



UNIVERSITIES & COLLEGES
EMPLOYERS ASSOCIATION

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

The benefits of working in HE

Produced by Universities and Colleges Employers Association (UCEA)
Summer 2008



About UCEA

UCEA represents UK higher education institutions, and provides advice and guidance to them, on employment, reward and human resources practice.

UCEA aims to be a valued representative of, and adviser to, higher education sector employers on the delivery of excellence in human resources management.

We aim to:

- advise our subscribers promptly, accurately and helpfully;
- consult effectively with our subscribers;
- engage in regular and constructive dialogue with our wider stakeholders;
- deliver effective services at good value;
- embed equality and diversity in all our activities.

First published in June 2008 by Universities and Colleges Employers Association (UCEA).

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Index

Foreword	2
Summary of key findings	2
HR challenges	3
Pay and grading	5
Pensions	8
Equal opportunities and diversity	10
Work-life balance and other benefits	12
Sources	16

Foreword

This short report presents a summary of the key benefits of working in the HE sector. There is a great deal to publicise - and to be proud of. HE has never been more exciting, or offered greater career opportunities. With a world renowned reputation for excellence, HE really is one of the UK's great success stories. For this to be sustained, sound business management, forward thinking HR, and good employee relations all need to play their part.

In recent years, the earnings of HE staff, both academic and support staff, have increased significantly - by over 30 per cent since 2001. HE earnings will continue their upward trajectory as the final increases agreed in the 2006-09 national pay deal and the Framework Agreement improvements come into play, resulting in the best pay increases in the publicly funded sector by quite some margin.

It is important to remember that there is a range of other factors that make working in HE such an attractive option. Aside from pay and pensions, academic and support staff enjoy working conditions that include flexible working hours, above average holiday entitlement and generous employment conditions such as maternity and paternity allowances.

'Where are we now? The Benefits of Working in HE' includes the latest research and most recent facts and figures on working in HE, highlighting whenever possible a comparison to working in other sectors. I hope that you find it a useful document and that it assists in changing previous, outdated perceptions of working in HE – one of the most desirable career destinations in the UK.

Professor Bill Wakeham, UCEA Chair and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Southampton

Summary of key findings

- Higher Education (HE) staff have received the best pay increases in the public services in recent years. Between 2001 and 2007 pay increased by a minimum of 30 per cent and overall pay will have increased by at least 13.1 per cent since the 2006 pay negotiations, with a 15.5 per cent increase for the lowest paid support staff.
- A major benefit of the Framework Agreement to modernise pay in HE has been to help deal with identified equal pay hotspots across all employee groups.
- HE staff with fixed weekly hours now work between 35 and 37 hours a week compared with 38 or 39 hours for many previously.
- Improved gender composition continues steadily with the proportion of female academic staff in all grades increasing from 41.9 per cent in 2005/06 to 42.3 per cent in 2006/07.
- Three quarters of HEIs offer flexible working arrangements, with 94 per cent offering maternity pay provisions above the statutory entitlement.
- HEI staff are one of the most generously rewarded of all employee groups when it comes to holidays. For example, academic staff have a median leave entitlement of 35 days whereas the median for the whole UK economy is 25 days.
- HE offers one of the best groups of pensions schemes to employees in the UK. The sector continues to offer final salary pensions to its employees when most private sector schemes have been closed to new members.

HR challenges

As this report shows, whilst challenges lie ahead, our sector has made great progress in rewarding and developing our staff in recent years. Most HEIs have now assigned staff to single grading structures using job evaluation, with much clearer criteria on progression and market pay. Pay levels have increased substantially to make them much more competitive with other sectors, not least because of our excellent final salary pension schemes and other benefits such as flexible employment arrangements and enhanced maternity leave and pay. Significant investment has also been made in staff and organisational development, performance management, and in better communications between managers and staff. The UPA looks forward to continuing our partnership with UCEA to move the sector further along a difficult but rewarding path!

