



University of  
Nottingham

UK | CHINA | MALAYSIA

# Staff Engagement Survey

Progress report 2019





# Contents

- 4 Institutional progress
- 5 The University’s staff engagement cycle
- 7 Faculty, School and Department action plans
  - 7 Faculty of Arts
  - 8 Faculty of Engineering
  - 11 Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences
  - 12 School of Chemistry
  - 13 School of Health Sciences
  - 14 Division of Cancer and Stem Cells
  - 16 Estates and Hospitality
  - 19 Finance
  - 21 Human Resources
  - 22 Information Services
  - 23 Libraries
  - 25 Planning, Performance and Strategic Change
  - 26 Research and Innovation
  - 27 Student Services



# Foreword

It is two years since my appointment as Vice-Chancellor and more than two years since so many colleagues completed the University’s first Staff Engagement Survey.

During that time, I have been pleased to listen to every colleague who has offered frank, honest and sincere feedback about what works and what needs to improve in how we work here at the University of Nottingham.

It is clear that progress has been made in addressing the many concerns and issues that have been raised by colleagues across the institution – not simply in the survey, but in the consultations, conversations, emails, meetings and visits that have become one of the hallmarks of my tenure in the role.

This second Staff Engagement Survey progress report sets out a selection of the changes, innovations and good practice introduced by the University Executive Board, Faculties, Schools and Departments to improve our working lives.

I believe this work is beginning to have impact, but there remains much to do. Engagement between an organisation and its people needs to be a constant work in progress if it is to be truly genuine and long lasting.

I invite everyone in our community to study this document and check our progress as an institution. There are many local ideas in here that can be celebrated, adopted or adapted to improve the culture and ways of working in other areas of the University.

I would like to thank every colleague who has contributed to this essential endeavour to date, in providing feedback, in contributing ideas or by delivering reforms. My particular thanks are owed to the network of staff engagement champions who have worked tirelessly at every level of the University to collate feedback, develop action plans and introduce changes to improve staff engagement.

As we approach the next Staff Engagement Survey later in this autumn term, I ask colleagues to use that opportunity to tell us where improvements have made a difference to your working lives and, crucially, to continue to tell us where more work needs to be done.

*Shaaron West*

Vice-Chancellor

# Staff engagement at the University – not just a survey

## Institutional progress

At an institutional level, the Vice-Chancellor and University Executive Board (UEB) have focused on the Staff Covenant – significant measures to improve trust, transparency and engagement across the University; distribute leadership and involve more of our community in decision-making; as well as resolve specific concerns raised in colleagues' feedback.

To build greater trust, transparency and engagement across the University community, a new approach has been introduced to consult colleagues about changes at the institution and to act on their feedback. The most visible example has been the new University Strategy, which started by 'crowd-sourcing' the ideas of staff through the 21st Century University workshops, and invited their feedback at every stage of its development as 'Green' then 'White' papers. More than 17,000 ideas and opinions have been received to date. Similar approaches have been taken with other institutional priorities, including the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion delivery plan, academic promotions criteria, and the Staff Wellbeing plan.

Leadership and decision-making across the University has been better distributed to ensure key decisions and committees benefit from the variety of the expertise, ideas and views found across our community and from colleagues who represent our diversity in all its forms. The governance model has been reviewed to ensure that key decisions are devolved from UEB to Faculties, Schools or Professional Service departments. UEB sub committees have been restructured, staff members sit on them by open application, and a summary of discussions and decisions is published online for wider scrutiny.

Rebuilding trust and transparency also means being open and taking responsibility when things go wrong. In ensuring that Campus Solutions was delivered for the new academic year, the UEB also published in full an independent review of the lessons to be learned and apologised to the University community for the difficulties experienced at the start of term.

UEB members have also placed greater emphasis on their individual communications and engagement, ranging from large-scale staff briefings and events, to staff surgeries where colleagues can drop in to discuss individual issues, to newsletters, blogs, vlogs and occasionally, webinars to communicate and discuss changes and decisions across the University. A new Staff Room information hub for colleagues on our UK campuses has been introduced to improve the access and ease with which staff can get information they need.

To empower colleagues to help improve things at the University, UEB has also introduced 'Task & Finish Groups' to address specific problems. To date staff-led task groups have developed solutions for important issues as varied as tackling sexual misconduct in our staff and student communities, and succession planning for senior roles.

Detailed consultation with staff has also delivered reforms to longstanding concerns including replacing the PDPR process with separate appraisal and reward schemes – the Appraisal and Development Conversation and the Nottingham Reward Scheme. A new partnership with trades unions has also delivered a commitment to ensuring fair pay and conditions for hourly paid workers through a new set of Principles for Working with Teaching Affiliates.

Further work to engage our community and maintain this progress will continue this year, not least to elicit staff ideas in the new Getting in Shape programme to improve how we work as a community. As the Vice-Chancellor has said: "Culture changes do not happen overnight, and it takes some time before they are truly felt on the ground. I recognise that however many improvements we make, we can always do more, but I hope that the reforms to date are a step in the right direction."

