

Academic staff and the relevance of flexible working

An FEO Project report prepared by Alison Hunt



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Section 1: Introduction

Early in 2000, the UK Government launched a Work-life Balance Campaign supported by a special unit established within the then Department for Education and Employment (DfEE). The campaign had several objectives, including raising employers' awareness of the business benefits of introducing policies and practices that encourage and assist employees to achieve a better balance between work and other activities in their lives. Central to the campaign is a belief that everyone can benefit from better work-life balance practices. In other words, the Government's contention is that good work-life balance policies should offer a win-win situation for employees and employers, leading to more motivated staff, easier recruitment, better retention and higher levels of productivity. More recently the Department of Trade and Industry, together with the CBI and the TUC have launched a new report *Managing Change* (DTI) in which top-performing companies share their experience of creating and running flexible working practices.

There have been new areas of employment law over the last few years that have brought flexible working to the fore but there are other factors that are peculiar to higher education. A number of new strategies and key Government initiatives such as 'The Learning Age', the drive towards life-long learning, widening participation and access, as well as the development of foundation degrees have promoted the need to re-design key teaching and learning strategies, including how, when and where learning and teaching are delivered to students. These changes within the HE sector have had a significant impact on all staff but particularly academic staff.

The Flexible Employment Options (FEO) project was developed with the overall purpose of considering ways in which flexible working could improve the longer-term attractiveness of employment and career opportunity specifically within the HE sector. The major objective of the project was to develop employment practice that was better aligned to meet the challenges facing higher education, and which would therefore improve recruitment and retention performance and employee satisfaction. The project commenced in 2000 and has been funded by the HEFCE's Good Management Practice programme. One of the major strengths of the FEO project lies in its application across the higher education sector, using collaborative links with colleagues from the University of Birmingham, Canterbury Christ Church University College, De Montfort University, and Staffordshire University. All of these institutions agreed to participate in pilot schemes to test out the viability of flexible working options and to co-operate with the research elements of the project. Representatives from ACAS, HEFCE and the trades unions NATFHE and UNISON have also participated in the project via their membership of the Project Board, with an overview of the project as a whole.

Alongside other research, the FEO Project Team ran pilot schemes testing a number of different flexible employment options. These took place in a variety of departments in the four partner institutions. A final project report on the pilot schemes was produced, and after its launch at a national conference in November 2003, was distributed to all HEFCE funded HEIs. Such was the overall success of the pilot schemes that all the departments taking part have continued to work flexibly, and all four institutions are seeking ways to introduce flexible options to all staff. As a result of the success of the project, several areas were identified as warranting further investigation or expansion. One area was guidance for institutions in implementing a flexible employment options scheme, including training specifically targeted at line managers in higher education. Over the last 18 months the FEO project has trained 216 staff from a variety of different faculties and services, including directors of services, from around 40 HEIs in England.

Another area of concern was that of academic staff and flexible working. The FEO project pilot schemes contained staff from three major categories – academic/research; professional/academic related/managerial; and administrative/support staff. The views of these three groups of staff formed the basis of the main project research report. After the questionnaires used to assess the pilot studies had been analysed, it was found that academic staff had in general, different views on flexible working to the other two main categories of staff taking part. In addition only two members of academic staff had used the opportunity to take up a flexible work option even though several academic departments took part in the pilot study. However through their comments the academic staff group as a whole made it clear that although flexibility at work per se was not a significant issue, they were generally struggling to maintain a healthy work-life balance, and job satisfaction and morale were particularly low in relation to other staff groups.

One of the recommendations from the final FEO project report stated that –

- ***Based on the project research and evaluation of the pilot schemes the FEO team recommends that:***
 - *The sector takes action to address the issues highlighted by academic staff regarding their concerns over heavy workloads and their inability to utilise flexible working arrangements.*

And the final project report in its conclusion also stated –

"Historically the HE sector has allowed some flexibility in terms of working arrangements particularly for academic staff. Some of the pilot departments, being academic based, already had a large majority of the staff working flexibly, albeit informally. In these departments concerns about working conditions, workloads and working long hours were raised, with many academic staff believing that heavy workloads prevent them from taking advantage of any flexible arrangements. However the support staff in these departments seemed to benefit greatly from having access to the scheme. HEIs will have to address these wider issues related to academic staff if the benefits of offering flexible working arrangements are to be optimised for both

organisations and employees. The issues concerning the applicability of flexible working options to academic staff will be taken up as a separate issue in the second stage of the FEO project."

In the light of all this, it was decided that a report concentrating on academic staff would be needed. This has been done by re-examining all the data acquired over the course of the original pilot schemes with a focus solely upon academic staff responses to questions about work in general and flexible options in particular. Therefore, this report will seek to discover if –

- More formal flexible work arrangements can help academic staff balance their lives
- Entirely different approaches are needed for academic staff
- A combination of approaches may form part of a solution for academic staff

It will also try to identify current good practice and recommend some ways in which a more balanced approach to work for all groups of academic staff could be achieved.

Section 2: Background

In recent years many research studies have highlighted the fact that academic staff as a group, appear to have poor work-life balance and suffer high levels of workplace stress despite having apparently a good deal of flexibility within their contracts, and what would be seen as generous terms and conditions in the private sector. There have been widespread and rapid changes in higher education over the past 20 years which are believed to be the main cause of this, and between 1979 and 1993 student numbers have doubled.

A study in 1994 (Fisher) in two Scottish universities suggested that an increasing number of academics in HE institutions had to perform a number of roles simultaneously, and that the job commonly involved teaching, planning, running tutorials, seminars and sometimes laboratories, and dealing with students' personal problems, whilst at the same time carrying out research, conducting personal experiments and attending conferences. The study concluded that under such conditions, the potential for role overload and role conflict was high.

A poll conducted by the Guardian Publishing Group in 1996 (Millward-Brown) looked at attitudes to work and concluded that university staff were more demoralised than 20 other occupational groups. Academics indicated that they felt less valued by their employer and reported lower levels of job satisfaction and job security than other groups.

In the light of changing working patterns, in April 1997 the CUCO (Commission on University Career Opportunity) published guidelines on flexible working in universities and HE colleges. The report recognised that the traditional patterns of term time and vacation were becoming increasingly difficult to maintain and that the pressure to perform in research was greater than ever. The flexibility that the academic job role once epitomised had disappeared, and in addition disparities between the apparent freedom of academic contracts and those for other staff were providing a source of tension.

The impact of the changes in the context and content of academic work has led to overload, long hours, job insecurity and high levels of psychological stress. An AUT report published in the spring of 1998 (Kinman) on the causes and consequences of occupational stress in UK academic staff obtained results that it described as "disturbing". Work-life conflict was found to be the main predictor of psychological distress amongst male and female academics, and as the balance between work and personal life was being increasingly affected, so high numbers of academic staff were thinking of leaving the sector. These negative perceptions were also being passed on to students thinking of a career in academia. Difficulties with recruitment and retention of academic staff (UCEA) are likely to be compounded by the fact that academics are an ageing occupational group. Preliminary findings of

a recent demographic review of the higher education sector indicate that, in some disciplines, up to one-half of academic staff are due to retire in the decade from 2010 (Johnston). One of the recommendations made by academic staff themselves was to introduce some control of workloads which would enable them to use the inherent flexibility of the role more fully. The research found that a high proportion of academic staff did not take all their leave, with 56% not using 5 days or more, and 20% not using 10 days or more.

In 1997 one of the recommendations of the National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education chaired by Lord Dearing was a review of pay and conditions of service for higher education staff. Following on from this in 1999 the government published its Independent Review of Higher Education Pay and Conditions, which was chaired by Sir Michael Bett. One of the issues highlighted by the Bett report was the disparity in working terms and conditions between the various staffing groups, and one outcome of this is the National Pay Framework Agreement which covers not only terms and conditions but issues around pay, personal and career development and the work environment.

In 2000, the Wellcome Trust in their research on who applies for research funding, asked "Are women and men in academia successfully balancing work and family responsibilities?" (Blake). The report looked into whether family circumstances and responsibilities of women and men in academia differ. Women in all age groups were less likely to have dependent children, but if they did then they were more likely to have domestic and caring responsibilities. For 47% of respondents, work-life balance was a problem, but there was no difference between the genders. The report recommended that to facilitate funding applications and research activities, part-time work and career breaks should be supported. It is becoming clear that the perception that the academic environment is inherently family friendly and with flexible working hours is erroneous and that often staff with open ended workloads are working at evenings and weekends to try to cope. The government's target of a 50% participation rate in higher education of those aged 18 to 30 has increased administrative loads, and the doubling of student numbers has not been matched by an increase in resources.

In 2002 a survey by the University of London's School of Oriental and African Studies concluded that long hours contributed to the work-life balance problem for academic and research staff, but the particular problem was the fluid boundaries between work and home especially when working from home, coupled with a high level of commitment. There was also some suspicion of colleagues who worked flexibly and they were perceived as harder to manage, had less career progression, and put pressure on others by not being there at important times. Academic and research staff however recognised their work structure allows for flexibility.

Also in 2002, the 4th annual survey of HEIs done by IRS Research into the recruitment and retention of staff in UK higher education (UCEA 2002) found that recruitment was worsening in some subject areas, such as computing, IT, business studies, engineering and medicine - areas which had to compete with particularly high salaries in the private sector. Some HEIs were experiencing problems

across the board, and along with academic staff leaving for better prospects or research opportunities, there was also a decline in the number of job applicants. Although in general applicants were aware of their market value to outside sectors they were nonetheless attracted by the autonomy, flexibility and content of the work. The problems highlighted included the volume of work, and the lack of balance between teaching, research and administrative duties. Solutions included using part-time work to enable staff to maintain a private sector career, and to improve recruitment advertising by communicating the range of benefits offered by HE employers. Other suggestions were to provide additional administrative support, targeting recruitment at under represented groups such as ethnic minorities, and improving family friendly policies.

Since 2001/2003, when the FEO data and comments were collected, research in this area has gathered pace as the need to deal with the problems has grown, and research that has taken place since 2002 will be evaluated after the main FEO data has been re-examined. However all the research discussed in this report has in common the need to look at flexible working and work-life balance options for academic staff in line with those offered to other staff.

Section 3: Flexible Employment Options project

As mentioned in the introduction, this section re-examines the original data from the FEO project, focusing on the responses given by academic staff to questions about flexible working and work in general.

3.1 Issues Identified

This section identifies some of the issues that academic staff have around work-life balance and flexible working arising from the first stage of the FEO pilot scheme and accompanying research. The main FEO project identified a number of general issues in the area of flexible working in higher education, but also some particularly pertinent to academic staff. The following statements are quoted directly from the report on the pilot project -

- Having to work long hours just to get the job done seems to be a huge issue for all categories of staff. Academic and management staff generally have flexibility to manage their hours to suit their work load and to occasionally work at home, but the **high workloads and pressure lead to long hours and a lack of balance**, which in turn can lead to stress, ill health and damage to family life.
- There are issues around the clarification of holiday entitlement for some academic staff, and also the balance between teaching, research and administration; the latter seemingly having grown rapidly over recent years. There is some recognition that long hours are needed at first to establish an academic career, but the main problem seems to be administrative tasks.
- However there is also comment that any monitoring of academic hours would reduce trust and breed resentment. It remains however that **long hours prevent the implementation or use of flexible working** and can lead to a lack of balance between work and home life.
- **Academic staff were not always aware that they already had access to flexible working practices** such as varying hours according to need, homeworking, managing their own workloads, and being judged on outputs rather than time, and therefore viewed it as irrelevant.
- They tended to feel that long hours and high workloads were more a major issue for them. This topic was frequently mentioned by respondents from the academic staff group, with one commenting that, in an ideal world, balanced work commitment, some freedom at the edges, proper breaks, and less long hours is the healthy option. In practice they feel "stretched and stressed".
- Academic staff almost invariably work long hours and weekends -
"Research is done in what a normal 9-5 job would consider "our own time". 9-5 we are teaching, admin and generally organising."

- Some academic staff mention 60-70 hour weeks in term time, and on top of this researching/writing for publication in their own time, even though these aspects form part of an academic contract. Leave entitlement is not taken, and unpaid leave means finding cover for lectures and tutorials. One respondent noted –

"My home life is drastically affected by my workload over a long period now."

Before the pilot schemes were launched, each department taking part filled out an audit giving details of current flexible working arrangements, both formal and informal, and how many staff this affected. The feedback from the academic departments was mixed, with most just recording ad hoc homeworking with no indication as to whether this was occasional or regular. Some mentioned part-time staff and one department indicated they had two term-time only staff. One department in a post-1992 institution was more specific and reported that 70% of staff had regular timetabled homeworking, with 30% occasionally working from home. This department also had six members of staff who had had time off in lieu for working at weekends or during the summer.

According to the comments received by the FEO project from academic staff, much of the different attitude to being offered formal flexible working options seems to stem from the fact that most academic staff already have a certain degree of informal flexibility built into their roles and contracts, and therefore have some control over when and where they work. The comments that follow are taken from the FEO pilot scheme questionnaires. For instance academic staff can often already –

- ▶ Choose the hours they work as long as they cover their responsibilities –

"I already vary my hours on a daily basis to fit in with work and study."

- ▶ Work at home when they want to –

"As an academic I already have some flexibility in working hours i.e. I can work from home when not teaching."

- ▶ Be judged on outputs such as attendance at lectures, student results, research results, and publications - not hours worked –

"Although I work hard, there is more "flexi" in this job than any other save being self employed."

"To a certain extent there is already flexibility for academic staff built into the system. Particularly if you teach evenings/weekends as I do. No one is "checking" you are at your desk 24/7. The important issue is outputs . . . "

- ▶ Not necessarily have to record or keep note of the hours they work –

"At present no attempt is made to monitor our working hours. I know at times mine are excessive. I would like recognition for this."

In addition it is generally apparent that academic staff –

- ▶ Can sometimes negotiate teaching time giving more control over working arrangements -

"Due to teaching commitments academic staff have reduced flexibility in the main term times, but sympathetic timetabling can enable some of the flexible options."

- ▶ Can sometimes negotiate part-time contracts as valuable and experienced members of staff –

"I am able to adapt my work to suit myself and the department so I work 2 days a week."

- ▶ Can sometimes negotiate teaching time to cope with caring responsibilities and along with the ability to work at home, manage to balance their work and personal lives with out recourse to more formal flexible working options –

"The post I am in has permitted flexible working hours so that I could drop off and collect children when needed and put the extra time in at home - this was very useful indeed."

So there are several reasons why in general academic staff may not have been so interested in standard flexible working options as these are designed to give other categories of staff the benefits academic staff already appear to enjoy. So how does this relate specifically to the eight options – flexible working hours, staggered hours, compressed hours, homeworking, part-time hours, seasonal hours, personalised annual leave, and unpaid leave - offered as part of the main FEO pilot study?

Flexible working hours/flexitime – This would not be relevant to academic staff as they are already free to arrange their hours as they see fit around their work commitments, but often it is not recorded or monitored. AUT guidelines to combating stress at work produced in 1997 (and updated 2003) includes the suggestion that hours worked may need to be surveyed for those not working fixed hours. Causes of stress cited in the document include long hours, unreasonable workload and expectations, and extra hours worked at home being detrimental to personal life –

"Academic staff have no choice about "flexible" working. What is at issue here is the working hours that are expected or needed."

Staggered hours – Here again academic staff do not usually have fixed hours of work and often work very long hours. Recent research suggests that more and more academic staff are being expected to be present during term-time standard 9-5 office hours for teaching, student contact, administrative duties and meetings. This means they then do the rest of their work at home where they can concentrate –

"Not really relevant to academic staff who almost invariably work long hours and weekends. Research is done in what a normal 9-5 job would consider "our own time". 9-5 we are teaching, admin and generally organising."

Compressed hours – Again academic staff can already control their hours around the teaching timetable, but generally to try to cope with their workloads academic staff work long days. This again raises the issue of monitoring hours and workloads. However one of the two lecturers taking up options did try out compressed hours, working a full-time role over 4 days a week. This was successful and has continued. Some managers taking part in the FEO project, in the same position of constantly working long hours, also found this option useful psychologically as it gives permission to take time off even if it is not always used in reality.

Homeworking – This is often assumed as part of a normal academic contract, but staff are wary of formalising this and feel that being asked to account for their time would feel divisive and unnecessary. However one department generally organised the teaching timetable to allow for one day a week free from teaching to enable academic staff to work from home:

"As an academic I have flexibility to work from home when I am not required on campus and to vary holidays etc. I would be very reluctant to introduce any system that would formalise this flexibility if it meant having to account for all my time!"

Part-time (Reduced) hours – There are already many kinds of contracts for teaching and research including fractional and hourly paid, and some staff may try to negotiate a particular number of teaching hours to aid their work-life balance. The HESA figures for 2003/04 gives quite high figures for part-time academic staff – 37.6% of female academic and 22.9% of male academic staff are recorded as working part-time. Research suggests there are issues relating to career progression if academic staff reduce their hours. Comments received from academic staff on the subject include -

"I would like to easier access to part-time work (half to three quarters) for academics for a period of time in their career without losing out on contractual benefits."

"It is important for female academics to be able to vary their contract at different stages of their career without it impacting negatively on their overall career prospects and recognition professionally."

"Dropping down from 0.8 to 0.4 about 8 years ago has allowed more flexibility in terms of arranging which days I am in work and more time for personal pursuits/life - however I feel I do as much work-prep/planning/marking etc. as when I was 0.8 in 1980's, now!"

Seasonal hours – to some extent this exists already with teaching in term time and research in vacation time, although this pattern may now be under threat –

"Because a good part of my job is research, all "spare" time tends to be spent on this. More time can be spent on research during the summer than during the summer than during my teaching terms (Oct. - March)"

Term time only working itself as an option is usually unpopular as non teaching weeks are generally less pressured, so an academic using this option would be working during the most demanding times and be unpaid for the least demanding, and arguably more flexible, times. With more generous annual leave, coupled with study leave and homeworking a term time only contract may be unnecessary.

Personalised annual leave (Not offered to all pilot groups) – Although academic staff often have greater annual leave entitlement as part of their contractual arrangements than other university staff, there is evidence that the boundary between work and personal life is blurred by research and scholarly activity to the extent that academic staff have indicated that they do not take all their annual leave.

Unpaid leave – The only other option taken up by an academic member of staff and this was used to take 3 months away from work to compete in a yacht race.

There were also comments that the whole scheme, including the original support pack for pilot participants and other documentation, was not sufficiently geared to the needs of academic staff. –

"Many of the questions are not applicable for academic staff who work at home and without fixed hours."

"Some of the questions do not apply to academic contracts. It would have been more useful for me if the preparation team had developed special questions for academics."

"One questionnaire does not fit all. Academics don't have fixed hours of work. Arguably the absence of fixed hours currently leads to exploitation."

"I found the questionnaire hard to answer, as many questions were not tapping issues salient to me, and perhaps to an academic job?"