Mike Moore, Universities Personnel Association (UPA) and HR Director, University of East London

The challenges for employers across all sectors have not only changed dramatically over the past couple of decades, they have also become progressively more complex. Organisations are competing for talent and striving for high performance while also seeking to improve the quality of working life for their employees.

Nowhere is this more evident than in HE, where employers are embracing the ever more global nature of the sector and seeking to attract and retain the highest calibre of leaders, managers, academic and support staff, drawing on talent from the UK and abroad. Like other organisations in the publicly funded sector, universities and HE colleges are coming under growing pressure from commercial considerations, which are being increasingly reflected in recruitment and reward practices that are already commonplace in the private sector.

That said, HE faces its own very particular set of challenges, not least the unique nature of academic life, which brings with it the academics' natural loyalty to their field of research and wider discipline, and a special relationship with students.

Employers have been conducting the largest human resources exercise ever undertaken in HE – implementing the Framework Agreement for modernising pay structures. Specifically, the objectives of the Framework Agreement were to:

- improve recruitment and retention;
- ensure equal pay for work of equal value;
- tackle the problem of low pay;
- reward and recognise individual contribution;
- underpin opportunities for career and organisational development.

The initiative also aimed to build a greater degree of flexibility and responsiveness into the reward system to enable HEIs to reflect their own strategic objectives and local challenges.

Implementing the Framework Agreement on such a massive scale – more than 160 HEIs, diverse in nature, each with different missions, strategic plans and policies, together employing more than 364,000 staff (more than 544,000 staff when 180,000 atypical staff are included) at all levels responsible for generating £45 billion of output a year – has been no mean feat, but one which was both necessary and is now yielding positive benefits.

In an evaluation of implementation commissioned by UCEA, 93 per cent of HR directors believe that many of the objectives have been achieved. Three fifths of respondents thought that recruitment and retention had improved; half said that contribution-based reward had become more prevalent and that universities and HE colleges now have more flexibility to design their own reward systems; over a third said that working practices had changed to facilitate the delivery of better services to students.

The last report on recruitment and retention in the UK HE sector, conducted by the Institute of Employment Studies in 2005, showed HE median staff turnover rates to be lower across the board than public and private sector medians:

HE medians:	Technical staff	6%
	Academic staff	7%
	Administrative & Professional staff	8%
	Manual & Clerical staff	10%
Public sector median:		15%
Private sector median:		26%

One of the most important objectives of the Framework Agreement was to ensure that university and HE college employers offer equal pay for work of equal value. The majority of case study employers in the UCEA research recognised that they had potential equal pay problems with their old pay systems and believe that their new agreements deal with these.

Harmonisation of terms and conditions of service was another important element of the Framework Agreement which has delivered successful outcomes. Nearly every HEI has harmonised the working week so that staff with specified hours on the same grade work the same hours; most adopting a common working week of between 35 and 37 hours. A single holiday entitlement for all employees is rare, but holidays have been harmonised across grades with increases of up to five days a year for many support staff. HEIs have been trying to harmonise other terms and conditions across all groups, with some pockets of success.

Across many aspects of working life, HE is leading the way. HEIs have made great strides in offering flexible working patterns to employees, including choice over when and where hours are worked. Childcare support services, such as workplace nurseries and holiday play schemes, are offered by many HEIs and maternity/ paternity and sick pay benefits are often better than private sector provision.

There is no room for complacency, however. Employers recognise that while progress has been made, more needs to be done to understand, embrace and sustain good equality and diversity practice, particularly in relation to gender, race, disability and age. HE employers are also concerned that the uncertain nature of student demand and some of their research funding in particular leads them to offer fixed term employment contracts more than some other industries. Similarly, while many HEIs have exemplary policies and procedures in place, promoting wellbeing by tackling stress and other workplace pressures is a concern that HE shares with other sectors.