## The engagement cycle

We are committed to making the University a great place to work for everyone, regardless of seniority, role or job family. Engagement is a continuous process, not a one-off exercise. It's a series of open and honest conversations with staff to define and put in place activities and processes which are focused on improving our working environment.

A network of more than 150 engagement champions, line managers and staff across the institution, continuously take part in engagement discussions and activities that vary widely across the range of job roles and working environments. It's important that everyone involved, whether they're working at a Department, Faculty or institutional level, stays connected and informed. Understanding what's required, sharing best practice and reporting on success are essential.

To help this process, we've established a cycle of activities which help provide clarity and structure for engagement across the University. Together, these elements form our engagement framework. Its objective is to ensure engagement is continually discussed and acted upon across the University.

### Listen

The Staff Engagement Survey runs every two years, and is open for a number of weeks to ensure everyone has the opportunity to participate. The next survey will take place in the 19/20 academic year. Teams have the option to run locally-run Pulse surveys every other year, and there are ongoing formal and informal feedback mechanisms available for people to share their thoughts and suggestions at a local and institutional level throughout the engagement cycle.

### Discuss

Survey results are released. Line managers and engagement champions discuss the responses with staff, to understand the factors that drive positive engagement, as well as identifying issues that are troubling colleagues.

### Act

Action plans are created and then implemented. You should expect to be involved in these activities and kept updated on progress.

### Reinforce

Communicate progress made on action plans, and share best practice across the University.

The University has a long-term commitment to this framework. We will run a Gallup survey once every two years, with locally-designed 'Pulse' surveys in the intervening years that will allow teams to ask their own engagement questions.

### The engagement champion network

The role of your local engagement champion is to be your voice in this process. There are engagement champions in all Faculties and Departments, and you can find out who your champion is on the staff engagement workspace pages.

Our engagement champions are all volunteers, and they've done a lot of great work on behalf of their colleagues over the past two years. We are grateful for their dedication and support in establishing the framework and preparing for the next survey.



“

The feedback we have had is that staff feel they are being listened to and are contributing to the direction we are now taking. ”

Professor Jeremy Gregory  
Pro-Vice-Chancellor



# Faculty, School and Department action plans

As well as the institutional action plan, every Faculty, School and Department was asked to develop a local action plan to respond to the specific staff engagement issues found there. This section highlights examples from the past 12 months contained in a broad selection of local action plans across the University.

## Faculty of Arts

**A programme of community-building events is supporting the Faculty of Arts' over-arching staff engagement objective to “work together more”.**

The Faculty, comprising three Schools (two with several departments), highlighted different issues, challenges and opportunities emerging from the 2017 staff engagement survey. In response, engagement activity has focused on “building the essence of a Faculty and providing opportunities for people to meet outside of their own academic Schools”, said Pro-Vice-Chancellor Professor Jeremy Gregory.

“Staff engagement is extremely important to us as a Faculty and, while the turnaround has been a slow process, we are making progress,” Professor Gregory explained. “Firstly, we did need to address issues which emerged around job descriptions, role profiles and the promotion system, but now we have sought to bring people together at a Faculty level. A range of events across the Faculty have supported the sense of community and health and wellbeing, culminating in a celebration in June during which 14 Faculty Citizenship Awards were made. Over 100 nominations were received – some entries were very moving on the contribution of colleagues, others were about unsung heroes, and staff could also nominate colleagues outside the Faculty who have made an impact. We were delighted to receive entries for staff based in professional services teams such as Libraries, Information Services, Student Services and External Relations.”

Deb Booter, Faculty Operations Director and one of the Faculty's four staff engagement champions, said the Faculty had involved colleagues in shaping the activities: “For example, we have had a half-day meeting followed by lunch, of course, for Administrative, Professional and Managerial (APM) staff to discuss key themes, brainstorming what these are, and then developing action plans going forward. We are now starting to deliver some ‘quick wins’ around these. The University's ‘hot topic’ groups which are giving space for Faculty and centrally-based APM staff to explore better ways of working have created a real buzz.”

Other community-building events include “yarn and a yarn” sessions and weekly coffee mornings organised by Cultures, Languages and Area Studies, community jigsaw led by English, and weekly APM health and welfare sessions for Humanities staff. “We are starting small, testing the water to see what colleagues like, and building from there,” Deb explained. Professor Gregory added: “The feedback we have had is that staff feel they are being listened to and are contributing to the direction we are now taking. Over the next 12 months we will look to develop our engagement activities further. Our investment in 11 posts in our Education and Student Experience team, who will act as the interface between academics and student services staff, is an important related step.”



## Faculty of Engineering

A series of initiatives introduced for staff in the past year have underlined the Faculty of Engineering's commitment to making "the University an even better place to work, acknowledging that our people are key to the delivery of our Faculty vision".

