



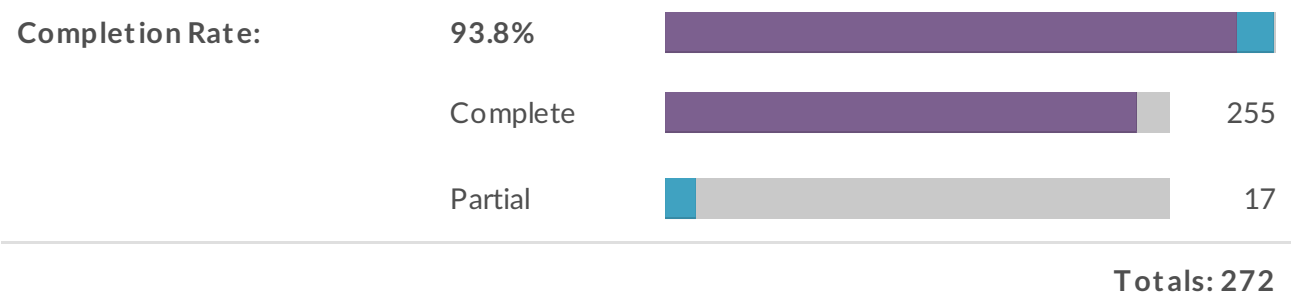
Data from NTU Branch UCU workload survey, 2018

Nottingham Trent University

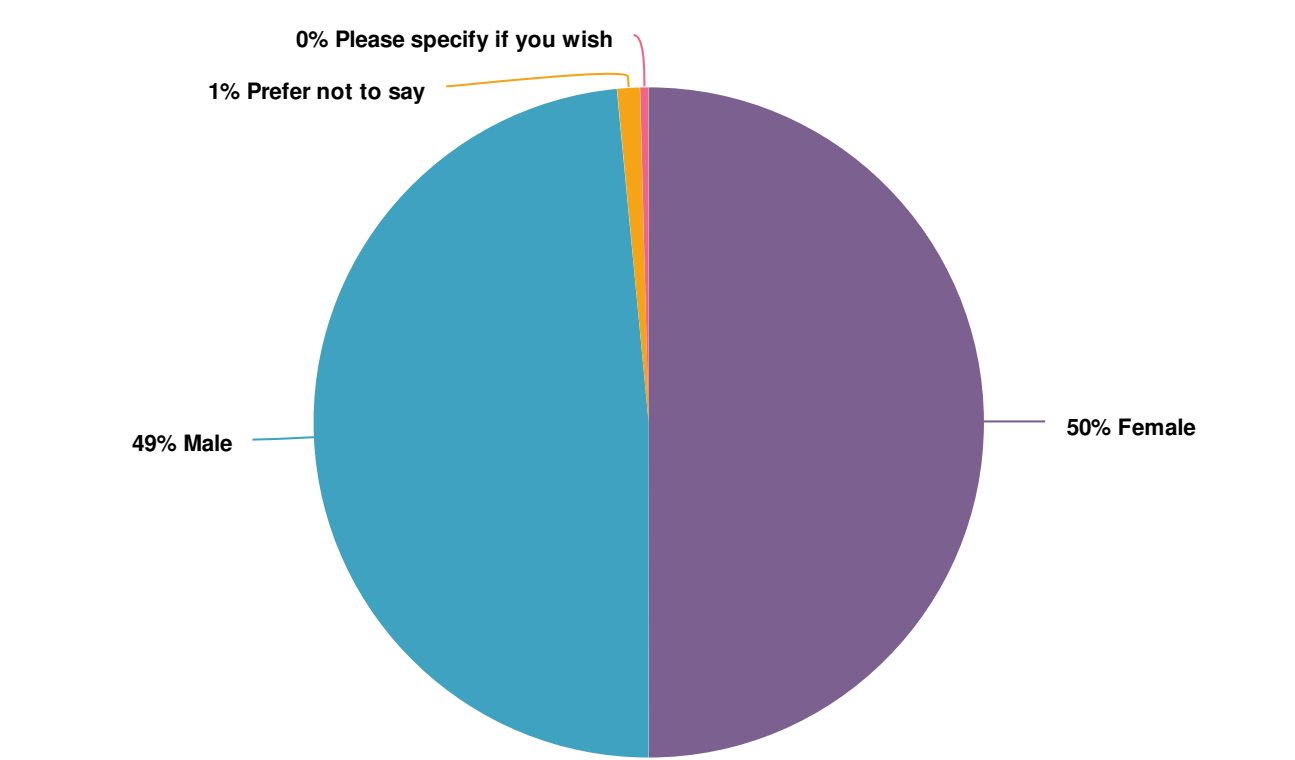
March 2019

Report for NTU UCU Branch Workload Survey Summer 2018

Response Counts



1. Gender (we want to see if there is evidence of gender discrimination in the way staff are treated)

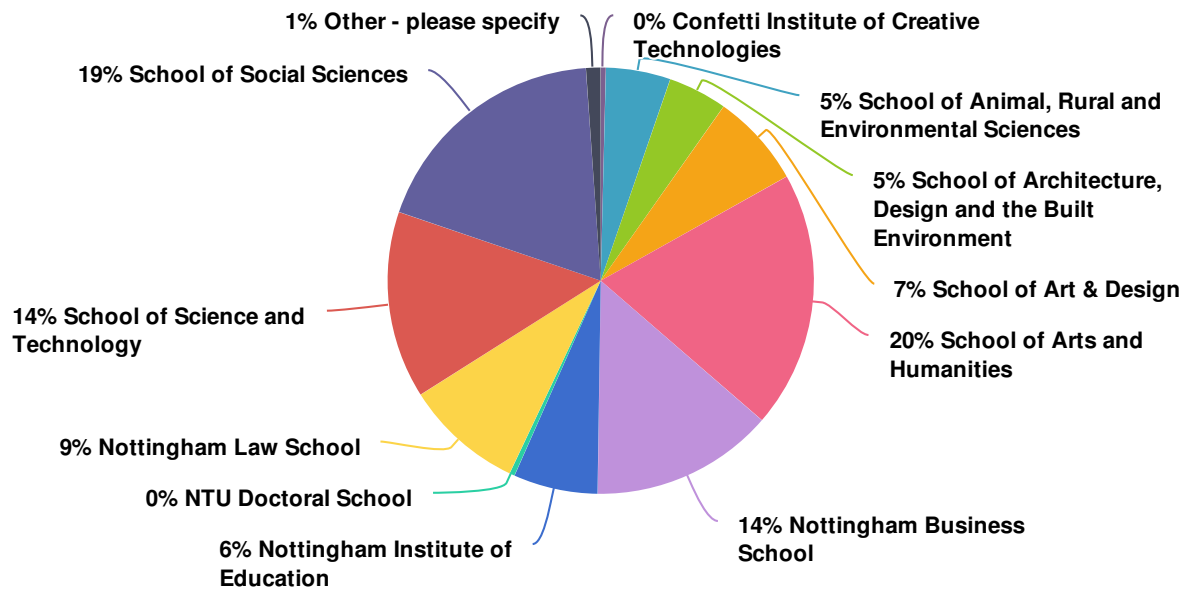


Value		Percent	Responses
Female		50.0%	133
Male		48.5%	129
Prefer not to say		1.1%	3
Please specify if you wish		0.4%	1

Totals: 266

Please specify if you wish	Count
non-binary	1
Totals	1

2. Which school do you work in?

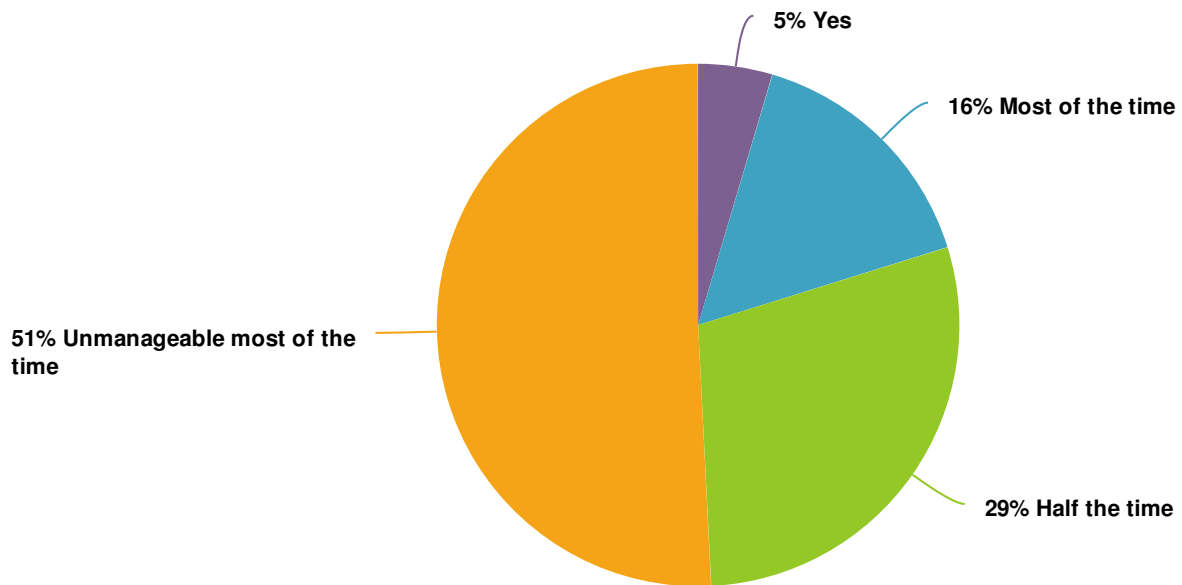


Value		Percent	Responses
Confetti Institute of Creative Technologies		0.4%	1
School of Animal, Rural and Environmental Sciences		4.9%	13
School of Architecture, Design and the Built Environment		4.5%	12
School of Art & Design		7.1%	19
School of Arts and Humanities		19.5%	52
Nottingham Business School		13.9%	37
Nottingham Institute of Education		6.4%	17
NTU Doctoral School		0.4%	1
Nottingham Law School		9.0%	24
School of Science and Technology		14.2%	38
School of Social Sciences		18.7%	50
Other - please specify		1.1%	3

