

2012 occupational stress survey – the Change and Role stressors in HE

The Change stressor measures the respondent's level of stress, or well-being, relating to their access to information and consultation about change at work.

The Role stressor measures the respondent's level of stress, or well-being, relating to their clarity of understanding about their duties and responsibilities at work, and their understanding of how their work fits into the overall aim of the organisation.

Headlines – Change stressor results for higher education

- The lowest level of well-being, or highest level of stress, on the Change stressor – which relates to employees' level of access to information and consultation about change at work - at a UK HEI in the 2012 UCU occupational stress survey was 1.88, on a scale where 1=lowest well-being and 5=highest well-being.
- The highest level of well-being, or lowest level of stress, at a HEI was 2.89.
- The average level of well-being on the Change stressor of UCU members in HE in the 2012 UCU occupational stress survey was 2.39, which was lower than the average well-being score of UCU members in HE in 2008, of 2.54. So stress levels for UCU members in higher education relating to Change have become worse in the last four years.
- The average level of well-being on the Change stressor in the British working population, as measured by the Health and Safety Executive's 2008 study *Psychosocial Working Conditions in Britain*, was 3.52.
- In other words, UCU members at UK HEIs on average showed lower well-being – or higher stress - on the Change stressor than the British working population as a whole.

Headlines – Role stressor results for higher education

- The lowest level of well-being, or highest level of stress, on the Role stressor – which relates to employees' clarity of understanding about their duties and responsibilities at work - at a UK HEI in the 2012 UCU occupational stress survey was 3.32, on a scale where 1=lowest well-being and 5=highest well-being.
- The highest level of well-being, or lowest level of stress, at a HEI was 3.88.
- The average level of well-being on the Role stressor of UCU members in HE in the 2012 UCU occupational stress survey was 3.66, which was lower than the average well-being score of UCU members in HE in 2008, of 3.72. So stress levels for UCU members in higher education relating to Role have risen in the last four years.

- The average level of well-being on the Role stressor in the British working population, as measured by the Health and Safety Executive's 2008 study *Psychosocial Working Conditions in Britain*, was 4.71.
- In other words, UCU members at UK HEIs on average showed lower well-being – or higher stress - on the Role stressor than the British working population as a whole.

The data

The data in this survey (conducted 16 April – 4 May 2012) are based on responses by UCU members to the Health and Safety Executive's questionnaire, the Management Standards Indicator Tool. The MSIT seeks to measure the level of well-being of respondents at work on the basis of their response to statements in the questionnaire.

The MSIT contains 35 statements, which are grouped under seven 'stressors': Demands (for which there are eight statements in the MSIT), Control (6 MSIT statements), Managerial Support (5 MSIT statements), Peer Support (4 MSIT statements), Relationships (4 MSIT statements), Role (5 MSIT statements) and Change (3 MSIT statements). There are five potential responses to each statement, ranging from 'Never' through to 'Always', or from 'Strongly disagree' through to 'Strongly agree'. For example, responses to the statement, 'I can decide when to take a break', under the Control stressor, are given a numerical value, ranging from 1 for 'Never', through to 5 for 'Always'.

An individual respondent's overall score for each stressor is calculated, based on the mean average of that individual's responses to each of the statements under a particular stressor, ranging from 1, for lowest well-being, to 5, for highest well-being.

To protect respondents' anonymity and promote data quality, in reporting results from UCU's 2012 occupational stress survey, UCU has been guided by the methodology of the UK's Higher Education Statistics Agency, that:

- Percentages based on 52 or fewer individuals must be suppressed
- Averages based on 7 or fewer individuals must be suppressed

The stress survey data make use of percentages and average data. Percentages are given when reporting the responses to a single item in the questionnaire. For example, in the higher education sample, 17.6% of respondents to the statement 'Different groups at work demand things from me that are hard to combine', relating to the Demands stressor, responded 'Always', 36.7% said 'Often', and so on.

In calculating the results for a given stressor, in this example the Demands stressor, a numerical value (for example, 1 for 'Never' through to 5 for 'Always', or vice-versa, and 1 for 'Strongly disagree' through to 5 for 'Strongly agree', or vice-versa) is given to each response by an individual – for example, a response of 'Never' to the statement 'Different groups at work demand things from me that are hard to combine', relating to the Demands stressor, would be given a score of 5. The average of an individual's response scores to the questions relating to a particular stressor is then calculated. Then the average of the average responses for respondents from a particular college or university is calculated, to give the stressor value for all respondents from a particular college or university.

