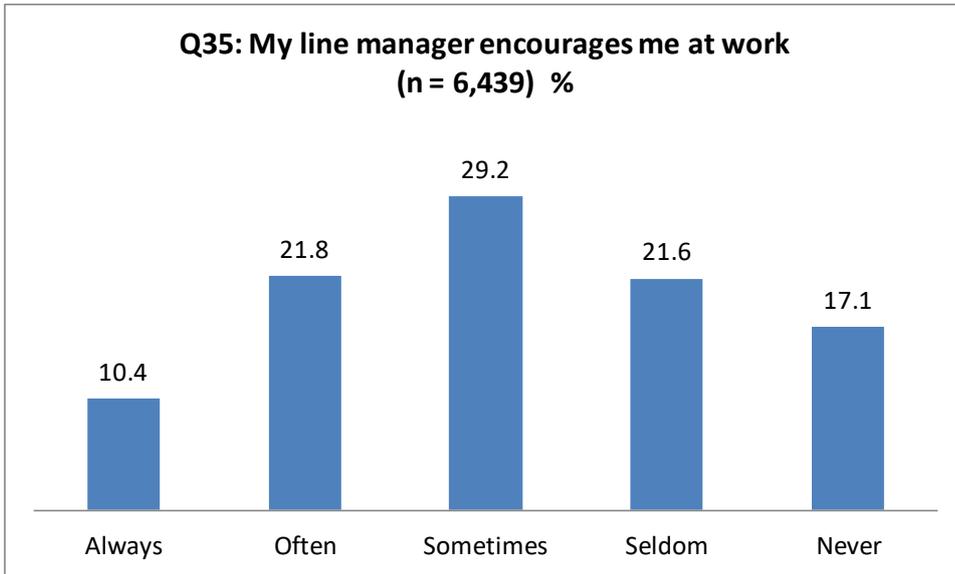|	Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
%	3	12.5	29.9	33.8	20.8

HSE scale out of 5
1=low well-being; 5=high well-being

q33

Higher education   **2.43**

Q35: My line manager encourages me at work
(n = 6,439) %

Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
10.4	21.8	29.2	21.6	17.1
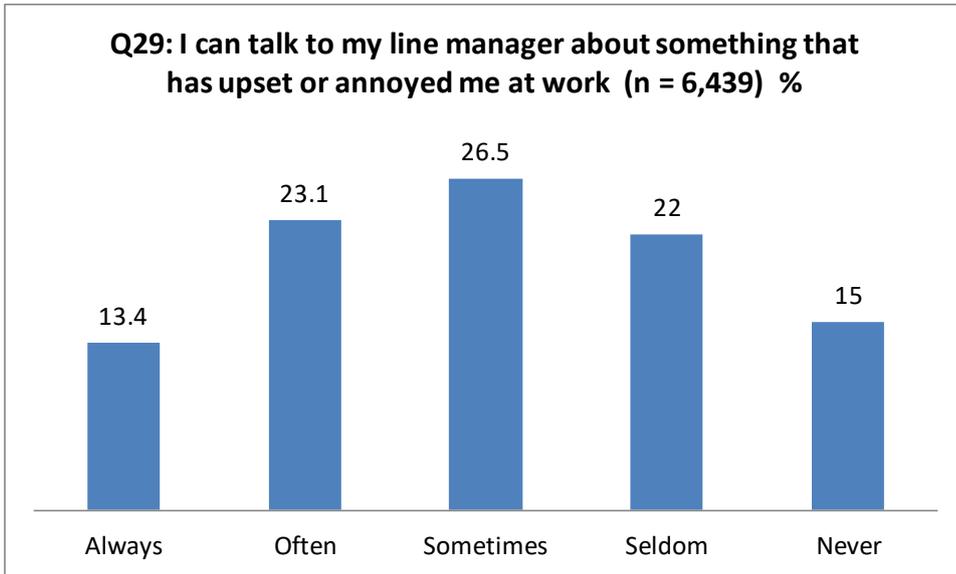
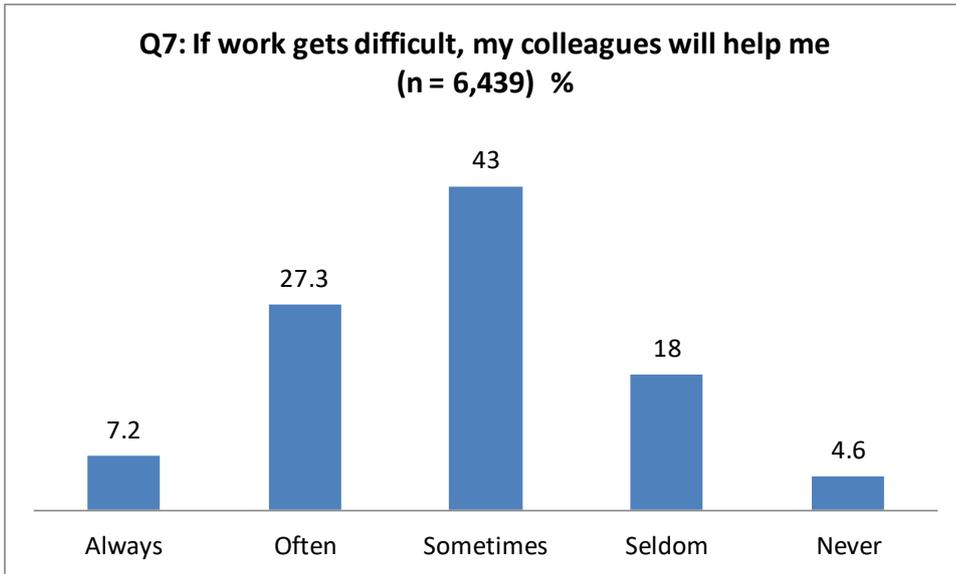|	HSE scale out of 5 1=low well-being; 5=high well-being
q35	
Higher education	**2.87**

Managers' support: summary

Comparison of the UCU data alongside the results of the Health and Safety Executive's survey 'Psychosocial Working Conditions in Britain' indicated a lower level of well-being in relation to support from managers in HE than in the HSE target industries, including education. The level of manager support has reduced since the previous survey was conducted in 2012. The most notable changes were in the extent of encouragement from managers and support for emotional demands.

	HSE scale out of 5 1=low well-being; 5=high well-being
Higher education	**2.75**
HSE survey target mean average	3.77

4. Peer support

A typical snapshot

Respondents said their colleagues would sometimes help them if work got difficult. They indicated that they sometimes received the help and support they needed, and the respect they believed they deserved, from colleagues. Respondents indicated that their colleagues were sometimes willing to listen to their work-related problems.

**Q7: If work gets difficult, my colleagues will help me
(n = 6,439) %**

7.2	27.3	43	18	4.6
Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never

**Q24: I get help and support from my colleagues
(n = 6,439) %**

10.5	33.1	38.1	15.2	3.1
Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never

Q27: I receive the respect at work I deserve from my colleagues (n = 6,439) %

9.8	34	33	17.5	5.8
Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never

HSE scale out of 5
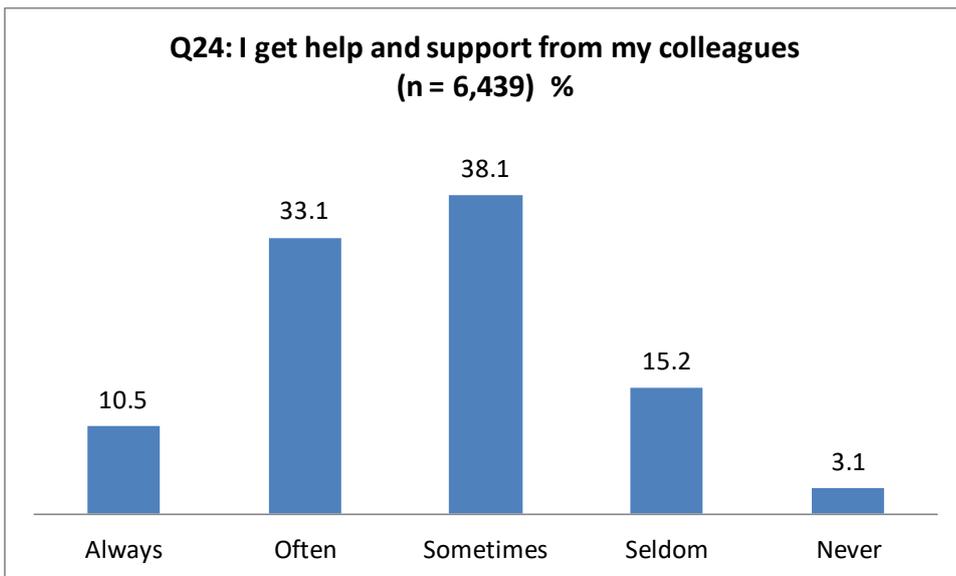q27   1=low well-being; 5=high well-being
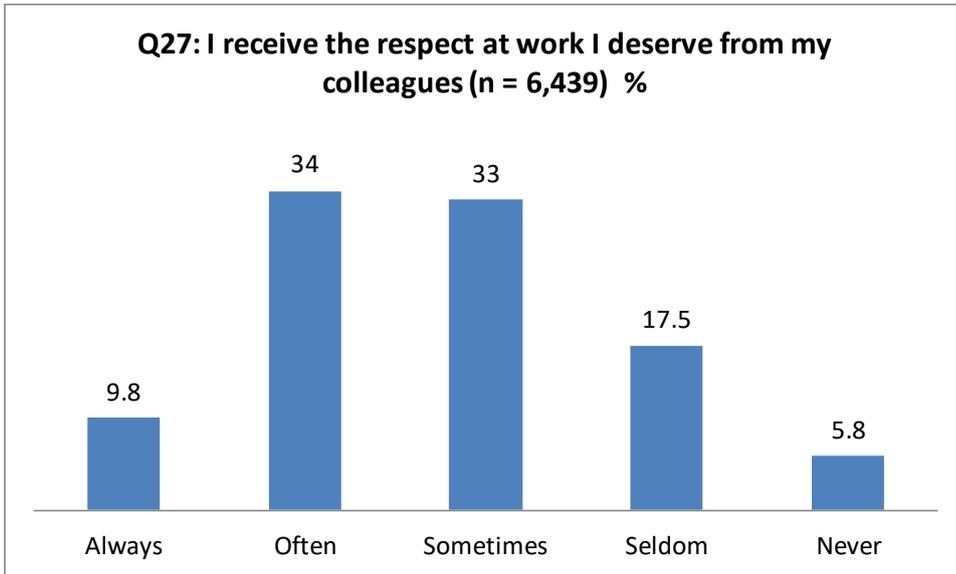**Higher education**   **3.25**