Totals: 267

Other - please specify	Count
Centre for Academic Development and Quality	1
Libraries & learning resources	1
Student Support Services	1
Totals	3

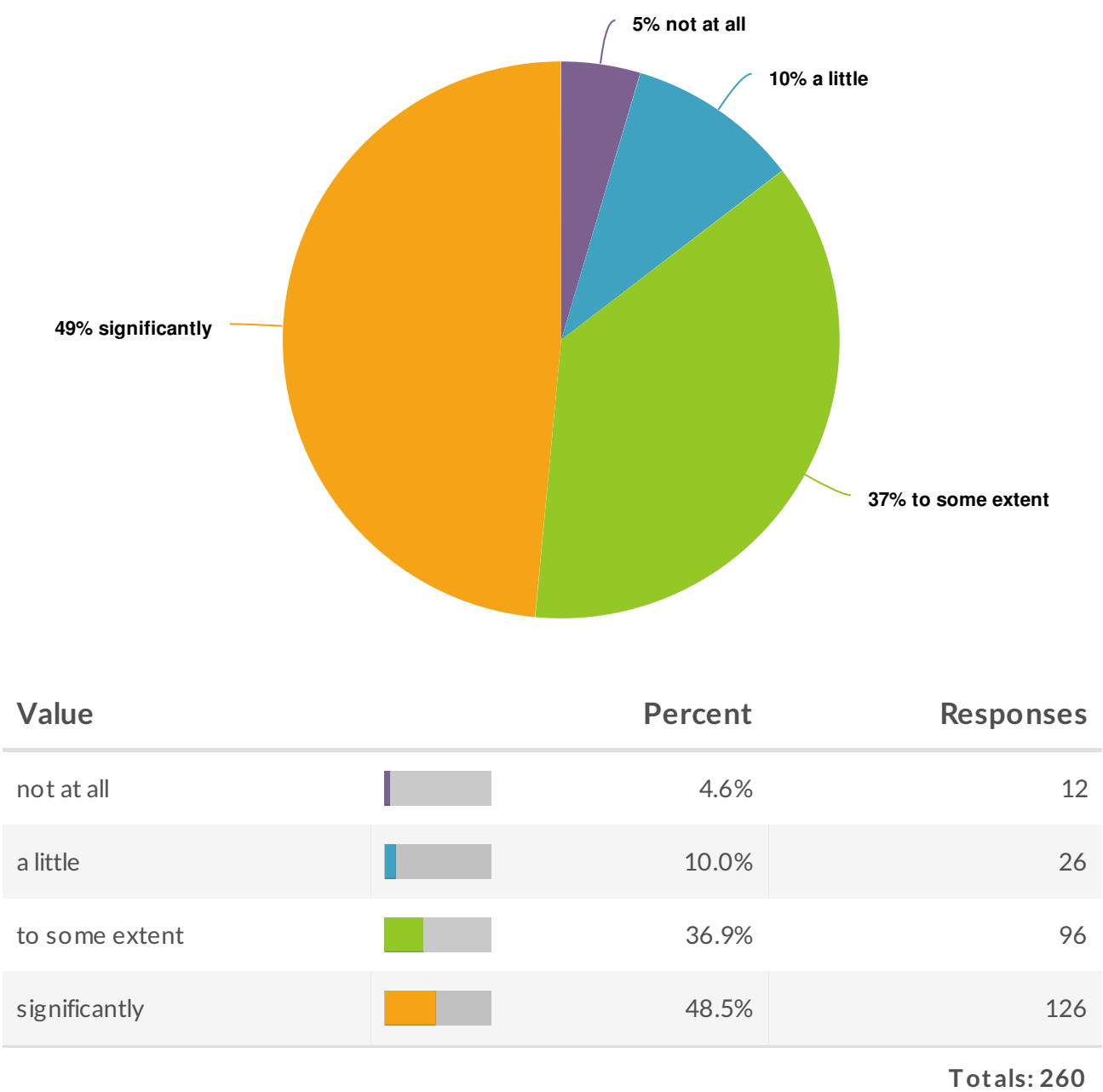
3. Would you describe the amount of work you're expected to do as manageable within a 35 hour week (or pro-rata if you work part-time)?



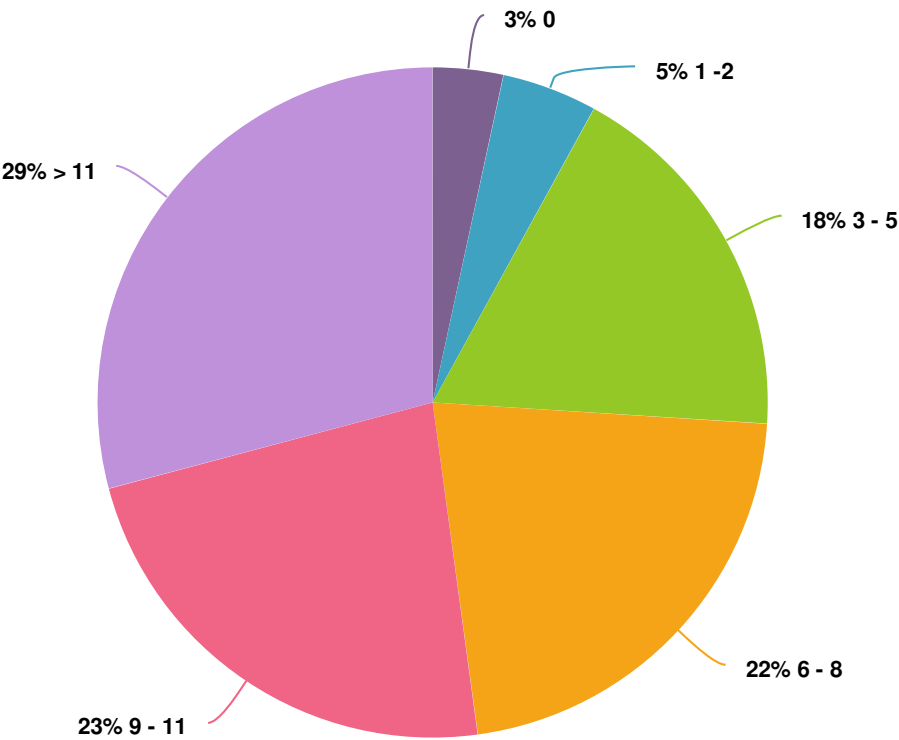
Value		Percent	Responses
Yes		4.6%	12
Most of the time		15.6%	41
Half the time		29.0%	76
Unmanageable most of the time		50.8%	133

Totals: 262

4. Has your workload increased over the last four years?



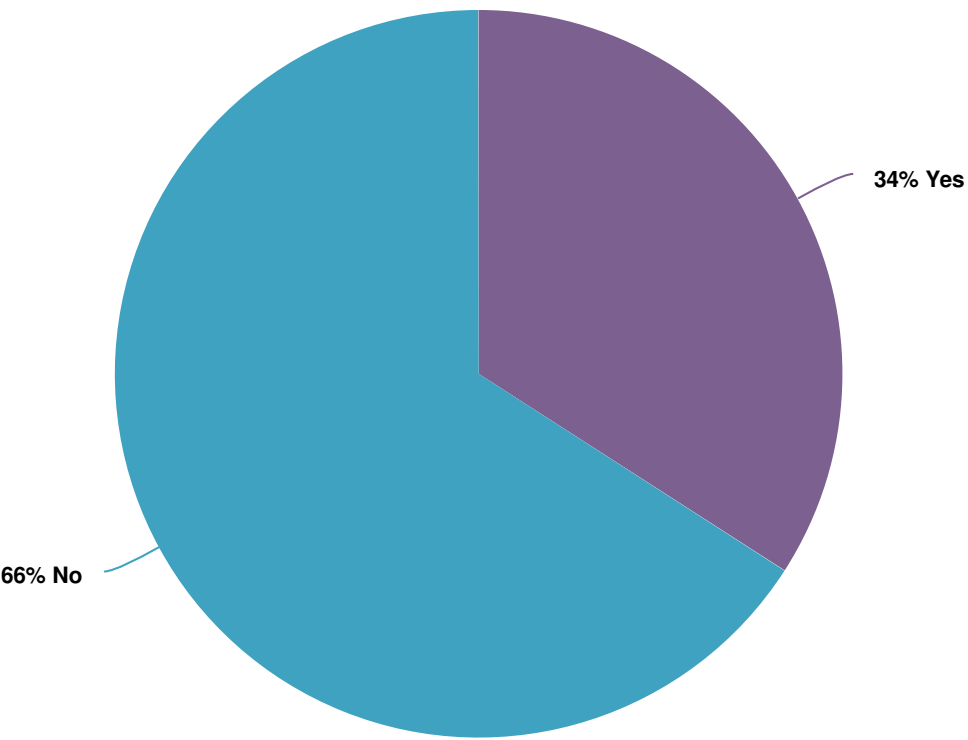
5. How many additional hours do you work over and above your normal working week (which for full time staff is 35 hours)?