Although, in the HESA methodology, averages based on 7 or fewer individuals should be suppressed, in higher education, UCU has not published averages for a particular higher education institution (HEI) based on 52 or fewer individuals, in the interests of robust data. Where any individual's response to one or more of the survey questions relating to a stressor is missing, then the average stressor for that individual is not calculated.

The Change stressor – higher education

The Change stressor measures the respondent's level of stress, or well-being, relating to their access to information and consultation about change at work, and includes the opportunity to question managers and be consulted about change, and being clear about how changes will affect them.

There was a total of 14,546 respondents to the UCU survey working in higher education who provided responses about change at work. Of those respondents in HE who provided information about their job, 76.3% were academics (including teaching-only, research-only and teaching-and-research) and 23.7% were academic-related (including managers, administrators, librarians and computer staff).

The HEIs are grouped by score as follows:

Group A: UCU survey well-being highest 20 / stress level lowest 20

Group B: UCU survey average or above average well-being / average or below average stress level

Group C: Below UCU survey average well-being / above average stress level

Group D: UCU survey well-being lowest 20 / stress level highest 20

Stressor score range: 1.00 = lowest well-being / highest stress, 5.00 = highest well-being / lowest stress.

Change stressor range, UCU 2012 survey: HEI highest score 2.89; lowest score 1.88. Change: 2012 UCU HE respondents' mean average: 2.39; 2008 UCU HE respondents' mean average 2.54. Health and Safety Executive 2008 mean average for British working population ¹: 3.52.

The Top and/or Bottom 20 may include more than 20 HEIs where there is a tied position.

Change – the statements

- **I have sufficient opportunities to question managers about change at work**
- **Staff are always consulted about change at work.**
- **When changes are made at work, I am clear about how they will work out in practice.**

¹ HSE (2008) Psychosocial Working Conditions in Britain in 2008, pp 26-27. The 'not target' group.

CHANGE STRESSOR – Higher Education	
<p>No HEI scores for the Change stressor out of a total of 94 HEIs were above the HSE 2008 average of 3.52.</p> <p>UCU HE 2012 average = 2.388 (N=14,546)</p> <p>1.00 = lowest well-being (or highest stress), 5.00 = highest well-being (or lowest stress). Within each group, HEIs are ranked alphabetically.</p> <p>N = number of respondents. Averages are not shown where there were fewer than 53 respondents at a HEI.</p>	N
Group A: UCU survey well-being highest 20 / stress level lowest 20 (Range of averages 2.597 to 2.885)	
Bangor University	66
Brighton, The University of	99
Cambridge, The University of	147
Canterbury Christ Church University	73
Durham, University of	161
Edinburgh, The University of	282
Essex, The University of	101
Goldsmiths College	58
Imperial College of Science, Technology and Medicine	85
Institute of Education	68
Leeds, The University of	413
Leicester, The University of	166
London School of Economics and Political Science	144
London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine	65
Newcastle-upon-Tyne, The University of	249
Oxford, The University of	223
Sheffield, The University of	221
Strathclyde, The University of	166
York St John University	66
York, The University of	149
Group B: UCU survey average or above average well-being / average or below average stress level (range of averages: 2.395 to 2.583)	
Aberdeen, The University of	149
Aberystwyth University	136
Aston University	54
Bristol, The University of	182
Cardiff University	173
Cranfield University	89
Dundee, The University of	119
Heriot-Watt University	85
Hertfordshire, University of	81
Keele, The University of	78
Kent, The University of	186
King's College London	167
Lancaster, The University of	141
Liverpool, The University of	278