Professor Philip Shipway, Associate Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education and Student Experience, is co-ordinating staff engagement activities with a focus on improving staff induction, celebrating staff and student success, and promoting wellbeing activities. Referring to the last of these, Professor Shipway said: "Juice is the Faculty staff wellbeing programme which offers activities such as yoga, pilates and body balance as well as an online health hub that promotes healthy living through articles and information related to wellbeing. For the third year running, Juice has also offered staff the opportunity to take part in the Virgin Pulse Global Challenge, a 100 day team-based 'step-challenge' and holistic wellbeing programme which encourages adoption of healthy habits. Over 40 teams of seven people each are taking part this year. The fact that Juice and the Global Challenge are accessible to everyone across all job families has supported positive social connection, team-building and conversation."

Additionally, to recognise the wider contribution made by all staff, the Faculty held its first Engineering Staff Awards with the winners announced at the summer barbeque, attended by around 260 staff. "The response was amazing," Professor Shipway said. "We had over 60 nominations for individuals and groups, covering a wide range of activities – and all job families; it was inspiring to see so many positive things said about our colleagues. The winners were announced and presented with a certificate and a personalised trophy, which was designed and made in one of our workshops by two of our apprentice technicians. We are already looking forward to next year's event."

The Faculty is now formulating an engagement programme for the 2019-20 academic year supported by 30 staff engagement champions, who have been recruited to the role. "We want to create a greater sense of membership and belonging in the Faculty," Professor Shipway explained. "We know this is about small gains over time, but we are resolute in our commitment to making our Faculty an even better place to work."

“We know this is about small gains over time, but we are resolute in our commitment to making our Faculty an even better place to work.”

Professor Philip Shipway  
Associate Pro-Vice-Chancellor  
for Education and Student Experience







“  
The shadowing of senior  
leaders was an idea developed  
and implemented within the  
Faculty. It is now impacting on  
all job families, at all levels. ”

Sue Evans  
Faculty Committee Co-ordinator  
and Support Officer

## Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences

The Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences' Work, Health and Wellbeing group is driving activity around a number of strategic themes which have been identified following further analysis of the 2017 staff engagement survey results.

Initiatives around physical environment, communication processes, career development, teambuilding, and leadership and competency development are underway as part of an integrated approach to staff engagement. “For example, we developed a Faculty space strategy, which involved focus groups to help set priorities and solutions for estates and facilities,” explained Sue Evans, Faculty Committee Co-ordinator and Support Officer, and a newly-trained staff engagement champion. “Making the most of our physical environment is so important. We have moved into a new Faculty office where our team is located all together and this supports wider collaborative working. We have also made great strides around internal communication – from the introduction of ‘Lunch and Learn’ to regular newsletters – as well as career development activities and supporting young researchers and actions to foster engagement and wellbeing.”

Sue also highlighted two particular programmes which had gathered pace – role shadowing and mentoring. “The shadowing of senior leaders was an idea developed and implemented within the Faculty. It is now impacting on all job families, at all levels. The mentoring scheme was originally set up by the School of Medicine and, again, this has grown and moved into Faculty level. Whilst improving communication is the biggest thing we have done, these two initiatives are perhaps symptomatic of the increased willingness to share what we do in our academic schools for the benefit of wider Faculty development.”

Having volunteered to become a staff engagement champion in 2019, Sue has undertaken training to help her to get to grips with her role. New Faculty Operations Director Katherine Tallant will oversee the next phase of action planning. “We have got a good base to build from,” Sue said. “There are definitely more opportunities to contribute to the staff engagement agenda and I am looking forward to being part of it.”

## School of Chemistry

**The creation of a Staff Focus Group (SFG), to act as a “conduit” between the School of Chemistry’s senior leadership team and other members of staff, is starting to become an important vehicle for constructive developments in communication and engagement.**

The SFG – chaired by Emeritus Professor David Garner with 10 members of staff who represent each job family within the School of Chemistry – has met several times since its formation in November 2018. “Communication was the key challenge emerging from the 2017 staff engagement survey and the SFG was set up to facilitate better dialogue up to, and down from, management,” said Ben Pointer-Gleadhill, a staff engagement champion and member of the SFG. “Issues are fed into the group from all staff for discussion, advice and – if possible – recommendations for action, if deemed necessary.”

Following consideration by the SFG, the School of Chemistry has acted on several issues; for example: a single shared drive location of the minutes of committee meetings, including summaries of senior leadership team meetings; the introduction of a new procedure for the allocation of PhD students, given some concerns about decisions made previously; an improved system for updating staff email lists; and the replacement of separate academic and student/support staff coffee/tea rooms with a single coffee/tea room to encourage informal interactions between members of different job families.