Value		Percent	Responses
0		3.4%	9
1 - 2		4.6%	12
3 - 5		18.0%	47
6 - 8		21.8%	57
9 - 11		23.0%	60
> 11		29.1%	76

Totals: 261

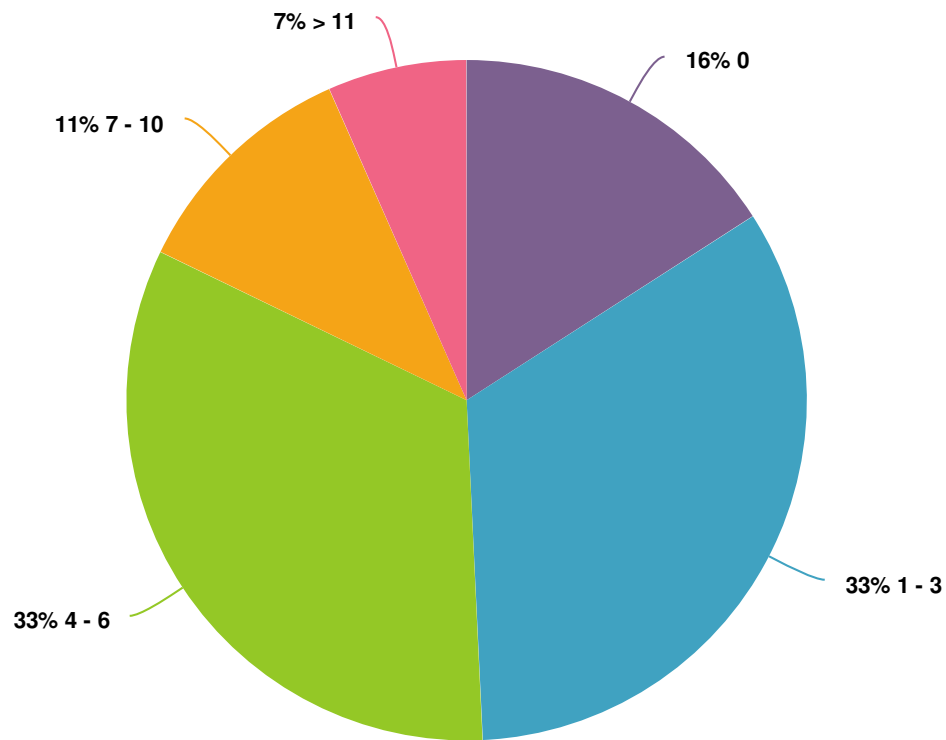
6. Have you had any weeks in this academic year which regularly included more than 16 teaching/supervision hours, (18 for practice –based courses)?

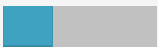


Value		Percent	Responses
Yes		34.1%	89
No		65.9%	172

Totals: 261

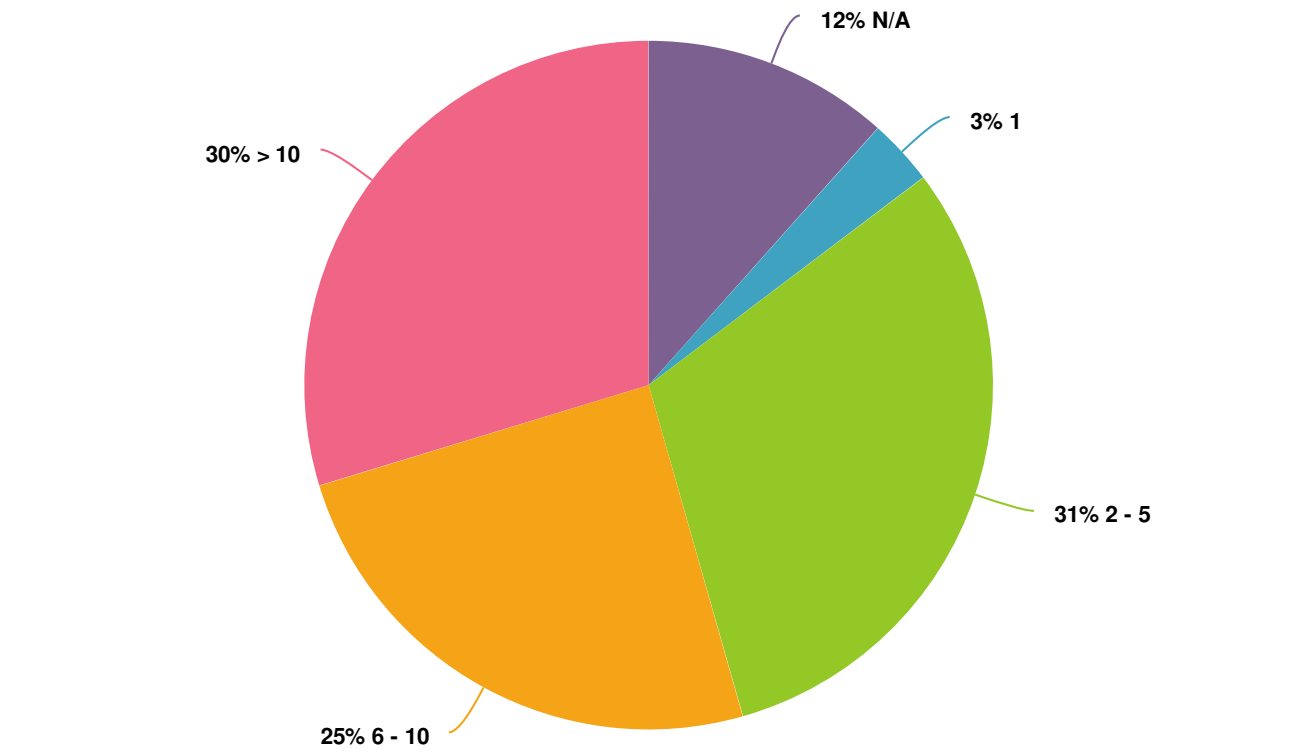
7. How many unpaid hours do you typically work at the weekend?



Value		Percent	Responses
0		15.9%	41
1 - 3		33.3%	86
4 - 6		32.9%	85
7 - 10		11.2%	29
> 11		6.6%	17

Totals: 258

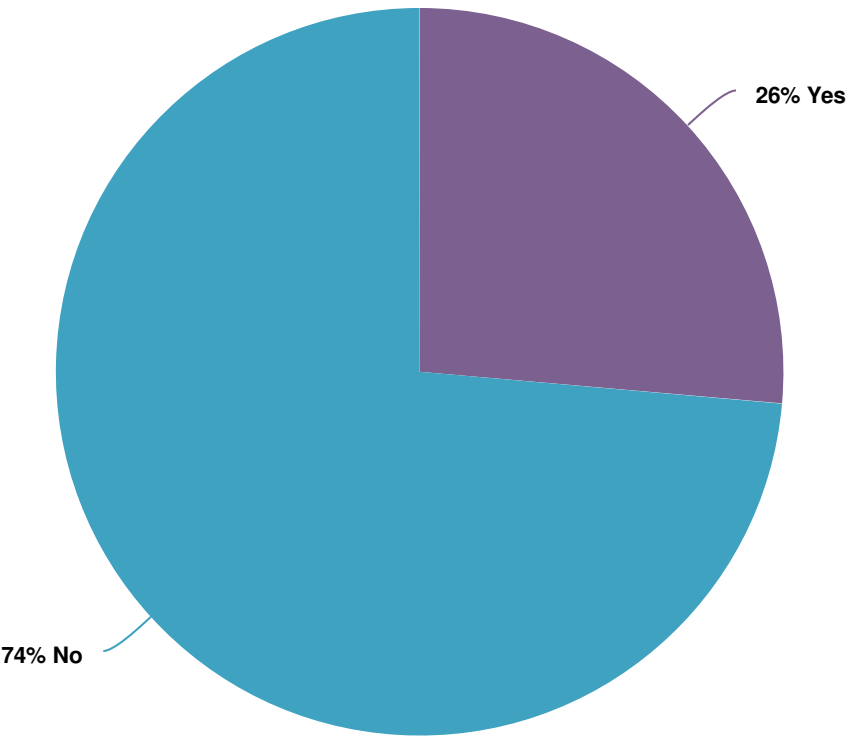
8. If you did any work while on annual leave this year (including research and answering work-related emails), on how many days did that happen, approximately?