Overall, though, there is much to celebrate about the quality of working life in HE. A survey (ICM Research Omnibus survey 16–18 May 2008) conducted among a representative sample of all adults in the UK explored which employment benefits they value most. Among the benefits respondents ranked as highly desirable were:

- 35 days or more of annual leave - most desired benefit in this survey - standard amongst academic staff, but experienced by only 24 per cent of the working population;
- flexibility over when hours can be worked, an area where HE scores strongly;
- sick pay of 100% of salary for one month or more, commonplace in HE and offered to just over a third, 37 per cent, of employees in the private sector;
- a pension supported by employer contributions of 10 per cent or more of salary, experienced by only 25 per cent of respondents in the workforce.

The ICM Omnibus research suggests that employees working in the education sector place a much higher than average value on the importance of annual leave, perhaps much appreciated after dedicating considerable extra hours to work, but place a much lower than average importance on the benefit of a contributory pension.

Pay and Grading

The Framework Agreement provided us with a timely opportunity to modernise our reward strategy and in so doing, to get pay 'right', by implementing a pay structure that is market competitive, fit for purpose and legislatively compliant. Northumbria University's significantly increased investment in staff salaries of approximately 13.5 per cent over the past two years, with a further increase in October 2008, reflects the University's aim to offer its staff the best deal possible within the limits of affordability. The pay framework agreement has successfully focused attention on modernising pay structures. The future challenges now lie in investing a similar level of time and effort into developing and improving the other aspects of the 'employment deal', such as career development, flexible working and leadership and management competence, with a view to improving attraction, retention and overall employee engagement.

Professor Peter Slee, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Northumbria University

Pay and benefits are an important part of the reward package for all employees, but research shows that individuals are also attracted, retained and engaged by a whole range of additional non-financial rewards from career development prospects and autonomous working to flexible working, work-life balance and recognition. This publication sets out the total reward package in HE but in this section we concentrate on improvements in pay and promotion opportunities.

The 2006 pay negotiations focused unprecedented attention on the reward strategies for HE staff. In recent years there have been significant improvements in the HE employment package aimed at addressing pay inequalities, securing substantial improvements to pay for support staff and closing any gaps between academic salaries and those in comparable professions.

Overall, as a result of the 2006-2009 pay deal, staff will see a total pay increase of at least 13.1 per cent by October 2008, with an increase of at least 15.5 per cent for the lowest paid support staff. This is in addition to the increases received by a large proportion of staff as a result of the implementation of the Framework Agreement to modernise pay. Not only was the 2006 deal at the very limits of affordability for HEIs, it also gave increases higher than other public services over the same period.

Much has been achieved in recent years and HE staff are now seen to have caught up and overtaken many other sectors in pay terms. Nobody wants to see a return to the lengthy, complicated and disruptive pay negotiations of 2006. The recently reviewed national pay system is evolving to reflect the mix of national and local elements of the reward package and an important joint data review has been established to underpin national negotiations with robust information about finance and pay.

Sector comparisons

Gross annual earnings for full-time employees

HE teaching professionals	£42,588
All professionals	£38,840
Secondary education teaching professionals	£34,442
FE teaching professionals	£32,683
HE sector – (all staff)	£32,254
All public sector	£28,964
All employees	£28,667

Source: ASHE data 2007

Earnings increase under recent pay deals

Prior to the 2006/09 pay agreement:

- From 2001, when new joint national negotiating machinery (JNCHES) was established, to 2006 the mean average annual earnings of academic teaching staff (excluding researchers) increased by 25.1 per cent. This increase was more than the equivalent across the economy as a whole (19.5 per cent), in the public sector (24.7 per cent) and in professional occupations (21.1 per cent) generally. This is based on data from the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) 2001-06, Office of National Statistics (ONS).
- Mean annual gross earnings for all HE employees from 2001 to 2007 (ASHE 2007 data) increased by 29.8 per cent. This compares with 24.8 per cent for all employees, 26.4 per cent for all public sector and 22.4 per cent for all private sector.

During the 2006/09 pay agreement:

- Earnings had already increased by at least a further 10.4 per cent under the current three year pay deal up to May 2008; plus an average one per cent from assimilation to the new pay spine. This means that since April 2001 earnings for staff will have increased by well over a third.
- In 2007-08 staff in HE have received increases totalling at least six per cent (three per cent from 1 August 2007 and three per cent from 1 May 2008), much higher than in other parts of the public services.