Q31: My colleagues are willing to listen to my work-related problems (n = 6,439) %

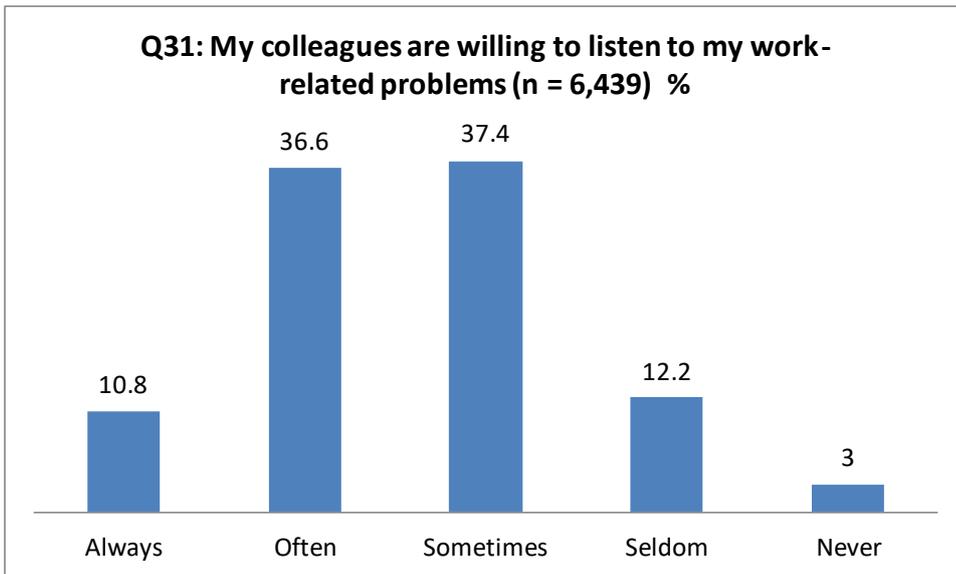|				
10.8	36.6	37.4	12.2	3
Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never

HSE scale out of 5
q31   1=low well-being; 5=high well-being
Higher education   **3.40**
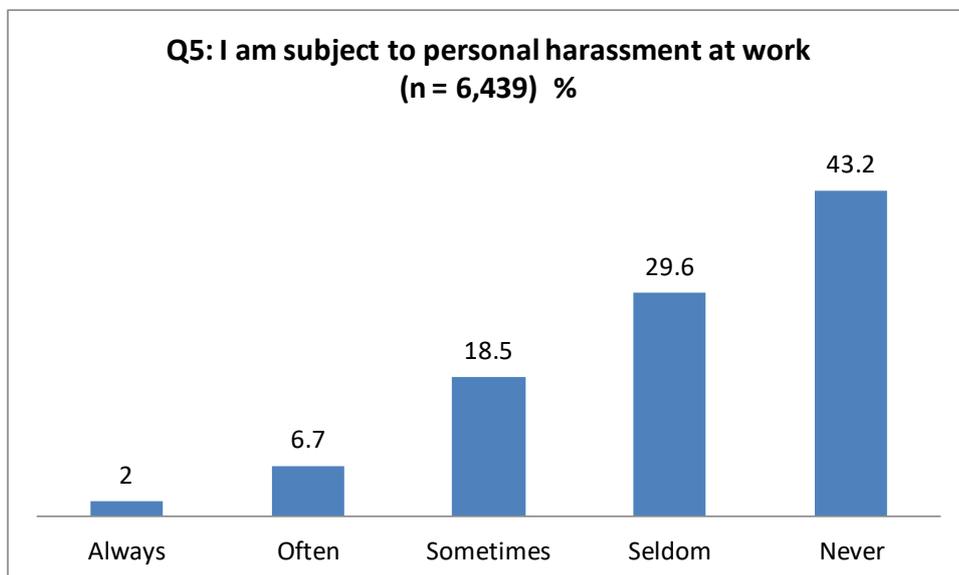
Peer support: summary

Comparison of the UCU data alongside the results of the Health and Safety Executive's survey 'Psychosocial Working Conditions in Britain' indicated a lower level of well-being in HE in relation to peer support than in the HSE target industries, including education. The level of wellbeing in relation to support from colleagues reported by employees in HE has reduced slightly since the previous survey was conducted in 2012. The most notable changes were in the extent to which colleagues were willing to listen to work-related problems.

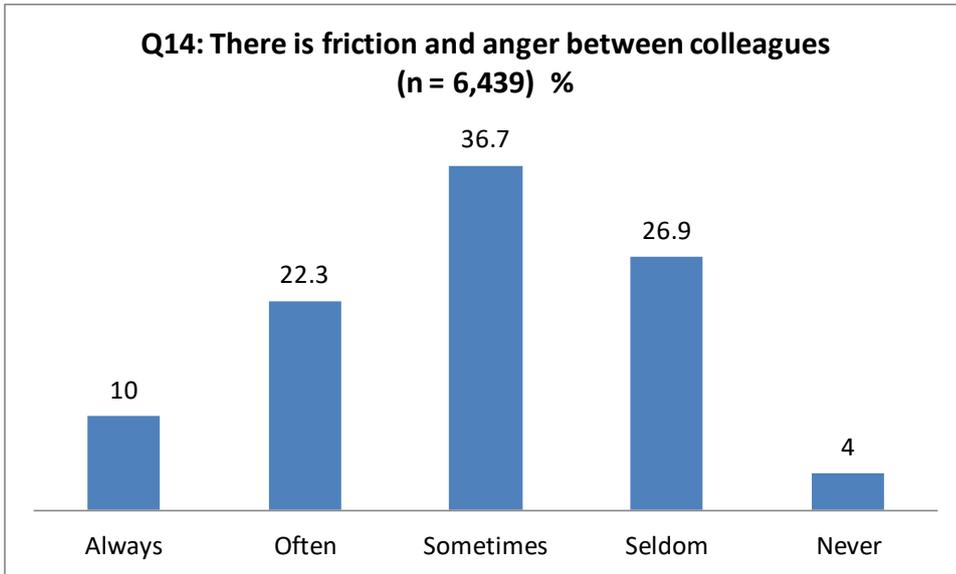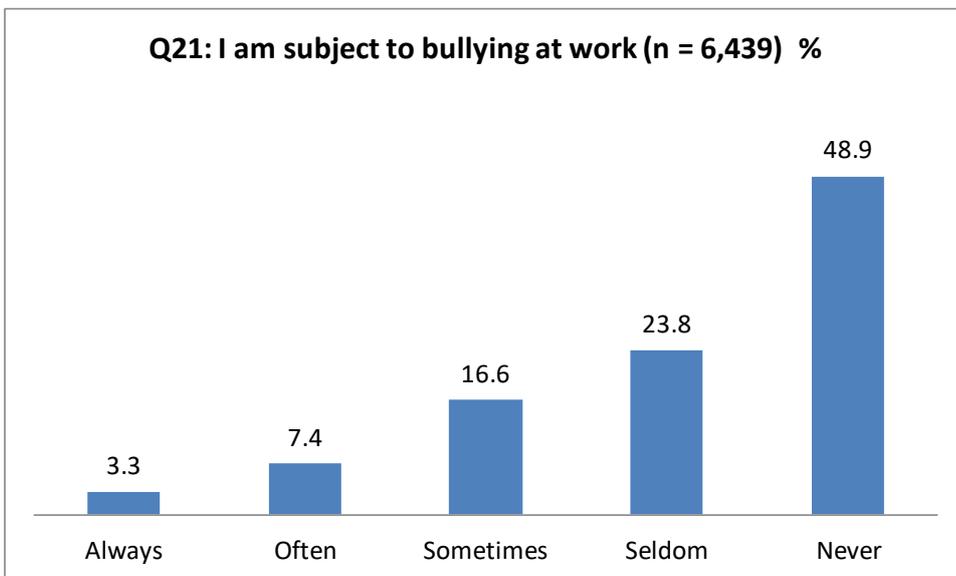|	HSE scale out of 5 1=low well-being; 5=high well-being
Higher education	**3.28**
HSE survey target group mean average	4.03

5. Relationships

A typical snapshot

Only just over four respondents (43%) indicated that they were never subjected to personal harassment at work. They reported that there was sometimes friction or anger between colleagues and relationships at work were sometimes strained. Only just under half (49%) of respondents could say they never experienced bullying at work.