Issues beyond the scope of the SFG have been raised directly with Professor Steve Howdle (Head of School). Also, the SFG had a constructive meeting with Professor Kevin Shakesheff (Pro Vice-Chancellor for the Faculty of Science) and Professor Howdle during which a wide range of topics of concern to all job families were discussed. Communication in Chemistry is supported by regular meetings led by Professor Howdle which inform all staff of the current state of prospective changes, and current developments in planning at the School, Faculty and University levels.

Also, a bi-weekly staff newsletter highlights recent achievements by staff and positive developments across the School.

“From our first meeting we have been able to ask difficult questions and have a robust two-way dialogue,” explained Ben, an Analyst Services Technician in the School. “The existence of the SFG has helped the School’s senior leadership team to understand the nature and extent of matters that concern staff; clarification, additional information and/or changes in policy or procedure may follow. The School regards staff engagement as a high priority and the progress made in recent months is indicative of that.”

Having established the SFG as a “facilitator of communication”, Ben and colleagues are now looking forward to becoming involved in further positive developments. The SFG will seek to address concerns identified and potential actions agreed at recent School away days, as well as consulting staff for their input on several matters, including the production of a Code of Conduct. “Now we have formed this group and established an operational procedure we will continue to make good progress,” Ben added.

## School of Health Sciences

**“In the past 12 months we have come to appreciate that our staff engagement activities were being developed by individual groups of staff, and the value of opening out engagement opportunities to all colleagues, as this helps us get to know and appreciate each other.”**

That is the perspective of Dr Sally Melling, Director of Staff Engagement, Health and Wellbeing, who has been heading up the School’s staff engagement initiatives for the past three years and will be retiring later in 2019.

Reflecting on the trajectory that the School has been on around staff engagement, one that will now be taken forward by fellow engagement champions working in formal and informal roles, Sally said the move to bring all staff engagement colleagues into one cross-School staff engagement group had proved a significant one. Significant because it has representation from Academic, Administrative, Professional and Managerial (APM) and Student Services staff, “creating a real sense of community”.

“We hope this decision will have an overall effect on staff engagement,” Sally said. “As well as regular breakfast and lunchtime events, monthly yoga sessions have been organised for staff which are bookable and have been very well received. There is also a monthly walk for staff around the University Lakeside which is an opportunity to relax and talk about things outside the working environment. A popular ‘sit and knit’ lunchtime event has now been expanded and renamed ‘Creative Corner’ – this is seen as a forum in which to relax and socialise. Most recently, we have produced decoration for the ‘Celebrating 100 Years of Learning Disability Nursing’ event, and colleagues have also suggested a book club for those interested in literature as well as conversation.”

The past year has also seen an increase in colleagues across the School coming together to raise funds for charitable causes – including donations to Nottingham Hospitals Charity and Stonebridge City Farm. In July, the School held its first ever full APM away day with an underlying theme of “getting to know each other”, a direct result of input from APM members of the staff engagement group who chose the venue and planned the day. The School is now looking to build on these successes in 2019-20.

“Generally, the approach we are taking now means that everybody can come to any activity – they are no longer purely for academics or APMs, and there is a growing recognition among colleagues that these are open to all,” Sally said. “We have more and more academics taking part now, and a recent Pulse survey showed that engagement across all staff had improved. However, with approximately 180 staff in the School of Health Sciences, there is a lot we still need to do. What we have got right is the ‘we can do this’ attitude. In the past, we were told that we cannot do certain things; now if we ask there is a desire to listen. We also have plans to do more Faculty-wide staff engagement activity.”



## Division of Cancer and Stem Cells

The relocation of the Division of Cancer and Stem Cells to the new five-storey Centre for Biomolecular Sciences Expansion (CBSE) building in the 2019-20 academic year has provided a “vehicle” for the team’s staff engagement activities.

In the lead up to the move, all staff have been given the opportunity to engage in planning and consultation. This has ranged from all-staff meetings to specific briefings for Academic, Administrative, Professional and Managerial (APM) and Technical staff, and the creation of sub-committees representing all job families which have responsibility for tasks such as shared procurement across the five floors. “Open communication and collaborative working were key themes which came out of the 2017 staff engagement survey, and indeed our own analysis and follow-on discussions, so the opportunity to use the relocation as a focus for engagement was one we wanted to capitalise on,” said Operations Manager Dave Shipley. “It has underpinned everything we have been doing and all job families are working closely together to input to life in the new building.”

The move to the CBSE (a new name is pending) means that staff who currently work in three geographical locations will be based together and, according to Dave, will “directly support the challenges we have experienced around communication and engagement”. Also significant is that the Division will be joined in the new building by colleagues from Pharmacy, Respiratory Medicine, Veterinary Medicine and Science and the Children’s Brain Tumour Research Centre – bringing opportunities for greater collaboration and multi-disciplinary research. Similarly, the development of a new Cancer Sciences undergraduate degree has provided a further platform for driving staff engagement.