Increases in 2006/07

In 2006/07 staff in HE received increases in basic pay totalling at least four per cent (three per cent from 1 August 2006 and one per cent from 1 February 2007), much higher than in other parts of the public services:

HE staff	4.00%
Local government	2.95%
Nurses	2.5%
Consultants	2.2%
Junior doctors	2.2%
Police	3.0%
Teachers in England and Wales	2.5%
Teachers in Scotland	2.0%

Source: IDS Pay in the Public Services

Future increases:

- In the coming academic year (2008/09), staff in HE are set to see their pay increase in October 2008 by 2.5 per cent or the September RPI figure, whichever the greater.
- Since April 2001 average earnings for all staff have increased by a third. Figures are likely to be higher than the most recent HESA statistics show, as the full effects of implementation of the Framework Agreement feed through. In addition a significant proportion of HE staff benefit from annual increments worth three per cent a year on top of their basic pay rises.

Improved pay for academics

- Average annual earnings of HE teaching professionals (excluding research staff but including clinical academics) were £42,588 per annum in the year to April 2007. This compared with an overall annual average earnings figure of £38,840 for all full-time professionals and £28,964 for all full time public sector employees (ASHE).

Minimum pay levels improve too

- Since 2001 minimum basic pay rates for HE manual staff have increased by at least 40 per cent due to the larger increases awarded to the lowest grade staff. They have also benefited from reductions in working hours which have increased the hourly rate.
- The 2007-08 pay increases brought the minimum wage in HE up to £6.46 per hour based on a 37 hour week. This is significantly higher than the National Minimum Wage of £5.52 payable from 1 October 2007.
- The October 2008 pay increase will raise the minimum wage in HE up to £6.62 per hour based on a 37 hour week, or £7.00 per hour based on a 35 hour week. This is significantly higher than the National Minimum Wage of £5.73 payable from 1 October 2008.

More staff and more promotions

- HESA's most recent statistics reveal that the number of academic staff in UK HE has increased from 164,875 in 2005/06 to 169,995 in 2006/07 with a similar rise in non-academic staff, from 190,540 to 194,170, over the same period.
- The proportion of academic staff employed on higher grades also increased significantly over the last decade (1995/96 to 2006/07), with a corresponding decline in those on the lower paid grades. The proportion of full-time academic staff who are professors has increased from 10.9 per cent to 19.3 per cent. There has also been an increase in the proportion in the next highest academic grade (senior lecturers in pre-1992 universities and the principal lecturer grade in post-1992 institutions) – from a quarter of the staff to over a third (HESA 2006/7 data).
- Until they reach the top of their grade, most HE staff now also receive annual, service-based pay increments worth an additional three per cent on top of a pay award.

Benefits from the Framework Agreement to modernise pay

- Increases in starting salaries for lecturers 'post-Framework' averaged 12 per cent.
- For those staff with fixed working hours the average is now between 35 and 37 per week – compared with 38 or 39 hours for many previously.
- Staff have also received pay increases of up to three per cent on assimilation to the new pay spine. According to UCEA research, approximately 8.5 per cent of academic staff and 15 per cent of support staff will have also received additional pay increases due to upgrading as a result of the job evaluation exercises conducted.
- The Framework Agreement is helping HEIs to tackle equal pay hotspots where they exist.
- The Framework Agreement is benefiting HEIs, through the improved pay levels, in both the retention of existing staff and the recruitment of new staff.

Pensions

The HE sector has a tradition of good final salary pension provision for the vast majority of its workforce, both academic and support staff. This has dovetailed well with an employment model for most of the sector based on a working life spent entirely or mostly in HE. However, the HE sector cannot be immune from the pressures affecting pension provision throughout the economy. These include longer life expectancy, reduced interest rates and more challenging investment markets. Many private sector employers have reacted to these cost pressures by closing final salary pension provision. In many cases new employees have been provided with money purchase pension schemes with much lower contribution rates than the final salary schemes which they replaced. The HE sector is currently considering how it can maintain good quality, affordable and sustainable pensions into the future.