Q5: I am subject to personal harassment at work (n = 6,439) %

Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
2	6.7	18.5	29.6	43.2

	HSE scale out of 5
q5	1=low well-being; 5=high well-being
Higher education	**4.05**

Q14: There is friction and anger between colleagues (n = 6,439) %

	Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
%	10	22.3	36.7	26.9	4

q14

Higher education   **2.89**

Q21: I am subject to bullying at work (n = 6,439) %

	Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
%	3.3	7.4	16.6	23.8	48.9

q21

Higher education   **4.11**

Q34: Relationships at work are strained (n = 6,439) %

Category	Value
Always	9.8
Often	19.9
Sometimes	36.1
Seldom	27.2
Never	7
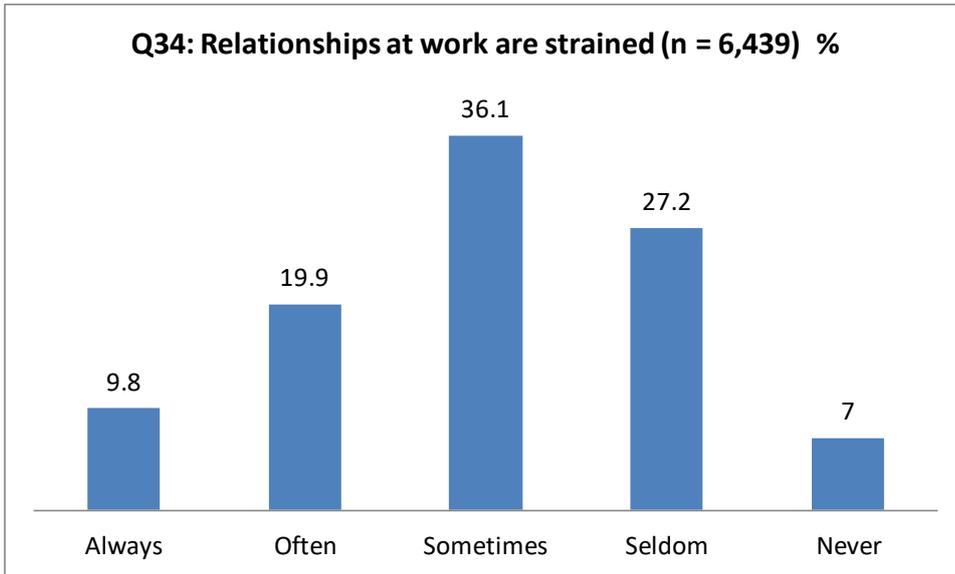
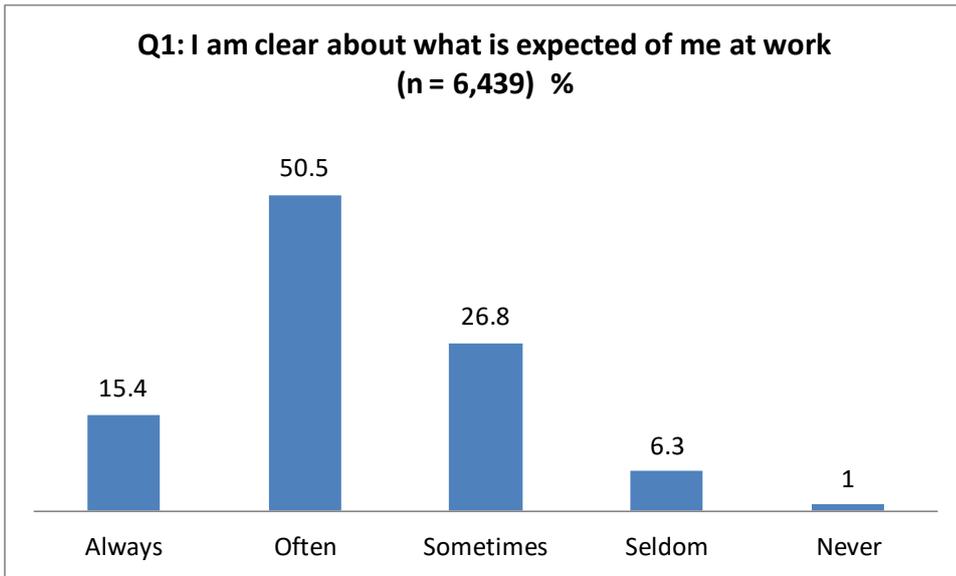|	HSE scale out of 5
q34	1=low well-being; 5=high well-being
Higher education	**3.02**

Relationships: summary

Comparison of the UCU data with the results of the Health and Safety Executive's survey 'Psychosocial Working Conditions in Britain' indicated a lower level of well-being relating to the quality of relationships at work in HE than in the HSE target industries, including education. The overall level of wellbeing regarding relationships reported has reduced slightly since the previous survey was conducted in 2012 with a higher proportion of respondents indicating that they were subjected to harassment and bullying.

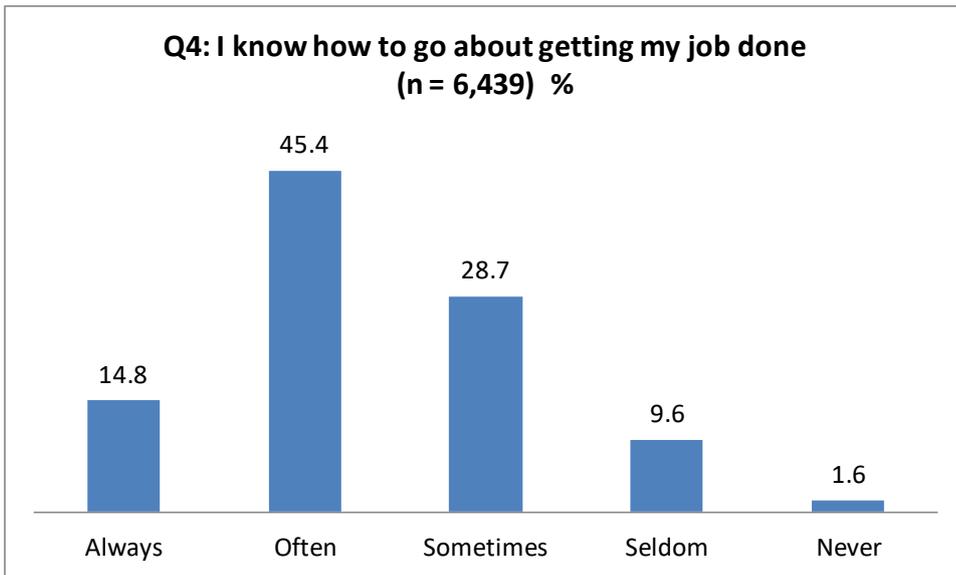|	HSE scale out of 5
	1=low well-being; 5=high well-being
Higher education	**3.47**
HSE survey target group mean average	4.13

6. Role

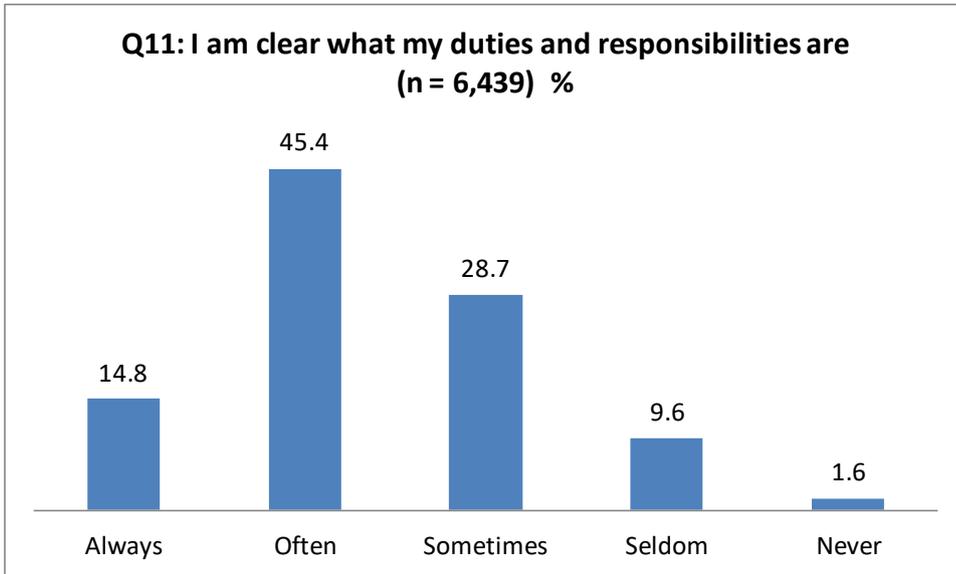## A typical snapshot

Respondents indicated that they often knew what was expected of them at work, often had the information required to get their job done and were often clear about their personal duties and responsibilities. They often understood how their work fitted in with the overall aim of their organisation, but were generally less clear about the goals and objectives for their department.

Q1: I am clear about what is expected of me at work
(n = 6,439) %

	Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
%	15.4	50.5	26.8	6.3	1

HSE scale out of 5
1=low well-being; 5=high well-being
q1
Higher education   **3.73**

Q4: I know how to go about getting my job done
(n = 6,439) %

	Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
%	14.8	45.4	28.7	9.6	1.6

HSE scale out of 5
1=low well-being; 5=high well-being
q4
Higher education   **3.62**

Q11: I am clear what my duties and responsibilities are (n = 6,439) %

Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
14.8	45.4	28.7	9.6	1.6

Q13: I am clear about the goals and objectives for my department (n = 6,439) %

Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
9.5	31.4	32.5	19.9	6.8

Q17: I understand how my work fits into the overall aim of the organisation (n = 6,439) %