“It is a really exciting time,” said Tessa Payne, who is supporting the launch of the Cancer Sciences degree and is also a staff engagement champion. “As a Division we are listening to colleagues and providing feedback on their ideas. We are also celebrating personal and collective achievement within all job families, for example through our bi-monthly newsletter and divisional seminars, and plan to do even more. Once we are settled in the new building we think we will really see the benefits as people have the opportunity to see more of each other. We anticipate there will be a greater sense of community, with colleagues able to talk to each other more easily and exchange ideas.”

Subtle changes are also having an impact. Communication routes have been updated to make sure divisional staff and students are identified and on appropriate distribution lists, the annual away day has been reinstated, and all team members are invited to events. “We are very positive about the trajectory we are now on,” Dave said. “That said, we know the whole is greater than the sum of its parts and are striving for a more open environment, better team-working and a consistent level of dialogue, engagement and feedback across all job families. The will is definitely there, and we have a plan.”

“

As a Division we are listening to colleagues and providing feedback on their ideas. We are also celebrating personal and collective achievement within all job families. ”

Tessa Payne  
Staff engagement champion





## Estates and Hospitality

**The Estates and Hospitality directorate have focused their staff engagement action planning and delivery on three key areas: improving communications, promoting wellbeing, and supporting colleagues' personal development.**

With a team of more than 1,000 staff working across all campuses on a 24/7 basis, Director of Development and Sustainability Andy Nolan admitted that effective communication can present a challenge but he is pleased with the progress being made. "A key finding from the 2017 staff engagement survey was how colleagues felt about their contribution to the University's mission – because we know what a great job they all do in terms of supporting our students, staff and visitors to the University and we know how significant the campuses are to attracting the very best students and staff," he said. "So we set up a staff engagement network – with representation across our diversity of services, and different grades and salaries – and explored issues coming out of the survey widely and deeply. Then we engaged with senior and middle managers to flesh out related action plans."

To overcome the communication challenge, Estates and Hospitality has introduced a number of different approaches. "People in our teams work around the clock so it is practically impossible to pull everyone into the same building, and not everyone has access to technology," Andy explained. "We have switched to 'listening' mode – and are listening to our staff and customers more actively. For example, we have introduced a bi-monthly conference call for our staff to dial-in and ask questions. Everyone has the opportunity to raise issues and concerns or make suggestions. We have varied the times of these calls to enable people across all our services to participate. Buy-in from managers has been particularly important to the process, and we have been active with our engagement champions."

Staff were brought together in person for an "incredibly successful" Christmas event at the East Midlands Conference Centre. A 'Town Hall-style' event and inaugural Estates Hospitality Employee Awards, which had over 60 submissions, was also held in July. Further social events are planned for the 2019-20 academic year. "Over the next 12 to 18 months we want to embed and improve two-way communication between staff," Andy said. "Whilst we have already made good progress, measured by responses to Pulse surveys and Strategy 2020, this is about driving a culture change, including a positive approach on how to give and receive feedback to facilitate honest conversations."

The wellbeing of staff is an important priority and a day was held in July offering all staff the opportunity to engage in physical and mental wellbeing talks and activities. There has been continued work on personal development and further investment in training and development, a revamp of the directorate's recruitment and induction processes, and engagement with professional development colleagues and the Leadership and Management Academy.

Andy Sweeney, Director of Operations, added: "We have learned that there is lots of passion, enthusiasm, energy and commitment to the University amongst our staff and we want to support that and all our staff."

“We have learned that there is lots of passion, enthusiasm, energy and commitment to the University amongst our staff and we want to support that and all our staff.”

**Andy Sweeney**  
Director of Operations





# Welcome Event for New Staff



“We can see that we are making progress and that staff engagement is improving, not just from surveys but also in talking to colleagues.”

Andrew Wells  
Finance Assistant

## Finance

Following the 2017 staff engagement survey and analysis of results, a group of ‘community champions’ was set up to look after both staff engagement and teamworking activities across financial management and financial control.

A relatively new member of the team is Andrew Wells, who joined the University as Finance Assistant in October 2018. Within a month of taking up his new position, Andrew volunteered to join the community champions, of which there are now 15 across the department. “I have really enjoyed the role and had the opportunity to attend both local staff engagement champion meetings as well as those in the wider University,” he said. “The main focus of my role is managing and encouraging participation in the Pulse surveys in my area, but also taking the results back to my office and disseminating them as well as discussing them at community champions meetings. I also have the opportunity to take ideas back to the wider community champions group. Ultimately our objective is to improve staff engagement and how people feel about their work, whether that is around career progression, access to equipment and facilities, available support or something else.”

The Pulse surveys have proved enlightening for Finance, not just for gauging how people are feeling, but for “signposting staff to where they can find advice on training and support across the University”. Andrew revealed: “Because our community champions cover Finance and Estates, and Estates has many staff who are not computer-based, we adapt our approach and our surveys go out on paper to those staff. We can see that we are making progress and that staff engagement is improving, not just from surveys but also in talking to colleagues. There is an improvement cycle here – analysing results, formulating what we plan to do in response, looking at what happened, and asking for feedback.”