Peter W Thompson BSc FIA

Independent Actuary and Consultant, author of 'Pensions Provision in the HE Sector'

The pensions pressures

Difficult investment markets, longer life expectancy, an ever-changing regulatory environment and, in more recent times, shrinking credit have severely eroded pension returns. Like every other sector, nationally and globally, HE is not immune from the so-called 'pensions crisis'.

In the private sector the potential shortfall between contributions in and payments out has seen the replacement of final salary schemes (with a guaranteed final pension amount based on service and the salary on retirement) with money purchase schemes (where no final pension amount is guaranteed) or, in some cases, career average schemes (where pensions are based not on the final salary but on a career average figure) as employers seek to mitigate their risk exposure. Meanwhile, in the public sector, employers are under growing pressure to cut pension costs.

The HE sector

As the HE sector itself is positioned at the boundaries of the public and private sectors, so are its final salary pension funds. The Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) is, and has always been, very clear that it is a private sector scheme and not a public sector scheme; it carries no government guarantee and pays a levy to the Pension Protection Fund like other private sector schemes. The same applies to the various pension schemes for support staff in pre-1992 HEIs. The Local Government Pension Schemes (LGPS) and the Teachers Pension Scheme (TPS), on the other hand, are clearly public sector pension schemes. Employees in HE are therefore in the very fortunate position of being able to opt into these additional benefits. However, as the sector is aware, change will be required and provisions need to be made by employers and employee members to ensure the sustainability of pensions in HE.

HE faces some of the factors which are generic to all pension arrangements. These include the structure of USS; the extent of any influence which the sector's employers have over USS; LGPS and TPS; concern over rapidly increasing costs of some of the smaller schemes; and whether some of the schemes within the sector should be merged.

The cost of pension schemes is a major expenditure for HE employers with contribution rates of 14 per cent or more to the main schemes (compared to employees contributions of around 6.5 per cent). In some cases, HE employers' contributions can be as high as 26 per cent (IDS 2008).

Despite all the well-publicised difficulties, pensions continue to be one of the most important remuneration benefits an employer can offer and a key factor in employee retention. This is well recognised by HE employers, whose views on pension provision in the future, the costs and their preferences on acting individually or collectively, were recently canvassed by the Employers Pension Forum established by UUK, UCEA and GuildHE as part of a long term strategy. The survey was the first stage in a process to identify and evaluate feasible options for a future HE pensions strategy which is fair, affordable and sustainable. The second stage, which is to identify the feasible options, is now approaching completion after consultation with HEIs. Once they are identified, the sector can move to detailed evaluation with a view to implementation with the agreement of all the stakeholders.

The Omnibus data reveals that employer contributions of 10 per cent or more of salary to a pension scheme were the fourth most desirable work benefit for respondents outside of the HE sector.

HE PENSION CONTRIBUTION RATES

Pension		Employer contribution rate (%)	Employee contribution rate (%)
USS		14%	6.35%
Teachers' Pension Scheme		14.1%	6.4%
Local pension scheme (e.g. HEI's own scheme)	Minimum	2%	2%
	Average	14.7%	6.5%
	Maximum	25.4%	16.1%
Local Government Pension Scheme	Minimum	6%	Contributions vary and are based on pay; they are between 5.5% and 7.5%
	Average	14.6%	
	Maximum	26%	

Equal opportunities and diversity

Whilst there are still challenges facing the HE sector in relation to equality and diversity, we are seeing increasing numbers of women and black and minority ethnic staff moving into more senior positions, and greater numbers of staff disclosing disabilities. Research is also now being carried out to assess the impact of sexual orientation, religion and age on staff employed by HEIs, for example in projects forming part of ECU's 2008 programme. There is no doubt that the sector is committed to moving the equality agenda forward to ensure that existing momentum is not only maintained but accelerated, and so that HEIs are truly fair and properly representative of the wide communities they serve.