12.7	37.4	29.7	15.6	4.7
Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
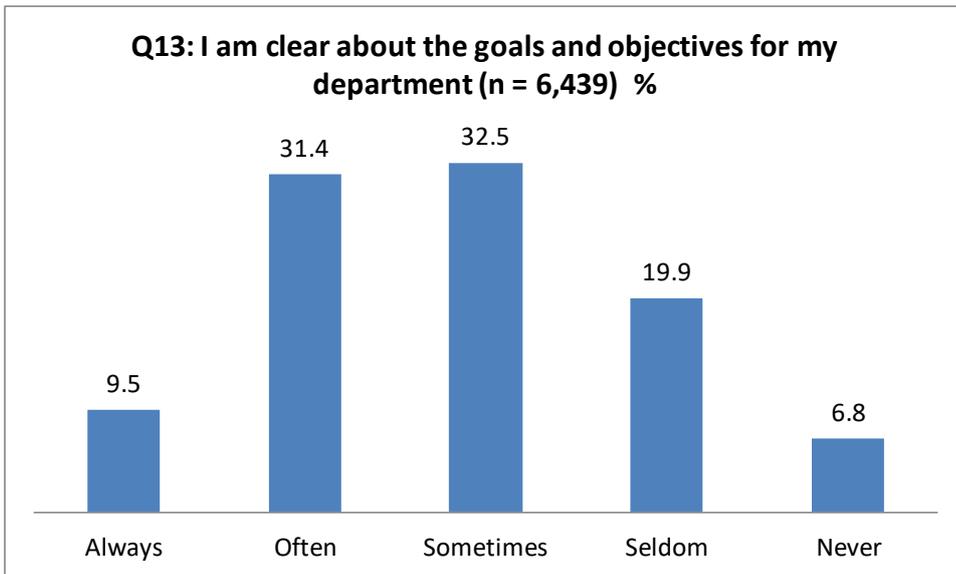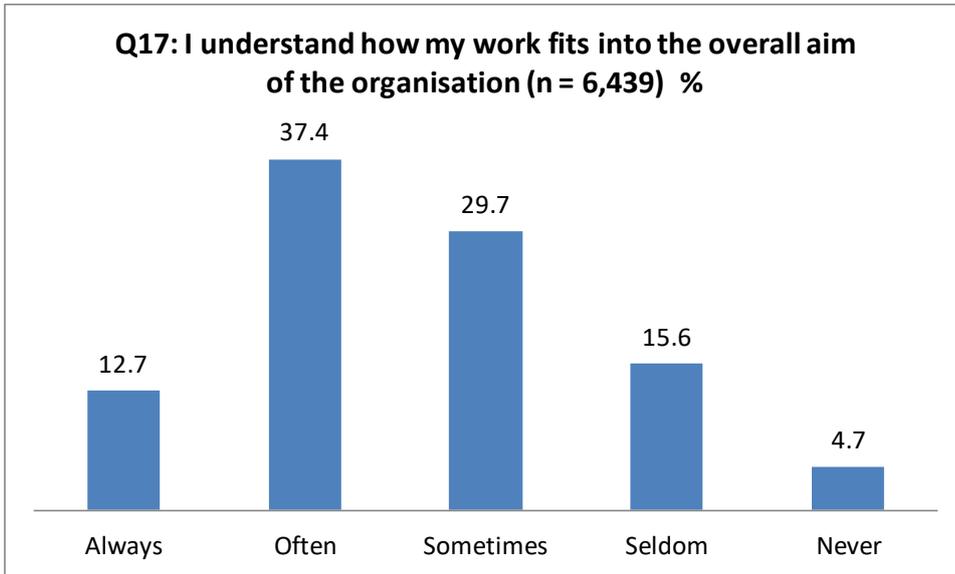
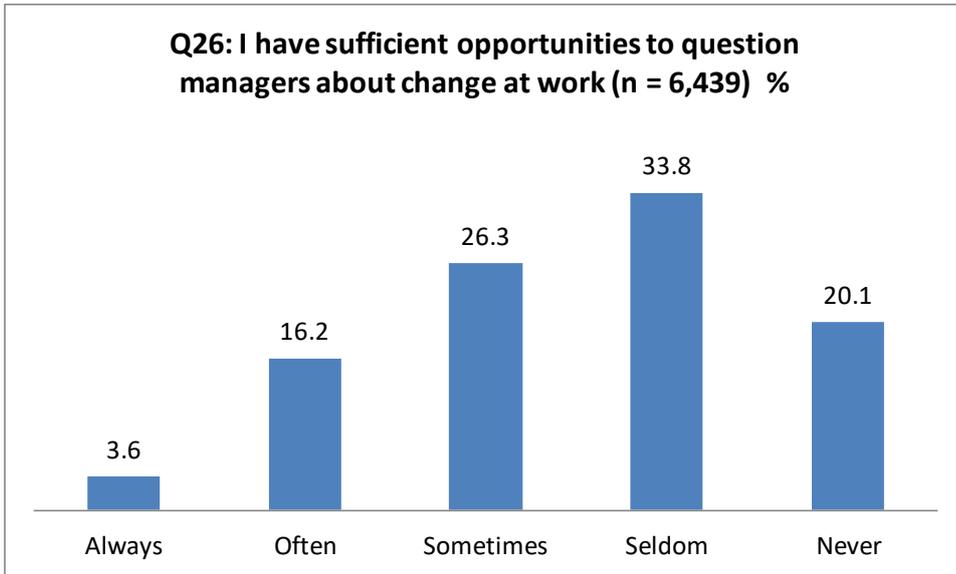|	HSE scale out of 5 1=low well-being; 5=high well-being
q17	
Higher education	**3.38**

Role: summary

Comparison of the UCU data alongside the results of the Health and Safety Executive's survey 'Psychosocial Working Conditions in Britain' indicated a lower level of well-being in HE than in the HSE target industries, including education regarding employees' understanding of their role. The overall level of wellbeing in relation to role has reduced slightly since the previous survey was conducted in 2012. The most notable changes were in the knowledge needed to get the job done and clarity about departmental goals and objectives.

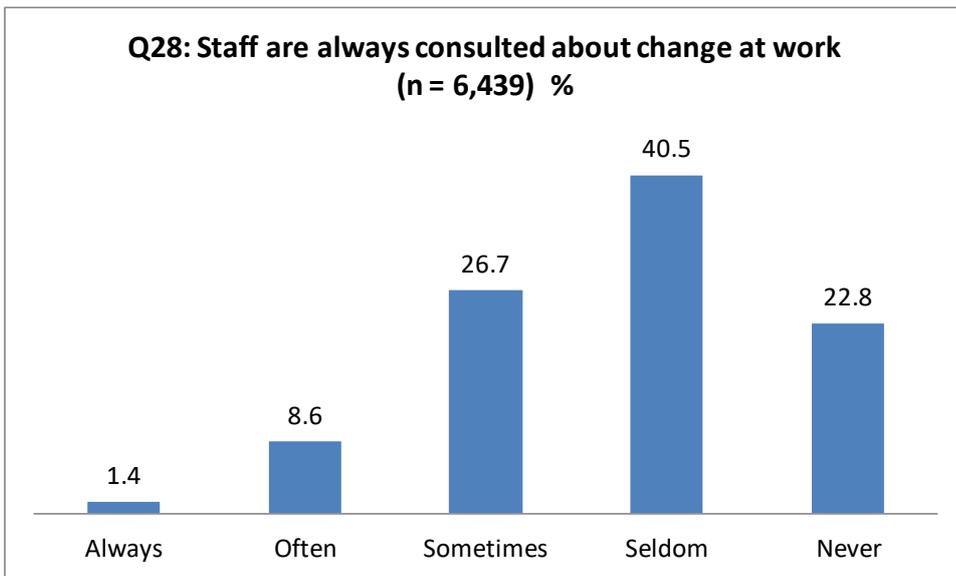|	HSE scale out of 5 1=low well-being; 5=high well-being
Higher education	**3.50**
HSE survey target group mean average	4.61

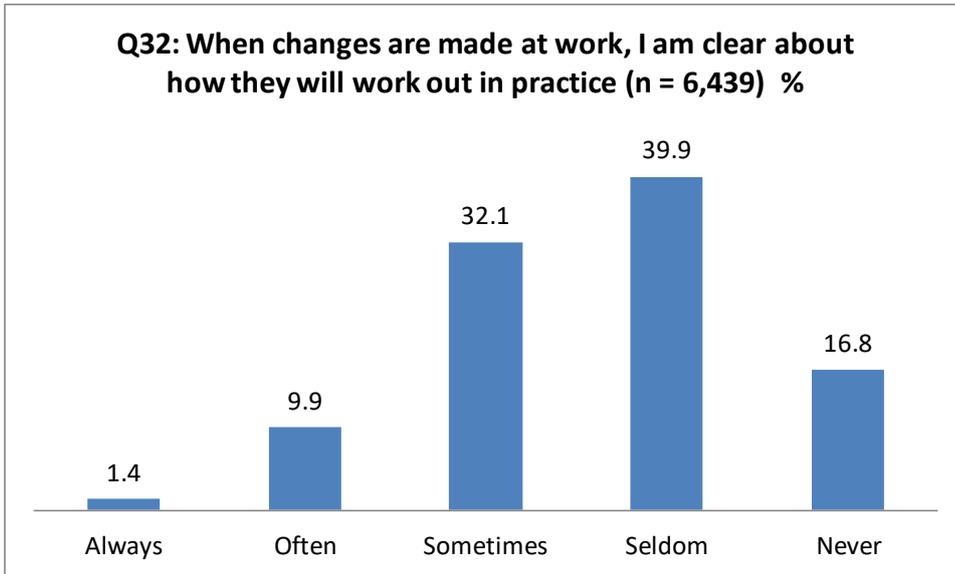## 7. Change

A typical snapshot

Respondents indicated that they seldom had the opportunity to question managers about change at work and were seldom consulted about changes and how they would work out in practice.

Q26: I have sufficient opportunities to question managers about change at work (n = 6,439) %

Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
3.6	16.2	26.3	33.8	20.1

q26

Higher education   **2.49**

Q28: Staff are always consulted about change at work (n = 6,439) %

Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
1.4	8.6	26.7	40.5	22.8

q28

Higher education   **2.25**

Q32: When changes are made at work, I am clear about how they will work out in practice (n = 6,439) %

	Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
	1.4	9.9	32.1	39.9	16.8

	HSE scale out of 5 1=low well-being; 5=high well-being
q32	
Higher education	**2.39**

Change: summary

Comparison of the data alongside the results of the Health and Safety Executive's survey 'Psychosocial Working Conditions in Britain' indicated a lower level of well-being relating to the management of change in HE than in the HSE target industries, including education. The overall level of wellbeing regarding how change is communicated and managed has generally remained stable since the previous survey was conducted in 2012.

	HSE scale out of 5 1=low well-being; 5=high well-being
Higher education	**2.38**
HSE survey target group mean average	3.54

3 Overall perception of stress

Three questions in the survey investigated the extent to which respondents considered their work to be stressful. More than three-quarters strongly agreed (33%) or agreed (46%) with the statement 'I find my job stressful'. Only 3% strongly disagreed.