CHANGE STRESSOR – Higher Education	
No HEI scores for the Change stressor out of a total of 94 HEIs were above the HSE 2008 average of 3.52.	
UCU HE 2012 average = 2.388 (N=14,546)	
1.00 = lowest well-being (or highest stress), 5.00 = highest well-being (or lowest stress). Within each group, HEIs are ranked alphabetically.	
N = number of respondents. Averages are not shown where there were fewer than 53 respondents at a HEI.	
Loughborough University	159
Manchester, The University of	464
Nottingham, The University of	218
Open University	365
Portsmouth, The University of	110
Queen Mary and Westfield College	141
Reading, The University of	116
Sheffield Hallam University	154
University College London	273
Group C: Below UCU survey average well-being / above average stress level (range of averages: 2.167 to 2.380)	
Bath, The University of	88
Birkbeck College	78
Birmingham City University	88
Bournemouth University	94
Bradford, The University of	110
Brunel University	103
City University	109
Cumbria, University of	67
De Montfort University	126
Derby, University of	82
East Anglia, The University of	109
Greenwich, The University of	88
Hull, The University of	90
Kingston University	83
Lincoln, The University of	64
London South Bank University	95
Northampton, The University of	82
Northumbria at Newcastle, The University of	123
Plymouth, The University of	149
Queen's University of Belfast	237
Royal Holloway and Bedford New College	98
Southampton, The University of	200
St Andrews, The University of	78
Sunderland, The University of	75
Surrey, The University of	102
Sussex, The University of	175
Swansea University	118

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Teesside, The University of	86
Warwick, The University of	220
Westminster, The University of	80
Wolverhampton, The University of	129
Group D: UCU survey well-being lowest 20 / stress level highest 20 (range of averages: 1.878 to 2.160)	
Anglia Ruskin University	75
Birmingham, The University of	210
Central Lancashire, The University of	138
Coventry University	57
East London, The University of	90
Exeter, The University of	167
Glamorgan, University of	82
Glasgow, The University of	231
Leeds Metropolitan University	147
Liverpool John Moores University	129
London Metropolitan University	126
Manchester Metropolitan University	143
Nottingham Trent University	202
Oxford Brookes University	68
Salford, The University of	190
Staffordshire University	66
Stirling, The University of	86
Ulster, University of	170
University of the Arts, London	102
University of the West England, Bristol	119

Source: UCU 2012 occupational stress survey

Data from the following HEIs were not used in this report relating to Change because there were 52 or fewer respondents from them:

HEI	Number of respondents
School of Oriental and African Studies	52
Glyndwr University	49
Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh	49
Huddersfield, The University of	48
Roehampton University	48
Bedfordshire, University of	47
Glasgow Caledonian University	47
Middlesex University	47
Buckinghamshire New University	45
Gloucestershire, University of	45
University for the Creative Arts	45
Abertay Dundee, University of	43
Bolton, The University of	43
Edge Hill University	43
Southampton Solent University	43
Chester, University of	42
Worcester, The University of	40
Leeds Trinity University College	38
University of Wales Institute, Cardiff	37
Liverpool Hope University	36
University Campus Suffolk	32
Bath Spa University	29
University of West London	28
Newman University College	26
Writtle College	25
University College Falmouth	24
University of London (Institutes and activities)	24
Wales, Newport, The University of	24
Winchester, The University of	23
Harper Adams University College	21
Swansea Metropolitan University	20
Chichester, The University of	19
Robert Gordon University	19
University College Birmingham	19
University College Plymouth St Mark and St John	18
Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts	16
Wales (central functions), The University of	16
Arts University College at Bournemouth	13
Central School of Speech and Drama	13
Bishop Grosseteste University College Lincoln	12
Glasgow School of Art	11
St Mary's University College, Twickenham	11
Rose Bruford College	10
St George's Hospital Medical School	10
Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance	10
Royal Veterinary College	9

St Mary's University College	9
Wales, Lampeter, The University of	9
UHI Millennium Institute	8
Royal College of Art	7
Norwich University College of the Arts	5
Ravensbourne	5
Courtauld Institute of Art	4
Heythrop College	4
Stranmillis University College	4
West of Scotland, The University of the	4
Royal Northern College of Music	3
School of Pharmacy	3
Edinburgh College of Art	2
Edinburgh Napier University	2
Leeds College of Music	2
Royal Academy of Music	2
Trinity University College	2
Buckingham, The University of	1
Conservatoire for Dance and Drama	1
Institute of Cancer Research	1
London Business School	1
Royal College of Music	1

Source: UCU 2012 occupational stress survey

The Role stressor – higher education

The Role stressor measures the respondent's level of stress, or well-being, relating to their clarity of understanding about what is expected from them at work, their duties and responsibilities at work, and their understanding of how their work fits into the overall aim of the organisation.