Nicola Dandridge, Chief Executive, Equality Challenge Unit (ECU)

Everyone is different. Each individual brings a unique set of experiences and attitudes to the workplace. Good equality and diversity practice is not about ticking boxes or cosmetic enhancement; it is about valuing the individual and creating a level playing field so that all staff have the opportunity to reach their full potential, regardless of race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion or age.

The business case for equality and diversity is well acknowledged. Employers who recognise and value diversity are more attractive to potential recruits; employees who experience good practice are more engaged; diverse teams are more creative than homogenous teams. And, with UK HEIs operating more than ever in a worldwide market, equality and diversity are becoming increasingly relevant to the internationalisation agenda.

Diversity is not only a fact of life in HE; it is to be encouraged and celebrated. Equally, as in every other sector, it presents its challenges. HE employers are working hard to embrace good equality and diversity practice, working in partnership with organisations like the Equality Challenge Unit (ECU), the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education (LFHE) and the Higher Education Academy (HEA). While progress has been made, particularly in relation to gender and race, employers recognise that more needs to be done to embed, promote and continually improve.

A major benefit of the Framework Agreement has been to help deal with identified equal pay hotspots across all employee groups.

It is clear that leadership level commitment is a prerequisite to equality and diversity through clear two-way communication, the delivery of consistent messages, the alignment of policies and practices to cultural and organisational objectives and an emphasis on processes which deliver positive outcomes for all.

Facts, figures and issues

Gender

- 48 per cent of the HE workforce is male compared to 52 per cent female.
- The number of female professors improved again last year: up by one per cent to 17.5 per cent.
- The proportion of female academic staff in all grades has increased over the same period from 41.9 per cent in 2005/06 to 42.3 per cent in 2006/07.
- The proportion of women and people from black and ethnic minority groups employed as academics is growing steadily and fastest at professorial level.

Age

One of the challenges for the sector over the next decade will be to replace the relatively high proportion of retiring employees, particularly in academic/professional disciplines and in business schools in particular.

- The HE workforce is slightly older than the UK workforce as a whole, largely because employment demands higher entry qualifications.
 - 28 per cent of the HE workforce is under 34 years compared to 40 per cent of all employees.
 - 55 per cent of the HE workforce is between 34-54 years compared to 48 per cent of all employees.
 - 16 per cent of the HE workforce is over the age of 55 compared to 12 per cent of all employees.
 - There is relative stability in the proportions of permanent academic staff in different age brackets and similar stability in professorial and support staff categories.

Disability

- HESA data suggest that two per cent of academic staff in HE are disabled but, as the disability status of 11 per cent of staff is unknown, this may well be underplayed.

Ethnicity

Around eight per cent of the UK population classed themselves being from a non-white ethnic group in the 2001 UK Census. Last year 9.9 per cent of the HE workforce designated themselves to be from a black and ethnic minority group (HESA Resources of Higher Education Institutions 2006/07) and while the numbers are steadily rising across all staff groups, employers are helping to optimise career progression opportunities by expanding spheres of research beyond specialised areas and improving systems for those working on short-term contracts.

Work-life balance and other benefits

HE is rightly considered to be a good place to work for those trying to balance family and career. In this increasingly hectic 21st Century, HE offers a workplace that has long recognised the importance of a work-life balance. HEIs have been amongst the vanguard of employers to introduce family friendly policies. Such policies recognise the need for people to integrate complex lives with work responsibilities. One area where HE is particularly well placed is in the area of holidays. For example, as the main HEI holidays mirror those of the wider education sector, working in the sector has enabled parents to spend a greater amount of time with their children than the wider UK workforce have enjoyed. The paid maternity and now paternity leave packages offered by HEIs have also helped to make the sector an attractive workplace for those with family responsibilities.

Jim Foulds, Chair of Council, University of Bristol

Work-life balance is an important part of employers' strategies to meet their equality and diversity challenges. However, work-life balance is not just for women; men are also the beneficiaries. As a wider employment issue, HE employers' approaches to benefits more generally are about helping improve productivity as well as motivate and engage employees.