More than half of the respondents indicated that the level of stress they experienced was generally high (36%), or very high (16%). Over one-third (37%) stated they experienced moderate stress, whereas 10% saw their overall stress level as low or very low. Fifteen percent reported that they seldom or never experienced unacceptable stress, but four respondents in every ten indicated that they often experienced levels of stress they found unacceptable, and 9% indicated that this was always the case. The proportion of respondents that endorsed each

response category for the three questions is shown below, together with the data from FE for the purposes of comparison[3].

q36a I find my job stressful	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	%	%	%	%	%
Higher education	**33.0**	**46.3**	**11.8**	**6.0**	**2.9**

q36b How would you characterise your general or average level of stress?	Very high	High	Moderate	Low	Very low
	%	%	%	%	%
Higher education	**16.4**	**36.3**	**37.3**	**9.0**	**1.0**

q37 Do you experience levels of stress that you find unacceptable?	Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
	%	%	%	%	%
Higher education	**8.6**	**39.6**	**36.9**	**13.5**	**1.4**

Comparisons with previous surveys

The findings of the present survey suggest that the overall level of stress in HE is increasing. Comparative data is provided below from UCU surveys of the HE sector conducted in 2008, 2012 and the current survey (2014). As can be seen, the proportion of respondents who strongly agreed that their job is stressful increased considerably between 2008 and 2012 and has increased further. In the present survey, 79% of respondents from HE agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "I find my job stressful" compared with 73% in the 2012 survey. The proportion of respondents that strongly disagree or disagree with this statement has generally remained stable.

I find my job stressful	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
	%	%	%	%	%
Higher education 2008 (n=9740)*	2.5	7.6	15.9	49.4	24.5
Higher education 2012 (n=14667)**	2.2	7.2	17.8	40.2	32.6
Higher education 2014 (n=6439)	2.9	6.0	11.8	46.3	33.0

Totals may differ due to rounding

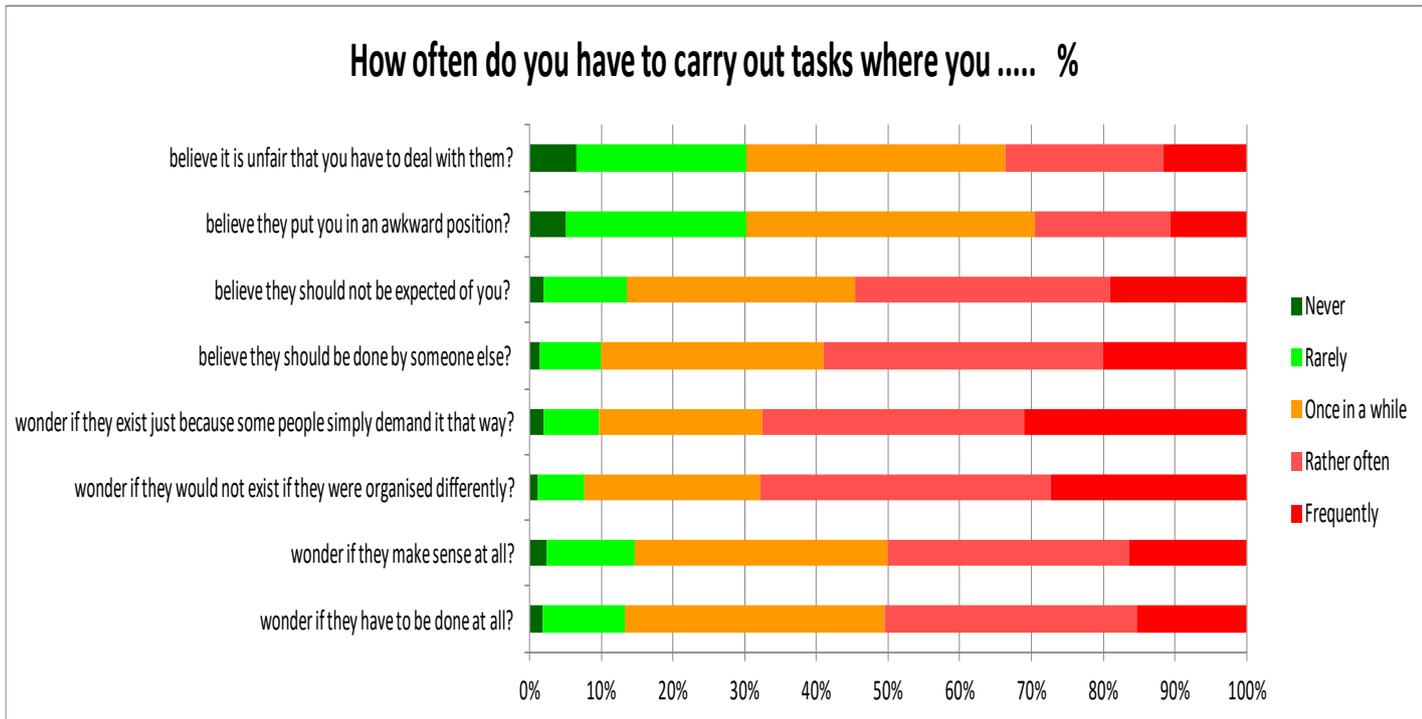* Stephen Court & Gail Kinman, Tackling Stress in Higher Education, UCU: London 2008
http://www.ucu.org.uk/media/pdf/d/0/ucu_hestress_dec08.pdf
** Gail Kinman and Siobhan Wray, Higher Stress, UCU: London 2012
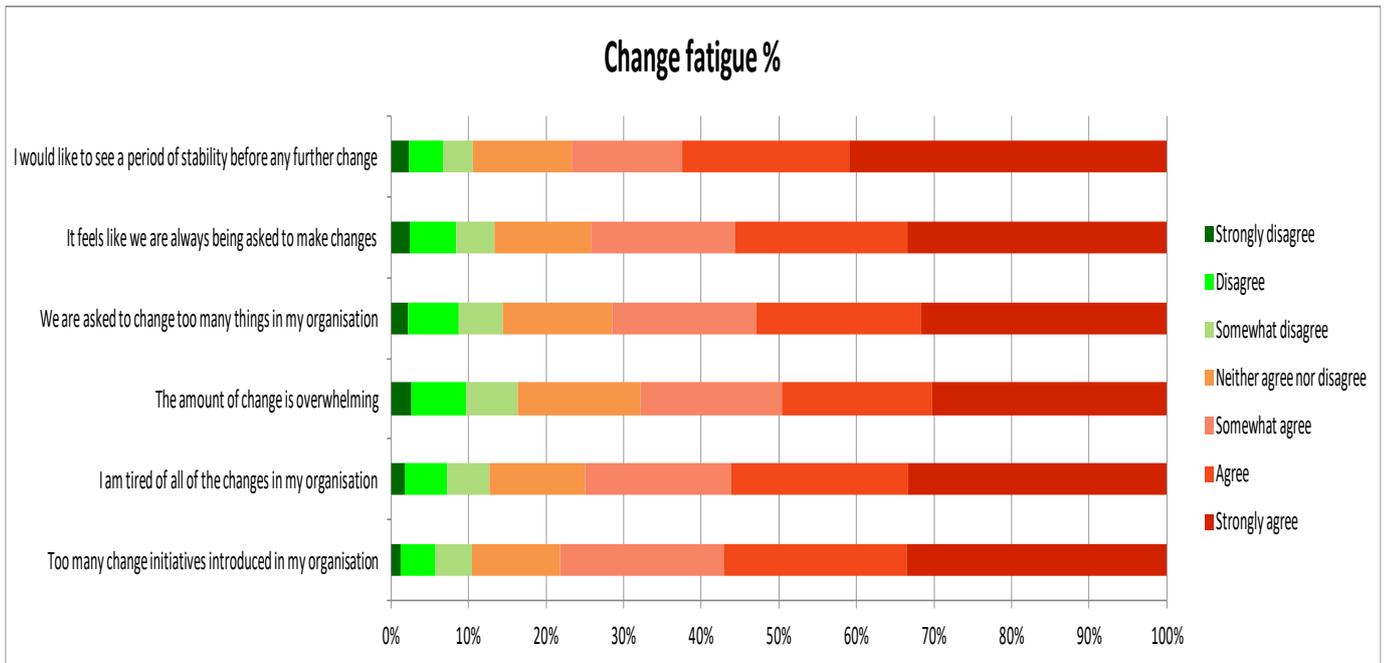http://www.ucu.org.uk/media/pdf/4/5/HE_stress_report_July_2013.pdf

Unreasonable tasks and change fatigue

The extent to which respondents believed they engage in tasks that are either illegitimate (i.e. they should not be done by them), or unnecessary (i.e. they should not be done at all) was explored. The chart below highlights the proportion of the sample that responded on a five-point scale where 1 = never and 5 = frequently. Half reported that they perform unnecessary tasks at work either rather often (35%) or frequently (15%). Only 2% of respondents from HE believed that they never undertake unnecessary tasks. Six respondents out of every ten expressed the belief that the tasks they do at work should be done by somebody else rather often (40%) or frequently (20%). The strongest level of agreement overall, however, was with the performance of tasks that would not exist (or could be done with less effort) if they were organised differently, and tasks that exist because some people simply demand it this way. This question achieved a mean score of 3.9 on a 5-point scale.

