

UHR Engagement Group Meeting - 27 March 2025

This padlet is created to collect the thoughts and insights from discussions at the UHR Engagement Group meeting for sharing with wider UHR membership

Agenda Formalities

↻ **The next session on 17 June will focus on the "Top 3 Engagement Challenges". Please provide here some suggestions that we can put out to the wider membership in a poll.**

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Caroline 3/27/25 10:05AM
Re-engaging colleagues following major organisational change.

anonymous 3/27/25 11:21AM
Motivation and engagement during long term change

Agile Lemur 3/27/25 12:12PM
Connecting with hard-to-reach groups

Anonymous 3/27/25 12:38PM
Combating lack of trust/anonymity

↻ **Would you like to see a speaker at the next meeting and do you have any suggestions for what type of speaker you want to see?**

It might be that you would like to see insights from Engagement colleagues in the private sector or the NHS.

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Humble Porcupine 3/27/25 10:55AM
Yes a speaker would be helpful

Guest Speaker - Jane Tidswell, HE Director, People Insight

↻ **Jane's presentation**

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People Insight and UHR 27th March session

↻ **Is the trend in response rates changing this year, given current challenges in the sector?**

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PHES 3/27/25 10:23AM

Jane confirmed 5 HEIs have surveys out now and it is seeming that the response rates are similar. Not seeing any major differences in the results based on the data analysis. In some cases people want to give their voice more, especially with providing direct responses to free text questions

⇒ **Is there ideal sequencing in how to roll out surveys i.e. full survey vs pulse survey?**

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PHES 3/27/25 10:25AM

Depends largely on the timelines for actions coming out of the analysis. There needs to be flow so don't launch a pulse survey before you have rolled out the outcomes and actions or people don't feel their insights are being valued. There could be a case for doing so if you are clearly communicating that you want to dig deeper into a specific area to get further clarity on the feedback.

⇒ **In terms of those HEIs with the highest response rate, what is the one thing they all do to keep the participation high?**

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PHES 3/27/25 10:27AM

It's about taking action and communicating it clearly. The comms needs to continue after the listening exercise and through the year to show what changes are being implemented as a result of the survey results. Also about spotlighting local changes in addition to institution-wide actions

⇒ **Do you have any particular recommendations or thoughts on conducting a survey after major organisational change?**

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PHES 3/27/25 10:29AM

Need to be very clear that the organisation has been through a difficult time and is moving forward and needs to hear how people are feeling to determine how to move forward. Could be surprised to hear what people want and that could strongly influence decision. It's about being authentic in the comms and the actions taken. Even if that means telling people that you are focussing on one specific

Engagement In Financial Challenges Context

⇒ POLL 1: Impact on Survey Activity

If you are doing something other than the options provided, please add detail in the comments.

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PHES 3/27/25 10:35AM

One member said they have made the decision to not ask questions so will launch a survey in the next few weeks. Need to give thought to the comms approach.

PHES 3/27/25 10:36AM

One member is re-establishing their strategic vision. Were meant to be doing the survey at the end of this year but pushed back 6 months. Are hoping the survey will be a cornerstone to the diagnostic approach.

PHES 3/27/25 10:37AM

One member did a check in in 2024 and will be doing a full survey this year. ~Seen a lot of internal change and have decided to continue so they hear what people have to say.

PHES 3/27/25 10:39AM

One member has decided to pause all surveys following consideration. Already aware they need to do work on actions and they are now in a change programme. Noted that HR team is fully involved in the change programme so there is a practical aspect of not having people to do the work on the comms, the analysis and the actions - especially as there would be limited action afterwards. Will review and hopefully do a survey in Autumn once strategic change has happened.

PHES 3/27/25 10:44AM

One member had planned to run the full survey again but proposed to Exec not to. Noted everything else going on in the survey world and how managers are impacted with the expectations to take action after the survey results. Lots of internal change activity going on that there were concerns about managers being overwhelmed. Especially as a further survey would raise employee expectations about what will change. Instead of a full survey every there they will move that to every two years and switch to quick response polls on hot topics.

PHES 3/27/25 12:15PM

One member explained: We did a full survey last year, will be looking to do our next one in 2026 when hopefully the change we are undergoing will have been completed.

PHES 3/27/25 12:16PM

One member responded: Short version - not sure as we don't set question set until the summer time for our autumn survey. No-one's asked me to do anything differently yet

Are you changing your survey activities due to change programmes and/or the financial challenges context?