Nonetheless, the research did indicate that academic staff are experiencing stress at work and as a result, poor work-life balance. According to comments given in the FEO questionnaires some of the issues relating to work-life balance can be summarised as follows –

- No set hours and therefore work is open ended – academic staff can work/research all the time if they wish to, or feel obliged to.
- In some instances the terms and conditions of employment are unclear or different to other categories of staff and seem to vary between institutions, such as access to special leave arrangements, having no set holiday entitlement, or hours specified in contracts.
- Resentment of formal control.
- High pressure to prove themselves particularly early in a career and in many cases with the pressure of the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE). Although this was not mentioned in the FEO comments it is cited in other research literature.

- Overall growth of management and administrative duties required of academic staff over the last 10/20 years.
- Academic life is now much more market driven – both teaching and research.
- Teaching not valued as a sole activity unrelated from research – this link is now being debated at national level, and there are new initiatives such as Teaching and Learning Fellowships.

The conclusion of the main project report highlighted many of these issues for academic staff around flexible working but the following comment is a good summary –

"Most of these questions strike me as irrelevant to academic staff whose work is for the most part structured by deadlines, not expected hours. The "flexibility" of academic contracts in effect means that we need to work days, evenings and weekends to fulfil the teaching, admin and research requirements of the post. Even then if one does so, one will never fully complete requirements. Load and lack of support are the issues not timing as such. There are not enough staff employed to do all the work and we are all struggling to fill the gaps."

3.2 Research data

With the issues identified in the last section in mind, the data collected from academic staff in the original pilot scheme will now be reanalysed. In doing this, answers to the following questions are sought –

- Would more formal and varied flexible working still offer help for academic staff dealing with work-life balance issues?
- Will the current data produce a valid picture of the attitudes of a sample of academic staff to the flexible working options offered under the pilot scheme, and how much they value flexible working in general?
- Can other data from the questionnaire on attitudes to work in general, help to create a context for looking more widely at work-life balance that can add up to a whole picture of working life for one particular sample of academic staff?

3.2.1 Methodology

Several questionnaires were sent out during the 18 months of the FEO pilot scheme, but the data analysed here is from the final questionnaire sent out at the end of each pilot to those taking part

whether they had taken up an option or not. This includes departments who acted as control groups and were not offered extra flexible options. The questionnaire has been included as Appendix 1.

The data was collected in the spring of 2003 in a rolling programme across all four institutions taking part. In all, 1066 questionnaires were sent out, with 502 being returned (a 47% return rate). Of these, 109 were from the academic staff group. Most of the academic staff respondents were based in general teaching/research based departments and so did not include any clinical, laboratory or fieldwork based academic staff, and most were at pre-1992 institutions. The academic staff group will be compared with the two other main groups of respondents – management/academic related staff, and administrative/support staff. In the other categories the numbers were too small to be statistically significant.

Academic staff in particular, made valuable contributions to the “*Any other comments*” section of the questionnaires. Some have been used within this report to highlight issues, but a full list of comments made in all the questionnaires can be found in Appendix 2. Overall 42% of the academic respondents gave comments as opposed to 32% of the management group and 21% of the administrative group.

In the tables used to present data in this section, the percentage positive response is the number responding “*Very important*” added to the number responding “*Important*” to a particular statement, while the negative response is the combination of those responding “*Not very important*” and “*Not important at all.*”

In the report overall where the term part-time is used it should be understood to mean fractional in terms of an academic staff contract, not hourly paid casual academic staff.

3.2.2 Sample - basic data

The basic data from Section A of the questionnaire can be summarised as follows:

Staff group – The 109 Academic staff responses amounted to 21.7% of the sample of respondents. The workforce analysis profiles for each institution prepared at the start of the project in 2001 gave a rough total of 3300 members of academic staff (people, not FTE and not including casual or hourly paid lecturers). Therefore it can be tentatively concluded that the response sample represented some 3% of the total academic staff working in the four institutions.

Contract type – 3% of academic staff group were on temporary/ fixed term contracts, and this was very similar to the other two main groups. For comparison all but one of those who ticked the category “*Researcher*” under “*staff group*” were on temporary/ fixed term contracts.

Hours of work – 12% of academic staff in the sample were part-time, and these were all permanent posts. The rest were full-time as there were no job shares. This compares to 9% of managers and 22% of support staff in the sample who were part-time.

Length of service - More academic staff had worked for over 10 years at their particular institution (45%) than management and administrative staff groups (around 30%).

Gender – This was roughly 50:50 male/female for the academic staff group, although 15% of female academics were part-time as opposed to 9% of male academics. Virtually none of the men in the other categories were part-time.

Disability – 6% of the academic category responded that they had a disability, while only 2% of the other two groups did.

Ethnic origin – The figures for ethnic origin are of concern, particularly for the academic sample. Although apparently similar to the other groups at having 91% as giving their ethnic origin as white, the remaining 9% has “Irish” as its largest minority component with only a few from other categories, while the other two staff groups had a more even distribution of ethnicity.

Caring responsibilities – The incidence of caring responsibilities was fairly evenly distributed between all the staff groups even though the academic staff sample has a more balanced male: female ratio. The percentages for the academic staff category were: pre-school children 12%; school age children 35%; elderly person 4%; someone with a disability/long term illness 5%.

Journey to work – Around 60% of the academic staff sample lived under 30 mins from work, more than the other two categories. However along with the management group, nearly 15% of academic staff lived over an hour’s journey from work. Only around 55% of the academic staff used a private car to get to work, and many more catching the train or bus or walking/ cycling than the other groups, where around 75% used a private car. Journey to work can be linked to desire for occasional homeworking.

3.2.3 Overall attitudes to flexible working

So given the lack of interest in taking up options in the FEO pilot scheme, what do academic staff think about flexible working in general? Respondents were asked to rank a series of statements relating to work – one set for their ideal job, and one set for their current job, on a standard 5 point scale. One set of statements concerned flexible working and asked –

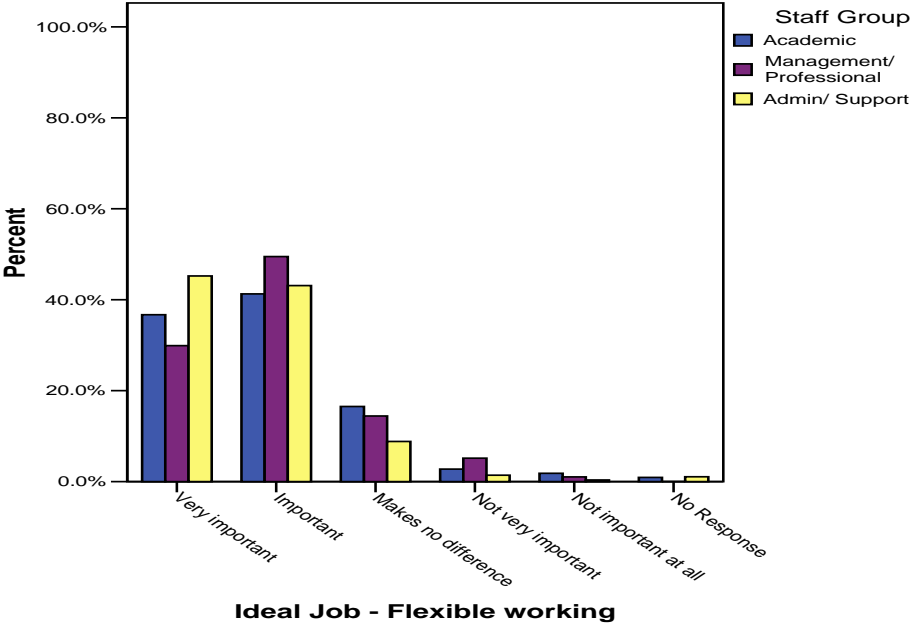
*“How important are opportunities for flexible working in your **ideal job**? “ and
“How well does your **current job** provide opportunities for flexible working?”*

The chart and table below show that a high percentage of academic staff would like opportunities for flexible working in their **ideal job** – nearly 80%. This is roughly the same as the response of the management group, although both are less than the response of the administrative staff group.

Flexible working in your <u>ideal job</u>	Positive	Neutral	Negative
Academic	78%	17%	5%
Management	79%	14%	6%
Admin	88%	10%	2%

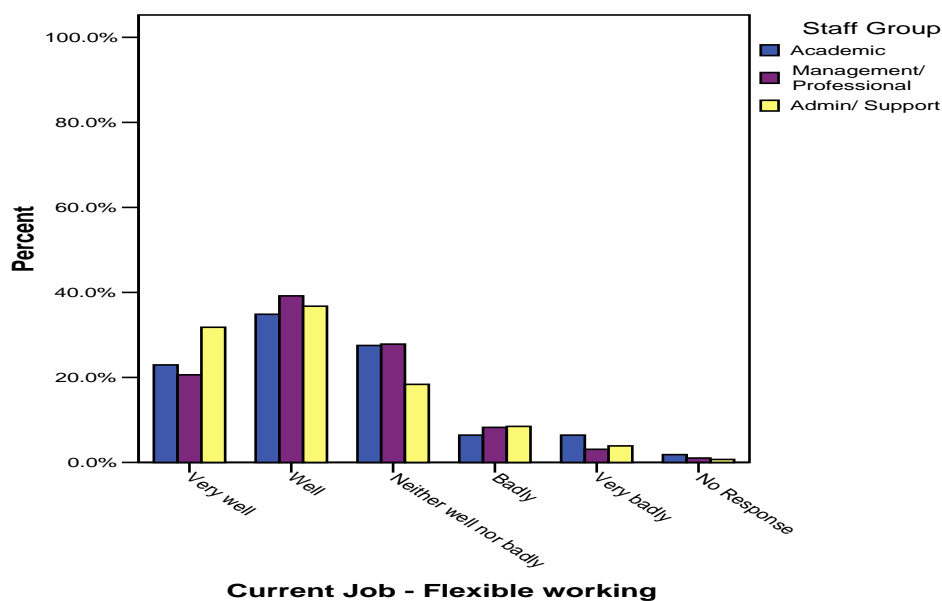
The table gives the combined positive percentage of those responding “Very important” or “Important” and clarifies what is shown in the chart below.

Table - “How important are opportunities for flexible working in your **ideal job**?”



These responses are more useful when seen in comparison to the response to the statement about **current job**. These are shown in the chart and table below.

Table - "How well does your **current job** provide opportunities for flexible working?"



There are two things to note – firstly that for all staff categories there is a drop of around 20% between the first and the second statements, and secondly that the positive response of academic staff is lower than that for administrative staff. This is despite apparently having more flexible terms and conditions and access to flexible working.

Flexible working in your <u>current job</u>	Positive	Neutral	Negative
Academic	58%	29%	13%
Management	60%	29%	11%
Admin	69%	19%	12%

Some of this may be because being able to vary hours, occasionally work from home and the seasonal nature of the work are so inherent within an academic role that it is not defined psychologically as "flexible working" but as flexibility associated with the role instead –

"... these ... questions imply the absence of privileges I already enjoy."

However as has been seen in other research the general build up of workload negates this flexibility and in addition the flexibility in the vacation time is paralleled by lack of flexibility in term time.

3.3 Value placed on flexible working options by academic staff

The previous section summarised why academic staff may not have been particularly interested in the specific options available during the pilot studies. Here the questionnaires have been used to revisit the wider picture and try to assess which options academic staff may feel are of importance. There are some issues to be borne in mind when looking at the data. In general the sample of academic staff returned more “no response” or “not applicable” answers than other categories. In addition the views are not representative of all subject areas, and none were from academic staff in science and technology subject areas.

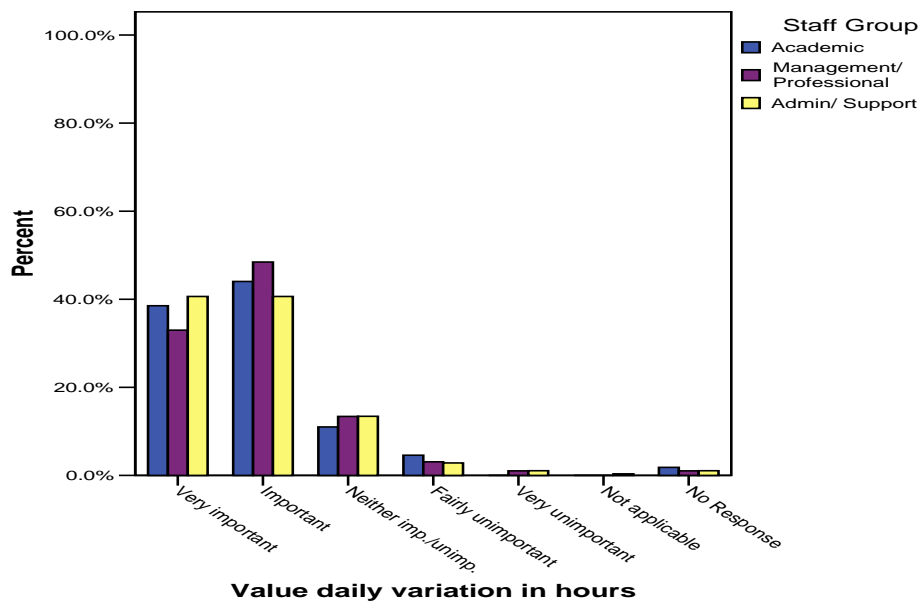
The questionnaire asked about the following options and respondents indicated how valuable they would find each one if they were to be made available, or how important each one is if they already have access to it. The options were -

- 3.3.1. Daily variation in hours according to own preference (Flexitime/staggered hours)
- 3.3.2. Daily variation in hours according to own preference for childcare purposes
- 3.3.4. Working from home some of the time (Occasional homeworking)
- 3.3.5. Flexible annual holiday (Buying and selling annual leave)
- 3.3.6. Three day weekend (Compressed hours)
- 3.3.7. Seasonal hours' variation
- 3.3.8. Temporary reduction in hours during career (Part-time)
- 3.3.9. Reduction pre retirement
- 3.3.10. Term time only working
- 3.3.11. Period of unpaid leave

The responses of the three main staff groups are compared, and in addition the academic staff response for each option has been further analysed with respect of gender and whether staff had any caring responsibilities. Section 3.3.12 on page 37 gives a summary of the data and findings.

3.3.1. Daily variation in hours (flexitime/ staggered hours)

“The opportunity to vary my hours on a daily basis according to my preference.”



Just over 80% of all groups viewed the ability to vary their own hours on a daily basis as important or very important. The figure for the academic staff group was 83%, and it can be tentatively concluded from the comments made that for the most part they were already doing this. In the pilot scheme all the academic staff taking part could already vary their hours as trusted professional members of staff, and saw it as a highly valued part of the job role. This is also true of managerial and professional staff, but other staff generally only have access to this level of trust if they are offered flexitime, otherwise they are confined to strict work times. However the reality for academic staff may be somewhat different as many of the comments received show –

“I have too much work for flexibility to be viable.”

“Bluntly the problem is that “flexible working” is a credible concept only if work hours are reasonable. Currently I work 60-70 hours per week, and could spend more time if I were to address all my work adequate.”

The table below shows the response from the academic staff group split by gender and also by caring responsibility. Male academics in the group were slightly more positive about wanting to vary their hours on a daily basis, while carers of pre-school children, although positive, were not as positive as non carers, supporting the concept that choosing start and finish times can be beneficial to everyone. Carers of pre-school children may have more rigid childcare times to adhere to, but daily variation in hours according to your own preference was very highly valued by carers of school age children within the academic staff group –

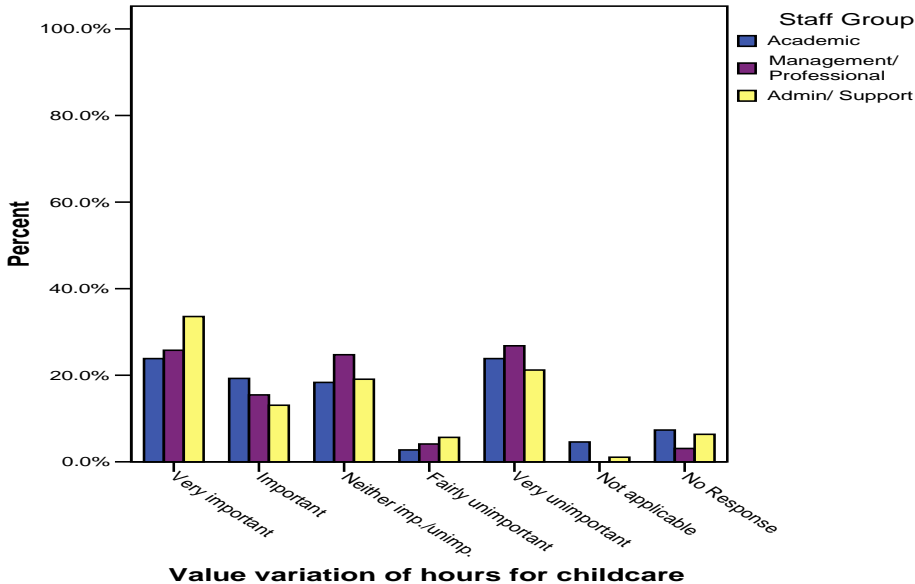
Daily variation in hours – academic staff group	% positive response
• Female	77.8%
• Male	87.3%
• Carers – pre-school	69.3%
• Non-carers	84.4%
• Carers – school age	86.9%
• Non-carers	80.3%

The academic staff in the FEO pilot scheme would already be varying their hours on a daily basis to enable them to fulfil their work objectives, so there would be no need to formally apply for it.

"...The ability to vary the working schedule is vital for academics, seeking to balance research-teaching-admin. In theory, we have it, in practice we do not, because understaffing limits our options."

3.3.2. Daily variation in hours for childcare purposes

"The opportunity to vary my hours in order to assist with my childcare arrangements."



This seemed to be viewed as slightly less important for academic staff than it was for administrative staff, with just over 40% of the group interested in varying their hours on a daily basis for childcare reasons.

"Flexitime is vital for people with small children and other dependants, and should be available for all staff sections."

From the table below it can be seen that male academic staff seem to value daily variation for childcare just as much as female staff –

Daily variation in hours for childcare – academic staff group	% positive response
• Female	44.4%
• Male	41.8%
• Carers - pre-school	84.6%
• Non Carers	37.5%
• Carers – school age	76.3%
• Non Carers	25.4%

The interest in this option goes some way to indicate the level of caring responsibility amongst academic staff, and that carers of children do value being able to vary their hours on a daily basis to help manage childcare. Roughly 15% of this sample of academic staff indicated they have caring responsibilities for pre-school children; 30% school-age children; 3% for an elderly person; and 5% for a person with disabilities or long term illness.

There were several comments however on the lack of provision for institution based childcare particularly to cover half terms and school holidays. This was also commented on in the AUT research, and may be of particular concern to academic staff who may have a higher incentive to continue full-time and not move to a part-time contract so as not to jeopardise their research career – the so called “career killer” by the AUT.

"The post I am in has permitted flexible working hours so that I could drop off and collect children when needed and put in the extra time in at home - this was very useful indeed."

"I would value more help with childcare costs rather than the opportunity to work less (and therefore get paid less)."