How often do you have to carry out tasks where you ..... %

Legend:
- Never
- Rarely
- Once in a while
- Rather often
- Frequently

Categories (top to bottom):
- believe it is unfair that you have to deal with them?
- believe they put you in an awkward position?
- believe they should not be expected of you?
- believe they should be done by someone else?
- wonder if they exist just because some people simply demand it that way?
- wonder if they would not exist if they were organised differently?
- wonder if they make sense at all?
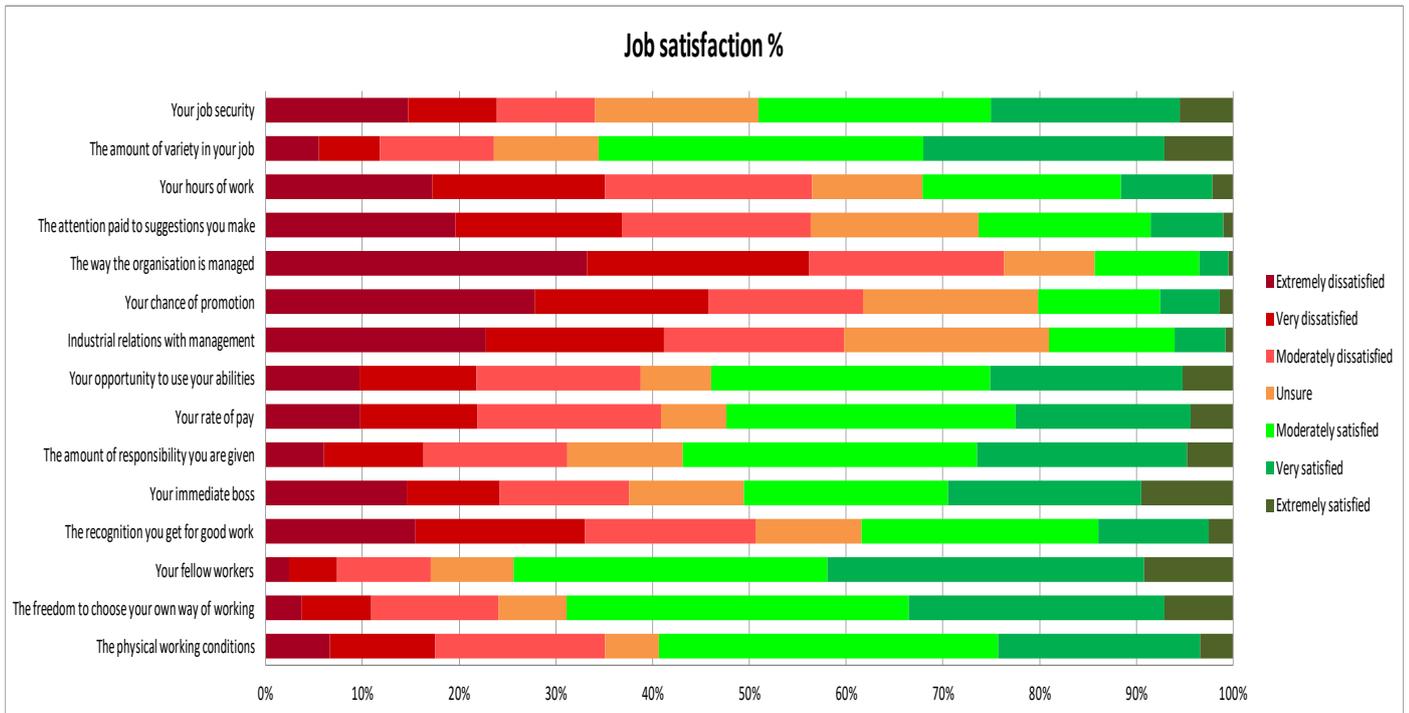- wonder if they have to be done at all?

A further scale examined the extent to which respondents were experiencing change fatigue. Responses to a series of statements ranged from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree. The chart below shows the responses to each of the statements. Almost six respondents out of every ten agreed (24%) or strongly agreed (34%) that too many change initiatives had been introduced in their organisation, whereas 6% disagreed (4%) or strongly disagreed (2%). Three-quarters of the sample indicated that they were tired of the changes that had occurred, and a similar proportion (68%) found them to be overwhelming. A considerable majority (76%) agreed at least "somewhat" that a period of stability without further changes being introduced was required, with more than four out of every ten (41%) expressing strong agreement. This statement had the highest level of agreement overall, with a mean score of 5.6 on a 7-point scale.

Change fatigue %

Categories (top to bottom):
- I would like to see a period of stability before any further change
- It feels like we are always being asked to make changes
- We are asked to change too many things in my organisation
- The amount of change is overwhelming
- I am tired of all of the changes in my organisation
- Too many change initiatives introduced in my organisation

Legend:
- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

X-axis: 0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

Job satisfaction and wellbeing

The overall level of job satisfaction was assessed together with two separate components: intrinsic satisfaction (i.e. reactions to features of the job itself, such as variety, control and the opportunity to use skills) and extrinsic satisfaction (features external to the job such as pay and the way the organisation is managed). Job satisfaction was rated on a seven-point scale with 1 = "extremely dissatisfied" and 7 = "extremely satisfied". Levels of satisfaction with the job in general varied considerably among respondents. Only just over two in every ten were very (14%) or extremely (7%) dissatisfied.

Satisfaction with specific job characteristics and working conditions were also investigated. respondents tended to be more satisfied with intrinsic than extrinsic aspects of work. As can be seen from the chart below, by far the highest level of satisfaction was with fellow workers, with 74% of respondents being at least moderately satisfied. Satisfaction with the freedom to choose how to do the job and the degree of variety in the tasks performed was also typically high. As can be seen below, however, the lowest ratings overall by respondents were with industrial relations, promotion opportunities and organisational management. Nonetheless, it should be emphasised that the level of satisfaction with line managers reported here was generally higher than with senior managers. This is illustrated by the finding that only 3% of the sample were very or extremely satisfied with the way their organisation was managed. The overall level of job satisfaction reported by respondents from HE (i.e. 3.88) compares unfavourably with studies of other occupational groups, for example, a police force (4.53), an NHS Trust (4.68) and Social Work (4.74) (Stride et al., 2007).

Job satisfaction %

Categories (legend): Extremely dissatisfied, Very dissatisfied, Moderately dissatisfied, Unsure, Moderately satisfied, Very satisfied, Extremely satisfied

Items (top to bottom):
- Your job security
- The amount of variety in your job
- Your hours of work
- The attention paid to suggestions you make
- The way the organisation is managed
- Your chance of promotion
- Industrial relations with management
- Your opportunity to use your abilities
- Your rate of pay
- The amount of responsibility you are given
- Your immediate boss
- The recognition you get for good work
- Your fellow workers
- The freedom to choose your own way of working
- The physical working conditions

Psychological wellbeing was measured in two ways: a) psychological distress, which assesses elements of depression, anxiety, insomnia and impaired decision-making; and b) job-related burnout, which encompasses exhaustion and disengagement

The measure of psychological distress explores the extent to which the respondent's current level of wellbeing differs from their usual state. Each of the questions has a "better/healthier than normal", a "same as usual", a "worse than usual" and a "much worse than usual" option. There are two ways of scoring the measure: the "Likert" method (which assesses severity of symptoms) and the 'GHQ' method where threshold scores are used to assess 'caseness' levels of distress (where some degree of medical intervention is recommended).

Just under half of the sample (49%) reported that they were feeling reasonably happy all things considered, but 49% were feeling less happy (35%) or much less happy (14%) than usual. A similar proportion indicated that they had been feeling unhappy and depressed either more (33%) or much more (17%) than usual, and were less (40%) or much less (13%) able to enjoy their normal day-to-day activities. In relation to insomnia, 37% disclosed that they were losing sleep over worry "rather more than usual" and 16% "much more than usual". While 4% of respondents reported feeling under strain "not at all" and 35% "no more than usual", more than six out of every ten disclosed that they did so "rather more than usual" (41%) or "much more than usual" (21%). More than half of the sample (60%) felt capable of making decisions about things, but four out of ten indicated that they felt "rather less decisive" (31%) or and 9% "much less decisive" than usual.

A high level of caseness was found in that 55% of the sample scored at the cut-off point of 4 or above, 49% scored above 5, 38% above 7 and 28% above 9. More than two respondents from every ten 10 or above and 13% achieved than maximum score of 12. This suggests that a high proportion of HE employees requires some degree of intervention to help improve their psychological health. The caseness rate found in this sample (i.e. 55%) should be compared to the proportion found in studies of other occupational groups: for example, Local Authority

(42%), Social Workers (37%) and Police Force (47%) (Stride et al. 2007). It also compares unfavourably with previous studies of the university sector, whereby Kinman & Jones (2009) found a caseness rate of 49% in a sample of academic and academic-related staff working in UK universities and Winefield et al. (2003) reported rates of 43%. This suggests that levels of psychological distress in HE have risen considerably over time.

In terms of burnout, levels of exhaustion and disengagement reported respondents were fairly high (the mean scores were 2.9 and 2.5 respectively on a 4-point scale). Almost eight from every ten agreed (48%) or strongly agreed (30%) that they usually felt worn out after the working day, and the same proportion (78%) reported that they took longer to recover from the demands of their job than in the past. Many appeared to find their work emotionally as well as physically challenging; was evidenced by more than two-thirds (69%) agreeing that their job made them feel emotionally drained. Responses to the questions assessing levels of engagement were subject to greater variation than those measuring exhaustion. For example, while more than seven respondents in every ten agreed that they tend to discuss their job in negative terms, 75% reported that they could always find new and interesting aspects in their work and more than half (61%) saw their job as a positive challenge and felt that this was the only type of work they could imagine themselves doing.

5 Work-life balance

As can be seen from the chart below, the work-life balance of respondents is generally poor. Reflecting the findings relating to exhaustion reported above, two-thirds of the sample reported that they come home from work too tired to do the things they would like to do like either often (30%), almost always (25%) or always (11%). Of particular concern is the finding that more than one-third of the sample almost always or always neglects their personal life because their work is so demanding. Only just over one respondent in every ten maintained that their personal life never (2%) or rarely (11%) suffers because of their work.
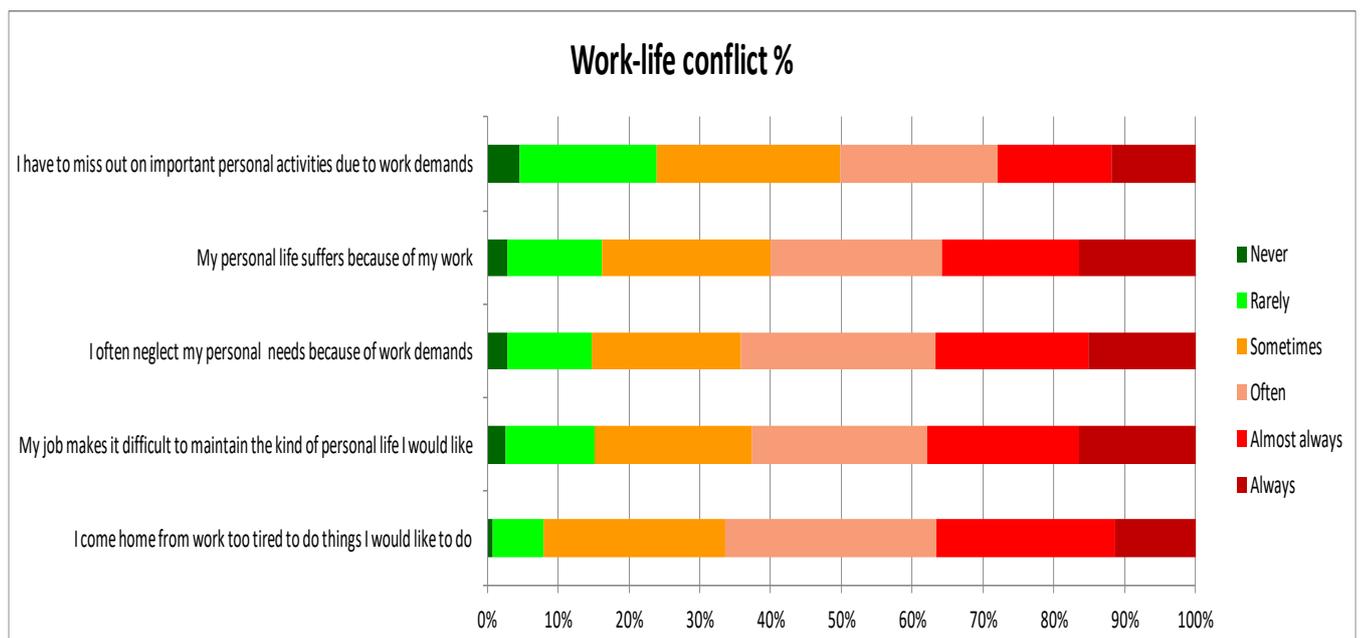