Value		Percent	Responses
N/A		11.6%	30
1		3.1%	8
2 - 5		30.9%	80
6 - 10		24.7%	64
> 10		29.7%	77

Totals: 259

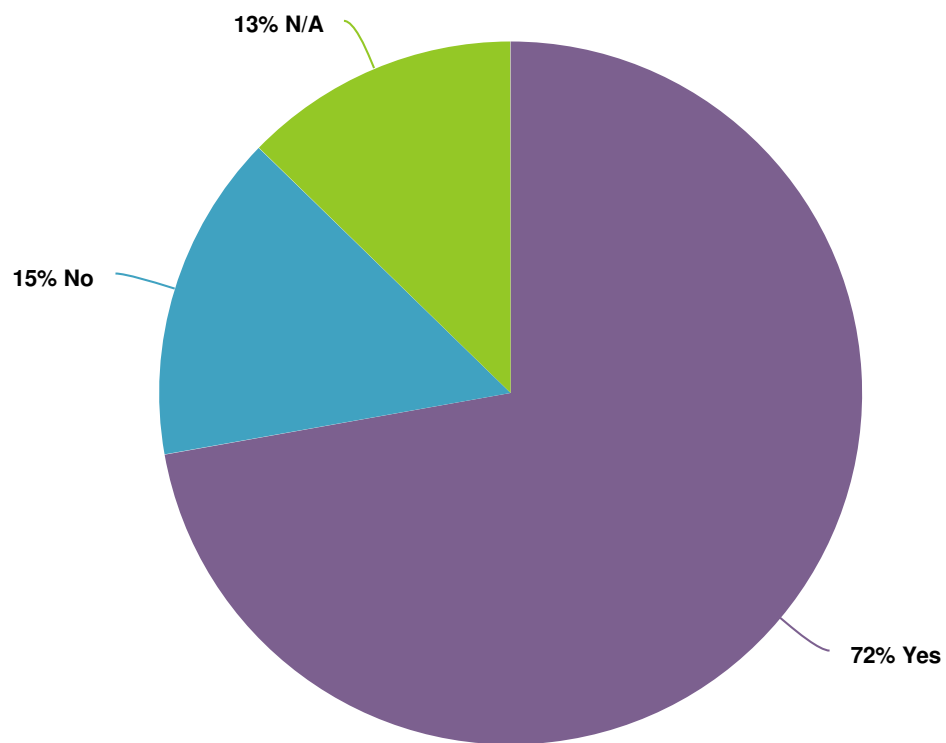
9. Has your workload meant that you have not been able to take a planned holiday over the last 4 years?



Value		Percent	Responses
Yes		26.4%	68
No		73.6%	190

Totals: 258

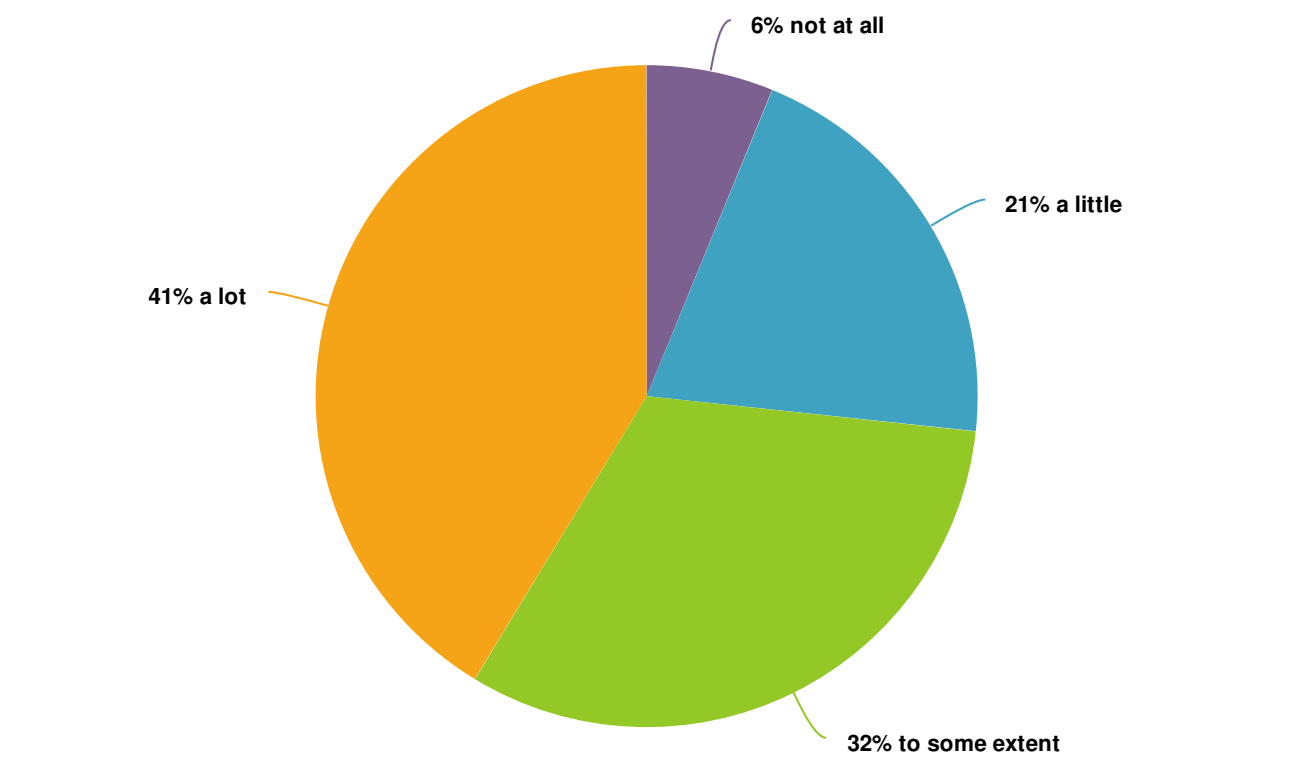
10. Does your workload prevent you from doing research in term-time?



Value		Percent	Responses
Yes		72.2%	187
No		15.1%	39
N/A		12.7%	33

Totals: 259

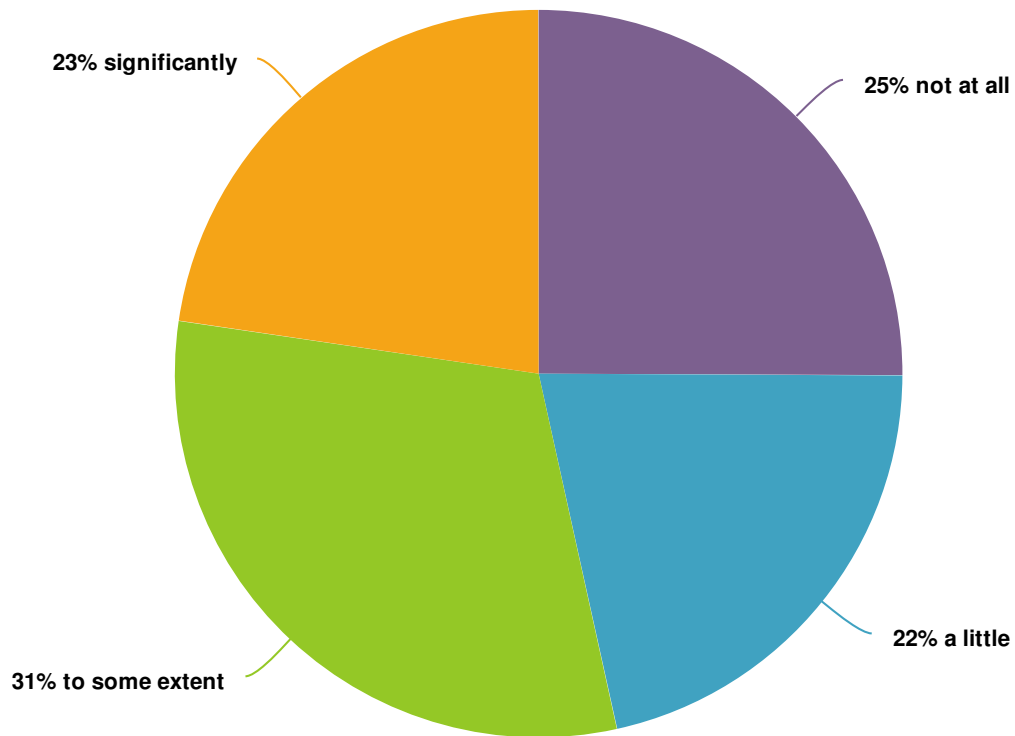
11. To what extent do you feel that your workload has a negative effect on your mental health, such as causing stress?