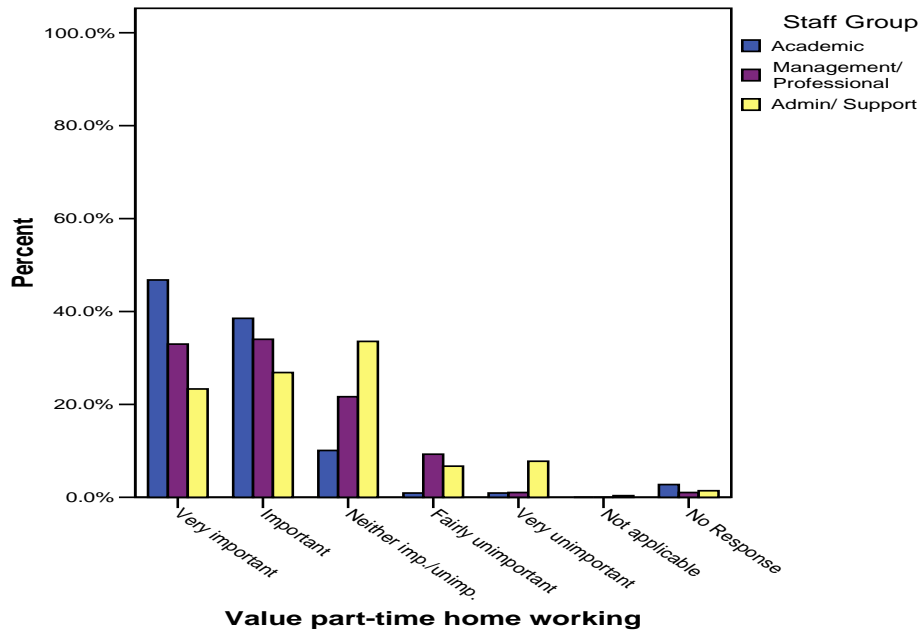
"The issue of after school care is one which is particularly pressing."

"It would be helpful if the University provided better and more accessible childcare arrangements/facilities."

Some higher education institutions offer a more comprehensive package of childcare provision for 1 to 14 year olds than others, including half term and holiday schemes.

3.3.4. Working from home some of the time (Occasional homeworking)

“The opportunity of working from home for a proportion of my working time, spending the remainder of the week at my usual workplace.”



The profile of this table is different to the others and shows a very strong positive response from academic staff. Being able to work from home was seen by over 85% as “Important” or “Very important”. From the comments it is clear that this aspect of flexible working is already enjoyed and valued by most academic staff. Very few think it is “unimportant” –

“As an academic I already have some flexibility in working hours i.e. I can work from home when not teaching.”

“As an academic I have flexibility to work from home when I am not required on campus and to vary holidays etc. . . .”

It may be worth noting here that with the development of IT and more widespread use of home or teleworking, health and safety issues are coming to the fore in this area, eroding some of the informality of the system. There may also be some issues around accountability and monitoring if this were to be a formal arrangement. The departments taking part in the pilot schemes indicated that this was the most prevalent of the informal or “ad hoc” flexible options already available to academic staff. It may be that as academic staff are increasingly being asked to be in the “office” 9-5, that working from home during the day is less prevalent, and that use of homeworking is in fact work done in evenings and at weekends –

"Research is done in what a normal 9-5 job would consider "our own time". 9-5 we are teaching, admin and generally organising."

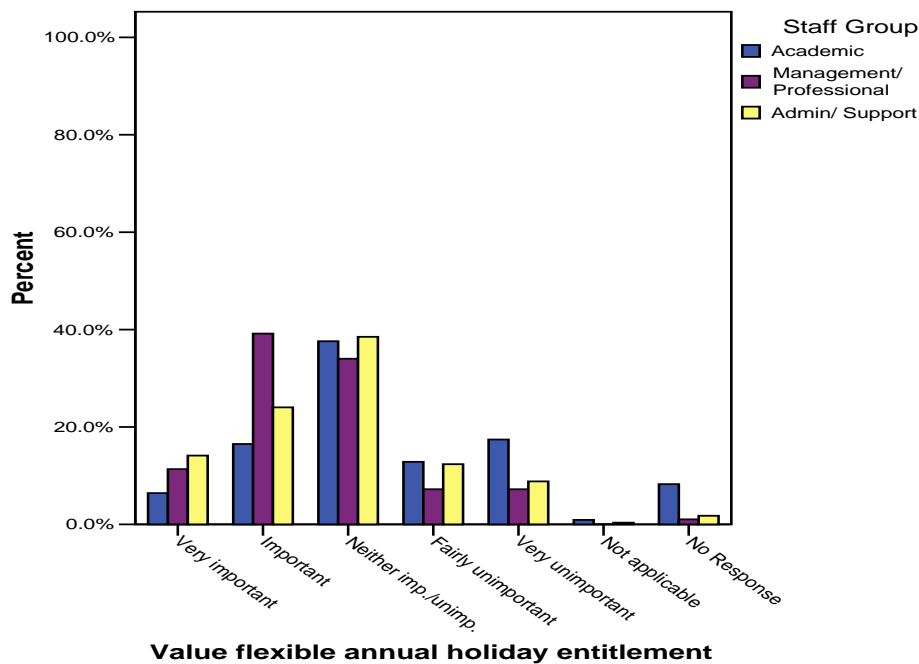
The table below shows that this option, although valued by high percentages of academic staff, it is particularly highly valued by female academic staff and carers of school age children.

Part-time homeworking – academic staff group	% positive response
• Female	88.9%
• Male	81.8%
• Carers – pre-school	76.9%
• Non-carers	86.4%
• Carers – school age	92.1%
• Non-carers	81.7%

Again those academic staff in the pilot scheme would already be using this option informally and so there would be no need to formally apply for it.

3.3.5. Flexible annual holiday

"The opportunity to either sell some of my annual holiday entitlement or buy additional days."



This statement is inherently complex as the reasons why staff may wish to buy or sell annual leave may be diametrically opposed to each other. Although there was an interesting strong response from the management/professional group, there was less interest in this option from academic staff.

However in their comments some academic staff indicated they have different terms and conditions regarding annual leave compared to other categories of staff, and many also indicated that they did their research and publication writing in their own time at weekends and holidays, and making use of such schemes as self managed days. Other research has revealed that an alarmingly high percentage of academic staff do not take all their annual leave entitlement, and several of respondents to the FEO questionnaires commented that –

"The concept of buying and selling time is meaningless when we do not have any limits on the hours we work. We want our overall workload lightened."

"Working hours are not fixed for academics in any way. Holidays, in my experience, are not monitored."

"The survey presumes that academic staff have fixed holiday entitlement and a set number of hours per week. We have neither . . ."

"I work all the time, including holidays, because evenings, weekends and "holidays" provide opportunities for research or to catch up on marking/paperwork. The level of flexibility I have at present is the most important positive factor about my job."

"I would . . . appreciate clear guidelines on the annual holiday entitlement for academic staff."

"As HOD it had proved difficult to get staff to be clear about when they are on holiday."

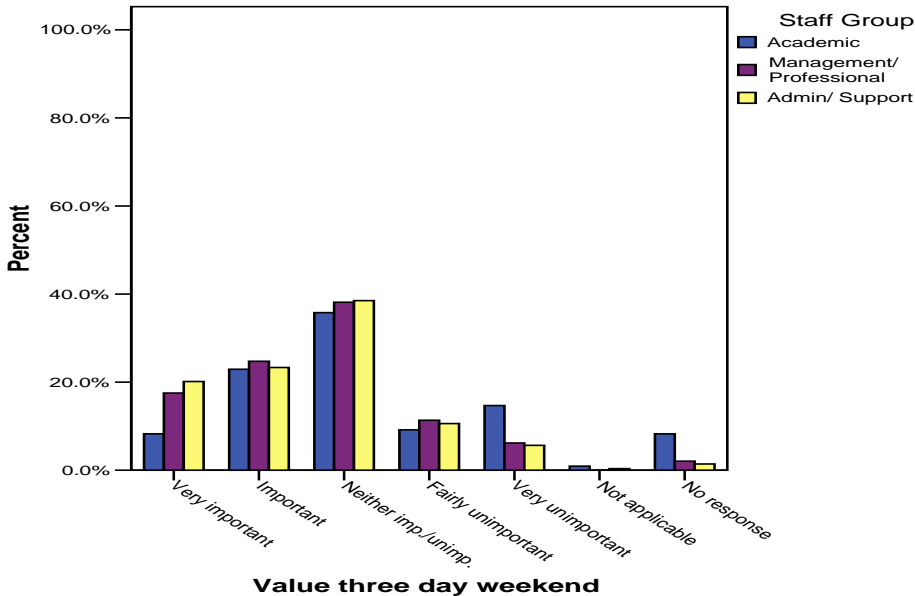
Male academic staff in the sample were more than twice as likely to give a positive response to being able to vary their annual leave entitlement as their female colleagues, but it is unknown whether respondents wish to buy holiday to gain more time off or sell holiday as they find they have too much. One of the dangers of selling annual leave is that employees do not take enough time off, which can be unhealthy in the long term, bearing in mind the statutory requirement of 20 days annual leave.

Flexible annual holiday – academic staff group	% positive response
• Female	12.7%
• Male	33.4%
• Carers – pre-school	38.5%
• Non-carers	20.8%
• Carers – school age	26.3%
• Non-carers	21.1%

In general there is some level of interest overall in being able to vary annual leave entitlement for one reason or another and not just accept the given fixed number of days. Not all the pilot groups were offered this option, and the one request made was eventually refused after complications and the FEO project does not recommend the buying and selling leave as appropriate to the sector at present.

3.3.6. Three day weekend

“The opportunity to have a three-day weekend on a fortnightly basis in return for longer working days.”



Academic staff gave a more negative response to this option than the other two groups. The “very unimportant” and “no response” are especially strong. This option may not offer a suitable pattern for academic staff with teaching responsibilities, sometimes in the evenings, and who have already indicated that they work very long days. Comments received indicated that workloads often meant at least a 6 day week especially in term-time leaving no leeway to compress hours –

“My average working day is usually a good 12 or 13 hours and I also work at least one day of every weekend, just to get everything done. The pressure of delivering research alongside coping with every day admin and teaching means that questions about working longer days in return for long weekends just sound like a joke. Making space for anything with this kind of workload is difficult.”

“The opportunity to have a 3 day weekend in return for longer working days would be nice if I was not already working long weekdays. At the moment I cannot really see myself cramming still more in a day.”

However this still means overall around 30% of the academic staff in the sample showed an interest in compressed hours and valued it as important, and as an option was taken up by a member of academic staff successfully, and is continuing.

The table below shows there was some positive interest from female staff and carers of pre-school children, and it may be useful as a means of finding “chunks” of time to spend with young children normally at nursery full-time during the working week.

“I found the opportunity to work a 9 day fortnight very useful in my previous job. It greatly helped with my work-life balance and enabled me to deal with work pressures better.”

3 day weekend – Academic staff group	% positive response
• Female	40.8%
• Male	21.8%
• Carers – pre-school	38.5%
• Non-carers	30.2%
• Carers – school age	28.9%
• Non-carers	32.4%

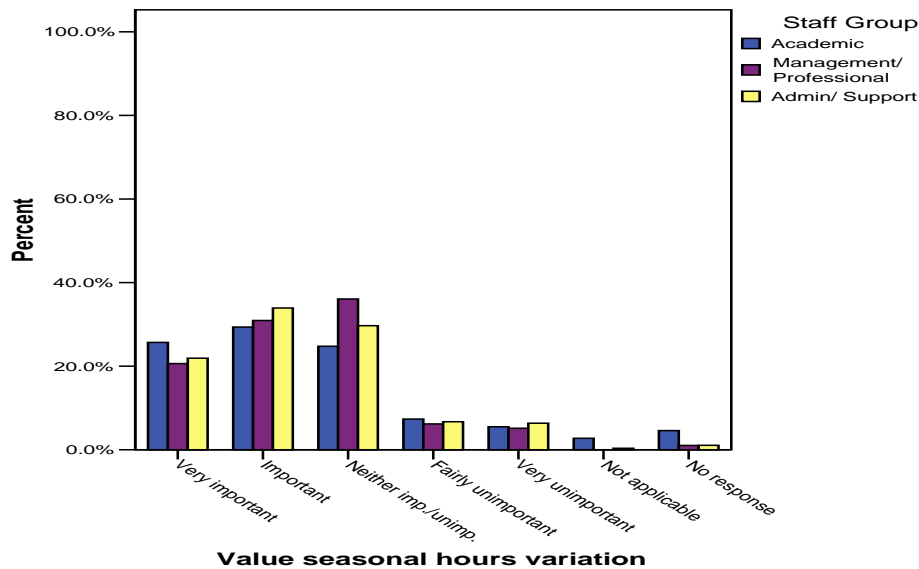
Compressed hours are also potentially useful for staff with elderly relatives who live a distance away and need regular visits –

“I don’t have any dependents for whom I need to provide substantial support at present, but this will change with time as my parents become older. As they live a substantial distance away (over 250) miles this could require periods away from work - e.g. the 3 day weekend proposed.”

3.3.7. Seasonal hours’ variation

“The opportunity to work fewer hours at certain times of the year in return for working more hours at other times.”

There was a slightly higher positive response from academic staff than the other two groups to this option, perhaps reflecting a value placed on the term time/vacation balance in higher education. Around 55% of academic staff valued this way of working as “important” or “very important”. However this is a pattern that may now be less distinct as all year round courses, evening work, part-time courses and distance learning alter the old term-time/vacation balance.



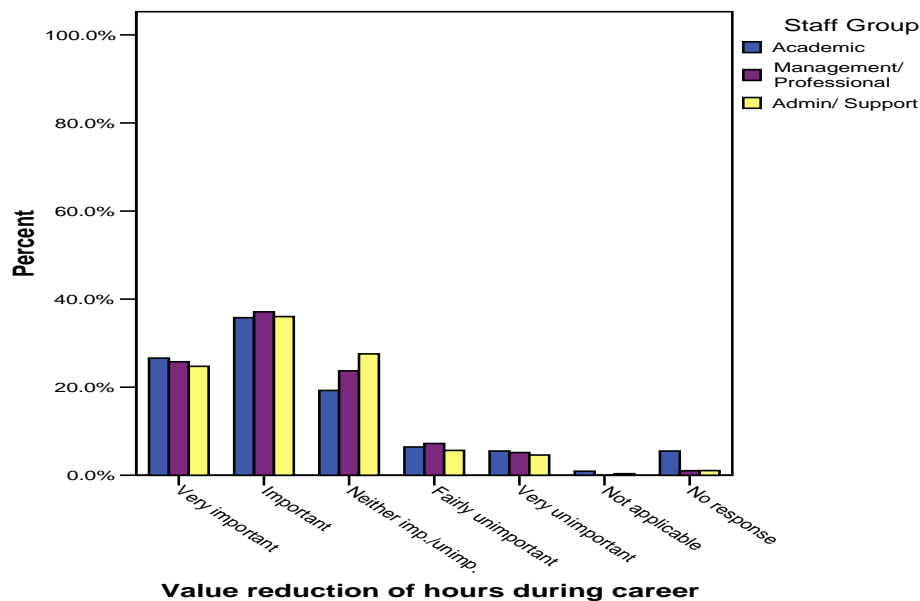
There was a higher percentage interest from female than male staff, although the positive response from male academics was still 51%, and there was also a high positive response from carers of pre-school children. Perhaps again it allows periods of time when things are quieter to prioritise other aspects of work and life. More interest might have been expected from carers of school age children, although perhaps the pattern of hours still does not provide a close enough match with school times.

Seasonal hours – academic staff group	% positive response
• Female	59.3%
• Male	50.9%
• Carers – pre-school	61.6%
• Non-carers	54.2
• Carers – school age	52.6%
• Non-carers	56.4%

Again this option was not taken up by academic staff in the pilot scheme as it is to some extent inherent in the job role, with teaching and administration taking up the term time and research and writing in the vacation. However in the original audit at the beginning of the pilot scheme one department mentioned two academic members of staff who worked term-time only contracts.

3.3.8. Temporary reduction in hours during career

“The opportunity to be able to reduce my hours of work at certain times during my career.”



Interestingly there was similar positive interest in this option from all groups at just over 60%. Academic staff, despite other research that suggests that any kind of career break damages an academic research career, nonetheless value this option as equally as other employees. Much of the research into gender balance in academia, especially for SET (Science, Engineering and Technology), suggests that women who take a career break to have children severely damage their academic career and subsequently always lag behind their male counterparts –

“I'd like to see easier access to part-time work (half to three quarters) for academics for a period of time in their career without losing out on contractual benefits.”

“It is important for female academics to be able to vary their contract at different stages of their career without it impacting negatively on their overall career prospects and recognition professionally.”

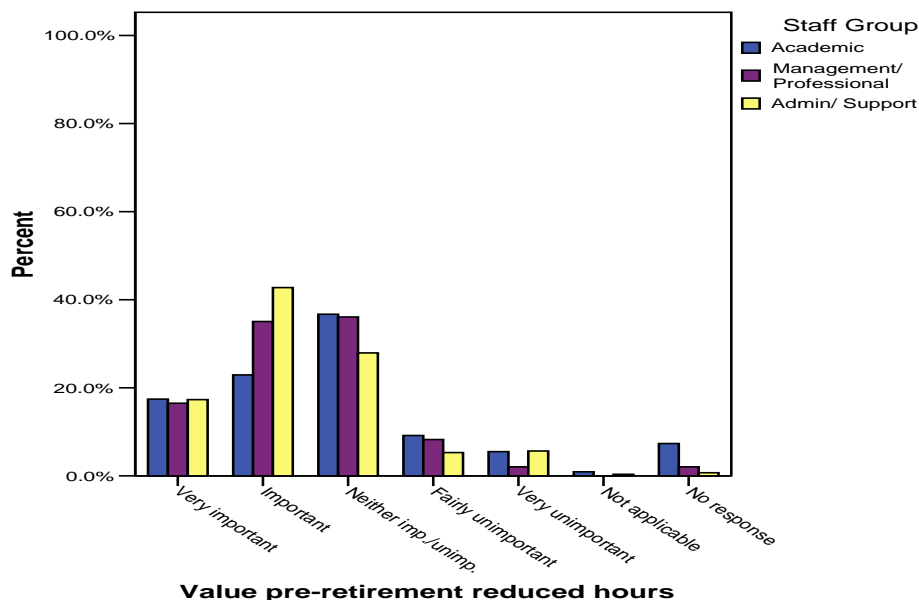
Although over half the men in the sample saw that they might need to reduce their hours at some stage during their career, this rose to around 70% for women and carers with school age children. The response showed that generally around two thirds of all staff consider that at some time during their career there may be a need to reduce their hours for a time, often to care for themselves or for others. Although the numbers involved are very small, of the carers of elderly or disabled relatives, only about half valued this option. Others may find other forms of flexible working more useful or are able to combine caring and full-time work.