There was a total of 14,324 respondents to the UCU survey working in higher education who provided responses about their role. Of those respondents in HE who provided information about their job, 76.3% were academics (including teaching-only, research-only and teaching-and-research) and 23.7% were academic-related (including managers, administrators, librarians and computer staff).

The HEIs are grouped by score as follows:

Group A: UCU survey well-being highest 20 / stress level lowest 20

Group B: UCU survey average or above average well-being / average or below average stress level

Group C: Below UCU survey average well-being / above average stress level

Group D: UCU survey well-being lowest 20 / stress level highest 20

Stressor score range: 1.00 = lowest well-being / highest stress, 5.00 = highest well-being / lowest stress.

Role stressor range, UCU 2012 survey: HEI highest score 3.88; lowest score 3.32. Role: 2012 UCU HE respondents' mean average: 3.66; 2008 UCU HE respondents' mean average 3.72. Health and Safety Executive 2008 mean average for British working population ²: 4.71.

The Top and/or Bottom 20 may include more than 20 HEIs where there is a tied position.

Role – the statements

- I am clear what is expected of me at work.
- I know how to go about getting my job done.
- I am clear what my duties and responsibilities are.
- I am clear about the goals and objectives for my department.
- I understand how my work fits into the overall aim of the organisation.

² HSE (2008) Psychosocial Working Conditions in Britain in 2008, pp 26-27. The 'not target' group.

ROLE STRESSOR – Higher Education	
<p>No HEI scores for the Role stressor out of a total of 94 HEIs were above the HSE 2008 average of 4.71.</p> <p>UCU HE 2012 average = 3.659 (N=14,324)</p> <p>1.00 = lowest well-being (or highest stress), 5.00 = highest well-being (or lowest stress). Within each group, HEIs are ranked alphabetically.</p> <p>N = number of respondents. Averages are not shown where there were fewer than 53 respondents at a HEI.</p>	
Group A: UCU survey well-being highest 20 / stress level lowest 20 (Range of averages 3.765 to 3.881)	
Aston University	55
Bangor University	68
Cambridge, The University of	154
Durham, University of	164
Edinburgh, The University of	279
Essex, The University of	101
Goldsmiths College	61
Heriot-Watt University	84
Imperial College of Science, Technology and Medicine	85
King's College London	166
Leeds, The University of	410
London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine	63
Newcastle-upon-Tyne, The University of	247
Open University	361
Oxford, The University of	226
Sheffield, The University of	218
Strathclyde, The University of	161
University College London	274
York St John University	70
York, The University of	148
Group B: UCU survey average or above average well-being / average or below average stress level (range of averages: 3.664 to 3.763)	
Aberdeen, The University of	146
Aberystwyth University	136
Bath, The University of	87
Birkbeck College	76
Brighton, The University of	102
Bristol, The University of	187
Canterbury Christ Church University	73
Cardiff University	172
City University	110
Cranfield University	87
Exeter, The University of	165
Hertfordshire, University of	81
Institute of Education	68
Keele, The University of	80

ROLE STRESSOR – Higher Education	
No HEI scores for the Role stressor out of a total of 94 HEIs were above the HSE 2008 average of 4.71.	
UCU HE 2012 average = 3.659 (N=14,324)	
1.00 = lowest well-being (or highest stress), 5.00 = highest well-being (or lowest stress). Within each group, HEIs are ranked alphabetically.	
N = number of respondents. Averages are not shown where there were fewer than 53 respondents at a HEI.	
	N
Kent, The University of	185
Kingston University	85
Lancaster, The University of	144
Leicester, The University of	165
Liverpool, The University of	277
London School of Economics and Political Science	150
Loughborough University	157
Manchester, The University of	461
Nottingham, The University of	213
Plymouth, The University of	150
Portsmouth, The University of	109
Queen's University of Belfast	236
Reading, The University of	114
Royal Holloway and Bedford New College	99
Surrey, The University of	102
Sussex, The University of	171
Group C: Below UCU survey average well-being / above average stress level (range of averages: 3.532 to 3.664)	
Anglia Ruskin University	74
Birmingham City University	88
Bradford, The University of	111
Brunel University	103
City University	110
Coventry University	55
De Montfort University	123
Dundee, The University of	119
Hull, The University of	90
Lincoln, The University of	64
Liverpool John Moores University	126
London South Bank University	93
Northampton, The University of	82
Nottingham Trent University	204
Queen Mary and Westfield College	141
Sheffield Hallam University	158
Southampton, The University of	201
St Andrews, The University of	77
Stirling, The University of	86
Sunderland, The University of	77