Value		Percent	Responses
not at all		6.2%	16
a little		20.5%	53
to some extent		32.0%	83
a lot		41.3%	107

Totals: 259

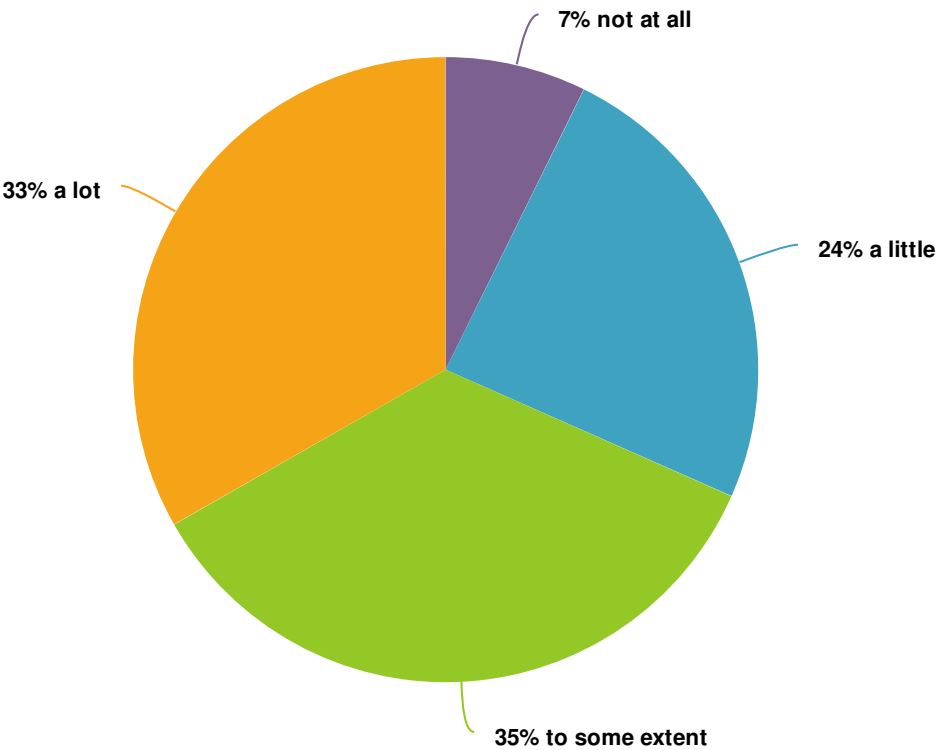
12. How much has sickness absence increased in your team in the last 4 years?



Value		Percent	Responses
not at all		25.1%	62
a little		21.5%	53
to some extent		30.8%	76
significantly		22.7%	56

Totals: 247

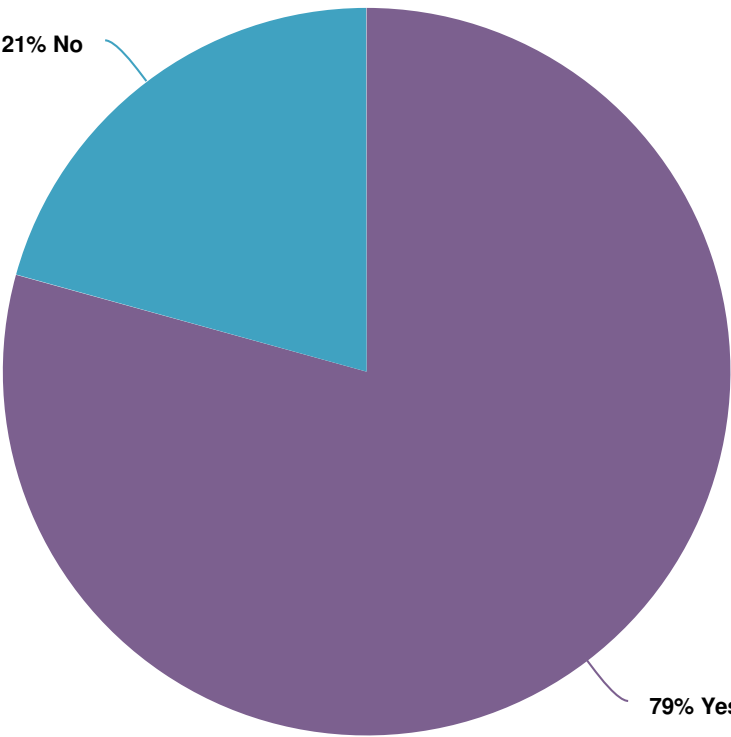
13. To what extent do you feel that your workload has a negative effect on your personal life, (including relationships and family)?



Value		Percent	Responses
not at all		7.3%	19
a little		24.3%	63
to some extent		35.1%	91
a lot		33.2%	86

Totals: 259

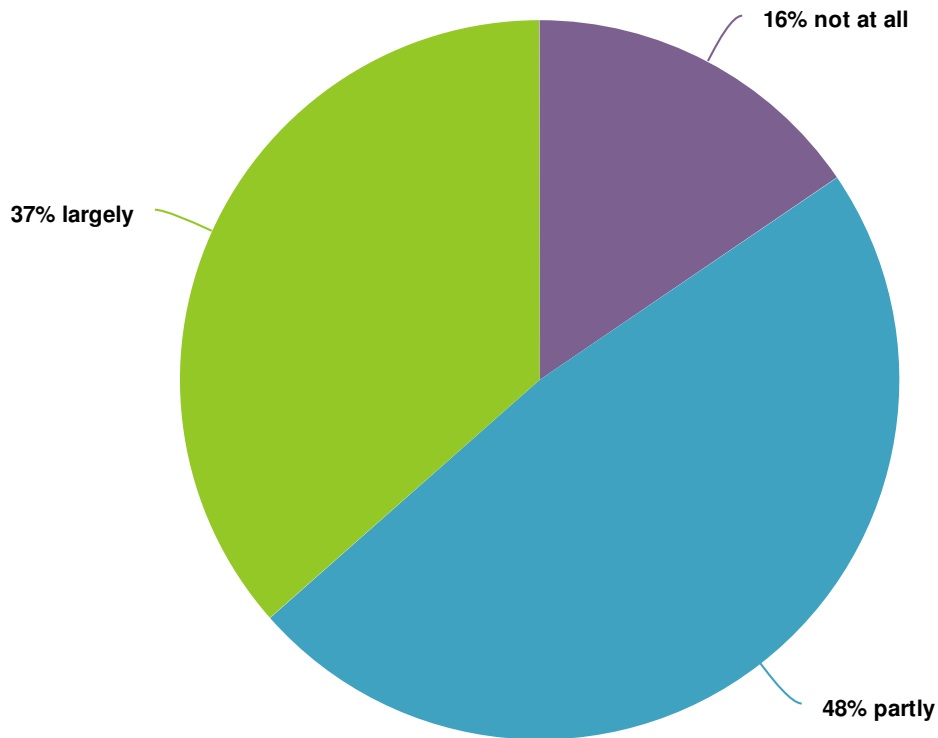
14. Do you feel your team is understaffed?



Value		Percent	Responses
Yes		79.3%	203
No		20.7%	53

Totals: 256

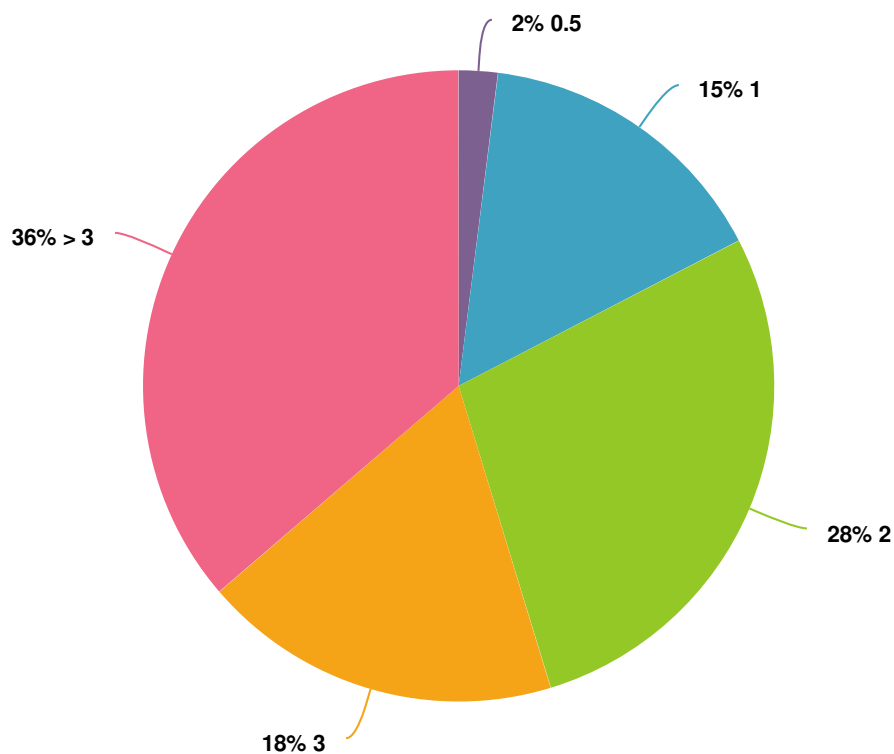
15. To what extent is your workload affected as a result of members of staff leaving and not being replaced?