Reduced hours during career – academic staff group	% positive response
• Female	70.4%
• Male	54.6%
• Carers – pre-school	61.6%
• Non-carers	62.5%
• Carers – school age	68.4%
• Non-carers	59.1%

As stated earlier, overall in the sample around 12% of the academic staff were part-time, however around two thirds of these are not carers. The tentative conclusion is that for academic staff at least, there may be other reasons why they wish to or have to work part-time other than to undertake a caring role.

3.3.9. Reduction pre-retirement

“The opportunity to reduce the number of hours I work gradually as I approach retirement.”



There was low positive interest in this option, with the exception of the administrative staff group. The comments from academic related and managerial staff reflected a fear of erosion of pension rights associated with final salary awards conflicting with a desire to slow down approaching retirement. This may change as more pensions in the future may be calculated over total years of employment

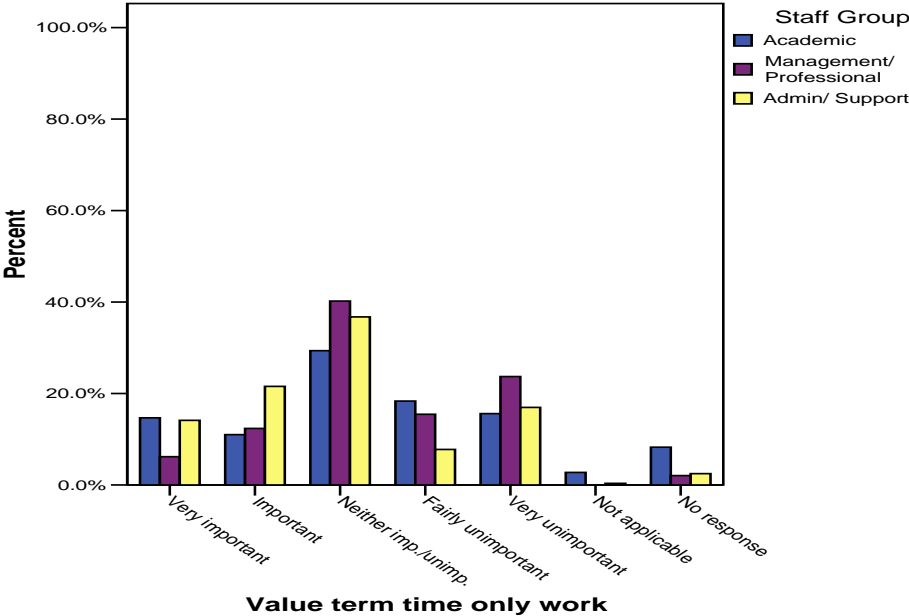
rather than final salary. A breakdown of age and staff group would help here, but data has not been collected on age so further analysis cannot be done in this direction. It would be interesting to see if academic staff are more able to retire early and then diversify into other areas which may offer part-time options such as consultancy or writing pre-retirement as in other sectors. The NHS, to retain senior consultants, is looking to use, among other flexible working options, a system of reducing hours approaching retirement.

This was not an option offered in the pilot due to the time constraints, however it was included on the questionnaire to gauge interest and see if it was possible to take it forward, given the current discussions over retirement ages and pensions –

"Planning for retirement would be something that I would like to see offered to staff around my age."

3.3.10. Term time only working

"The opportunity to be able to work during term time only."



Generally there was low positive interest in this option but it was still considered to be important by roughly 25% of academic staff. While the main FEO project report covered the issue of the appeal of term-time only working being to those who had childcare responsibilities, some comments from academic staff indicated that the concentration of teaching into terms left space for research and writing at other times possibly at home. This would potentially mean that academic staff who had caring responsibility for school age children could arrange their work to accommodate school terms far more easily than support staff, by for example using homeworking. Further investigation would be

needed to establish whether teaching only or hourly paid posts are valued for their term time only nature despite the lower pay.

Term time only–	academic staff group % positive response
• Female	33.4%
• Male	18.2%
• Carers – pre-school	23.1%
• Non-carers	26.1%
• Carers – school age	39.5%
• Non-carers	18.3%

The term time only option is overall less valued than seasonal hours, but does attract a number of both female and male academic staff. However the interest in concentrating work in term time amongst academic staff is highest again from carers of school age children.

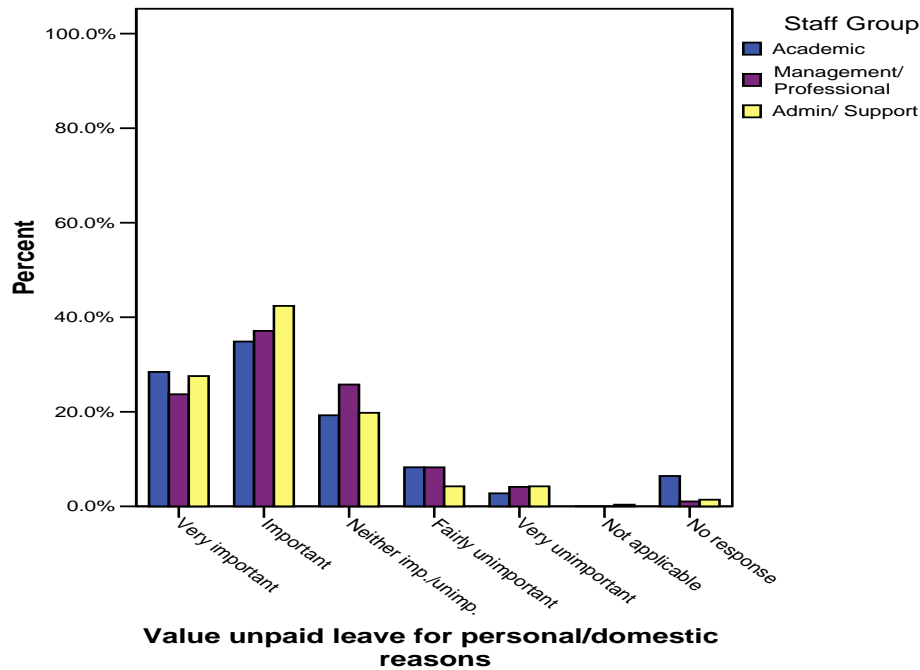
3.3.11. Period of unpaid leave

“The opportunity to take a period of unpaid leave for personal or domestic reasons.”

Just over 60% of academic staff valued this option along with a similar percentage of the management group. This contrasted with a 70% positive interest from the administrative group. It can be tentatively concluded that the most common reasons for requesting a period of unpaid leave, particularly family illness, are of course not confined to one category of staff. Indeed it may be more difficult for an academic member of staff to be absent during term time –

“I cannot have unpaid leave unless I find cover for all my work, and it is impossible for me to achieve this.”

Comments were made with respect to there being no one else with the specialised knowledge to pick up the work, and the strains of picking up the teaching responsibilities of absent colleagues, and freedom in the holidays being paralleled by limited freedom in term-time.



From the table below it can be seen that again the highest positive response comes from female academic staff and carers of school age children.

Value unpaid leave – academic staff group	% positive response
• Female	72.2%
• Male	54.6%
• Carers – pre-school	53.9%
• Non-carers	64.6%
• Carers – school age	78.9%
• Non-carers	55.0%
For comparison -	
• Carers -elderly	78.8% (all staff)
• Carers - disabled	86.4% (all staff)

Other research suggests that academic staff are generally reluctant to take long periods of leave because of the damage it may do to their careers. However two thirds consider that there might be the need at some stage for a shorter period of leave to cover emergencies.

3.3.12. Summary

Certainly most academic staff highly value what they have in being able to vary their own hours daily according to preference and work at home when they see the need to. It can also be tentatively concluded that this aids academic staff who may have family responsibilities despite the general workplace culture. The table below summarises the responses of staff to the different work options. They are in order of value placed on them by this sample of academic staff, starting with the one that attracted the highest % positive response.

% positive response to valuing particular flexible options	Admin.	Manage.	Academic	Notes on use by academic staff
Occasional homeworking	50.2%	67.0%	85.3%	Already widely used informally
Daily variation in hours	81.2%	81.5%	82.5%	Already widely used informally
Access to a period of unpaid leave	70.0%	60.8%	63.3%	Difficulty in finding cover in term time for some subjects
Reduced hours during career	60.7%	62.9	62.4%	Identified as a "career killer" particularly for women, but still a popular choice
Seasonal hours	55.8%	51.5%	55.1%	Nature of HE is still inherently seasonal
Daily variation for childcare	46.7%	41.3%	43.2%	Could affect around 1 in 3 staff
Reduction pre-retirement	60.1%	51.6%	40.3%	Difficult under final salary schemes
3 day weekend (compressed hrs)	43.4%	42.2%	31.2%	Negated by long hours; useful if caring is distant
Term-time only	35.7%	18.6%	25.7%	Similar to seasonal; would apply to teaching only posts
Flexible annual holiday entitlement	38.1%	50.5%	22.9%	Often enjoying greater freedom with annual leave; terms & conditions not always clear

Summary of responses to on value placed on particular flexible options

Some inherent aspects of the academic job role such as access to informal homeworking, varying hours within teaching and administrative parameters, and the seasonal nature of the work might be useful to emphasise when recruiting new staff. However these useful aspects are potentially countered by a culture of long hours, pressure to establish a research career and low pay. More research may be needed in to why people choose to work in HE, and if women are drawn to teaching and research in an academic environment because of its term time nature, and the fact that it fits in more closely with caring responsibilities than other roles of a similar level in the private sector.

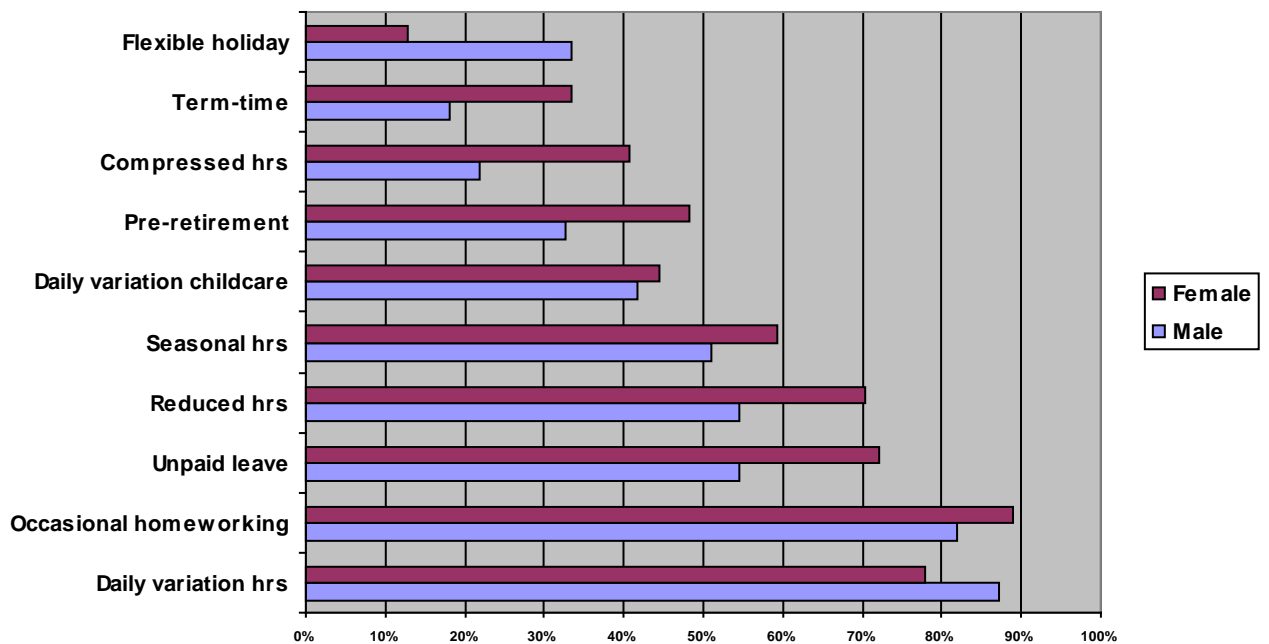


Table (above) - Interest in flexible working shown by academic staff split by gender

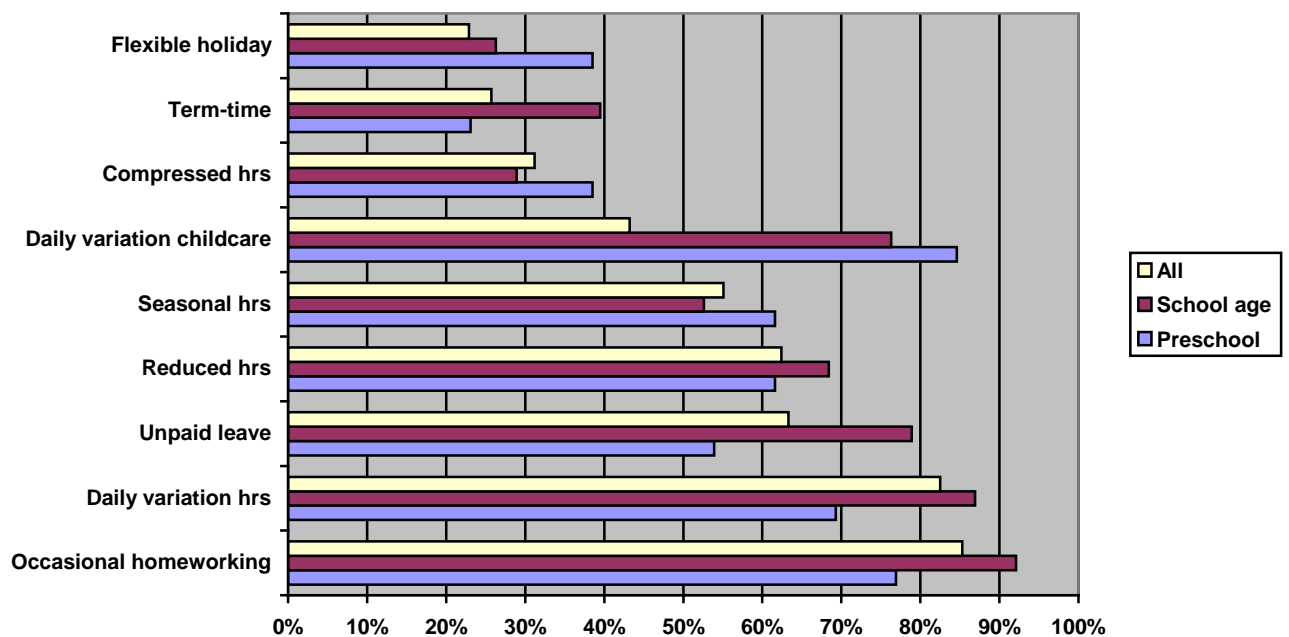


Table - Interest in flexible working shown by academic staff split by caring responsibility

The results in the tables support the theory that it is best to offer a range of flexible options to choose from as all job roles are different, and all personal circumstances are different. This applies even to those with caring responsibilities as it appears that carers of pre-school children are interested in different options to carers of school age children.

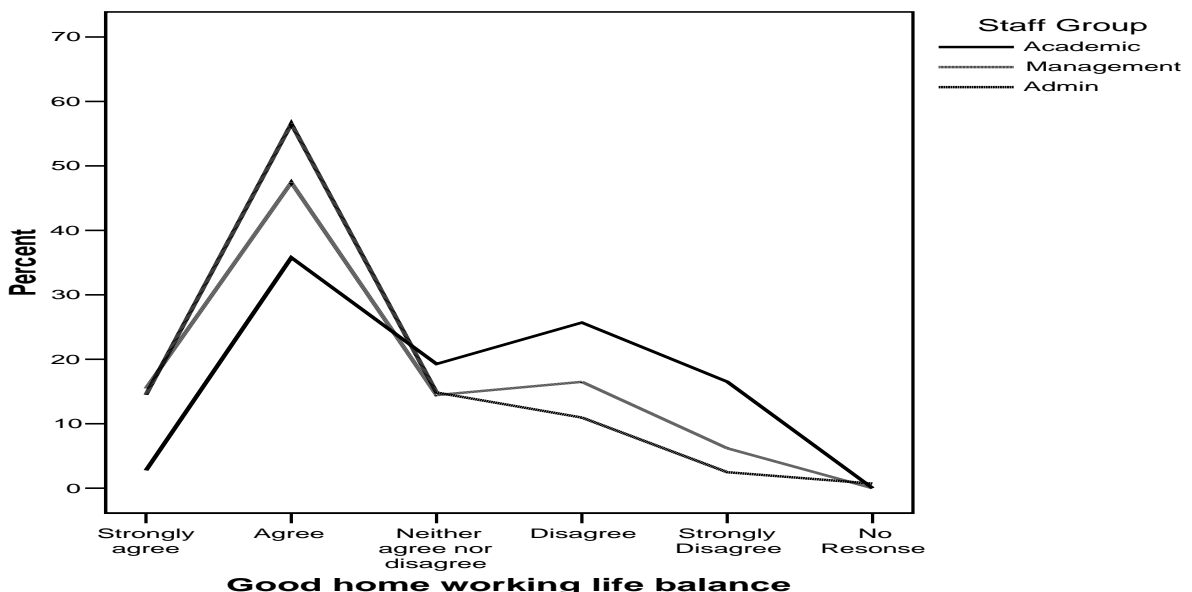
It can also be tentatively concluded that the higher level of flexibility for academic staff may be helping them to manage caring responsibilities. Homeworking during the vacations and occasionally at other times could be seen as particularly helpful. Staff could also benefit because of the amount of annual leave and self managed time.

3.4. General well being at work

The final questionnaire included general questions on respondents' perception of work and how it is related to their overall well-being. These concerned the balance between work and personal life, and overall job satisfaction.

3.4.1. Home/ working life balance

The questionnaire asked whether or not respondents felt they had a good balance between their work and their personal lives –*"I am able to strike a good balance between my home and working life."* For all the flexibility they seemingly enjoy, the line chart below suggests academic staff feel they have much less balance between work and personal life than the other categories of staff.



Only 40% agreed or strongly agreed that they had a good balance between work and personal life, and more worryingly 40% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

The table below shows that carers seem to have a better work-life balance as do part-time staff, but female staff overall view their work-life balance in a less favourable light. Is it perhaps easier for part-time staff to regulate their hours and avoid long hours leading to a better work-life balance? Carers in general view their work-life balance in a more favourable light than non carers, but men view their balance better than women although neither percentage is very high.