Work-life conflict %

Evidence was found that the overall level of work-life conflict in HE has increased since the 2012 survey; the mean score for the scale as a whole increased from 3.54 in 2012 to 3.92 in the present survey, with particular increases found in the extent to respondents neglect their personal needs and return from work too tired to meet their personal responsibilities. In the current survey, additional questions were asked relating to the extent to which HE stsaff ruminate about work-related worries and how they feel about this. More than three-quarters of the sample disagreed (45%) or strongly disagreed (33%) that they are able to leave work issues behind when they leave. Similarly, only just over one respondent in every ten (16%) indicated that they find it easy to unwind after work. A considerable majority reported that they become tense (76%), fatigued (68%) and irritated (73%) when they think about work issues in their free time.

Work-life facilitation %
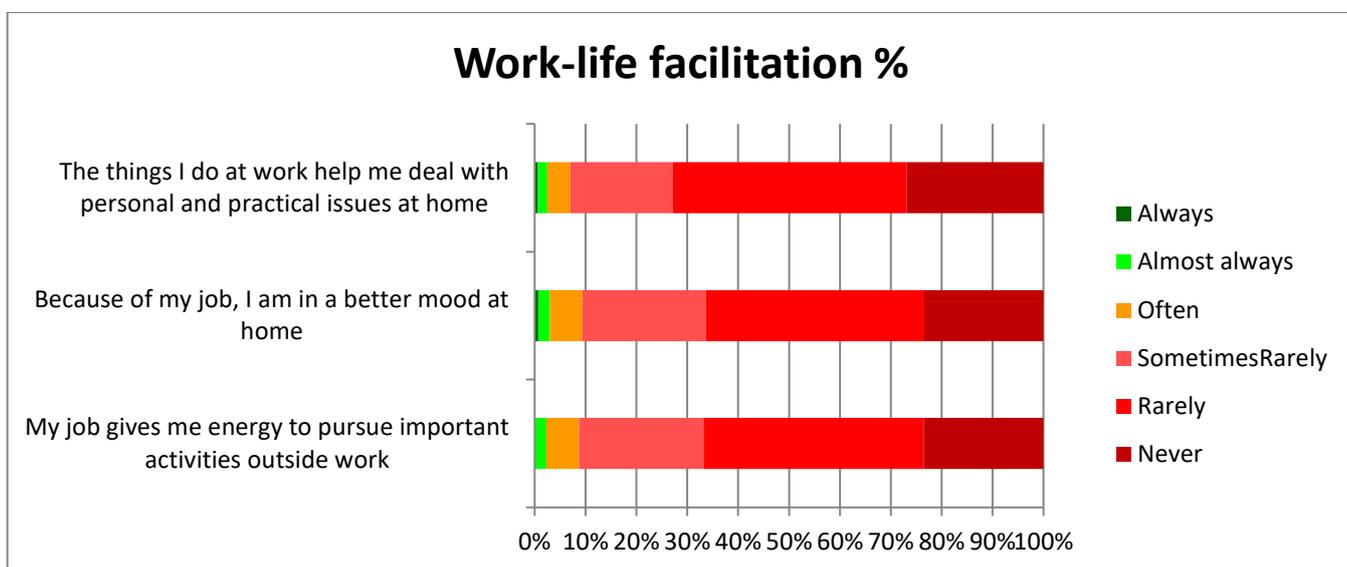
Little evidence was found that respondents experience work-life facilitation. Only 8% reported that their job gave them energy to pursue important activities more frequently than sometimes. Similarly, only just under one respondent in every ten indicated that their job helped improve their mood when they returned home often (6%), almost always (2%) and always (1%), whereas more than two-thirds (67%) reported that this rarely (43%) or never (24%) occurred. Unlike work-life conflict reported above, which had increased in the four-year period, the overall level of work-life facilitation reported by respondents from HE remained fairly stable.
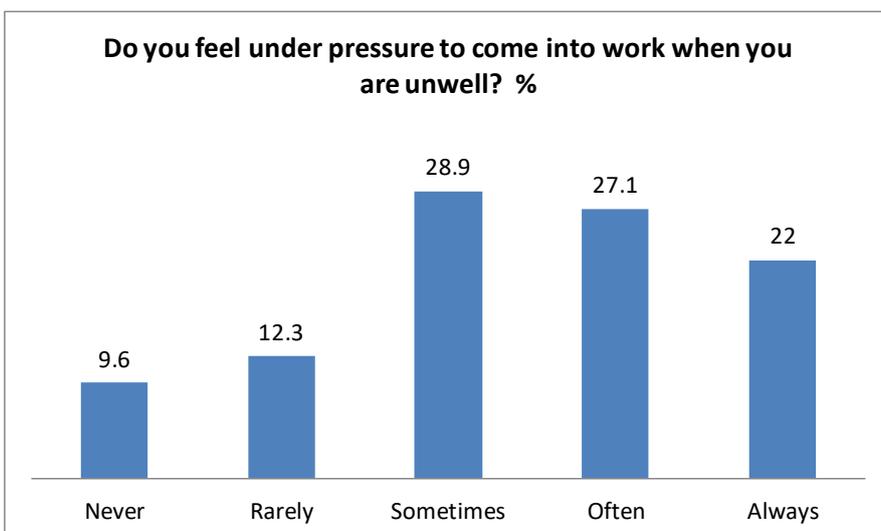
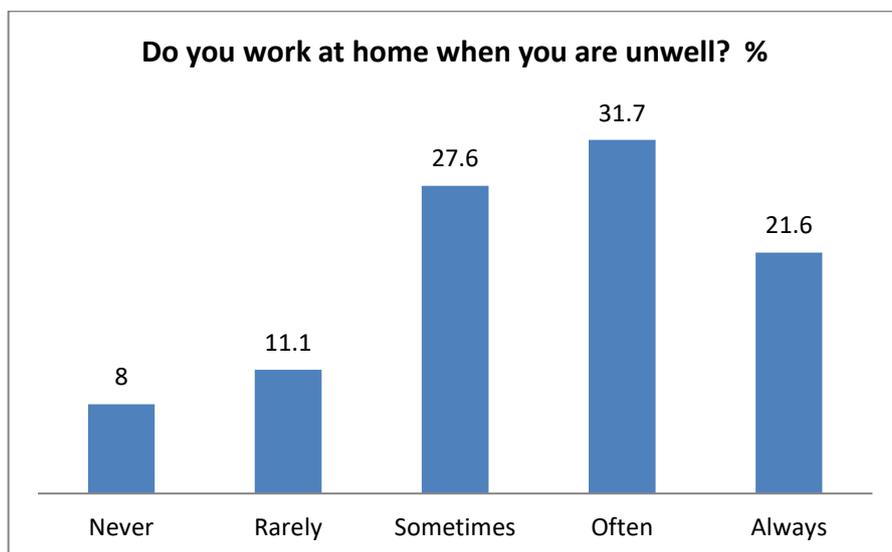## 5.   Health, sickness absence and "presenteeism"

As can be seen from the chart below, the majority of respondents (91%) were in at least fair health, whereas 22% reported that their health was very good or excellent.

In general, my health is... %

Poor: 8.5
Fair: 32.1
Good: 37.7
Very good: 17
Excellent: 4.7
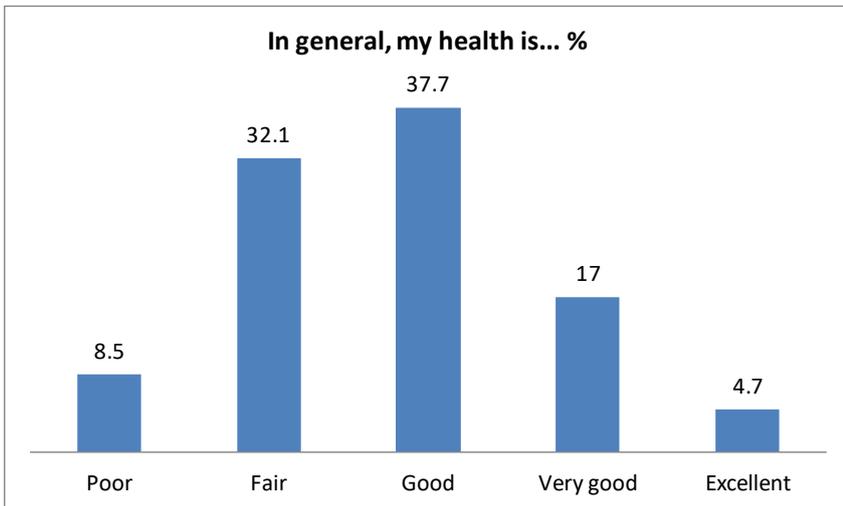
Nearly seven out of every ten respondents (68%) reported that they had taken sick leave in the 12 months prior to the survey being conducted. This represents a slight rise in the proportion found in the 2012 survey. The number of sick days taken over the last year ranged from 1 to 270, with a mean of 5.6 (SD = 17.0). Of the respondents who had taken time off sick, almost three out of every ten (29%) indicated that a proportion of this time had been due to stress-related illness, with 12% reporting taking more than five days and 8% more than 10 days off for this reason. When interpreting these findings, however, it is important to recognise the 'healthy worker effect', whereby employees with chronic health problems are likely to have retired or changed occupations.