Value		Percent	Responses
not at all		15.5%	31
partly		48.0%	96
largely		36.5%	73

Totals: 200

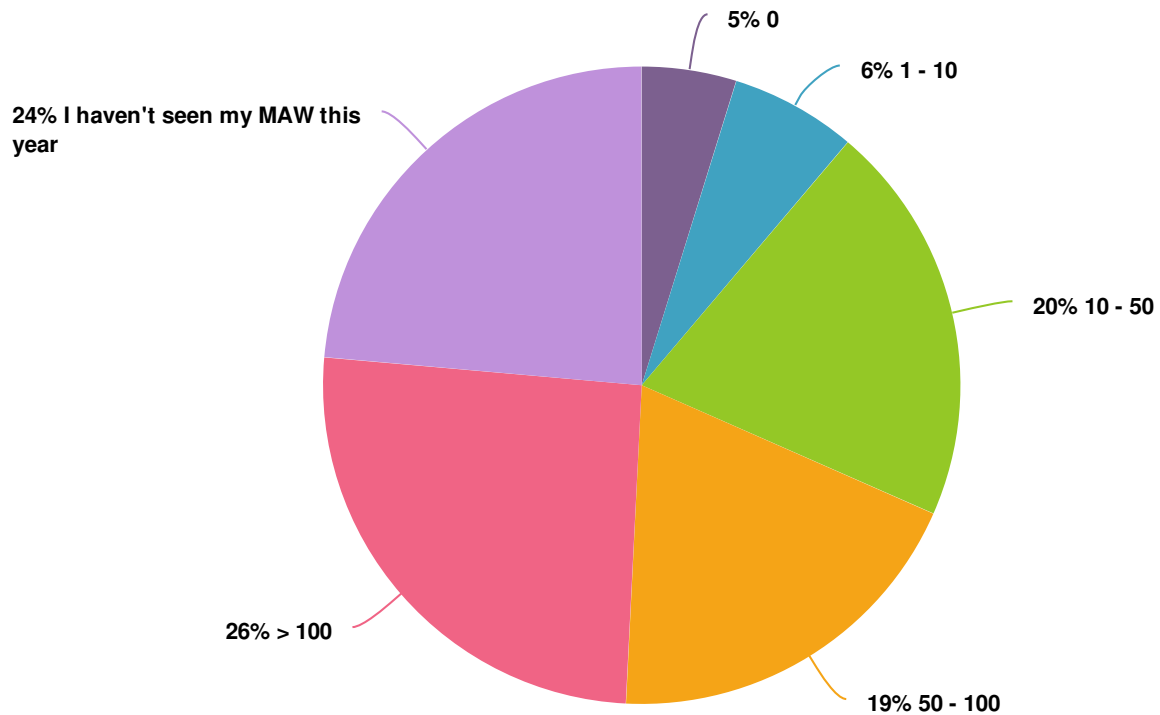
16. How many more members of staff do you think your team requires to function properly?



Value		Percent	Responses
0.5		2.0%	4
1		15.4%	31
2		27.9%	56
3		18.4%	37
> 3		36.3%	73

Totals: 201

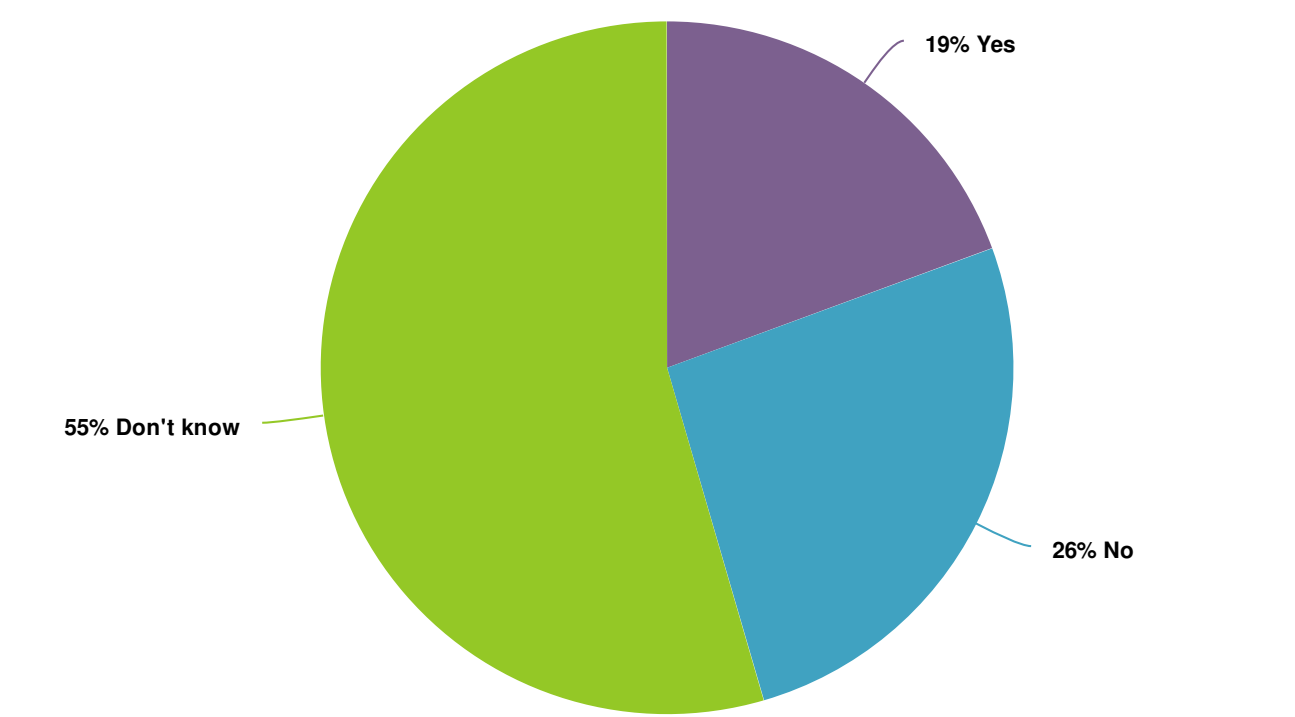
17. NTU staff should all be able to see their MAW (AWF workload spreadsheet). How many of your working hours do you think are not reflected in your MAW?



Value		Percent	Responses
0		4.8%	12
1 - 10		6.4%	16
10 - 50		20.4%	51
50 - 100		19.2%	48
> 100		25.6%	64
I haven't seen my MAW this year		23.6%	59

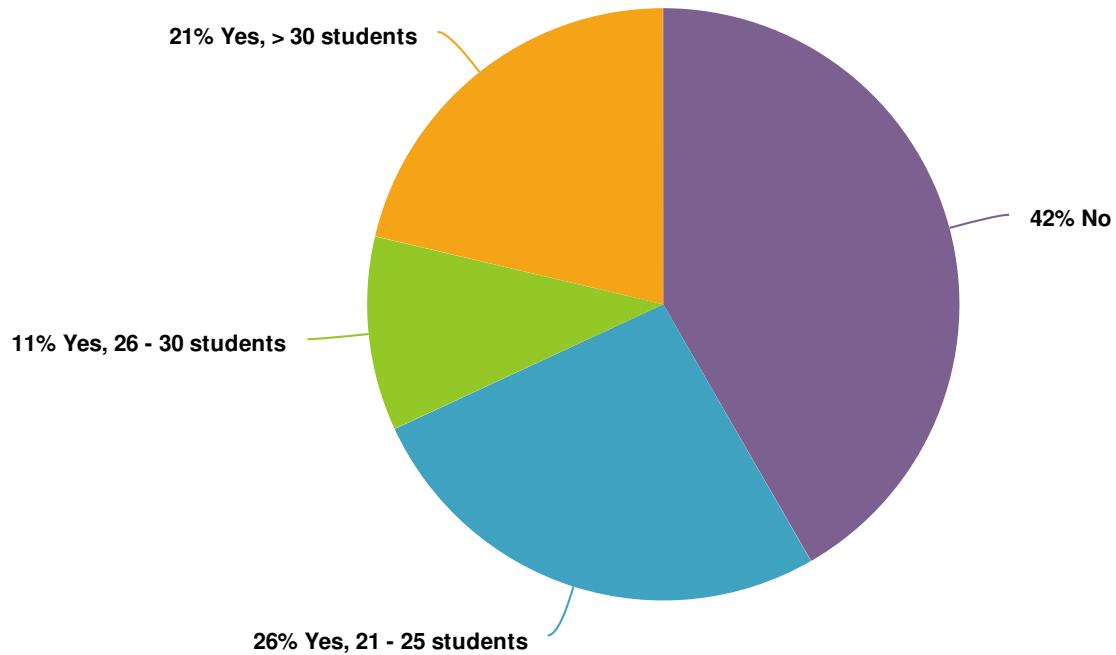
Totals: 250

18. Lectures should have the multiplier of 1.7 on the MAW. Are any of yours given a lower multiplier?



Value		Percent	Responses
Yes		19.4%	49
No		26.1%	66
Don't know		54.5%	138
Totals: 253			