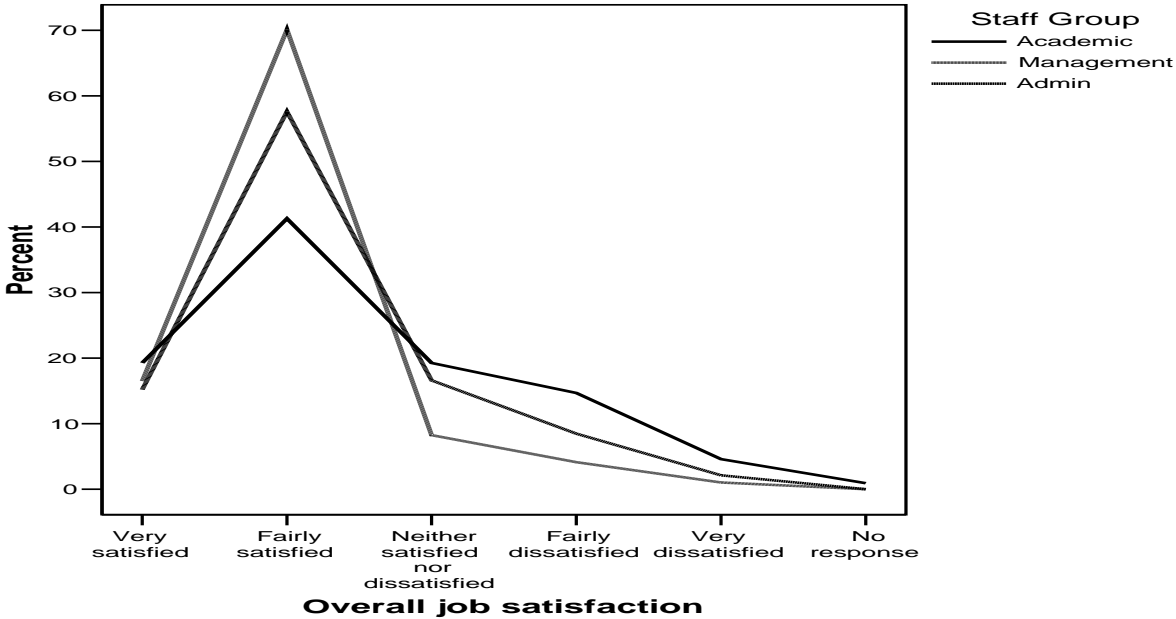
Work/home balance - Academic staff	% positive response
• Female	31.5%
• Male	45.4%
• Carers – pre-school	61.5%
• Non carers	35.4%
• Carers – school age	42.1%
• Non carers	36.6%
• Full-time	32.6%
• Part-time (fractional)	84.6%
• Over 10 years	34.7%
• 5-10 years	46.5%
• 3-5 years	50.1%
• 1-3 years	20.0%

"... Concern lies in the lack of balance between work and family life. The nature of the job is that for 26 weeks of the year you are under severe pressure to offer a quality service this impacts on family life (working most weekends in that period). Long term this can not be good for the individuals or the university."

3.4.2. Job satisfaction

Respondents were asked at the end of the questionnaire - "Overall, how satisfied are you with your current job?". As well as feeling they had a much poorer work-life balance than the other two categories of staff, they rated their job satisfaction as much lower too, with a stronger indication of dissatisfaction. However, in some cases comments indicated that often the dissatisfaction was with the organisation and the terms and conditions of service, not necessarily the day-to-day job role.

As can be seen from the line chart below, approximately 60% of the academic staff in the sample are “fairly satisfied” or “very satisfied” with their job – however this is a lower figure than for other groups of staff.



The table below shows academic staff data split into various categories. Note the difference between job satisfaction of part-time and full-time employees, where the job satisfaction for part-time (fractional) academic staff in the sample is very high.

Job satisfaction – academic staff group	% positive response
• Female	55.5%
• Male	65.5%
• Full-time	56.8%
• Part-time (Fractional)	92.3%
• Over 10 years with institution	69.4%
• 5-10 years with institution	64.3%
• 3-5 years with institution	62.6%
• 1-3 years with institution	66.7%
• Carers – pre-school	53.9%
• Non carers	61.5%
• Carers – school age	60.5%
• Non carers	60.5%

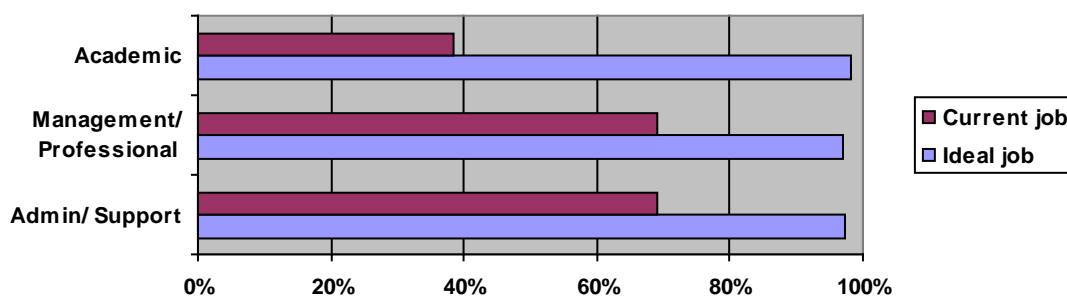
3.5. General perceptions of work and working conditions

The following statements come from the section of the questionnaire which asked respondents to rate certain aspects of their ideal and current job on a standard 5 point scale in the following way –

*“How important is working in an organisation with . . . to you in your **ideal job**” and -
How well does your **current job** provide for . . . ?*

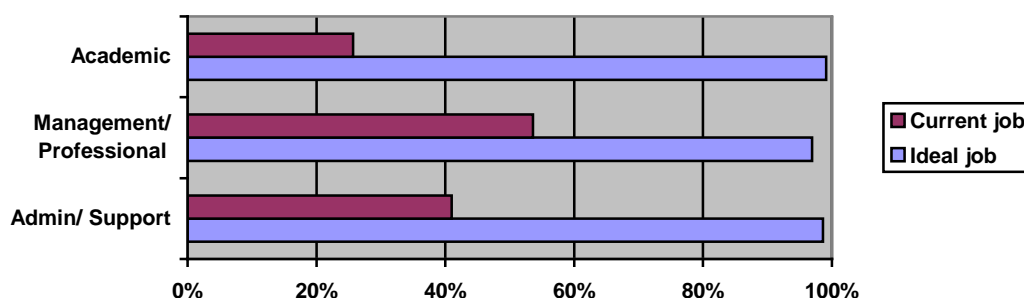
Each of the tables compares the positive response of the three main staffing groups. Looking at these may help to put together a picture of how academic staff perceive their work, working conditions and environment. Generally the response of academic staff to this set of statements is significantly different to the other groups, with many more responding neutrally or negatively to the statement on current job. There is a summary of the data on page 46.

3.5.1. “. . . Good terms and conditions (benefits) of employment.”



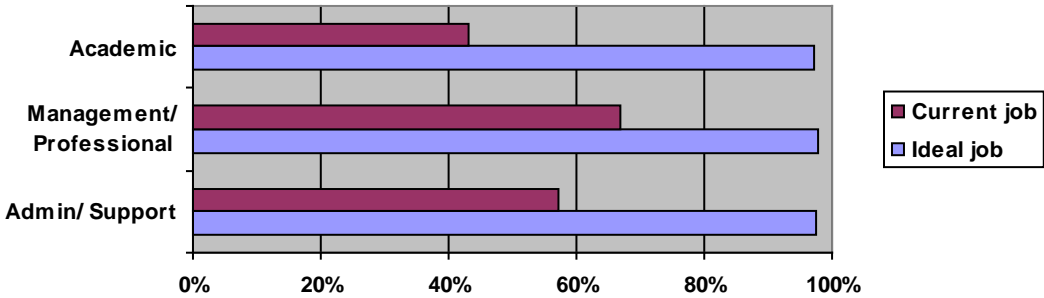
Poor terms and conditions of service are highlighted in comments made by academic staff, and also differences between terms for academic staff and other members of staff. The response from academic staff for the FEO project echoes that of other research mentioned in Sections 2 and 4.

3.5.2. “. . . Fair pay for the work I do.”



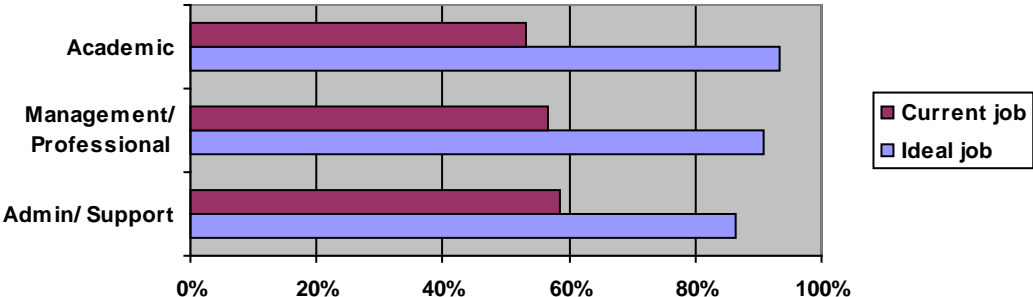
The sample of academic staff return a strong negative compared to other groups, and suggests that they feel under-valued, particularly compared to management. The low current levels of pay compared with other sectors including school teaching is highlighted in research and is increasingly causing problems not only with recruitment but retention too.

3.5.6. ". . . Recognition for the work I do."



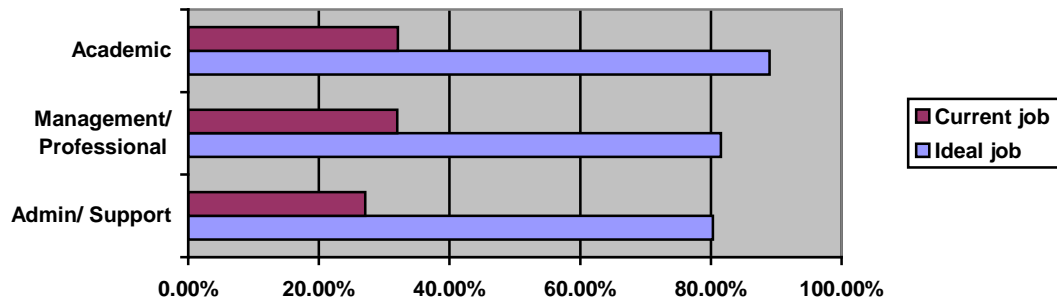
The management category returned a more positive response to this than the other two categories, but there is not enough information to say whether such systems as appraisal or staffing structure have a part to play. There is an expectation for academic staff to achieve recognition beyond their own institution in the wider academic world.

3.5.7. ". . . Opportunities for personal development."



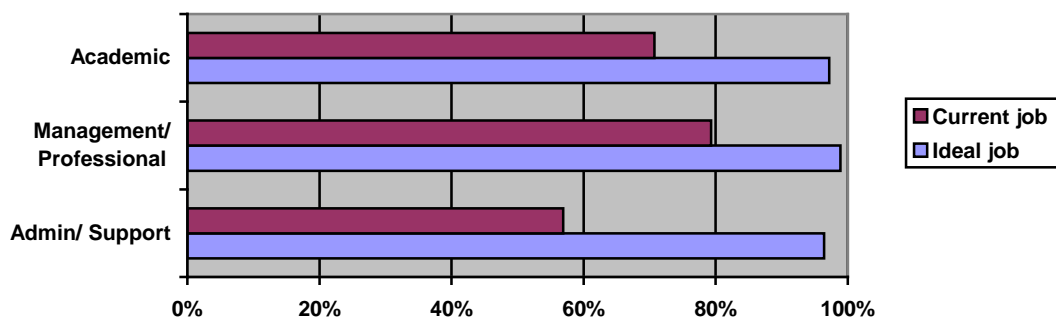
This is desired by a high percentage of academic staff, more so than the administrative and management groups, although again they are all over 85%. Around 55% of academic staff feel they have opportunities for personal development in their current jobs, but this differential is similar to that of the other two staff groups, so the perceived gap between theory and reality is wider for academic staff.

3.5.8. “. . . Opportunities for promotion/ career prospects.”



Interestingly opportunities for promotion or career prospects were not viewed as quite as important as opportunities for personal development by academic staff, but still high at around 90%, and certainly more so than for management and administrative staff. All respondents found that in their current job there seemed to be little scope for promotion or career prospects. It is unclear whether this is linked to particular institutions or is prevalent sector-wide.

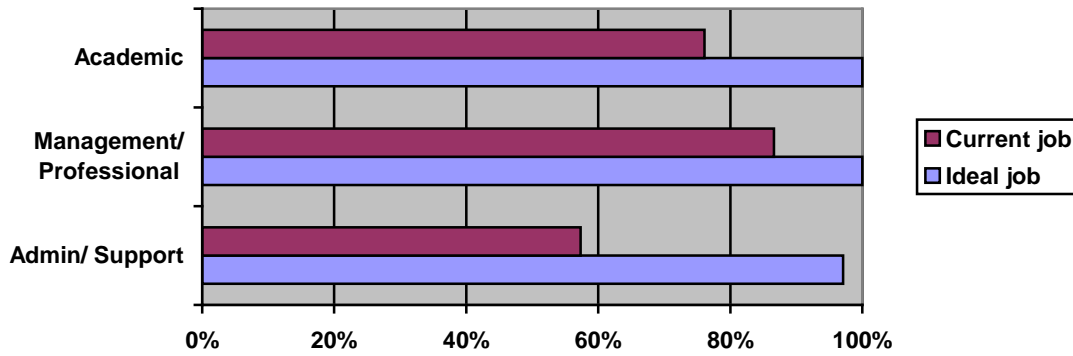
3.5.9. “. . . Work that gives a sense of achievement.”



The management category returned a more positive response to this statement than the academic staff, but even so roughly 70% of the academic staff sample felt a positive sense of achievement, despite a lack of work-life balance, low pay and lower levels of overall job satisfaction. This is one of only two statements where academic staff give a more positive response than administrative staff, the other is interesting and enjoyable work. This could be due to working in a chosen subject area, and despite the pressures of workload and long hours, enjoying research and teaching.

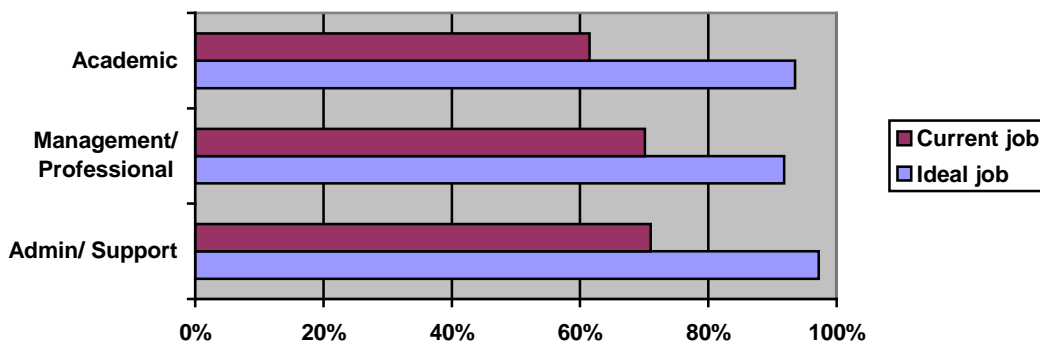
3.5.10. “. . . Interesting, enjoyable work.”

Here there was a lower positive response again for the academic staff group than that of the management category, but more than that of the administrative staff category.



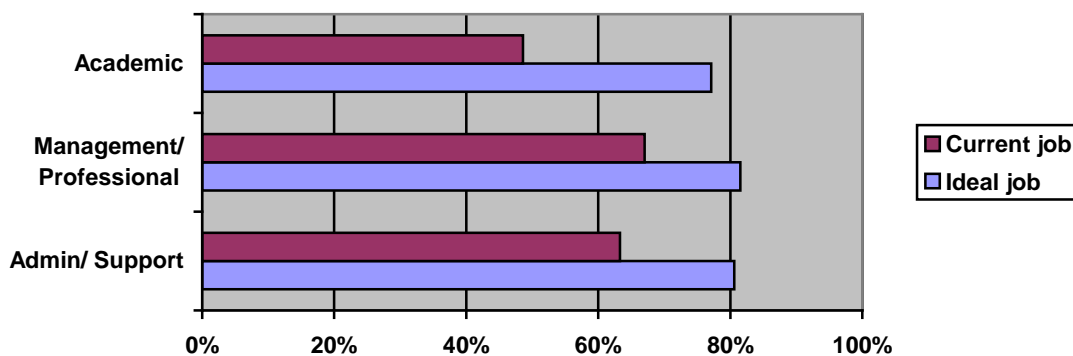
Over 75% of the academic staff sample rated their current work as interesting and enjoyable. It could be expected that the positive response to be high given that generally people will be researching and teaching the subjects of their choice.

3.5.11. "... Job security."



The response of academic staff to this statement is similar to other categories, but with slightly more negatives, with 15% of academic staff responding that their current job provided badly or very badly in terms of job security. It could be tentatively concluded that this could be due to rapid changes in the sector and the changing role of academic staff.

3.5.12. "... Working in an organisation with a good reputation."



A higher percentage of academic staff responded “*Very important*” than the other two categories to ideal job, but taken overall the response was similar for everyone, within roughly 4 out of 5 feeling that working for an organisation with a good reputation was important to them. When it came to current job, academic staff seemed to rate this lower than other two categories, with a significantly higher percentage responding with “*badly*”.

3.5.13 Summary

The table below shows the percentage positive response to the questions about their *current job* for each of the main staff groups responding to the questionnaire, with the first column showing the response of academic staff to the question about their *ideal job* for comparison. They are listed in descending order of positive response of academic staff on current job -

Academic Ideal job	Area of work	Academic Current job	Manage. Current job	Admin. Current job
100%	Interesting, enjoyable work	76%	87%	57%
97%	Sense of achievement	71%	80%	57%
94%	Job security	62%	70%	71%
94%	Opportunities for personal development	53%	57%	59%
89%	Opportunities for promotion/career prospects	53%	57%	59%
77%	Working in an organisation with a good reputation	49%	67%	63%
97%	Recognition	43%	67%	57%
98%	Good terms and conditions	39%	69%	69%
99%	Fair pay	26%	54%	41%

Are academic staff more easily dissatisfied? Do they start with higher expectations, or is there real significance in their responses to questions about fair pay, job recognition, personal development, and job security? Those respondents that fall within the Management category give the highest positive responses to these statements.

These issues are vitally important because of the way they all contribute to staff morale and job satisfaction, which in turn contribute to performance and customer service.

3.6 Expectations at work

These questions were part of a general section where respondents were asked to rate a series of statements on a 5 point scale. The statements were based on those used by the Work Foundation for staff satisfaction surveys. They are listed in descending order of positive response.

“I am clear about what is expected of me on a day to day basis.”

Clear about expectations	Positive response	Negative response
Academic	79%	11%
Management	90%	2%
Admin	89%	2%

“I have adequate access to IT to enable me to do my job effectively.”

Access to IT	Positive response	Negative response
Academic	64%	17%
Management	84%	9%
Admin	87%	4%

“I am able to make the decisions I need in order to do my job effectively.”

Decision for job effectiveness	Positive response	Negative response
Academic	49%	19%
Management	70%	17%
Admin	75%	9%

“I have the information I need to do my job effectively.”

Information for job effectiveness	Positive response	Negative response
Academic	48%	24%
Management	64%	25%
Admin	65%	9%

“My grade fairly represents my level of responsibility.”

Fair grading for responsibility	Positive response	Negative response
Academic	41%	44%
Management	58%	24%
Admin	47%	32%

“I have the resources I need to do my job effectively.”