ROLE STRESSOR – Higher Education	
No HEI scores for the Role stressor out of a total of 94 HEIs were above the HSE 2008 average of 4.71.	
UCU HE 2012 average = 3.659 (N=14,324)	
1.00 = lowest well-being (or highest stress), 5.00 = highest well-being (or lowest stress). Within each group, HEIs are ranked alphabetically.	
N = number of respondents. Averages are not shown where there were fewer than 53 respondents at a HEI.	
	N
Teesside, The University of	86
Warwick, The University of	217
Westminster, The University of	78
Wolverhampton, The University of	126
Group D: UCU survey well-being lowest 20 / stress level highest 20 (range of averages: 3.321 to 3.525)	
Birmingham, The University of	201
Bournemouth University	93
Central Lancashire, The University of	143
Cumbria, University of	68
Derby, University of	81
East Anglia, The University of	110
East London, The University of	91
Glamorgan, University of	83
Glasgow, The University of	228
Greenwich, The University of	89
Leeds Metropolitan University	141
London Metropolitan University	129
Manchester Metropolitan University	139
Northumbria at Newcastle, The University of	123
Oxford Brookes University	67
Salford, The University of	190
Staffordshire University	63
Swansea University	119
Ulster, University of	168
University of the Arts, London	100
University of the West England, Bristol	119

Source: UCU 2012 occupational stress survey

Data from the following HEIs were not used in this report on the Role stressor because there were 52 or fewer respondents from them:

HEI	Number of respondents
School of Oriental and African Studies	51
Glasgow Caledonian University	49
Huddersfield, The University of	48
Glyndwr University	47
Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh	47
Roehampton University	47
Southampton Solent University	47
Gloucestershire, University of	46
Middlesex University	46
Bedfordshire, University of	45
University for the Creative Arts	45
Abertay Dundee, University of	43
Bolton, The University of	43
Buckinghamshire New University	43
Chester, University of	42
Edge Hill University	41
Worcester, The University of	41
University of Wales Institute, Cardiff	38
Leeds Trinity University College	37
Liverpool Hope University	36
University Campus Suffolk	32
Bath Spa University	29
University of West London	28
Newman University College	25
Writtle College	25
Wales, Newport, The University of	24
University College Falmouth	23
University of London (Institutes and activities)	23
Winchester, The University of	23
Harper Adams University College	21
Robert Gordon University	20
University College Birmingham	20
Chichester, The University of	19
Swansea Metropolitan University	19
University College Plymouth St Mark and St John	19
Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts	16
Wales (central functions), The University of	15
Arts University College at Bournemouth	13

HEI	Number of respondents
St Mary's University College, Twickenham	13
Bishop Grosseteste University College Lincoln	12
Central School of Speech and Drama	11
Glasgow School of Art	11
St George's Hospital Medical School	11
Royal Veterinary College	10
Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance	10
Rose Bruford College	9
St Mary's University College	9
Wales, Lampeter, The University of	9
UHI Millennium Institute	8
Royal College of Art	7
Ravensbourne	6
Norwich University College of the Arts	5
Courtauld Institute of Art	4
Heythrop College	4
Stranmillis University College	4
Royal Northern College of Music	3
School of Pharmacy	3
West of Scotland, The University of the	3
Edinburgh College of Art	2
Edinburgh Napier University	2
Leeds College of Music	2
Royal Academy of Music	2
Trinity University College	2
Buckingham, The University of	1
Conservatoire for Dance and Drama	1
Institute of Cancer Research	1
London Business School	1
Royal College of Music	1

Source: UCU 2012 occupational stress survey