The focus for many employees in the UK on creating high performance cultures in the workplace has been accompanied by longer working hours and pressure to balance responsibilities at work with their home life. At the same time increasing numbers of women in the workforce, and an ageing population, mean that employees are more likely than ever to have caring responsibilities at home. Increasingly workers are simply looking for more free time, according to the Second Flexible Working Employee Survey published in 2005 (BERR).

We look at some particular areas here:

Maternity, paternity and adoption provision

Maternity and paternity benefit provision is one barometer of employer commitment to work-life balance for all. Figures drawn from the 107 HEIs which responded to the 2008 UCEA/IDS survey show that HE compares favourably to other sectors.

- 94 per cent offered maternity pay provisions above the statutory entitlement. This compares with 15 per cent in the economy as a whole and 33 per cent among larger organisations. This is based on the WLB employer survey from Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR) 2007.
- 75 per cent of respondents offer paternity provisions that are above the minimum statutory entitlement of two weeks at Statutory Paternity Pay (SPP).
- 86 per cent offer the same maternity/paternity provisions to parents who adopt.
- Almost three quarters of HEIs provide a workplace nursery, 16 per cent offer childcare vouchers and almost half provide a holiday play scheme.

Holidays

Everyone needs a good holiday to re-charge, re-energise and maintain the work-life balance that is vital to health, relationships and work.

Staff working in HE are one of the most generously rewarded through leave of all employee groups. The UCEA/IDS survey 2008 revealed:

- median annual leave by employee group in HE is:
 - 35 days for academic staff;
 - 25 days for support staff (27 for those with harmonised leave).
- Comparator data from the 2007 IDS HR Studies database shows that basic annual leave entitlement for academics is above that for employees across the rest of the economy (leave entitlement across all employee groups is 24 days), while leave for support staff is in line with that for other sectors.
- In addition to annual holiday entitlement, HE staff benefit from being given time off for additional non-statutory closure days, averaging 4.5 days a year across the sector.

The Omnibus survey showed that respondents would rank 35 days or more annual leave (or this amount pro rata if working part time) as their most desirable work benefit.

Flexible working

HEIs are increasingly recognising the significant benefits that flexible working can offer, both to the organisation and the individual. Many younger staff are looking for better work-life balance opportunities, including the ability to take career breaks and unpaid leave, older staff frequently have to juggle caring responsibilities for children, elderly relatives or both, and staff approaching retirement often want more time for their own interests without giving up work altogether. HEIs that have made efforts to meet staff requests and thus been recognised as good employers, have seen the benefits in terms of recruiting a more diverse and highly skilled workforce. This increases retention of experienced employees who would otherwise have gone elsewhere, and improves the motivation, morale and productivity of all staff, irrespective of whether they are actually working flexibly or not.

Jill Scott, Director, Flexible Work Solutions Ltd

HE employers recognise the importance of being able to offer flexible working options alongside remuneration packages in attracting and retaining high calibre people. A significant benefit of working in HE is that many roles are open to a variety of working patterns.

A report on work-life balance in HEIs suggests that many offer term-time contracts, part-time and/or job-share working and almost half offer career breaks (the 24/7 Work Life Balance Survey 2008).

For many roles, employers are also able to offer considerable flexibility in when and where hours are worked.

Many HEIs also offer additional childcare support services such as workplace nurseries and holiday play schemes.

Omnibus and other research data show that:

- for one in four public sector employees, working beyond their contracted hours is expected and commonplace, a figure which is slightly higher than for private sector employees at one in five. Nearly two fifths, 38 per cent, saw these extra hours worked as benefiting society, compared to two per cent of private sector workers;
- amongst HE staff with contracted hours, the average of 35.6 hours worked for support staff compares favourably with a national average of 37.3 hours worked across all sectors;
- four in 10 HE employees reported having flexibility with regard to when they work their hours, compared to just over three in 10 private sector employees;
- more than one in five of UK employees generally work more than 45 hours a week.