Resources for job effectiveness	Positive response	Negative response
Academic	30%	50%
Management	46%	31%
Admin	62%	14%

In all cases the response from academic staff is less positive and in the majority of cases much more negative. It is interesting to note that administrative staff and management felt they were better equipped in terms of resources than respondents from the academic staff group.

3.7 Key issues arising

Attitudes to flexible working (3.2.3)

- As many academic staff as other respondents would like opportunities for flexible working in their ideal job – around 1 in 8.
- 58% of academic staff in the sample said they had opportunities for flexible working in their current job. This response is lower than that of the administrative and managerial staff groups despite the general view that academic staff have a flexible remit.
- Two questions emerge –
 - Generally do academic staff see the way they are permitted to work as flexible working options?
 - Is this flexibility negated by workload, long office hours and research expectations?

Value placed on particular options by academic staff (3.3)

- One of the most valued/important of the options is the ability to vary your own hours on a daily basis – a desire matched by the other two groups.
- Occasional homeworking is valued by 85% of academic staff, but much less by the other two staff groups.
- Access to periods of unpaid leave and reducing hours during a career are as valued by academic staff as the other groups at around two thirds.
- This is the same for seasonal hours. HE is still inherently seasonal despite the increase in activities and courses run during vacations.
- Varying your hours of work for childcare purposes is as valued by academics as other groups at around 45%
- There is less interest from academic staff than other groups in reducing working hours pre-retirement, a 3 day weekend, term time working and also flexible annual holiday.
- However there are some gender differences.
- There is higher interest generally from female academic staff in more and different options – occasional homeworking, unpaid leave, reduced hours, seasonal hours, varying your hours for childcare, pre retirement, compressed hours, and term time only.
- Male academic staff highly valued daily variation in hours and flexible holiday entitlement.
- Carers of school age children valued term time, reduced hours, unpaid leave, daily variation in hours, and occasional home working.
- Pre-school carers valued flexible holiday, compressed hours, daily variation for childcare, and seasonal hours.

General well being at work (3.4)

- Academic staff much were less positive about their work-life balance than other groups – the administrative staff group was the most positive.
- When work-life balance was split by gender, male academic staff were more positive than female staff, while carers of pre-school children were more positive than carers of school age children, and part-time staff (85%) much more positive than full-time (33%)
- For the question on job satisfaction, academic staff seemed to be much less satisfied than the other groups – 40% were fairly satisfied, whereas this rose to 60% of administrative staff and 70% of management. Overall academic staff gave a 60% positive response to this question.
- Again part-time staff have a high level of job satisfaction at 92%. For full-time staff this dropped to 57%.
- With job satisfaction there was very little difference between carers and non carers, although those with pre-school children perceived their job satisfaction to be slightly lower than other carers.

General perceptions of work and working conditions (3.5)

- In all areas the academic response was lower for the current job than the other two groups, even though the various aspects were viewed as important in an ideal job, or indeed more important. In some instances this perception was lower by 20-30%.
- The highest positive response was for *“Interesting and enjoyable work”*, but only about 70% of the academic staff sample were positive about their current job.
- There was a positive response for *“Sense of achievement”* at 71%.
- The following were particularly low – *“Recognition of work”* (43%); *“Good terms and conditions of employment”* (39%); *“Fair pay for the work I do”* (26%).
- Are expectations higher in an ideal job? In some cases slightly but not otherwise. In which case this is worrying data.
- There has been research since this data was collected (see next section) and also action following the recommendations of the Bett and Dearing reports.

Expectations at work (3.6)

- This data paints a poor picture of academic life perceived by this sample of academic staff when compared to the two other main groups of employees in the survey. However some aspects were perceived as low for everyone.
- Particularly bad all round was *“Resources to do the job effectively”*, with only a 30% positive from academic staff with 46% for management and 62% for administrative staff.
- An equally low response from academic staff compared to other groups was *“Access to IT to do the job effectively”* at 64%. This rose to 84% for management and 87% for administrative staff.

- Academic staff were 80% positive that they were “Clear about what was expected of them day to day”, but this was up to 90% for the other two groups.
- The response to “Ability to make decisions needed to do the job effectively” was 50% positive for academics, but up to 70-75% for the other two groups
- This was similar with “I have the information I need to do the job effectively” with a 50% positive response from academic staff, but up to 65% for other two groups.
- The response to “My grade fairly reflecting my level of responsibility” was 40% positive from academic staff, and around 47% and 55% for the others – so low all round.
- So overall, academic staff were less sure about having enough guidance, information, resources or technology to do an effective job, than the other two groups of staff. In fact administrative staff seem the best catered for.

Key Issues –

- Academic staff already have access informally to many of the options that had been offered via the FEO pilot schemes. However they still seem to be increasingly unable to use the inherent flexibility of the role. Furthermore, as workloads and expectations increase work-life balance is suffering for everyone not just those with family responsibilities.
- Academic staff, particularly those with school age children and female staff want more flexibility/options than they currently have.
- Why are academic staff are not taking up formal options (as opposed to the informal ad hoc nature of their current flexible working options)? Do they feel it will jeopardise their career? Or do they have access to enough flexibility, making do with what they have? Or are formal options, where they exist, not being made available to academic staff?
- The other areas of the FEO questionnaire highlight other issues that are contributing to poor work-life balance; particularly worrying is the lack of resources, including IT.
- This sample of academic staff perceived themselves to be less supported in the culture of the organisation than other categories of staff, despite being those that deliver key front line customer services.
- Comments from academic staff indicated they are clear on what the issues are for them, notably workloads and long hours, and the solutions outlined in following sections seem to concentrate on ways of regulating workloads and therefore hours. Researchers are concerned about the high level of stress and possible psychological illness which follow. This is particularly difficult especially in subject areas where there may be no overlap in teaching expertise, and the necessity of avoiding the stress cycle of long term illness and its effect on a department.
- Homeworking is increasingly the subject of health and safety issues because of the IT now in use for work. The way work is done at home has dramatically changed over the last 20-30 years, as too has the way teaching is delivered.
- The general findings of this section support the need to look beyond flexible work to work-life balance, stress, and workload.

Section 4: Work-life balance and academic staff

It has been established that the group of academic staff who responded to the FEO pilot scheme questionnaires were interested in flexible working and also already used it extensively informally, even though only two took up an option formally with the project. It has also been established which options may interest particular groups of academic staff. However it was also clear that, in line with the previous research, the respondents from the academic staff group had a work-life imbalance and much lower levels job satisfaction than other staff groups. This section looks more broadly to include work-life balance as well as flexible working, and includes some of the research undertaken in this area since the FEO pilot scheme.

4.1 Research undertaken in the sector

The 2003 annual work-life balance survey of academic staff from THES and NATFHE (THES 26 9 03) warned of an “epidemic” of stress that was damaging the quality of teaching and research, and that this had serious consequences for health and safety at work. The research also found that long hours and overwork were affecting personal lives and family relations.

The work of Tytherleigh and Cooper, funded by Hefce, on stress in higher education is summarised in an article in the THES (3 10 03). One of the main problems arising was that of the long hours culture. 66% of HE staff compared with 50% of the general workforce worked more than 40 hours a week, with 40% working a minimum of 51 hours. Staff were not taking lunch breaks or all of their annual leave, and also taking either no sick leave or returning to work before they were well. There was a sense that workloads were being “put up with” because of concerns over job security. Staff in pre-1992 universities were more stressed than the post-1992 institutions with the 36-45 age group being the most stressed. The sector was still perceived as family friendly with flexible working hours, but men reportedly had the worst work-life imbalance and the highest levels of stress.

The AUT have for a number of years surveyed their members about working conditions. A separate AUT poll in 2003 (AUT 10 3 03) also highlighted the problem of work-related stress for academic staff, and in it 81.7% of respondents said that work impaired their quality of life. The poll also revealed that 25% of research staff, and 38% of academic staff who combined teaching and research, felt work impaired the quality of life to an “unacceptable” level, while this rose to 40% for teaching only academic staff. In addition 26.9% were thinking of leaving the sector. This had been picked up by the Prime Minister’s Chief Scientific Advisor, Sir David King, and he suggests that universities can do

more to help all academics balance work and home life, and not just focusing on women. (Lipsett 23 9 05)

Also in 2003, the AUT response to the government proposals around work and parents, leading up to the introduction of the Right to Request flexible working in the 2002 Employment Act, highlighted many issues around work-life balance for academic staff. In their response, the AUT supported the government moves towards further help for working parents, but wanted to focus upon childcare as a parental issue, rather than purely of concern to women and extend work-life balance policies for men, to promote equality. Although the AUT felt that the green paper was gender orientated, they also felt an overall change in the workplace culture concerning childcare issues was needed. In particular two problems were highlighted – firstly the “career killer” where some kinds of provision, such as career breaks, extended maternity leave, reductions in working time and parental leave, actually marginalise staff; and secondly the move towards “Casualisation” where the increasing numbers on fixed term or hourly paid contracts lose out on contractual benefits only available to permanent academic staff. The AUT supported the promotion of quality part-time work for both men and women with an emphasis on quality not quantity for promotion, with appropriate research output targets. It was also felt that paid paternity leave would recognise the role of fathers in childcare, and help towards breaking down the “career killer” culture. Women who take unpaid parental leave (and unfortunately it will probably be women) will suffer loss of earnings, and this will actually increase inequality and reinforce gender roles.

The survey Kinman carried out for the AUT in 1998 was followed up in 2004 in the report *“Working to the limit”* (Kinman and Jones) and the data compared. The 2004 survey found some measures of the levels of job related stress and psychological distress were similar to those found in 1998, a few had reduced but some had increased. The tentative conclusion was that employees may be acclimatising or have access to higher levels of support than in 1998, however around half of the sample continued to show evidence of “caseness” levels of psychological distress where some intervention is recommended. In the foreword to the report Sally Hunt, the AUT General Secretary, said that the sector should *“. . . take action to reduce work related stress in HE and improve work-life balance for academic and related staff. Employers should ensure that the work staff are expected to do is appropriate and not excessive . . . Employers should encourage staff to take their full holiday entitlement – as well as make full use of their rights to flexible working.”*

As to where academic staff work, many respondents to the survey were expected to be present at their HEI between 9am and 5pm through the week, and so were not able to work at home during “normal” office hours. In addition their place of work did not provide conditions to adequately perform work which required concentration and minimal interruptions, and therefore they did this work at weekends and in the evening instead. Like the SOAS report mentioned in Section 2, there is a blurring of and pressure on the boundaries between home and work which causes huge problems for many academic staff, not least in limiting their options for using the flexible working that is already

inherent in their job role. Those with clearer boundaries between home and work tended to be less stressed by their work.

The survey also found that only 18% of respondents indicated that their employers had informed them about the right to request flexible working, but felt that HEIs had a role in helping employees achieve a more effective work-life balance. Those who felt their institution supported them in establishing and maintaining a work-life balance were less likely to wish to leave the sector. The report concluded that even services currently provided in institutions to help employees manage stress and the work-life “interface” need to be considerably more visible.

However research also suggests that although flexibility at work is desired by most people, there is a risk that those more involved with their work or under the pressure of high workloads, use the flexibility to work longer and harder rather than channel it into family life/leisure, and so may report low levels of well being and work-life balance (Kinman, 2004). NATFHE have recently conducted an online survey (NATFHE 27 5 05) and have found that respondents worked an average of 11 hours (unpaid) over their contractual hours each week. Respondents also indicated that workloads affected their personal lives, and affected the quality of support to students, and that workloads were also affecting their health. 69% indicated that their working hours were not monitored; 88% indicated that their contracts specified a “normal” working week. However comments received through the FEO projects indicated that some academic staff were experiencing working hours of 60-80 per week during term times.

Another area where flexible working has an influence is that of creating opportunities for a more diverse workforce within higher education, particularly with respect to gender. An article in the Guardian (23 9 05) highlighted a gender gap between men’s and women’s academic pay revealed by a study of data collected by HESA for 2001-2, and NATFHE suggested there was a need to look at equal opportunities and employment procedures to ensure women were not disadvantaged. In an age where an increasingly important part of the potential employee pool will be women, and where over 50% of first degrees are now gained by women, it is important that higher education addresses these issues. Currently women make up only a quarter of senior lecturers, and 13% of professors (THES 4 7 03), while the percentage of female vice-chancellors is even lower. Erica Halvorsen, policy advisor for the ECU (Equality Challenge Unit), suggested that research was needed into why certain roles in academia appeared to be so unappealing and unavailable to women (Johnson) and suggested that *“making options available for flexible working and work-life balance to all staff including academics would help.”*

There has been more research in the areas of work-life balance, flexible working and family friendly cultures by those concerned with gender balance. This has concentrated on ways of encouraging women into particularly male orientated areas such as science and engineering technology (SET). Numerous research studies have been set up under the umbrella of the ATHENA Project and published reports are available. Report no. 26 published in 2003 and surveying science, engineering

and technology in HE being particularly relevant (ATHENA and Fazackerley). It highlights a strong sense of injustice among female scientists. Particularly difficulty was experienced in returning after a career break, and contact with the department, flexible working hours, and childcare were most frequently cited as suggestions as to the flexible measures that would help the transition back to work. More work on gender issues in academia has been done in the US. In an article on one such publication from leading female academics on combining work and personal life, families in particular, a professor is quoted as saying *“Adequate childcare, flexible career paths, longer tenure tracks and job sharing need to be part of the institution’s way of life.”* (Fine)

A report from UCEA in 2002 looked at recruitment and retention of staff in HE and found that the percentage of females in all grades was increasing, however so also was the proportion of over fifties suggesting lower recruitment from younger staff to sustain staffing levels in the future. It suggested that an academic career was no longer viewed as a job for life particularly by those in their thirties who are more conscious of promotion opportunities and career progression in the private sector. The research institute Demos is to look into the areas of academic recruitment, particularly in encouraging PhD students to carry on in academia.

Schemes for women may not fully address the gender issue as articles such as “Balancing fatherhood and professional life need not mean the annihilation of academic ambition” (Furedi 24.10.03) show. Just as for women being a mother can damage a career, male academics feel they can not be acknowledged as fathers, and often the culture of the institution draws a distinct line between work and personal life. There is a prevalent culture where it is felt that all hours are needed to establish a career and this is therefore not compatible with family life.

The Centre for Diversity Policy Research at Oxford Brookes University is looking into work-life balance for academic staff. Preliminary reports suggest that annual leave is not taken (reiterating “Working to the limit”), staff are working beyond normal hours, there is an increasing need to be in attendance for whole week, and there is a general lack of job security and feeling valued. Again this is reiterated in the FEO pilot scheme and other data. In addition, as the job is essentially open ended work can be “piled on”, whereas with support staff overtime costs may be a consideration. The other side of this however is that academic staff fear that more formal flexibility and monitoring of hours may restrict the scope and trust of the more open contacts. A balance needs to be sought.

4.2 Barriers to good work-life balance

The following section summarises the main areas that can cause problems for academic and research staff in higher education that have already been identified in this report.

- ▶ **High workloads** – There is an urgent need to find some way of managing work to enable more of a balance generally, and specifically to manage the balance between research, teaching and administrative duties that has been changing over the last 20 years. There seems to be a need for acknowledgement on both sides that open ended contracts mean that workload can be increased with no immediate impact on cost. Organisations need to acknowledge that “cost” comes later in psychological stress which affects customer service and the standing of the institution and in costs associated with attraction, recruitment, retention, and performance of academic staff.

- ▶ **Casualisation** – With increasing numbers of hourly paid staff and short term contracts, it is difficult to create financial stability for families. There seems to be a move to employ hourly paid staff to run courses in a bid to match staffing to market more closely, and thereby cut costs.

- ▶ **Taking a career break** – The general feeling is that a break of any kind seems to damage overall research career development, particularly in SET and academic medicine, but also in other subject areas. This applies to not only to breaks to have a family, but also breaks to complete PhDs, travel, move house or country. With more women now gaining first degrees there is a need to address gender balance in academic research.

- ▶ **Reducing hours** - Seeking reduced hours or other flexible options can be damaging to an academic research career and especially in a culture that does not acknowledge a life outside of work. Some part-time work is available and /or negotiable. However the hours outside of timetabled teaching can be difficult to monitor and can end up being as being full-time but on lower pay. There is a prevalent view that part-time staff cannot contribute in the same way. The other side of this is that in some subject areas the only way *into* a research career may be through part-time contracts.

- ▶ **Difficulty in finding appropriate childcare** – Although provision of on-site nurseries is very good in the sector (about 70% of HEIs provide one), students usually have priority and with increasing student numbers places available to staff are decreasing. The opening times are often geared to student time tables and not staff working times, and as Section 3 of the report shows there is a particular need for full-time staff to have flexible care for children in the school holidays and half terms. Often these are academic staff who are trying to remain full-time so as not to have a career break or reduce their hours to protect their careers. The current perception that generally senior roles cannot be effectively covered either part-time or using other flexible options such as job share, does not help.

► **General lack of family friendly culture** – There needs to be more recognition of life outside work and the value of family relationships, including the fact that male academic staff may have families. This would require a shift in the organisational culture. It seems an acknowledged fact (Davis and Farrar) that often academics marry each other. A locality may only be able to accommodate one career therefore the other partner may be lost to other sectors. Often it is women, who in their thirties take lower paid work or go elsewhere, and HE may be losing valuable potential employees.

However it should also be acknowledged that there are many areas where there are issues for academic staff that local policies on flexible working and work-life balance cannot address -

► **Lack of resources** – the FEO data showed that academic staff perceived a lack of resources both physical, as in IT, and in people, as in administrative and clerical support. In the private sector it would be considered a poor use of human resources to have academic level staff photocopying and filing. The government's goal of 50% of school leavers carrying onto higher education, the widening participation agenda, new markets in the private sector and abroad, and the rapid change in the ways in which teaching is being delivered and when, have all contributed to the resources deficit.

► **Research Assessment Exercise (RAE)** – There has been concern expressed in research and in the media about the distorting effect of the RAE and the next one is due in 2008. As quantity of output is often seen to be important, anyone who cannot work long hours, or wants to have a life outside their job, feel they show a lack of commitment, and damage their career prospects. This may affect female staff who take a career break or who work part-time, and enabling female academic staff to fulfil their research potential has important implications for gender balance in academic research.

► **The lack of parity/clarity in terms and conditions** – particularly between academic and support staff, and also between pre and post-1992 institutions. The lack of parity and clarity in terms and conditions is being looked at in the wake of the Bett and Dearing reviews on higher education.

All of the above pose barriers to good work-life balance for academic staff in some way or other. However it must be recognised that within this label there are many different roles and contracts, and the experiences of workloads, patterns and culture is very different for different categories of academic staff often determined by subject area. However this still should not stop forward thinking institutions from putting work-life balance at the top of their agendas and encouraging cultures that make academic staff feel valued, whether they be researchers or teachers or both.

