HUMAN RESOURCES/ STAFF SURVEY: Managers’ Guide

1. Why conduct a staff survey?

1.1. The survey will provide an opportunity to enhance the University as a place to work and to ensure the features that are valued by staff are preserved. We therefore need to know employees’ perceptions of their work environment and how they would like this to develop. The survey will also support the positive environment needed for the Research Excellence Framework, our Athena SWAN work, and it will help us to measure progress against the People Strategy.

1.2. The survey will provide some baseline data enabling benchmarking with other universities, it will highlight what we do well and areas where we want to take action to ensure that Kent continues to be a great place to work for everyone, and over time, it will enable us to see trends.

2. Content of the survey

2.1. The questions are asked under the main headings of ‘affiliation and advocacy’, ‘support for work and career development’, ‘participation and transparency’, ‘equality’, ‘leadership and strategy’, and ‘finally’. All except the last are generally acknowledged as the features of organisations with highly engaged staff (with the consequent positive impact on organisational performance). ¹

2.2. Most questions will ask recipients to rate their level of agreement with a statement. There is also an opportunity to make free-text comments.

2.3. The survey also has a demographics section so that we can analyse the information in more detail and compare the experiences of different groups of staff.

3. Eligibility

3.1. The survey is open to all staff holding a contract at the University of Kent.

3.2. Staff who are on long-term sick leave and maternity leave will be able to participate.

3.3. Staff on secondment within the University of Kent will be eligible to participate in relation to their current (rather than substantive) place of work.

4. Survey schedule

4.1. The survey is being run in four quarterly tranches to enable efficient administration, and capacity for Human Resources to support Heads of School and Department to respond to any issues highlighted by the results. The first tranche in June (Monday 05 June 2017 to Friday 30 June) will have largely professional service department (PSD) participation.

4.2. The following three tranches in September, December and March, will include participation from schools.

4.3. The survey schedule shows the activity throughout the year.

4.4. In the month leading up to the survey taking place, the staff survey website and a range of posters will be made available to support Heads of School and Department to communicate about the survey to their teams.

4.5. Schools and departments will also use the month leading up to the survey to agree additional questions relating to the school or department, or relating to Athena SWAN.

5. Additional Athena SWAN questions

5.1. Some of the core questions have been designed with Athena SWAN in mind, however, schools may wish to collect responses to additional questions, depending on the objectives and action plans within the school. These need to be agreed with the HR Business Partner in the month before the survey is live to ensure they can be incorporated in the survey design before it is sent out to recipients.

6. Additional school or department questions

6.1. Schools and departments may also wish to collect responses to additional questions relating to local issues, particularly if there are known concerns, or a lack of information or knowledge about the working environment in the school or department. As above, these need to be agreed with the HR Business Partner in the month before the survey is live.

7. Deans’ access to school results

7.1. Results for all schools within a given faculty will be accessible by the Dean of that faculty.

8. Marketing the survey to get a good response rate

8.1. It is important that the survey is promoted to all recipients as a positive opportunity for sharing experiences and thoughts about working in the school or department, to maximise response rates. A 50% response rate would be considered good, particularly in the first year.

8.2. HR has developed a web-site to provide information about the survey, and has commissioned a number of posters to promote the survey for local use.

8.3. It is essential to confirm with staff that results will be accessible to all staff within the school or department, and that action will be taken as a result of any issues that may be revealed. A Toolkit has been created to enable Heads of School and managers to undertake further work. The HR Business Partners and the Learning and Organisational Development Consultants and Advisers can help with this and in some cases will support managers requiring a more bespoke response.

8.4. It is important to reassure staff about the level of confidentiality to encourage participation.
9. **Anonymity, confidentiality and redaction of names from comments**

9.1. The survey is anonymous and confidential. When responses start to come in it is impossible to know who has returned them. For this reason, the survey will be sent to schools and departments separately so that local results can be collated.

9.2. Schools and departments will receive results including the ability to analyse by gender, ethnicity and staff group, unless this analysis creates a response group of seven or fewer people. (The Equality Challenge Unit (ECU), which runs Athena SWAN, recommends that groups of seven or fewer should not be identified.)

9.3. Recipients’ responses should not identify individuals, however, some people may include names in the free-text comments. Where this occurs, any comment which clearly identifies individuals or small groups, will be redacted to protect confidentiality. Similarly, any offensive, demeaning or abusive comments not including names but where the identity of the subject or author of the comments can be readily inferred, will be redacted.

9.4. It is important for Heads of School, PSD Directors and managers throughout the University, to reassure staff on the level of anonymity and confidentiality described above, to maximise engagement and response rates.

10. **Accessibility for those with specific needs**

10.1. Staff with specific needs to access the survey can use tools available on the University of Kent website at https://www.kent.ac.uk/studentsupport/accessibility/productivity/

10.2. Further support and advice will be available from local staff ‘Equality, Diversity and Inclusion’ (EDI) representatives.

11. **Sharing school or department results**

11.1. As a part of their leadership responsibilities, Heads of School and Department are expected to circulate and share freely the results for their school or department within that school or department and this will optionally include the free-text comments. All staff within the school or department must have access to the results for the survey to have credibility and for staff to have confidence in any actions subsequently put in place. Results will also be shared with the relevant managing dean or member of EG.

11.2. Schools and departments are encouraged to share information more widely, however, it will be a matter of school or departmental policy (as determined by the appropriate head) whether it is shared beyond that unit.

11.3. All staff will have access to aggregated University data.

12. **Next steps**

12.1. The Heads of School and Department will agree with HR Business Partners how best to circulate, explore and act upon the results of the staff survey. The survey results will be shared with the Head of School/Department and the relevant managing dean or member of EG within eight weeks of the survey closing. Staff should expect to receive the results from their Head of School/Department shortly thereafter. Once the results have been shared, the Head of School/Department will work with the HR Business Partner and the Senior Management Team to formulate
any appropriate action plans or follow-up activity as required as a result of the findings of the survey.

12.2. It is important that Heads encourage staff to take part in activities in the school or department in response to the results because this is the best way for any issues to be resolved and improvements to be made.