- Yes - pausing/delaying survey activities (either annual or pulse)

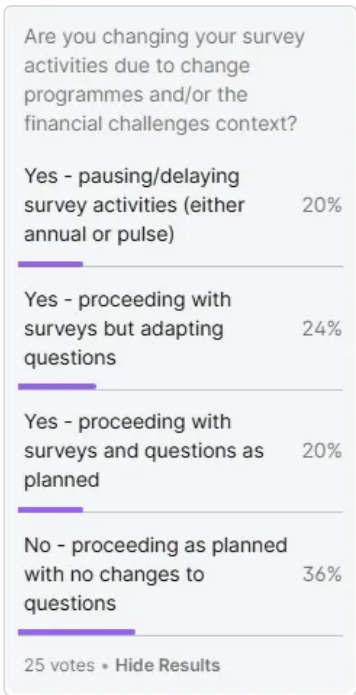
- Yes - proceeding with surveys but adapting questions

- Yes - proceeding with surveys and questions as planned

- No - proceeding as planned with no changes to questions

↩ POLL 1 RESULTS

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↩ **If your HEI is facing financial challenges, is the cost of Engagement Surveys a factor in your decision about proceeding or not (whether in-house or using a provider)?**

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Secretive Rhino 3/27/25 10:34 AM
cost will definitely be a factor at contract renewal stage in a few months

Wholesome Dragonfly 3/27/25 10:34 AM
Yes we are considering whether to renew our contract with our provider which is due to renew in October. In place using a forms type functionality within our HR System.

PHES 3/27/25 10:41 AM
One member explained they needed to close down contract with survey provider to save cost. Will be looking at what can be undertaken but paused for now. Noted the team has limited capacity to support listening activities.



⇒ **POLL 2: Impact on Survey Participation**

Please provide any additional context in the comments section. It would be interesting to note how you might be managing expectations at senior level about participation and results.

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Do you think participation in your surveys may be affected by current change programmes?

- Yes - anticipate lower responses
- Yes - anticipate same responses but different results
- No - we expect it to be the same
- N/A - we're not running surveys

⇒ **POLL 2 RESULTS**

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Do you think participation in your surveys may be affected by current change programmes?



20 votes • Hide Results

⇒ **Is anyone having discussions about the optics of asking certain benchmarking questions whilst undertaking organisational change?**

Some examples of controversial questions could be about whether colleagues would recommend the institution as a place to work.

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PHES 3/27/25 10:48AM

One member reports ENPS as a KPI and it has been noted to Exec that there could be change in this. Noted that the question about "recommending" the institution could be transposed into people not recommending the whole sector given the current challenges.

PHES 3/27/25 10:51AM

One member is currently drafting the messaging coming out from Exec to staff about the expectations. They are currently going through



change and have launched a VS scheme so working with comms about how to acknowledge the change and the external challenges that many institutions are facing. Aware of the sensitivities but encouraging people to participate in survey and submit responses and take the appreciative enquiry approach looking at the reasons people want to stay and what it is they value about the organisation. Very tricky and such an emotive issue

PHES 3/27/25 10:51AM

One member is anticipating the same response rate or higher. Trying to keep people motivated and had a good response to a check in survey.

↩ **Are you looking at your wider recognition of contribution programmes during a period of organisational change?**

- Perhaps you may be looking at opportunities for non-financial recognition?
- Can you share any insights on how your approach is being perceived by colleagues?

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PHES 3/27/25 10:55AM

One member noted they had not had any kickback to the launch of a new lifestyle discounts programme which includes a thank you recognition scheme. They wondered how it would land with colleagues and TU reps but it hasn't been a significant factor

PHES 3/27/25 10:58AM

One member explained they are completely reviewing staff benefits and are also going through a period of change, including a MAL scheme across the institution. Explaining to people that there will be more change ahead in the future. Also moving forward the agenda on Reward with retail discounts and Total Reward Statements. Also looking at EAP and other potential add-ons, salary sacrifice schemes etc. Note the need to stay competitive in terms of EVP.

PHES 3/27/25 11:01AM

One member noted the challenge of showing thanks and recognition in the current climate. Previously launched a scheme to encourage peer-to-peer thanks and still going well. Split recognition out into a separate process with awards, celebration events etc. The challenge is deciding what to do as a thank you and making it land well given any perception of spend is a conundrum.

PHES 3/27/25 12:34PM

One member responded: we're involving staff in the process of identifying the most value-added benefits we can explore (acknowledging financial limitations). We asked our Employee Forum reps to canvas their departments and feed into a conversation around priorities, which we've then developed some proposals to exec from.

Discussion on Survey Question Design

↩ **Do you plan to use the same questions as previous surveys or are you bringing in new areas/questions?**

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Agile Lemur 3/27/25 11:03AM

Using consistent questions to monitor trends

PHES 3/27/25 11:05AM

One member explained the majority of their survey will be testing the narrative around the new strategy. In the main it will be the third survey and they want to retain the majority of the questions to see trends. The continuity in questions has increase in importance over time. Internal benchmarking is now more important than external comparisons. Taking an Action Learning Set approach for areas doing well to share their experience with areas who have lower results.

anonymous 3/27/25 11:06AM

We use a core set of question as our longitudinal measures and add topical questions to each survey depending on what is going on or where we want to do a deeper dive. This degree of agility seems to work for us.