The Omnibus survey showed that flexibility in when hours are worked was the second most desirable work benefit to respondents.

Wellbeing

HE takes the wellbeing of its staff seriously and prides itself in an environment that enhances wellbeing - a fundamental and integral part of the HR Strategy. Wellbeing is, however, an individual matter and is effectively influenced through skilled people leadership at all levels within our organisation. Leaders who take responsibility for the wellbeing of staff facilitate, empower, develop and support individuals and this results in heightened levels of individual contribution measurable through greater levels of institutional performance. The agenda within HE requires the ongoing creative review and development of strategies, policies and business processes that ensure the autonomy, levels of personal control and flexibility, which make the sector so potentially motivating and unique. Attention to the wellbeing of staff should ensure that high quality individuals are attracted and retained.

Susan Rutherford, Director of HR, University of Liverpool

Job satisfaction criteria vary from individual to individual and will inevitably have an impact on wellbeing. In general academics enjoy a considerable amount of control over their working environment, have greater autonomy, flexibility and the opportunity to focus on their research and teaching passions, all of which are highly motivational in themselves. Levels of job satisfaction are influenced by a range of other factors covered in this report but assisting students to reach their full potential in every capacity and taking forward ground breaking research are clearly overriding attractions of working in the sector for both academic and support staff.

Happy, healthy staff are more productive, more committed and less likely to become absent due to sickness, but staff reporting stress is a growing concern for employers and employees across all sectors.

Cross-sector data from 2007 shows that employee absence through sickness costs employers, on average, £659 per employee every year. The CIPD annual Absence Management survey of more than 800 organisations shows a significant increase in reported stress with a positive net balance of 31 per cent of employers reporting an increase in stress-related absence.

Promoting employee wellbeing is a priority for all employers in the drive to manage and minimise absence.

The last report on recruitment and retention in the UK HE sector, conducted by the Institute of Employment Studies in 2005, highlighted many positive features of employment in HE, including generous terms and conditions, pleasant environment, employee perceptions of HEIs as fair employers, interesting jobs and (for some) an international research profile. Just as in every other sector, however, there are hotspots affecting wellbeing ranging from workload to opportunity for career progression, which HE employers are actively seeking to address.

Many have put in place a range of measures to enhance wellbeing in the workplace, including flexible working arrangements, non-financial rewards such as time for research and other scholarly activities, recognition of contribution, significant access to training and development and improved communications. HEIs also offer benefits such as access to subsidised sports facilities or staff discounts and access to counselling and personal advisory services.

Many HEIs have exemplary policies and procedures in place, as well as access to support resources, to tackle stress, bullying and harassment. UCEA's acclaimed 'Preventing and Tackling Stress at Work' resource, seminars and sector-wide HSE stress 'roadshows' have helped HEIs to implement policies to combat stress. The sector's Equality Challenge Unit also offers practical support for dealing with bullying and harassment.

Employers recognise that the drive to promote wellbeing in the workplace should be complemented by an effective sick leave policy. In line with public sector and not-for-profit organisations, sick pay provision in HE is more generous overall than the private sector in terms of sick pay duration, rates and eligibility requirements. The UCEA/IDS Conditions of Employment in HE research showed that:

- half of respondents have a common sick pay scheme that covers all employees, while half have variant schemes for different groups of employees;
- most have some element of eligibility criteria related to length of service, but it is not unheard of for HEIs to have no service requirements and/or to offer six months full pay from the point of commencing the job.

The Omnibus survey showed that respondents would rank sick pay of 100 per cent of salary for one month or more sickness absence as their third most desirable work benefit.

Omnibus Research and Data collection

Omnibus research within this report was conducted by ICM Research among a random sample of 1,148 adults aged 18+ using an online methodology. Surveys were conducted across the UK between 16 - 18 May 2008. Results were weighted to the profile of the National Readership Survey (NRS) to match the profile of all adults in UK. ICM is a member of the British Polling Council. This report also makes use of a variety of data currently available within the HE sector – these data sources are listed below.

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