Away from the surveys, the community champions co-ordinated a new-look Finance department away day which included a workshop for better working together, focusing teams on how to live the “Finance vision” in their everyday working environment, and a variety of fun activities. “This worked really well as a health and wellbeing exercise,” Andrew explained. “Colleagues had the opportunity to choose activities to try including pottery painting, yoga, climbing, football, aromatherapy and massaging as a small part of the overall day. It was the perfect environment to mix with other members of the department, or simply to grab some relaxation time. We then finished the away day by coming together for a team quiz.”

Separately, in the past 12 months, a staff engagement session on how Finance is responding to Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity issues was held and a number of training courses were developed to help staff with financial literacy, both of which drew on the expertise and insight of the departments’ community champions.





## Human Resources

**A greater emphasis on staff retention and development has led to a number of engagement opportunities for Human Resources in the last year.**

“As one of the key priority areas of our thematic action plan, the department has responded to feedback from colleagues seeking support with career development and progression, to provide a number of short careers-focused sessions and to raise awareness of formal and informal training,” said Pam Tallis, Recruitment Specialist – Senior Appointments, and staff engagement champion. “This is benefitting both Human Resources staff directly in their own aspirations but also supporting them in conversations with others across the University.”

The department has enlisted the support of a range of colleagues across the team to share their experience and expertise through sessions such as career planning, CV writing, interview skills, project management skills, coaching and mentoring and professional qualification routes. Pam revealed: “We have found that uptake in programmes run by the Leadership and Management Academy, such as leadership courses and coaching and mentoring qualifications, has increased as a result of greater awareness and clarity of the opportunities, and support and encouragement from managers. We have also introduced apprenticeship entry-level roles within the teams, bringing in apprentices to do their CIPD qualification and start their journey on a HR career pathway.”

Better communication remains an underlying priority for Human Resources and a range of supporting initiatives have been introduced. “To help colleagues feel more connected and improve awareness of what each team does, we set up a coffee conversations experiment,” Pam said. “This involved creating opportunities for colleagues to break out from their daily work activities and meet with somebody they do not work directly with. The aim is to build relationships across the department, support wellbeing and create a greater sense of and broader communication. We are also continuing with local team social activities such as pizza lunches and national sweepstakes, and broader communication such as a suggestion box, TV screen, team news emails, office posters, briefing rooms and team meetings. More formal recognition is given to celebrating team performances and successes in team and department meetings, and we have created manager and employee guidance for effective one-to-one’s for a more consistent approach across the department.”

Pam added that “if there is one thing we have done differently that has had a positive impact across the whole department, it is to change our approach to departmental meetings”, explaining how these are now less formal and allow for wider participation and information-sharing: “We have different colleagues leading these meetings and everyone gets floor space. They are now a team effort, no matter what job level you are at, and as a result I think colleagues are getting more value from these meetings. Similarly, our away days are better balanced with business and fun-focused activities for colleagues to connect with one another. Going forward, there will be even more emphasis on greater team involvement in staff engagement events and making the agenda more organic.”



## Information Services

**A ‘People Board’ of volunteers, established to work alongside senior management to “improve ways of working and kick-start new people-focused initiatives”, is leading the way on staff engagement activities in Information Services.**

Sharon Caine, Acting Head of the Chief Digital Officer (CDO) team and an engagement champion since 2017, explained how the People Board had raised the profile of this agenda within the department. “Our new senior management team joined the University almost two years ago and have tried to be more transparent regarding expectations and departmental objectives, which are clearly shared and cascaded across teams – ensuring staff are aware of departmental priorities and how their role contributes to them,” she said. “The People Board has given our staff engagement programme real momentum, directly facilitated change, and will also help to shape our future priorities which will likely focus upon developing high-performing teams and working in a more agile way.”

In the past 12 months, Information Services has had a huge push on training and development activities to increase the skillsets of the team and raise morale; investing significantly in formal training, conference attendance and subscriptions as part of a “promoting a culture of inclusivity and attendance” strategy. “We have tried to ensure that the budget was distributed fairly, and focused upon the key skills and capabilities our teams requested,” Sharon said. “We are also committed to a regular programme of engagement and communication events, including six-weekly staff meetings, fortnightly newsletters about our teams and what makes them tick, monthly team briefings and regular social activities. It has been our aim to be open and transparent and invite feedback at all times.”

Sharon highlighted a range of other staff engagement programmes that had already been put in place, but pinpointed the ‘high five’ initiative of peer reward as one she was proud of. She said: “This is a recognition scheme that was started by Finance – we used our People Board to champion the initiative and it is growing. We are expanding this by using a Microsoft app called ‘Praise’ to further thank our colleagues and have produced a series of bespoke ‘thank you’ cards with IT themes – all aimed at recognising excellent work undertaken within the department. We have improved our wellbeing programme, offering new opportunities such as team climbing events as well as our usual barbeques and staff forums. We are also aiming to widen the diversity of our team by developing an apprenticeship programme for new staff and encouraging existing staff to take up in-house apprenticeship opportunities.”