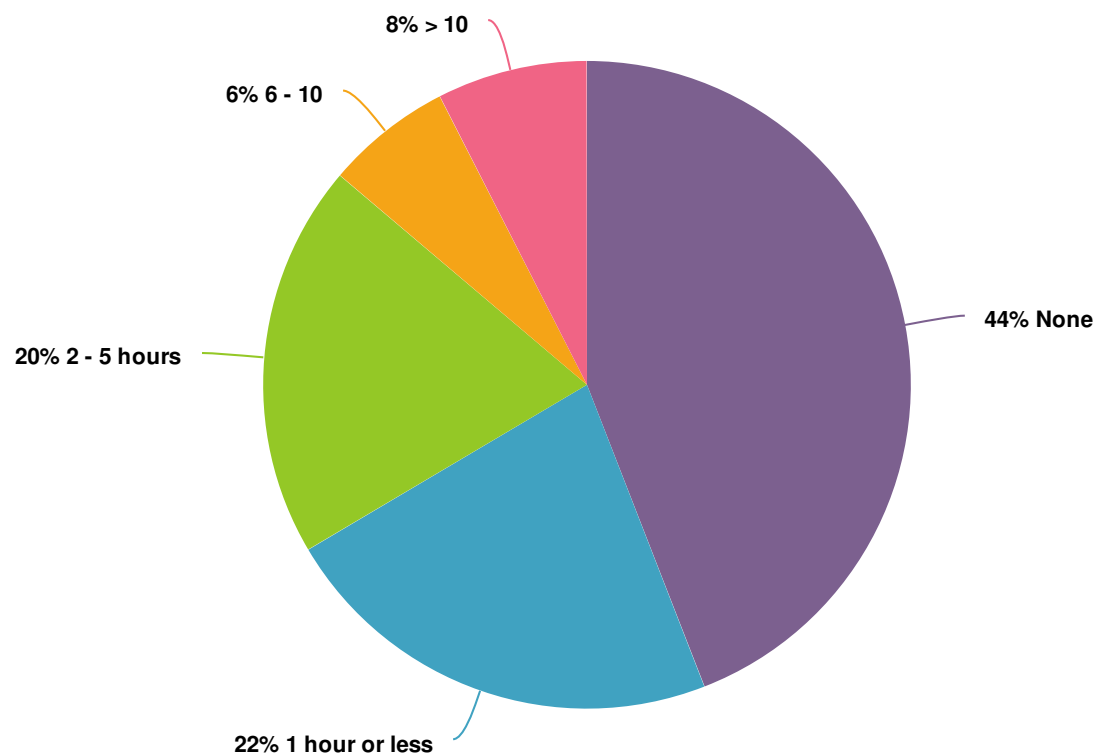
19. Have you had to take any seminars of over 20 students this year?



Value		Percent	Responses
No		41.7%	106
Yes, 21 - 25 students		26.4%	67
Yes, 26 - 30 students		10.6%	27
Yes, > 30 students		21.3%	54

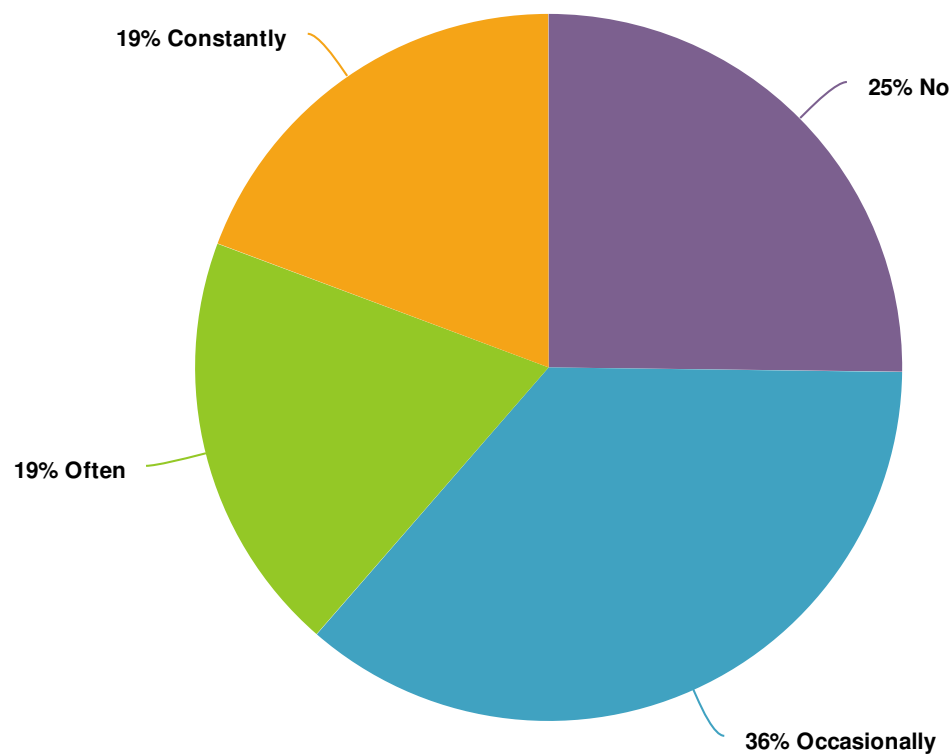
Totals: 254

20. How much time have you spent this year on managing Lecture Capture?



Value		Percent	Responses
None		44.1%	112
1 hour or less		22.4%	57
2 - 5 hours		19.7%	50
6 - 10		6.3%	16
> 10		7.5%	19
Totals: 254			

21. Have you considered leaving your job this year because of the workload?



Value		Percent	Responses
No		25.2%	64
Occasionally		36.2%	92
Often		19.3%	49
Constantly		19.3%	49

Totals: 254



Analysis of qualitative comments from the UCU workload survey, 2018

Nottingham Trent University

March 2019

Mark Weinstein
Joint Branch Secretary
NTU UCU



At the end of the workload survey, respondents were invited to write in their open response to the following open question: 'Please use this space for your thoughts or comments on key problems, successes and areas for improvement, with regard to your workload. One hundred and eighty of the 272 respondents (66%) who completed the survey provided responses. This is an unusually high response rate for an open question in a survey of this kind, and that so many people wrote so much is an indication of the strength of feeling expressed herein. This report offers a summary of this qualitative data and is organised under a series of headings deemed most appropriate once the process of data analysis had been completed. There is an indication of how many respondents commented in relation to specific things and illustrative quotations have been included as typical of the academic staff experience.

THE MANAGEMENT OF ACADEMIC WORKLOAD (MAW) FRAMEWORK

Forty six respondents made broad comments about the appropriateness of the university's MAW framework and the manner in which it is applied. Respondents reported that parts of their job were not accounted for in their MAW and that it was now the norm to work beyond their contracted hours. The framework is seen as an inadequate method of capturing the nature of academic work, ie, it is 'not fit for purpose'. Indeed, many respondents suggested that rather than the process having faults in one or two areas, the framework as a whole is deficient. The only thing that is captured with accuracy (although not always) is teaching that takes place in a classroom. Otherwise, almost everything else that is detailed on the MAW document is measured incorrectly.

'MAW doesn't relate in any realistic way the time that is required to do the job.'

'MAW is a form of corporate corruption.'

'Local managers undertake a zealous application of MAW. Nearly all staff are unable to do their job properly within their normal contracted week.'

'The time that is needed to complete tasks is deliberately and systematically underestimated.'

'MAW keeps our nose to the grindstone.'

'The amount of time now spent supporting students is remarkable, yet remains hugely underestimated.'

'Heads know that they are shafting staff.'

'MAW is a form of institutional bullying.'

'Managers squeeze every last drop out of us.'



The workloading system at NTU is now seen to be 'broken', such that significant numbers of academic staff see it as fundamentally inadequate. Consequently, there is a very strong sense that nearly everyone is working beyond their capacity, overstretched and feeling stressed at work. Workload planning at NTU is now regarded as essentially a paper exercise that bears little relation to the job as it is actually carried out.

Some respondents went so far as to suggest that MAW is deliberately misapplied and that managers consciously manipulate the figures in an attempt to squeeze as much as possible out of their staff. For example, through the classifying of tutorials as administration activity rather than teaching, inappropriately reclassifying seminars as workshops, or by applying the 'meanest' allocation of hours for a task/activity such as module leadership. Several people raised such issues, saying that their local manager tries to 'fool' them.

Many respondents (26) offered specific comments on the way in which local managers seek to deliberately manipulate the ratio of teaching related duties (TRD) to standard teaching duties (STD) in the application of the university's MAW. There is a huge well of discontent around the application of a standardised ratio of just 1.4 as the norm, with 1.7 also being used in some instances. With such meagre allocations of TRD the university fails to recognise the work that is required in the preparation for the delivery of teaching. Staff posed questions concerning the extent that it is possible to reflect, update, innovate and improve when the time that is provided in workloads is so limited. In what way can these limited ratios be seen as adequate reflection of the administrative and student support burden that is placed on academic staff? Some people said that in their local area, a ratio of 1.4 is enforced across the board and that they are told that 1.7 is not possible even for year three specialist option modules.

'There is no chance to be creative in teaching with 1.4 or 1.7.'

'Given the demands of modern students 1.7 is a joke.'

'These multipliers are a work of fiction.'

'1.7 doesn't allow for the preparation of an hour's teaching let alone everything that flows from it.'

'It's sad that so many staff just accept 1.4 or 1.7 as the voice of authority without questioning it.'

Most commonly, where individuals raise these issues with their local managers, they say that they are 'fobbed off' with a dismissive response about following university guidance or orders from above. People said that local managers are typically not interested when confronted by people working excessive hours and questioning their workload, and that they often brand those who raise these things as troublemakers.

While the majority of local managers reject workloading concerns outright – often telling people that they are 'under capacity' – some managers do listen and respond appropriately; persistence may pay off and some managers may simply be more 'reasonable' than others.



A conclusion could be reached that if confident enough to complain, an individual may get lucky in getting their workload adjusted. Conversely, stay quiet and accept one's lot and there is a fair chance that someone will get given even more work to do in the future. Mostly, however, people report that there is very little opportunity to raise such issues and problems, that such things are ignored or quickly closed down and that there is an absence of open dialogue or willingness to listen about such workload problems.

Finally, several respondents raised the issue of seeing their MAW document and the absence of transparency at the local level. People reported that they had not seen their MAW documentation for a number of years, that there was a lack of parity or equality with their local team or that the university had failed in its duty to publish workloads at the local level.