Section 5: Current good practice

For academic staff the problem is not the lack of desire for flexible working, which is just as strong as for other staff, but seems to lie with long hours and heavy workloads and is compounded by the way in which research is funded. These factors often negate even the informal flexibility over daily hours and occasional homeworking to which most academic staff have access, and bar access to more formal flexible options which would provide a range of possibilities for all staff to help balance their work and personal lives. The examples of good practice are included with permission of the institution named. The following are some of the ways in which higher education institutions are trying to tackle these issues –

- 5.1 Workloads and long hours
- 5.2 Current contractual flexibility
- 5.3 Career breaks
- 5.4 Part-time work and fractional posts
- 5.5 Childcare
- 5.6 Institutional culture

5.1 Workloads and long hours

Academic staff taking part in the FEO pilot had emphasised that it was an issue of heavy workloads, long hours and balance between administrative duties, teaching and research, not necessarily a fundamental lack of flexible working that was the problem. To help, measures to regulate work time and workload management without prescribing hours are being introduced in some institutions.

Working Time Regulations (WTR) – some schemes recommend that academic staff self regulate their hours roughly in line with these regulations at 48 hours a week averaged out over 17 weeks. Some higher education institutions have included academic staff along with other staff when advocating the use of the regulations, although the opt out clause is still in place in this country at present. Several HEIs have adopted the AUT's model workload agreement policy concerning the working time regulations. This agreement includes the phrase *“Workloads will be managed in such a way as to ensure that adequate time is available to enable members of academic staff to engage in scholarship and research and to ensure that these core activities are not consigned to evenings and weekends.”* Other institutions exclude academic staff from consideration under the WTR as they do not have specified hours.

Examples of good practice

- **University of Strathclyde** – Model Workload Agreement – Formulated in conjunction with the AUT, and adopted as policy adopted by the Personnel Department in October 2004 (<http://www.strath.ac.uk/Personnel/site/>)
- **The Open University** – Academic staff have no set hours of work. The hours will be those necessary for the performance of the member's duties having regard, as appropriate, to office hours set by the council and operational demands, but *“The University will endeavour within the resources available to it to provide adequate levels of support to avoid the working of unduly long hours, taking into account the requirements of the Working Time Regulations.”* In addition where academic staff are required to work and/or travel at weekends or evenings or at times generally regard as unsocial or inconvenient, this will be taken fully into account in assigning duties and kept to a minimum. In these circumstances staff may qualify for time off in lieu subject to the approval of their head of Unit. (From “Terms and conditions of service – academic staff group”, 2005)

Workload Allocation Framework – This is a scheme where a framework is provided around which academic staff can build their working time. Such schemes usually use percentages to allow academic staff to roughly proportion their time between areas of responsibility.

Examples of Good Practice

- **University College London** – Workload Allocation Framework for Academic Staff – the framework aims to ensure that *“workload allocation is both fair and transparent . . . and at avoiding academic staff becoming stressed due to overload.”* It relates to part-time as well as full-time academic staff. Heads of Department are responsible for planning and distributing the workload of the department according to objectives, and there are guidelines on workload management. The framework draws on *“good practice already operating within the university”*, and was developed in consultation with the AUT (<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/hr>)
- **The Open University** – Recommends that central academic staff spend up to 80% of their time on course preparation, delivery and administration, and at least 20% on research. Study leave is also available for academic staff. (From “Terms and conditions of service – academic staff group”, 2005)

Evening work – Taking account of time spent teaching outside the normal day.

Example of Good Practice

- **Aberdeen Business School (Robert Gordon University)** – at the school, a substantial part of teaching takes place after 5pm, so “*staff who work in the evenings would ordinarily see it as part of their working load and their evening work will be reflected in the daytime commitment and attendance at work.*” Contact time is less for staff with administrative duties. (From <http://www.rgu.ac.uk/abs/aboutabs/> Jobs/ Working at RBS - “The culture of Aberdeen Business School”) However this ethos is also true of Robert Gordon University generally.

Allocation of time during the working day – Aims to maximise working time by considering when during a working day teaching, administrative and research roles are performed, and whether current patterns of working offer the best use of academic staff time.

Example of Good practice

- **Oxford Brookes University** – “Sustainable Working Policy” – the key elements of this are that it is the responsibility of managers to ensure staff take proper leave; that workload planning is in blocks of time not individual hours (to avoid having odd hours between teaching that cannot be used effectively); that there are proper rest breaks, a maximum length of the formal day, and limits on unsocial hours working; that thought is given to overwork and work taken home. It has also been found that there is a need to train managers to protect the health and safety of staff and prioritise tasks. This policy is currently at the committee stage. (Centre for Diversity Policy Research, seminar on Work-Life balance, November 2004 <http://www.business.brookes.ac.uk/research/cdpr/>)

To reach a similar goal, some institutions have used diary tracking or reporting (individual staff noting down their daily working patterns) to try to understand the issues surrounding the working day.

However this approach can be seen as divisive and disruptive.

5.2 Current contractual flexibility

Earlier in the report it was shown that access to flexible working does have a major part to play in helping academic staff to balance their personal lives with their job role and career ambitions. This view is backed by major unions and other research. How formal or informal this is may still be open to

debate, but informal schemes are much more open to abuse, particularly for academic staff not only in terms of workload and long hours but also in terms of access to other more formal approaches until recently only seen as suitable for support staff. Formal schemes are fairer, more equitable, with transparent and clear procedures to follow. What is needed is a way to apply these without restricting autonomy and professionalism. The FEO data shows that female academic staff and carers, particularly of school age children, are actively looking for more variety of formal flexible options, including part-time working and job shares.

Utilising the inherent flexibility of the job role is an important tool that academic staff use to achieve business objectives. This includes recognising flexible working hours, occasional homeworking, and the seasonal/ term time nature of the job role. Once recognised these aspects can also be used as tools for recruitment and retention, but only when coupled with measures to control workloads and address long hours.

Homeworking –

- Use self assessment check sheets to cover the health and safety aspects of using IT equipment at home.
- Use workload allocation to make use of occasional home working for work that requires more concentration as part of the working day not as part of over working in the evenings and weekends.
- Recognise that for those caring for school age children being able to work a home is a huge bonus particularly in school holidays.
- Recognise that being able to work at home occasionally is a bonus to all academic staff in juggling home and work life.
- Monitor leave to help to differentiate between working at home and when taking leave.

Flexible working hours –

- Although timesheets may not seem to be appropriate, many institutions acknowledge that self monitoring hours, bearing in mind the working time regulations, is appropriate.
- Acknowledge that this flexibility although leading to open ended days can also help when it comes to work-life balance.

Seasonal nature of the work –

- Recognise that this is still very much valued, although it is being eroded by widening participation and the changing nature of delivering higher education.
- Recognise that the apparent freedom in vacation is paralleled by the restrictions of term time teaching and administration.
- The seasonal nature of the work can be helpful for those with school age children.

Examples of good Practice

- **Staffordshire University Law School –**
 - Homeworking - Most academic staff in the department have one full day free from teaching in order that they can, if they wish, work at home. The time is given so that staff can work on teaching tasks such as preparation and marking, or on research.
 - Compressed hours – A lecturer works their hours over 4 days. The day off is flexible if attendance at a particular event is required.
- (http://www.staffs.ac.uk/academic/business_law/index.php)

With any options it is important to monitor what use is being made of flexible options and other work-life balance support such as the different types of leave, and review whether the range of options being offered is appropriate.

5.3 Career breaks

Although it was felt originally that the FEO pilot scheme would be in operation for too short a period to offer a career break, a period of unpaid leave was discussed. It was found that 70 % of academic staff in the sample foresaw the need to take a period of unpaid leave sometime during their career. It should be recognised that many career breaks are not taken by choice, but rather by necessity of personal circumstance. Research has identified that career breaks can be particularly damaging to an academic career. In the Athena Survey of SET (Science, Engineering and Technology) 2003 respondents made suggestions to help the transition back to work after a career break –

- Male respondents wanted (in order of preference) – contact with department, peer networks, flexible working, childcare, part-time work building to full-time, and mentoring.
- Female respondents wanted (in order of preference) – Childcare, flexible working, contact with department, part-time work building to full-time, shorter hours, mentoring, and peer networks.

Childcare and part-time work are covered later but a number of research studies mention the value of mentoring particularly for female academic staff and how useful it can be when returning from a career break.

Example of Good Practice

- **City University** – Guidelines for mentoring scheme for academic staff - This is a comprehensive formal policy including the benefits of mentoring for new staff and existing staff in new roles. (<http://www.city.ac.uk/sd/mentoringhomepage.html>)

It is still true that women are more likely to interrupt their careers to accommodate caring responsibilities. Many studies have been done under the Athena project umbrella for SET subject areas, as this is where knowledge and technical expertise become obsolete quickest but there is no reason why the solutions should not be transferred to all subjects.

Nottingham University and Loughborough University were involved in a partnership project “Skill acquisition and mentoring during early career stages” under the Athena Project. It gave participants a chance to form a supportive relationship with a senior woman academic who also worked in SET and a safe environment for exploring issues around academic life for post-doctoral women in SET with someone at a higher grade or with more experience. The project proved supportive and helpful in enabling them to deal more effectively with changes in their career, (Athena Project – Report 4)

Managing Maternity returnees – Schemes specifically to help those who return to full-time work after maternity leave. Time is granted, usually six months, to allow for the re-establishment of research before teaching is added into the equation.

Examples of Good Practice

- **Bristol University** – Women Returners Scheme – This scheme applies to Lecturers/ Senior Lecturers and Professors within the Faculties of Engineering, Science, Medical and Veterinary Sciences. It takes the form of a period of protected research time of up to six months after returning from maternity leave – with no teaching or administration duties to help re-establish a research career. The aim is to improve recruitment, retention, and career progression in SET. ((<http://www.bris.ac.uk/personnel/policies/wreturners.html>)
- **Imperial college, London** – Elsie Widdowson Fellowship Award. This supports women returning after maternity or adoption leave, and consists of funding to allow their department to relieve them of teaching and administrative duties for six months. The Fellowships must be applied for two months before going on maternity leave. (https://www.imperial.ac.uk/spectrum/hr/hr_info/procedures/family/elsiewiddowson.htm)

Managing female academic staff returning after a longer career break – The Open University (OU) was the subject of a detailed case study in an Athena report “Beating barriers and constraints in HE careers.” The report looked at why the OU is apparently more successful than the wider higher education sector in recruiting women as both as full-time SET academic staff and part-time SET Associate Lecturers. The report makes recommendations for other higher education employers if they are serious about increasing the numbers of women they employ, and these are –

- Offer flexible part-time working and professional development and training.
- Think about how to retain those who are primary child carers.
- Be receptive to highly skilled re entrants who need to update their skills.
- Actively develop the careers of all staff not just those who are full-time
- Ask academics, female in particular, what experience or training they need.
- Assist women to switch between research and lecturing and back to allow for family commitments
- Put in place returnee schemes covering research and lecturing skills.
- More part-time and job share roles available.
- Opportunities for women on career breaks to update their skills
- Using the possibilities for distance learning and virtual teaching for child carers.
- More flexible employment terms and conditions for women in SET

In 2003 the British Medical Association published a document on recruiting and retaining women in academic medicine. This report suggests that the workload for this type of role is inevitably heavy as it is fundamentally a combination of two jobs, and the expectations of the role particularly in research form barriers for women. More and more doctors would like to train and work flexibly, and want options to help them care for family members, children or the elderly. Solutions cited in the article include –

- Making the problem visible and setting targets
- Emphasising that gender balance is needed to benefit research
- Diversity should be valued
- Flexible working should be supported
- Staff should be managed through appraisal on achievements not hours worked

The report also mentions supporting the establishment of a resource centre for women in SET, and this has now happened.

Examples of Good Practice

- **Daphne Jackson Trust** – The trust enables scientists, engineers, and IT specialists to return to an academic work environment after a career break. (www.daphnejackson.org)

- **UK Resource Centre of women in science, engineering and technology –**
Comprehensive website includes a section encouraging women qualified in SET to return to employment within the sector. (www.setwomenresource.org.uk)

Although these recommendations and those from the Open University are for increasing the number of women both entering and being retained in SET academic careers, they are good practice generally for all staff.

5.4 Part-time work and fractional posts

The availability and acceptance of part-time work (fractional posts), where part-time can mean anything from 0.2 to 0.8, is cited in research as being very important for the retention of academic staff and as an aid to work-life balance. The perception of part-time work can vary and although it may be acceptable to work a fractional research post and also run a business or work in the private sector, it may not be to enable academic work to be combined with caring responsibilities.

The option of being able to come back to work part-time when returning from maternity leave or other career break and then building to full-time is seen as attractive to those with caring responsibilities. The FEO data shows that part-time academic staff have highest levels of job satisfaction and are more positive about their work-life balance, and around two-thirds of all academic staff saw the need to reduce their hours at some point in their career. However with a culture of high workloads and long hours care needs to be taken that fractional staff do not do the same amount of work as a full-time employee for less money. Clearer goals and expectations may be necessary when considering output of research from part-time academic staff, and longer time scales for the completion of research may be beneficial.

In Belgium both parents can work 70 to 80% of a full-time contract with flexible hours. This is seen as better than one partner taking a career break, particularly if both work in SET. It reduces the loss of skills and experience (McLeod).

Job share for academic posts – some institutions now have specific guidelines on how to manage a job sharing arrangement under an academic contract.

5.5 Childcare

The availability of good quality comprehensive childcare should be seen as a vital aid to the work-life balance of academic staff with childcare responsibilities, contributing to the maintenance of a full-time career. In reality, care for school age children is patchy, and nurseries at institutions although widespread in the sector, are usually for students first and staff second, with opening hours more suited to student timetables.

Example of Good practice

- **Robert Gordon University** – Treehouse Early Care and Education Centre – built by the university for the children of staff and students. Opened in 2004, it is leased and run by the private sector. Open 7.30am to 6 pm it is now a benchmark site for Scotland.

(<http://www.rgu.ac.uk/student-services/treehouse/>)

Provision for care for older children in school holidays is just as important for a large employer. Some institutions have collaborated with other large employers in the vicinity to provide services.

Examples of good practice

- **University of Durham** – Durham Kids Club Partnership - Partners are civil service, New College, and local NHS trusts to provide care for 5 to 13 year olds in all holidays and half terms. Clubs are run by the Kids Club Network and County Durham TEC.
(<http://www.dur.ac.uk/university.nursery/kids-club.htm>)
- **University of Cambridge** – in conjunction with **Anglia Ruskin University**, provides a holiday play scheme for the children of staff from rising 5 to 14+ in all school holidays except Christmas. Also operates two nurseries for staff and student children with a total capacity for 142 FTE; provides a salary sacrifice scheme for staff using these nurseries and childcare vouchers for staff using other providers of childcare. The Childcare Office which is in the process of expansion also provides information for staff and students on all aspects of childcare. (<http://www.cam.ac.uk/cambuniv/childcare/playscheme/>)

All the options investigated by the FEO project had high levels of interest from carers of school age children. At present the Right to Request Flexible Working regulations only cover children under 6, but some employers have recognised the importance of extending this.

Example of Good Practice

- **Loughborough University** – here the regulations have been taken further and the right to apply to work flexibly is available to all employees with children under the age of 14 years. (<http://www.lboro.ac.uk/admin/personnel/geninfo/FlexibleWorking.htm>)

At present employer supported childcare is encouraged by government policy, but costs of provision and increasing student numbers are pressurising provision. Some institutions are investigating flexible benefits in this area such as offering childcare vouchers to staff, and some have had general childcare policies in place for some time.

It is important to note here that increasingly staff are experiencing the pressures of eldercare as demographic changes take place, but little investigation has taken place to date on what might be helpful for employees. Flexible working is as helpful here as with any other situation, but there is also scope to provide services such as day care with other large employers in the locality.

Example of good practice

- **University of the West of England** – Carer's Leave (Academic Staff) - This policy is to help academic staff deal with caring responsibilities for dependents where only a short time away from work is necessary. (<http://info.uwe.ac.uk/personnel/>)

5.6 Institutional culture

There is a need to recognise high stress levels present within the sector, and that tackling work-life balance issues can help to improve health and reduce stress. The Health and Safety Executive have established a clear link between poor work organisation and subsequent ill health. Institutions may already be aware of such national schemes as -

- The Health and Safety Executive Management Standards – these are aimed at reducing stress at work and the parts that relate directly to flexible working and work-life balance include -
 - Demands – the organisation provides employees with adequate and achievable demands in relation to the agreed hours of work.
 - Control – employees have a say over when breaks can be taken; employees are consulted over their work patterns.

- Role – the organisations ensures that, as far as possible, the different requirements it places upon employees are compatible.
- Investors in People
- Athena/ SET gender objectives
- The Work-life Balance standard

The AUT policy statement on occupational stress for academic staff (April 2005), includes the following:

- “The impact of long hours and over work are spilling over into employees’ homes and family life.”
- “We will press employers to reduce work related stress in HE and improve work-life balance for academic and related staff.
- “We will negotiate with employers to ensure that the work staff are expected to do in appropriate and not excessive.”
- “Employers should encourage staff to take their full holiday entitlement – as well as ensuring that they make full use of their rights to flexible working.”

Employees are valuable, particularly frontline workers in teaching and research, and should not be seen as easy to be replaced as it is increasingly difficult to recruit into higher education and significant numbers of staff want to leave. Although recognition that flexibility will help female staff within the sector, both male and female academic staff value being able to vary hours daily for childcare and other caring responsibilities. However alongside this needs to be the recognition that flexible working is useful for all staff, including academic staff, and move away from the view that it is just for those with children.

Examples of Good Practice

- **University of Bristol** – Positive Working Environment – *“A process with the aim of making working life at the University of Bristol productive, rewarding, enjoyable and healthy for all colleagues.”* (<http://www.bris.ac.uk/pwe/>)

Section 6: Conclusion – So is flexible working relevant for academic staff?

The aim of this report was to discover if more formal and varied flexible working would help academic staff with their work-life balance; if entirely different approaches are needed; or if a combination of approaches may form part of the solution. It also aimed to identify current good practice and recommend some ways in which a more balanced approach to work for all groups of academic staff could be achieved.

All the research, FEO included, points to the fact that flexible working is relevant to academic staff, both in the informal sense and the provision of more formal options. It is one of the most valued aspects of an academic role – the freedom to choose when and where (flexible hours and occasionally working at home) to deliver the objectives of the role, but it is this that has been steadily eroded by increasing workloads and long hours.

In fact the very flexible and informal nature of academic roles may be obscuring issues, and this informality coupled with contracts that are open ended have led to a creeping increase in workloads and hours until staff are now showing signs of unacceptable levels of stress. Thus the ability to vary your own hours translates as long hours, and working informally at home translates as the only means of accomplishing more concentrated research work outside of the expected 9-5 attendance at the institution. The pressure is so great that informal flexibility is no longer useful to balance work and personal life but is used merely as a means of trying to cope and in essence, as it is with many other professional and managerial groups, as a means to overwork. In the case of academic staff this may be more hidden as it takes place at home out of sight. A lack of monitoring or means of distinguishing “working at home “ from “on leave” may compound the problem. With the pressure to publish for the RAE in 2008 increasing this can be at the expense of all evenings, weekends and vacation time, with annual leave not being taken.