The recently announced intention to deliver a new IT Operating Model for the University was informed by extensive engagement with IS staff through meetings, workshops, surveys and briefing sessions. Engagement, transparency and support for staff will continue to be essential while the model is shaped across the next 12 months. IS staff at all levels will continue to be involved in its final design, as well as the wider University community, using the Getting in Shape programme to inform the systems and requirements for the new model.

## Libraries

**The implementation of a new library management system as part of a two-year Integrated Scholarly Information (ISI) project has provided a timely platform for the department’s staff engagement initiatives over the past 12 months.**

ISI, part of the Digital Learning workstream within the University’s Digital Futures programme, will deliver a personalised, reliable student learning experience to support self-directed learning, integrated online resources, and seamless user journey between services and applications. This is core to Strategy 2020, the Digital Strategy and the Digital Learning Strategy which seek to transform the University’s learning and teaching environment by making a step-change in its facilities, technologies and support of learning. It also responds to present and future expectations of digitally-savvy students and users of University of Nottingham Libraries.

Roz Kelly, Executive Co-ordinator and staff engagement champion, said the introduction of the new tri-campus library management system had meant a “fundamental change to ways of working”. She explained: “This is a large-scale and complex project, impacting on many areas across the department, which is transforming the way we deliver our activity and provide access to information, making sure everything is joined up. Whilst we needed to update our library management system, we took the strategic decision to make ISI a focus of our wider staff engagement action plan. Given our objectives are to bring staff together, reduce silo working, and connect the senior management team and wider staff body, it made perfect sense to bring the two together.”

With a new Business Change Manager, Jackie Lowe, in post and a firm commitment to this approach, Roz explained that the “level of meaningful involvement for staff at all levels was unprecedented in our department”. This included a comprehensive communications plan; all-staff launch event; roadshows; drop-in sessions; newsletters, blogs and email updates; and a Sharepoint site to provide a single point of information. “Colleagues have been involved in everything from testing and user experience to process mapping,” Roz said. “We also have two staff on the ISI project board which is an excellent professional development opportunity for them, and the board adds value in that colleagues are able to question in a way that others could not. At the launch event our ‘Pledges to Project’ initiative gave staff the opportunity to get directly involved, our change champions network provides an ear to the ground for the project team and a conduit for staff, and we have surveyed staff on how happy and comfortable they are in using the new system.”

To date, the £1.8 million project has involved around 175 Libraries’ staff directly. The next strands are self-service and security, digital content and discovery, digital preservation and archiving, and reading lists; providing further opportunities for the eight staff engagement champions within the department. “We want to create a more open environment and demonstrate that feedback is being listened to, whilst also managing expectations about what is possible,” Roz said. “Ultimately our objective is to help staff better understand what is going on in the department and the wider University.”



“We have a really good community of practice and the University is taking more of a people focus than it has in my 10 years here.”

Ben Coupland  
Senior Finance Programme Manager

## Planning, Performance and Strategic Change

**Planning, Performance and Strategic Change – a newly-created department comprising of the former Strategy, Planning and Performance and Strategic Change Unit teams – is revisiting its over-arching approach to staff engagement to inform its future plans as one department.**

A Pulse survey was run to ask again some of the questions from the 2017 staff engagement survey, assessing progress and variability across the department, as well as gathering feedback on particular themes. There was a 72% response rate to the May 2019 survey and a large number of free text comments across the categories were “very informative and will be very helpful in formation of the new department”.

“Previously the two separate functions developed and implemented staff engagement action plans, including reviews of meeting structures and communication within the teams,” said Ben Coupland, Senior Finance Programme Manager and one of two staff engagement champions in the department. “This latest survey covered positive feedback on ways of working, developing a shared vision aligned to the new University strategy, improving communications, practical steps around space, equipment and software, and supporting our people to collaborate as we form Planning, Performance and Strategic Change into a new team.”

Seeking to build on the positive feedback that colleagues gave in the 2017 survey on the purpose of their role and their general level of satisfaction in working for the University, the engagement champions are sharing approaches and best practice with the Finance and Infrastructure directorate, which is prioritising staff engagement across a much larger team. “We want to create a culture of open communication and collaboration across the team,” Ben explained. “There is some practical stuff on co-location too, but all this can contribute to our next step of creating a team vision, values and priorities. As part of this, we aim to make sure colleagues have a voice and that there is effective co-creation of our strategy and action plan. Working groups are being set up to develop departmental vision, strategy and values, and the survey feedback will be a really valuable input.”

Ben said he was personally benefitting from being plugged into a wider network of engagement champions across the University. He added: “We have a really good community of practice and the University is taking more of a people focus than it has in my 10 years here. The Planning, Performance and Strategic Change department has a key role in contributing to the delivery of the new University strategy, and ensuring our teams are supported and engaged will be key to the institution’s development.”