PHES 3/27/25 11:07AM

One member is using a very similar question set to allow for comparison of responses over time. Aligned questions to Stress Risk Assessment from HSE. Keen to keep that consistency to look at work related stress

PHES 3/27/25 12:18PM

One member responded: We will probably ask similar questions - feedback from staff on the survey suggested some felt questions were too vague and needed to be more specific as some interpreted the questions in different ways. However we want to make sure that we can get comparable data year on year so asking the same or similar questions will allow us to monitor changes in engagement

PHES 3/27/25 12:18PM

One member responded: We try to keep as much similarity as possible but have done some tweaking especially adding specificity about what "level" the question is being asked around. Eg adding "in your area (School / Service)" to a few questions about leaders and manager performance so it's clearer to know who you're responding about.

⇒ **Do you use pulse surveys as a way of deep diving into certain themes/topics?**

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EG 3/27/25 10:43AM

Yes we run 3 pulse surveys each academic year on different themes i.e. wellbeing, benefits, and also use 9 standard 'staff satisfaction' questions included in every survey which we use to benchmark and is a University KPI. We are due to launch one next week on 'Learning & Development/Managing Change' which should be interesting.

Humble Porcupine 3/27/25 10:53AM

We are making minor changes to our questions

Gerry 3/27/25 10:53AM

We are currently running 3 pulse surveys in an academic year on specific themes linked to strategic priorities. Responses will either form a baseline of understanding or be used to monitor/track changes. Our current pulse survey is out and is on Leadership. We have about 7-12 questions plus 3 additional questions asked each time which are linked to our

corporate scorecard/KPI. Will revert to a full survey again in the future.

Agile Lemur 3/27/25 11:01AM

We don't use pulse surveys - because we're wary of survey fatigue given that we have annual full engagement surveys

PHES 3/27/25 11:09AM

One member has 5 key action points (organisational outputs) and these are the basis for the pulse surveys.

anonymous 3/27/25 11:09AM

Yes we have run surveys with specific focus on wellbeing, hybrid working, our strategic plan etc

PHES 3/27/25 12:19PM

One member responded: Yes we do run pulse surveys but manage these in-house and only when a specific need arises (also depending when the last full survey was issued)

⇒ **Can I ask those who are pulse surveying - do you include demographic questions in your pulses or just keep it as more of a finger in the wind exercise rather than seeking greater detail?**

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PHES 3/27/25 12:35PM

We recommended that this year, but got strong push back from senior colleagues

PHES 3/27/25 12:35PM

We're in exactly the same position - this is the suggestion we'll be making but yet to be decided at exec level

PHES 3/27/25 12:35PM

We asked demographic questions too (we snuck in a couple of other binary question too)

PHES 3/27/25 12:35PM

We didn't include demographic monitoring in our recent pulse as it would have increased the survey length by ~50% unless we 'prioritised' a few, which didn't feel appropriate.

PHES 3/27/25 12:35PM

we currently use Culture Amp which has demographic data embedded extracted from HR system

PHES 3/27/25 12:36PM

We have been amending the demographic questions depending on the pulse survey theme. We received pushback due to the number of demographic questions vs the survey questions.

Discussion on Survey Participation

⇒ **Which areas of the institution tend to have higher participation rates?**

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Sarah, AUB 3/27/25 10:36AM

Professional Services staff had a much higher participation rate than academic or technical services staff.

Agile Lemur 3/27/25 11:13AM

ditto!

Gerry 3/27/25 11:13AM
ditto

PHES 3/27/25 11:16AM
One member noted PS Staff is the highest responders. Lower response rate from Research colleagues, which could be linked to fixed term rather than open-ended contracts. They have someone who works on comms and engagement in Estates and Facilities team - ensuring they have access to tablets to complete. Also done a lot of work to build trust in the survey security to show how the data is collected, stored and moved around. Noted the more part time you are the less likely you are to respond.

PHES 3/27/25 11:20AM
One member agreed with this pattern. Highest response from desk-based prof services. The lowest responses from those people who don't see themselves as staff such as student ambassadors which lead to thinking on who they include. Had a success with staff in Estates with a dedicated session in their working hours dedicated to completing. Where language barriers or literacy issues were a problem it proved effective to have them sit with their peers. Also sitting with people to help them input where there were digital literacy concerns. Feel it made a difference and also identified vulnerabilities from a duty of care perspective, especially around digital literacy.