Although over the last ten years research has shown that life for academic staff in higher education is getting increasingly stressful, it is only in the last few years that solutions are being sought as ill health and difficulties in recruitment and retention impact on costs. No longer can work just be “piled on”, and duties and student numbers increased without a matching increase in resources. Repeatedly studies have identified that there are two main solutions to these issues. Firstly to find ways of managing workloads and thus address the issue of long hours, and secondly to offer more and varied formal flexible working options to all staff, not just to support staff, and not just to women. There is some justification to the argument that the age of child covered by the Right to Request Flexible Working Regulations is not high enough, but also that they can be seen as divisive in that the

regulations can be seen to discriminate against those without dependent children. A range of options available for all staff to choose from is more equitable and helpful not only to individual work-life balance but also the overall institutional culture. Thus staff “pick” those options that are most useful for their job role and life situation.

The data collected by the FEO project on attitudes of academic staff to flexible work in general and on particular options, shows that they are just as interested in flexible working options as other groups of staff. The FEO data also highlighted some other issues that may be contributing to a potential lack of work-life balance and stress. These are a lack of resources, both IT and support staff; a lack of opportunities for personal development; low pay for work done; and poor terms and conditions - all contributing to low job satisfaction.

There is a need for a more formal approach to controlling hours worked, but rather than monitoring some other ways of creating manageable workloads, of regulating long hours, and balancing the time spent on each area of responsibility are being sought. Access to formal flexible working arrangements would encourage gender balance and diversity within academic staff groups. This would mean viewing part-time roles on a par with full-time roles which coupled with the wider availability of such schemes as job share, would help with career progression. Along with more widespread access to part-time roles, schemes concerned with returning to work after a career break are also very useful, as is mentoring. Better and more comprehensive childcare facilities that fit in with staff work times, particularly for school-age children, are requested by parents – male and female. A potential by-product of the effect of research pressure, particularly on women’s career progression, is that they delay having children with its important demographic and social implications. A large percentage of staff balance work with the impact of caring for dependents, but single academic staff are also in need of a balance between their work and personal life, and need flexibility.

It is important that HEIs recognise a work-life imbalance for academic staff as it eventually impacts on the quality of service to students. Students are now more critical not only of the service they receive, but also in viewing academia as a potential career and higher education institutions as future employers. There is a need to realise the importance of academic staff as assets to the university as the future calibre and reputation of the institution and of research rests on them. Academic staff in particular struggle with the two edged sword of having open contracts and the genuine blurring of boundaries between work and personal life because of the interest in, and commitment to, their subjects. Some means is needed to keep hours and duties manageable while allowing annual leave to be taken without interfering with the creative aspect of the role. It has been seen that there is already much good practice developing within the sector as institutions seek solutions to these issues.

Like everyone else, academic staff would like job security, less pressure to work long hours, a week that allows for some relaxation time and some personal commitments, and not having so much work

that they struggle to balance the three roles of administration, teaching and research. The last word on flexibility from a respondent –

“Academics don’t have fixed hours of work. As an academic I have the opportunity to vary my hours. And I have to do many of the things you propose to fit in my research, not to have time off with the family. I am massively stretched and stressed, and so are almost all my colleagues. The ability to vary the working schedule is vital for academics, seeking to balance research-teaching-admin. In theory we have it, in practice we do not, because understaffing limits our options – a balanced work commitment, with some freedom at the edges, proper breaks, and less long hours is the healthy option.”

Finally work-life balance is not about being minimalist about work but rather not having to neglect personal commitments.

Section 7: Recommendations

This report makes the following recommendations -

That HEIs consider introducing means to help academic staff regulate workloads, and therefore hours, to create more manageable job roles within the terms of the Working Time Regulations.

That HEIs recognise the flexible working element of an academic contract, and the role of flexible working hours, occasional homeworking, and the seasonal nature of the work within this. Aim to use this alongside management of workloads as aids to work-life balance.

That HEIs consider carefully the process of returning to work after a career break, taking into account maintenance of contact with the department, training in new technologies, mentoring, reestablishment of research, and flexibility of work patterns.

That HEIs think particularly around schemes to recruit and retain female academic staff in all subject areas, including part-time roles, job sharing, opportunities for updating skills when back at work and while on a career break, allowance for family commitments when considering the balance of lecturing and research, use of flexible working, and exploring the use of distance learning and virtual learning environments for primary carers.

That HEIs consider how they use fractional posts within the research workload of the department, and the overall balance of work for each role, recognising that part-time staff still want career progression and have a valuable part to play in research. Consider the use of job share for roles that cannot be achieved solely on fractional hours.

That HEIs develop comprehensive childcare provision bearing in mind the needs of academic staff during vacation times and local school times, recognising the role of contract flexibility in helping academic staff cope with caring responsibilities.

That HEIs extend support for those with caring responsibilities for elderly or disabled relatives.

That there should be an appropriate management and organisational culture reflecting the needs of staff and acknowledging commitments to dependents outside of work.

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Appendix 1: Questionnaire used in the FEO pilot schemes

The ----- is participating in a 3 year project (FEO) examining flexible employment options for the HE sector which will help all employees, at different times in their working lives, to better balance their responsibilities at work and their commitments outside work.

This questionnaire is designed specifically for this piece of research and your answers will be used to identify the types of flexibility that are of interest to employees within the HE sector. You have already completed a similar questionnaire at an earlier stage of the project, but we would be very grateful if you could complete this version in order to enable us to complete our research for this project.

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of the pilot scheme, it will be necessary for the research team to identify individual participants which will be done by means of coding the questionnaires. Any information that you provide will be treated with complete confidentiality and details relating to individuals will at no time be made available to anyone outside the FEO research team.

The questionnaire should take about 10 minutes to fill out. There are no right or wrong answers to the questions. What we want are your own personal views. We would welcome any additional points you would like to make in the space at the end of the questionnaire. Thank you for taking the time and trouble to complete the questionnaire. Please take this opportunity to say what you think.

Completion example

This example shows you how to complete the questionnaire:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I like going to the cinema	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5

By ticking the box under 'agree' you are indicating that you think the statement is correct but do not feel particularly strongly about it.

Please read each question carefully before answering it. If you make a mistake or change your mind about a question please make your final answer very clear as in the following example

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I like going to the cinema	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5

Section A - About You

Some people may have more than one role within the University. When completing this section, and indeed all of the questions within the questionnaire, please focus on one of these roles.

1. What is your staff group?

PLEASE TICK ONE BOX ONLY

- Academic 1
- Researcher 2
- Manual 3
- Management/Professional/Academic Related 4
- Admin/Support Staff 5
- Clinical 6
- Part-time hourly paid academic 7
- Other (including Casual) 8

2. What is your contract type?

PLEASE TICK ONE BOX ONLY

- Permanent 1
- Temporary/Fixed term 2
- Casual 3

3. What are your hours of work?

PLEASE TICK ONE BOX ONLY

- Full-time 1
- Less than full-time 2
- Job Share 3

4. How long have you worked for the University?

PLEASE TICK ONE BOX ONLY

- Less than 1 year 1
- More than 1 year, up to 3 years 2
- More than 3 years, up to 5 years 3
- More than 5 years, up to 10 years 4
- Over 10 years 5

5. Are you....?

PLEASE TICK ONE BOX ONLY

- Female 1
- Male 2

6. Do you consider yourself to have a disability?

PLEASE TICK ONE BOX ONLY

- Yes 1
- No 2

7. To which ethnic group do you belong?

PLEASE TICK ONE BOX ONLY

- Bangladeshi 1
- Black – African 2
- Black – Caribbean 3
- Black – Other 4
- Chinese 5
- Indian 6
- Irish 7
- Pakistani 8
- Mixed race 9
- White 0
- Other X

8. Do you have any of the following caring responsibilities at home?

PLEASE TICK AS MANY AS ARE APPLICABLE

- Child/children under school age 1
 - School age child/children 2
 - Elderly person/people 3
 - Person/people with disabilities 4
 - Other (please specify) 5
-

9. How long is the average time of your journey to or from work?

PLEASE TICK ONE BOX ONLY

- 15 minutes or less 1
- Over 15 minutes but less than 30 minutes 2
- Over 30 minutes but less than 45 minutes 3
- Over 45 minutes but less than 1 hour 4
- Over 1 hour 5

10. How do you normally travel to or from work?

PLEASE TICK ONE BOX ONLY

- Private car 1
 - Train 2
 - Bus 3
 - Walk 4
 - Cycle 5
 - A combination of any of the above (please specify) 6
-
- Other (please specify) 7
-

Section B – You and Your Job

11 How important are the following factors to you in your ideal job?

PLEASE TICK ONE BOX IN EACH LINE

	Very Important	Important	Makes no difference	Not very Important	Not Important at all
A good physical working environment	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Convenient work location	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Recognition for the work I do	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Friendly working atmosphere	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Opportunities for flexible working	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Working in a 'dynamic' organisation	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Working in an organisation with a good reputation	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Interesting, enjoyable work	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Work that gives a sense of achievement	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Working with young people	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Job security	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Opportunities for personal development	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Opportunities for promotion/career prospects	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Fair pay for the work I do	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Good terms and conditions (benefits) of employment	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5

12. How well does your current job provide the following?

PLEASE TICK ONE BOX IN EACH LINE

	Very well	Well	Neither well nor badly	Badly	Very badly
A good physical working environment	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Convenient work location	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Recognition for the work I do	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Friendly working atmosphere	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Opportunities for flexible working	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Working in a 'dynamic' organisation	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Working in an organisation with a good reputation	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Interesting, enjoyable work	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Work that gives a sense of achievement	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Working with young people	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Job security	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Opportunities for personal development	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Opportunities for promotion/career prospects	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Fair pay for the work I do	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Good terms and conditions (benefits) of employment	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5

13 To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

PLEASE TICK ONE BOX IN EACH LINE

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I am clear about what is expected of me on a day to day basis	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
My grade fairly represents my level of responsibility	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
I am able to make the decisions I need to in order to do my job effectively	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
I have the information I need to do my job effectively	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
I have the resources I need to do my job effectively	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
I have adequate access to IT to enable me to do my job effectively	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
I am able to strike a good balance between my home and working life	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
There is good co-operation within my immediate work team to achieve our objectives	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
There is good co-operation between work teams to achieve the University's objectives	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
The University cares about the people it employs	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5

14. The following are specific types of flexible working arrangements. If you are currently able to utilise these, please indicate how important each of them is to you. If you are not currently able to utilise these, please indicate how valuable each would be to you if they were to be made available

	Very Important	Important	Neither Important nor unimportant	Fairly unimportant	Very unimportant
The opportunity to vary my hours on a daily basis according to my own preference	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
The opportunity to vary my hours in order to assist with my childcare arrangements	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
The opportunity to either sell some of my annual holiday entitlement or buy additional days	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
The opportunity to have a three-	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5

day weekend on a fortnightly basis in return for longer working days					
The opportunity to work fewer hours at certain times of the year in return for working more hours at other times	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
The opportunity to be able to reduce my hours of work at certain times during my career.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
The opportunity to reduce the number of hours I work gradually as I approach retirement.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
The opportunity of working from home for a proportion of my working time, spending the remainder of the week at my usual workplace	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
The opportunity to be able to work during term time only.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
The opportunity to take a period of unpaid leave for personal or domestic reasons	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5

15. Overall, how satisfied are you with your current job?

PLEASE TICK ONE BOX ONLY

- Very satisfied 1
- Fairly satisfied 2
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied 3
- Fairly dissatisfied 4
- Very dissatisfied 5

16. Please write here any other comments you would like to make about topics raised in the survey

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION.
PLEASE RETURN THE COMPLETED QUESTIONNAIRE TO THE FEO
PROJECT TEAM IN THE FREEPOST ENVELOPE PROVIDED.**

Appendix 2: Comments

Academic staff made many interesting comments at the end of the pilot scheme questionnaires, some on flexible working but many on other work issues they felt strongly about. Many respondents from the Academic staff group felt they had access to the flexibility they needed and that this aspect of working was very important to them. However other issues such as heavy workloads, long hours, and no fixed hours/ holiday entitlement dominated instead. Many female academics seem to have been in a stronger position to negotiate changes to working patterns than perhaps those in other groups, although the overriding concern was for career protection.

Flexibility is already available -

- *“. . . These . . . questions imply the absence of privileges I already enjoy.”*
- *“Flexibility as such is not a real problem.”*
- *“Although we work hard, there is more “flexi” in this job than any other save being self employed.”*
- *“As an academic, I find there is already a large amount of flexibility.”*
- *“As an academic I already have some flexibility in working hours i.e. I can work from home when not teaching.”*
- *“I already vary my hours on a daily basis to fit in with work and study.”*
- *“I work all the time, including holidays, because evenings, weekends and “holidays” provide opportunities for research or to catch up on marking/paperwork. The level of flexibility I have at present is the most important positive factor about my job.”*
- *“I want flexibility to enable me to do my research effectively, as well as have appropriate personal time.”*
- *As a lecturer I have flexible working now and I can achieve more at home (undisturbed), so most of Q13 (valuing different options) is irrelevant.*

Career flexibility

- *“Recognition for me rates more highly than working more flexibly.”*
- *“I’d like to see easier access to part-time work (half to three quarters) for academics for a period of time in their career without losing out on contractual benefits.”*
- *“It is important for female academics to be able to vary their contract at different stages of their career without it impacting negatively on their overall career prospects and recognition professionally.”*
- *“Working as a part-time lecturer with research, teaching and (heavy!) admin responsibilities would appear very difficult and little reward in terms of a clear*

reduction in hours worked. I am also concerned that my terms and conditions would be changed for good – un favourably – if I asked for working part-time for a fixed period.”

Flexibility for caring responsibilities

- *“I am able to adapt my work to suit myself and the department as I work 2 days a week. However in a full-time post this would be difficult.”*
- *“The post I am in has permitted flexible working hours so that I could drop off and collect children when needed and put the extra time in at home – this was very useful indeed.”*
- *“The issue of after school care is one which is particularly pressing.”*
- *“It would be helpful if the University provided better and more accessible childcare arrangements/facilities.”*

Workloads

- *“Flexible working is hard to envisage when much work has to be done and at particular times.”*
- *“I have too much work for flexibility to be viable.*
- *“Because a good part of my job is research, all “spare” time tends to be spent on this. More time can be spent on research during the summer than during my teaching terms (Oct.-March)*
- *“In principle our job should be flexible – in practice the demands entail constant pressure to take work home – often work late at night/all night. In term time the job is more flexible than many, but the hours are also much longer – on an hourly rate that is poor for the level of expertise. Because of the disparate nature of the tasks and the lack of time available it is difficult to prioritise effectively – this means the tasks which affect oneself most e.g. research, tend to get squeezed, and job satisfaction is reduced.”*
- *“My average working day is usually a good 12 or 13 hours and I also work at least one day of every weekend, just to get everything done. The pressure of delivering research alongside coping with every day admin and teaching means that questions about working longer days in return for long weekends just sound like a joke. Making space for anything with this kind of workload is difficult.”*
- *“Flexible working doesn’t really make any difference to academic staff. It’s the overall workload that is too high. We already have flexibility about when we do that work (to an extent) but it doesn’t really help.”*

- *“As an individual, my research is important to me. As an employee, research is supposed to be a third of my duties. However, the teaching load and – in particular- the ludicrous and ever increasing amounts of administration mean that research is constantly pushed to the bottom of the pile of things demanding my attention. My job satisfaction is mostly in spite of, not because of current university structures.”*
- *“I work an 80 hour week during peak times and 60 hour week at other times. I have senior responsibilities. The university makes large profits from my work. This is exploitation.”*

Long hours

- *“I like many academics, work immensely long hours, usually 7 days a week.”*
- *“Can’t be more flexibility until hours reduced.”*
- *“At present no attempt is made to monitor our working hours. I know at times mine are excessive. I would like recognition for this.”*
- *“The concept of buying and selling time is meaningless when we do not have any limits on the hours we work. We want our overall workload lightened.”*
- *“Bluntly the problem is that “flexible working” is a credible concept only if work hours are reasonable. Currently I work 60-70 hours per week. – and could spend more time if I were to address all my work adequately.”*
- *“The opportunity to have a 3 day weekend in return for longer working days would be nice if I was not already working long weekdays. At the moment I cannot really see myself cramming still more in a day.”*
- *“The majority of these flexible options are irrelevant for Academic staff who already work an 80 hour week.”*
- *“Not really relevant to academic staff who are almost invariably work long hours and weekends. Research is done in what a normal 9-5 job would consider “our own time”. 9-5 we are teaching, admin and generally organising.”*
- *“Academic staff have no choice about “flexible” working. What is at issue here is the working hours that are expected or needed.”*

Terms and conditions

- *“I would . . . appreciate clear guidelines on the annual holiday entitlement for academic staff.”*
- *“The university should set hours of work for academic staff or provide proper support so we do not spend our time doing administration.”*

- *“Although administrators’ overtime can be recognised, academic or/and other related staff’s currently has not been recognised.”*
- *The survey presumes that academic staff have fixed holiday entitlement and a set number of hours per week*
- *“A lack of clarity in our working conditions is standard. Attempts to clarify tend to lead to an extreme deterioration in working conditions especially regarding flexibility.”*
- *“Working hours are not fixed for academics in any way. Holidays, in my experience, are not monitored.”*
- *“There are no fixed holidays laid down in the terms and conditions of work.”*
- *“The survey presumes that academic staff have fixed holiday entitlement and a set number of hours per week. We have neither . . .”*
- *“As an academic I have flexibility to work from home when I am not required on campus and to vary holidays etc. I would be very reluctant to introduce any system that would formalise this flexibility if it meant having to account for all my time!”*

General issues

- *“I am not dissatisfied by my “core” teaching and research activities, and get on well with all my immediate colleagues. The university however . . . sometimes seems primarily intent on preventing us doing what we come into the profession to do!”*
- *“The apparent lack of training in personal management skills for HODs is detrimental to a good working environment. I need a line manager who can offer constructive advice, reward good work and motivate/encourage research projects.”*
- *“Many of the questions are not applicable for academic staff who work at home and without fixed hours.”*

Summary

- *“Academics don’t have fixed hours of work. As an academic . . . I have the opportunity to vary my hours. And I have to do many of the things you propose to fit in my research not to have time off with the family. I am massively stretched and stressed, and so are almost all my colleagues. . . The ability to vary the working schedule is vital for academics, seeking to balance research-teaching-admin. In theory we have it, in practice we do not, because understaffing limits our options – a balanced work commitment, with some freedom at the edges, proper breaks, and less long hours is the healthy option.”*
- *“. . . Irrelevant to academic staff, whose work is for the most part structured by deadlines, not expected hours. The flexibility of academic contracts in effect means*

that we need to work days, evenings and weekends to fulfil the teaching, admin and research requirements for the post. Even then if one does so, one will never fully complete the requirements. Load and lack of support are the issues, not timing as such. There are not enough staff employed to do all the work and we are all struggling to fill the gaps.”

- *“Many of the questions are not applicable for academic staff who work at home and without fixed hours.”*