

OXFORD BROOKES UNIVERSITY

STAFF EXPERIENCE AND ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY 2017-2021

1/ Introduction:

In 2016, the Senior Management Team (now Vice Chancellor's Group - VCG) at Oxford Brookes University (OBU) made the strategic decision to heighten the profile and importance of the staff experience to a level commensurate with that of the student experience, underpinned by a common set of guiding principles – a culture of generosity of spirit, confidence, connectedness and enterprising creativity. A member of VCG was consequently appointed Pro Vice-Chancellor for Staff Experience. Working closely with the Director of Human Resources (HR), the PV-C has been given the remit to ensure that OBU provides the best possible working environment for colleagues and more specifically, she has been tasked with improving staff wellbeing, creating a sense of community in the workplace and encouraging discussion and open communication amongst colleagues at all levels of the institution.

Although several initiatives to meet this remit have already been initiated, the following strategy sets out a clear set of objectives and related actions to enhance the staff experience. This strategy has been derived after substantial consultation with colleagues from across the University and links to other key institutional plans and initiatives (e.g. HR Strategy, institutional Athena SWAN Action Plan, Social Responsibility Framework, Race Equality Strategy and Action Plan, Internal Communications Plan etc.). Nevertheless, it should be noted that by necessity, the strategy will evolve and flex with the changing needs of colleagues and the University, and through ongoing consultation.

2/ Objectives of the Strategy:

1. To develop a culture across the University that values the staff experience and takes it into account in all we do.
2. To improve the staff experience by engaging and consulting with colleagues on all campuses.
3. To ensure that all colleagues across the institution feel valued and that their efforts are appropriately recognised and appreciated.
4. To work together with colleagues to build a working environment which is positive, supportive and nurturing.
5. To maintain and enhance our ongoing commitment to equality, inclusion and diversity across the University as it relates to the staff experience.

Rationale for Objectives.

2.1 To develop a culture across the University that values the staff experience and takes it into account in all that we do.

- OBU prides itself in having an excellent student experience and initiatives relating to maintaining and further enhancing this strategic objective are a high priority for the institution. However, we only achieve what we do through our staff and as colleagues suggested to the Vice Chancellor at a Campus Briefing, the staff experience needs to be an equally high priority for the University.
- The HR Strategy recognises that to achieve our institutional plans and ambitions we need a skilled and engaged workforce. The HR Strategy aspires to make Oxford Brookes to be a great place to work with employees who are committed to university objectives and are valued for their contribution.

2.2 To improve the staff experience by engaging and consulting with colleagues on all campuses.

- In the 2014 Staff Survey and the 2016 Staff Experience Survey, colleagues said they would welcome more opportunities for open dialogue with senior management on key issues that were important to the sector and important to them.
- Discussions were held with colleagues across the University in September and October 2016 about their preferences regarding methods of cross-University communication.
- There is a need to make sure that consultations and communications engage with seldom-heard colleagues.

2.3 To ensure that all colleagues across the institution feel valued and that their efforts are appropriately recognised and appreciated.

- OBU fully recognises that our staff and students lie at the heart of the institution and our success is down to their hard work and dedication. The University already offers a range of benefits to colleagues who work at the institution, but discussion at the newly formed Staff Experience Steering Group (SESG) made it plain that not all colleagues are aware of these.
- Feedback from both the 2014 Staff Survey and the 2016 Staff Experience Survey suggested that workload planning and workload issues more generally led to some colleagues feeling stressed and, at times, under-valued by the institution.
- The 2014 Staff Survey identified that OBU could do more to improve awareness of existing forms of recognition and how to achieve these, and also encouraged the introduction of new forms of recognition.

2.4 To work together with colleagues to build a working environment which is positive, supportive and nurturing.

- Wellbeing is fundamental to a positive staff experience.
- In the 2016 Staff Experience Survey, colleagues asked the institution to facilitate more cross-campus and cross-University social events to enable colleagues to foster more of an institutional identity and culture. In addition, some colleagues also said they would welcome more information on how best to engage with volunteering opportunities, particularly in relation to the local community.
- The Staff Experience Group collated a list of issues (largely related to bureaucracy and IT) which cause some frustration and stress to colleagues and could potentially be easily remedied thereby improving the wellbeing of colleagues.
- The Social Responsibility Framework encourages all staff to look after their health and wellbeing and for Oxford Brookes to support this as being central to the staff experience. The approach to have a staff specific Feel Good Festival in 2017, significantly enhanced engagement and attendance of the event.

- In the 2016 Staff Experience Survey, professional services colleagues, in particular, said they would welcome consideration of a broader range of career development opportunities including shadowing, secondments, etc.
- Feedback from colleagues who had recently joined the University expressed a preference that opportunities for staff development should be a more explicit element of the staff induction process.

2.5 To maintain and enhance our ongoing commitment to equality, inclusion and diversity across the University as it relates to the staff experience.

- In the 2016 Staff Experience Survey, colleagues welcomed the University's commitment to equality, inclusion and diversity initiatives such as LGBT History Month and Black History Month and wanted the institution to do more to celebrate and promote diversity.
- In the Race Equality Charter Mark Survey carried out in 2015, BME and international colleagues raised a range of issues which suggested that OBU could do more to improve inclusivity in the working environment.
- In the institutional Athena SWAN submission, the Race Equality Charter Mark Survey carried out in 2015 and from the 2014 Staff Survey, data and commentary from colleagues suggested that there needed to be increased awareness of the opportunities for promotion and advancement across the institution.

3/ Delivering and Monitoring the strategy:

All Faculties and Directorates across the University (alongside the departments and services therein) will be responsible for ensuring colleagues actively engage with this strategy and that annual planning and review processes take account of it so that current and future activities align accordingly. Advice and guidance about implementing the strategy will be provided by the Pro Vice-Chancellor Staff Experience, HR, OCSLD, Communications (Corporate Affairs), Wellbeing and members of Staff Experience Steering Group (SESG) and monitoring will be done by SESG, with an annual progress report presented to Executive Board at the end of each academic year.

4/ Consultation:

A significant amount of consultation with colleagues has already gone into the creation and formulation of this strategy. Nevertheless, the strategy will go through the normal formal governance structure procedures for consultation on draft policy documents beginning with the Senior Management Team in May 2017. Wider consultation will be conducted in parallel with this process, initially through an article in *Onstream*, but also via discussion amongst the Staff Experience Steering Group, the Joint Staff Committee and other relevant and appropriate groups across the University, as well as through direct discussion with colleagues at the Staff Open Forum meetings convened in September 2017. The consultation period will conclude after these meetings with a final document produced and ready to be implemented from the start of the new academic year 2017/18.

AMK and AC 08/05/2017

AMK updated 06/09/2018