PHES 3/27/25 11:25AM
One member agreed that response rates highest in PS staff then similar between academic and research staff. Had noted that technicians weren't engaging so introduced specific comms. Struggle with Teaching Associates as a hard to reach community who tend not to be on campus and less responsive to email. In terms of Deskless site staff they expected them to benefit from additional support so have always arranged some scheduled sessions for that group. Experimented with informal drop in sessions which weren't well used. One thing that has worked well around access to the survey via a QR code for colleagues to use smart phones - marked difference to having to use a keyboard. Also mindful of language barriers and consulted TUs to ask which languages would be most useful for translation. Translated into 3 other languages (Portugese, Polish, French, Ukranian and Somali)- not the highest quality in translation but well received, although it didn't seem to impact on the response rate but enabled people to provide a fuller response.

↩ **Is timing of survey activity a factor in participation rates?**

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EG 3/27/25 10:45AM
Yes, we had a great response rate in December before staff were due to be off for over 2 weeks. Summer usually tends to have lower due to annual leave etc

anonymous 3/27/25 11:15AM
We were running surveys in Spring and Autumn but have moved to once a year in November and leave the survey open for a month. This seems to work okay. The lowest response rate we receive is 50%, we have been as high as 78% but that was in relation to a hybrid working survey.

PHES 3/27/25 12:19PM

One member responded: Yes - however there is never a good time to hold a survey, our academic staff will always say the timing of the survey is bad for them as they are always so busy.

⇒ **How do you encourage participation from academic colleagues?**

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PHES 3/27/25 11:29AM

One member explained that they tried mapping questions from CEDARS specifically for research community but the CEDARS organisation weren't keen.

PHES 3/27/25 11:30AM

One member explained that the REF team are using the survey data and also being used in Athena Swan activity so they are hoping that will have an impact. Looking at leaning into communicating directly with Deans to push promotion as the academics in that area will get a better response rate.

PHES 3/27/25 12:11PM

One member had tried doing a workshop with the Dean and got them to buy in to the vernacular of the questions and they got a better engagement from academic colleagues

PHES 3/27/25 12:20PM

One member responded: Using Directors of School and course leaders to promote the survey to them and encourage them to do so. Having webinars with People Insight for our course leaders and directors to show them the benefits of the survey and the benefits of encouraging their staff to participate.

PHES 3/27/25 12:20PM

One member responded: Heads of School and Heads of Professional Services in our Schools are critical. I engage with them separately and early - at least six weeks ahead of our survey opening - to make sure they have what they need to encourage a strong response rate. We also have a champions network - our Colleague Engagement Leads - who play a huge role in survey promotion

PHES 3/27/25 12:37PM

One member added: VP in one of the Faculties has scheduled 1 hr in everyone's diary when our next survey open!

⇒ **How do you encourage participation from deskless colleagues such as those in Estates and Facilities?**

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anonymous 3/27/25 11:19AM

We set up a PC with written instructions for those staff to access and the managers encourage staff to utilise this and ensure people have cover so they can leave their work to complete the survey. We also have posters and flyers and encourage completion via mobile phone for those without PC's.

PHES 3/27/25 12:21PM

One member responded: We sent out postcards with QR codes on to those on family leave or long-term

sick, we didn't use these for other staff but could have done the same thing for deskless workers and so could have produced posters for staff common areas etc to encourage deskless staff to complete the survey.

PHES 3/27/25 12:21PM

One member responded: I also do a lot of bespoke comms for deskless (deskfree?!) colleagues, from specific presentations on their townhalls to address issues of trust, to adapting our privacy notice to fit on a printed handout with graphics, to making survey promotion graphics and QR codes suitable for sharing on Whatsapp which some of our teams use.

PHES 3/27/25 12:21PM

One member responded: Posters with QR codes around all our campuses and specific stacks to be put up in staff only spaces for deskless colleagues. Buy in from our Facilities managers and other Estates colleagues. Moving other processes to tablet based (eg PDR) has had a great impact.

PHES 3/27/25 12:36PM

One member responded - We've undertaken a similar approach with our Facilities staff supported with regular meetings with Heads of those teams in the run up to the survey launch so they could be involved in shaping the approach and supporting their teams to engage

PHES 3/27/25 12:37PM

One member added: We went 'on tour' with our survey when it was live to hard to reach areas to support people filling it in - with a cuppa and a biscuit. Helping people to complete who needed it. Insightful conversations on other things whilst we were there. Also having a quiet place available for those who needed it. Although we had the option of paper surveys to complete, they were not as popular - we used QR codes to access the survey too

↩ **How do you encourage participation from casual and hourly paid colleagues?**

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PHES 3/27/25 12:22PM

One member responded: We tried to include them in our first full survey last year. We had just 4% response rate from that group. Next time the survey is run we will be focussing on our established workforce.