The two charts below show the proportion of respondents who indicated that they work while they are sick. Almost eight out of every ten (78%) feel pressure to come to work when they are unwell at least sometimes; while almost half experience such pressure either often (27%) or always (22%). Few (i.e. 8%) never work at home when they are unwell, whereas a considerable majority (81%) do so at least sometimes, and 22% always do so.

Do you feel under pressure to come into work when you are unwell? %

Never: 9.6
Rarely: 12.3
Sometimes: 28.9
Often: 27.1
Always: 22

Do you work at home when you are unwell? %

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
8	11.1	27.6	31.7	21.6

Respondents who indicated that they continued to work while they were sick were asked to provide the reasons for this. The explanations provided varied considerably; some were concerned about falling behind with their work which would increase the pressure on them when they returned, while others did not want to let their students or their colleagues down. Many indicated that rescheduling classes, assessments and meetings was difficult, meaning that they felt obliged to go into work. Respondents commonly highlighted a lack of cover for sickness absence so that if they did not do their work it would remain undone. Others mentioned that they were expected to provide work for their students to do when they reported going off sick, or were asked to find somebody who was prepared to take on their duties. The potential adverse impact on institutional and national student surveys of staff taking time off sick was also highlighted, especially where classes had to be cancelled.

Relationships between the working environment and wellbeing

Respondents who experienced more demands at work, less control and support from managers and colleagues, poorer quality relationships, less role clarity and less effective management of change typically reported more stress, burnout and psychological distress and less job satisfaction. Similarly, those who believed that a higher proportion of the tasks they performed were unreasonable and who experienced more change fatigue tended to be psychologically distressed, exhausted and dissatisfied. Work-related demands, role ambiguity and poor quality relationships were particularly powerful predictors of distress. Respondents from HE who experienced more work-life conflict also tended to report that their mental health was poorer than those with a better work-life balance; a risk factor was an inability to switch off from the job and a tendency to ruminate on work problems during free time. The work-related factors that were the strongest predictors of wellbeing will be discussed further in the conclusion section later in this report.

6   Differences between groups

This survey explored whether there were any job-related or demographic differences in the extent of stressors and strains reported by respondents from HE.

Academic and academic-related staff. Respondents employed in academic roles reported more demands and role ambiguity, less control and support from managers and peers, poorer quality relationships and less effective management of change than academic-related grades. They also tended to experience more stress and work-life conflict.

Academic role. Respondents from academic grades who were employed in both teaching and research roles typically reported more demands, less control and peer support and a higher level of stress and work-life conflict and stress than those in teaching or research jobs. On the whole, respondents with research-only contracts reported less demand, more control and support from managers, better quality relationships and more effective change management than those in teaching and research roles. Research only grades also experienced the lowest levels of work-life conflict and stress.

Sex. Women working in HE reported more demands, less control and higher levels of stress and work-life conflict than their male colleagues. Women also tended to take more time off sick than men. Nonetheless, female respondents were typically more satisfied with the support they obtained from managers and colleagues and reported more role clarity. Men tended to work longer hours than females; this difference remained after controlling for mode and terms of employment[4].

Disability. Respondents who identified themselves as disabled, or who were unsure if they were disabled, reported less wellbeing in relation to all the HSE stressor dimensions. They also tended to report more work-related stress and work-life conflict.

Age. Older respondents tended to report more role clarity, but they also typically experienced poorer quality relationships in work and less support from management and colleagues. Working hours and perceived stress also tended to rise with age.

Tenure. Respondents who had worked longer in HE typically reported more demands, worked longer hours and received less support from managers and colleagues. They also tended to experience more control and role clarity and more effective management of change.

Mode of employment. Respondents employed on a full-time basis typically reported more job demands and higher levels of stress and work-life conflict than those on part-time and hourly-paid contracts. On average, however, those who were hourly paid tended to perceive less control, peer support and role clarity.

Terms of employment. Respondents who were employed on a permanent contract generally reported more demands than those on fixed-term and other types of contract.

7   Conclusion

Although a degree of stress is to be expected in any professional role, this survey indicates that it remains a serious cause for concern in higher education in the UK. The high level of stress found in the 2012 survey has not been alleviated; in fact, the proportion of respondents who agree or strongly agree that their job is stressful has increased by 6% (i.e. from 73% to 79%) in

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[4] Female respondents from higher education were more likely to be employed on a part-time and fixed-term basis than males.

the two years since the previous survey, and a higher proportion (52%) reported that they often or always experienced levels of stress they found unacceptable (44% in 2012 which, in turn, represented an increase from the 39% reported in the 2008 survey). These findings should be contrasted with those reported in 2010 by the HSE, where the proportion of UK employees in general who consider their job to be very or extremely stressful was 15%. In the current survey, demands were by far the most powerful predictor of job-related stress, followed by poor interpersonal relationships.

On all the HSE stressor categories, HE employees reported lower well-being than the average for those working in the HSE target group industries, including education. The biggest 'well-being gaps', in order of magnitude, were change management, role, support from managers and job demands. This is a similar pattern to that which emerged in the 2012 study, but the well-being gap in relation to support from managers and peers, demands and control has widened further, highlighting particular problems in these areas. There is evidence that job control can protect employees from the negative impact of job demands on wellbeing. Although the overall level of control reported by HE staff still exceeds the HSE benchmark, the gap is narrowing year on year (from 0.43 in 2008 to 0.17 in 2014). These findings should be contrasted with those reported by the HSE for the UK workforce in general. Although demand, control, peer support, role and relationship scores have changed little among all British employees since 2004, some improvements in levels of wellbeing in relation to change and managerial support have been documented (HSE, 2010). As can be seen below, there continues to be a considerable shortfall between the mean scores for each of the hazard categories and the HSE recommendations and this has widened over time.

1=low well-being; 5=high well-being	Demands	Control	Managerial support	Peer support	Relationships	Role	Change
HSE target group mean average	3.44	3.32	3.77	4.03	4.13	4.61	3.54
Higher Education 2014	2.49	3.49	2.75	3.27	3.48	3.50	2.38
'Well-being gap'	-0.95	+0.17	-1.02	-0.76	-0.65	-1.11	-1.16
Higher Education 2012	2.52	3.62	2.91	3.39	3.53	3.66	2.39
'Well-being gap'	-0.92	+0.30	-0.86	-0.64	-0.60	-0.95	-1.15
Higher Education 2008	2.61	3.75	2.94	3.40	3.57	3.72	2.54
'Well-being gap'	-0.83	+0.43	-0.83	-0.63	-0.56	-0.89	-1.00
HSE interim target	3.50	3.50	3.80	4.00	4.25	5.00	3.67
HSE long term target	4.25	4.33	4.60	4.75	4.75	5.00	4.00

Evidence has been found that academic and academic-related staff in the UK continue to have problems achieving healthy balance between their work and their personal life. Despite growing evidence that work can facilitate and enrich non-working life (Grzywacz & Demerouti, 2011), little support for such positive effects in HE employees emerged. Only just over one respondent in every ten maintained that their personal life rarely or never suffers because of their work. The overall level of work-life conflict found in the present survey is considerably higher than that found in 2012.   The findings indicate that demands, and to a lesser extent lack of control and poor quality relationships at work, were the most powerful predictors of work-life conflict in HE staff. Nonetheless, change fatigue, performing unreasonable tasks and rumination about work-

related worries and concerns also made a significant contribution. Conversely, respondents who experienced more work-life facilitation tended to report higher wellbeing in relation to demands, support and control and have a stronger boundary between their work and home life.

The survey introduced several new variables thought to be of particular relevance to current working conditions in HE. The findings indicated that half of the sample frequently engages in tasks they consider unnecessary. Only 2% of respondents believed that they never undertake such tasks. Moreover, a particularly high level of change fatigue was revealed, which was well illustrated by the majority indicating that too many changes had been introduced in their institution and a period of stability was required.

This survey also included measures of health, 'presenteeism', psychological distress and job satisfaction. The majority of respondents from HE appear to find their work physically and emotionally exhausting. The finding that staff commonly continue to work when they are sick raises serious concerns for their continued wellbeing. In HE, presenteeism does not necessarily mean that employees come into work while sick, a considerable majority (i.e. more than eight out of ten respondents to this survey) work at home at least sometimes, with more than 20% of the sample always doing so. Pressure of work, feelings of guilt, lack of cover, a reluctance to let down students and further burden colleagues, job insecurity and knowing that work will remain undone were among the most frequently cited reasons for this presenteeism.

The extent of psychological distress and burnout found in this survey is high. Evidence has been provided that HE staff are in poorer psychological health and experience less job satisfaction than many other occupational groups. More than half achieved 'caseness' levels of distress where some intervention is recommended. As outlined above, the extent of caseness found in the current survey is considerably higher than that found in other professional groups. It also compares unfavourably with previous studies of the university sector in the UK and Australia (Kinman et al. 2009; Winefield et al., 2003). The findings of this survey suggest that the psychological health of employees in HE has worsened over time, but may be increased if attention were given to reducing demands, increasing role clarity and improving the quality of working relationships as they were the strongest predictors of psychological distress.

Most respondents from HE were at least moderately satisfied with their work, but almost one-third were moderately, very or extremely dissatisfied. Nonetheless, more than seven in every ten reported that they could always find new and interesting aspects in their work and many saw their job as a positive challenge. Satisfaction with intrinsic factors, such as fellow workers and the amount of variety in the job, was typically high. The lowest level of satisfaction was with industrial relations, opportunities for promotion and the way the organisation is managed. The strongest predictors of overall job satisfaction were control, support from managers, good quality relationships at work and effective management of change. Unreasonable tasks and change fatigue were strongly related to dissatisfaction with the job.

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