CONCERNS AROUND STAFFING LEVELS

There was a very strong sense (32 respondents) that many workload problems could be attributed to insufficient staffing levels. The perception is that there are simply not academic staff to deliver the NTU student offer without this having a severe negative impact on academic staff. This doesn't mean that the university is not seen to be prepared to invest in staff when it chooses to do so, as the university is seen to have employed more senior and professional services members of staff in recent years. Associated with this are comments made with respect to the failure of the university to respond to increased student numbers through appropriate staff recruitment. This is seen to be even more important within the context of an ever-demanding student population, something that senior NTU managers are seen to actively encourage.

'Too many students, not enough academic staff.'

'Employ more staff!'

'Too many useless managers on expensive salaries.'

In some academic teams, staff shortages are highlighted as being of a critical nature, having a detrimental impact on health and well-being and leading to staff illness and, consequently, time off work. Furthermore, the practice of deliberately leaving vacant posts unfilled – at least temporarily, but sometimes as long as a year – was seen as commonplace in some parts of the university.

It should also be noted that a number of respondents pointed out the enthusiasm of the university to invest in new and improved estate, posing questions around the prioritisation of financial resources.

RESEARCH

One of the consequences of the failure of the MAW framework is that staff do not feel that there is adequate time to do research (14 respondents), and certainly not to the standards that are now expected by the institution. There is a strong sense that the gap



between those who are able to carve out the time to pursue research (usually in their own time) and the majority who do not is widening. Individuals also commented on the way that the teaching timetable is driven overwhelmingly by concerns for the 'student experience', with research not usually seen as an acceptable 'constraint' to place on individuals' teaching timetables. As with other aspects of workload pressure, respondents typically said that the only way to develop and sustain research careers is to do so at expense to the individual, sacrificing personal and family time and effectively 'doing research for free'. As one individual said: 'that's what I do with my weekends'.

MARKING PRESSURES

Twenty one contributions focused specifically on the pressures presented by the university's imposition of a 15 working-day turnaround for the marking of student coursework. These comments suggest that many academic staff see this as presenting unreasonable and unrealistic demands on individuals, particularly within the context of increased student recruitment and the encouragement of a more customer-focused student body. The standard imposition of a three-week turnaround, irrespective of module size or level of study is seen as deeply damaging. Comments in this area highlighted the extent to which marking gets done in people's own (unpaid) time and the impact that this has on people's lives and their health and wellbeing. As one individual said, during the main assessment period of the year, marking pressures representative a 'life-wipe' for up to six continuous weeks.

INCREASED ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN

There were many comments (25 respondents) about what people perceived to be an increase in the administrative burden placed on academic staff. Academic staff are of the strong view that this is increasing and at an unacceptable level and that low level administrative tasks feel like they dominate the week. This is most obviously apparent in relation to email. However, whether in relation to the demands of personal academic tutorials, 'constant report writing', 'unnecessary meetings' or 'pointless bureaucracy' there is a sense that academic staff are bombarded with things to do.

'No wonder everyone looks miserable.'

'There are too many meetings involving too many people.'

'Email is a form of workplace tyranny.'

'It's thankless, relentless and exhausting.'

There is also a feeling that routine administrative tasks that ought to be done by administrative staff are increasingly 'dumped' on academic staff. The question was posed on a number of occasions: why doesn't the university employ more administrative staff to carry out appropriate administrative work?



NEW INITIATIVE OVERLOAD

Many respondents (25) raised their concerns with the frequency of new initiatives that were handed down from university managers. Some of these initiatives are seen to be 'foisted on people' with minimal meaningful consultation and there is the perception that important things – sometimes 'crazy management initiatives' – are pushed through too quickly by management. Similarly, people are unhappy with the imposition of new systems at inappropriate times of the academic year and the failure to include necessary hours for responding to these new demands. In this way, work that 'appears' during the year is seldom added to workloads and often leads to people working over their contractually agreed guidelines.

'Urgent additional tasks get added with no thought to existing working and staff shortages.'

'There is far too much change, too quickly, without any consideration for how to manage that change and how much work and stress it creates.'

'I am constantly worrying about what else I might be asked to do at short notice and without necessary preparation.'

IMPACT OF STUDENT/CUSTOMER FOCUS

There is a strong view (14 respondents) that academic staff are being put under intense pressure from an increasingly demanding student body and that this customer focus is something that is being actively encouraged by senior NTU managers. For example, staff feel pressurised to respond to student emails at all times of day and on all days of the week.

'I feel chained to my desk responding to student emails.'

'Those who answer emails at all hours make themselves popular but make it much worse for all of us.'

'I feel that there is a subtle, subliminal blackmail developing as pressure is applied citing the needs of students.'

PRECARIOUS WORK

A small number of respondents (six) made specific references to the pressures that are placed on those who are employed at NTU on hourly-paid lecturer (HPL) contracts. Such members of staff feel a particular kind of vulnerability and are concerned that the hours that they are contracted for are insufficient and way below what they consider to be essential for doing their job properly. Some individuals who have been employed through an HPL contract for a significant period of time considered this to be inappropriate and posed questions as to why this was the case and why they had not been given a 'proper' job.



STAFF MORALE

It is hard to avoid the conclusion that academic staff morale at NTU is very low indeed, with many of the comments offered in the survey using extremely strong and worrying language. For many respondents who commented in this area (20), the university is seen to be 'uncaring', 'hostile', 'vindictive' with respect to academic staff and only really caring about its place in the league tables, delivering on key performance indicators and winning 'plaudits'.

'We are underresourced, undervalued, overburdened.'

'When I bring up issues of workload at meetings with local managers these are brushed off and it makes me feel that the university doesn't care about its staff.'

'I do not expect to work in an environment where tears are commonplace amongst my colleagues due to unreasonable workloads and attitudes towards staff.'

'I don't volunteer for NTU but that's what it feels like.'

'I am mentally fatigued and exhausted.'

'I have grave concerns regarding suicide.'

'We are not seen as human beings, but rather cash cows that they need to use to get their money's worth.'

'I feel insulted by the contempt and lack of respect with which we are treated.'

'I am sick of NTU and its uncaring attitude to staff.'

STAFF HEALTH AND WELLBEING

It is apparent on reading the comments that excessive workload pressures are having a detrimental impact on staff health and well-being, with many respondents (28) commenting on these matters. There is a feeling that work-related stress and mental health pressures are not taken seriously by university managers. People reported a variety of illnesses, ailments and constant struggles with deeply stressful situations. Various people reported having been signed off work with symptoms of stress, often on repeat occasions and with significant impact on their personal and family lives. A few respondents also argued that it would be more appropriate for the university to seriously address excessive workload as the root cause of stress-related illness rather than providing programmes (mindfulness, wellbeing, etc) that seek to manage ill health and stress once it has occurred, ie, a strategy of prevention rather than cure.

'Overall I feel powerless when it comes to workload and this is my main source of stress and anxiety.'



'I am seriously mentally challenged by the ever-increasing demands of the job.'

'All of my colleagues are suffering from work-related stress.'

'I had a huge marking burden and ended up in A&E because of extreme stress and anxiety and had to take time off of work.'

'I am exhausted but still have to work weekends and into the night, losing sleep.'

'Working at NTU feels like being in an abusive relationship.'

'I feel poorly and exhausted working to midnight.'

There is, however, a clear picture from this data that people absolutely do not want to have to take time off work because of work-related stress given that subsequent illness and absence then also places even greater pressure on existing team members.

LEAVING NTU

The depth of feeling and experience highlighted in this report is such that many people say that they are keen to leave NTU and seek employment elsewhere for the sake of their health and well-being. For many, working at NTU is just too hard; a relentless struggle to cope with the demands placed on them on a day-by-day basis. Several (13 respondents) people said that they immensely unhappy and explicitly added that they are constantly looking for work elsewhere.

'I'm constantly thinking about getting out.'

'All I think about most evenings is how to leave.'

'It's too little, too late for me. I'm so tired all the time. I hate working here but have no choice. I am stuck but I have no opportunity to escape.'

'I feel that my current line manager is pushing me to the point where I no longer care. The university purports to value its employees, but it fails to hold managers accountable for making it happen. I am considering handing in my notice at the end of the academic year.'

Various comments were also made as to the apparent lack of managerial concerns with respect to the rate of academic staff turnover.

THE DIRECTION OF TRAVEL

Weaved throughout the data, there is a very strong view expressed that the workload pressures being discussed in this report have increased significantly in recent years, that the situation is markedly worse than it was just a little while ago, and that it is getting worse still. The direction of travel is not a positive one. All workload pressures are seen



as becoming more intense, and people now report working at a pace and intensity that was once commonplace only at particularly pressurised pinch-points in the academic year, for example during assessment periods. Respondents typically said that they were working in excess of 50 hours a week for most weeks of the year suffer ill health as a consequence. It is not unusual for academic staff to report working 10 or 11-hour days, to restart work later in the evenings from their home, to work at the weekends and also to work while on annual leave.

'I'm constantly just trying to keep up. I feel constantly compromised as a professional.'

'Next year looks even worse.'

'The UET behaves like a psychopath in a nightclub looking for one-night stands.'

'Weekend work is now the norm; it's becoming unbearable.'

'There is a real sense of despair across the university.'