## Research and Innovation

**“Bringing teams together”, and a related push on more effective communication across the department, has led to Research and Innovation delivering a number of practical improvements and changes to support staff engagement.**

Ben Sumner, Interim Director of Research and Innovation, said that he and colleagues across the department had taken a “management team approach” to tackling the engagement agenda. “The 2017 staff engagement survey showed that people were not necessarily clear on their roles, some colleagues did not feel valued or recognised, and there were issues with access to equipment and other facilities,” he explained. “What we wanted to do was adopt a consistent approach in response across all of our workstreams – and with a different senior management team in place we have addressed some of the ‘softer’ issues, as indicated in a Pulse survey we undertook. This has particularly involved making time to support each other, which also marks a cultural change in our department.”

Communication has improved with the introduction of an Office 365 team communication site to share information. Weekly staff briefings and networking sessions take place, as do all-staff away days twice a year. Personal training and development is encouraged throughout the teams, including opportunities with staff apprenticeships and the Leadership and Management Academy, and a new staff induction programme has been rolled out along with job titles now being aligned within the teams. A departmental social group is being formed, which will promote both external and internal group events, along with a wellbeing programme for the 2019-20 academic year. This will build on the success of the formation of a fundraising team to encourage events throughout the year which raise funds for local charities. All these activities are a step-change for Research and Innovation.

“Going forward, staff communication and development will remain at the forefront of our engagement strategy,” Ben said. “With communication, we want colleagues to have a feel for what is going on, through multiple channels – digitally and face-to-face – so they are told what is happening rather than finding out from elsewhere. On development, we want more staff to get involved with formal and informal training. We have already expanded our teams with an increase in newly-recruited staff and the launch of the University’s new Knowledge Exchange and Impact Strategy in the 2019-20 academic year will create further exciting development opportunities for colleagues outside their existing roles.”

As well as the cultural shift taking place in Research and Innovation, Ben pointed to a forthcoming “environmental change” that would also potentially support engagement. “We are currently implementing agile and flexible working to encourage collaborative working, upgrading all PCs to laptops, and are in the process of an office refit which will include changing and shower facilities. Overall, we have moved to a position where managers are more supportive and engaging with staff – we are getting the culture right, but there is a lot more to be done around the supporting environment.”

## Student Services

**Teamworking, collaboration and communication continue to be the drivers of staff engagement activities in Student Services.**

Ginny Birney, Senior Continual Improvement Manager – People, said that departmental and team-level activities were designed to “continue to be relevant and continue to support people” at a time when significant operational changes were still underway. “We recognised that we needed to make time and space for colleagues to explore things they want to learn for themselves, so have stepped up our work on staff wellbeing over the past year,” she said.

“A wellbeing programme pilot run for the department by the Continual Improvement team during March and April included sessions on Tai Chi, yoga, creative writing, campus walks and personal and professional development, and was incredibly well received. Given staff are scattered all over our campuses we learned that we need to offer sessions at different locations, and at different times in the day, but we have approval to run a longer-term programme which is currently being designed.”

Other key staff engagement activities in Student Services in the past 12 months have included: re-boot of induction and welcome event for new staff; support and facilitation for team-level away days; winter and summer whole department team-building and networking events and party; re-launch of celebratory newsletter; support for fundraising initiatives; and mental health first aid training. “The events we have run are more networking-focused and a change in format has enabled more people to come,” Ginny said. “The welcome event stands out as we worked with the Leadership and Management Academy on their ‘Service Animal’ TMI programme. Now new starters can see what ‘animal’ they are, and therefore what their working style is, aiding their integration within the department.”

Meanwhile, Student Services’ engagement champion network is growing with a further eight people from different teams recruited to further boost activity. “What we are seeing is a very positive culture shift within the department – increasing our ability to openly communicate, speaking up (what is working well or not working well) and being seen to do something about it,” Ginny explained. “We are a huge department, quite fragmented in terms of geography, so a priority is getting to know each other better. We are developing Communities of Practice at a work level and now we are seeing each other in a non-work way.”

Whilst Pulse survey results point to an improvement in staff engagement overall, Ginny is focussing activity around the ‘having the opportunity to learn and grow’, ‘having someone talking to staff about their progress’, and ‘feeling the University’s mission makes their job important’ survey questions. “One initiative we have introduced is a development programme for Service Delivery Managers,” she said. “We are sure that great management is a key ingredient in effective staff engagement. We recognise that our managers have complex roles and that we need to invest in their development. We are especially looking at skills such as leadership, empowerment, stakeholder management, and change management.”





University of  
**Nottingham**

UK | CHINA | MALAYSIA

For further information on staff engagement,  
please contact

 [staffengagementsurvey@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:staffengagementsurvey@nottingham.ac.uk)