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Acknowledgement

The authors gratefully acknowledge permission to use questions from the Times Higher Education University Workplace Survey 2016. This permission was granted by John Gill, editor of *Times Higher Education*. 
Preface

In 2016 the Association for Tertiary Education Management (ATEM) celebrated its 40th anniversary. To mark this important milestone, ATEM ran a University Workplace Survey across the higher education sector in Australia and New Zealand. This survey was based upon the Times Higher Education (THE) University Workplace Survey 2016\(^1\) in the UK.

The aim of this endeavour was to gain a better understanding of the working conditions in the Australian and New Zealand tertiary education sector. This report represents the findings of the survey and is presented to the Tertiary Education Sector as a significant outcome of ATEM’s 40\(^{th}\) anniversary activities.

The survey asked respondents to state their level of agreement with statements about their views of their workplace, pay and conditions, politics and policy and workplace atmosphere. They were also asked to provide some socio-demographic information. Additional information about the methodology used by the survey can be found in the methodology section at the end of this report.

The results from this research shows that the clear majority of professional staff found their work rewarding, even when clear concerns about workload and work-life balance was also evident. While other surveys of staff satisfaction at institutional levels may have similar findings in the Australian/New Zealand contexts\(^2\), there are some significant differences in responses from the ATEM Survey compared to the UK-based Times Higher Education University Workplace Survey 2016.

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\(^1\) https://www.timeshighereducation.com/features/university-workplace-survey-2016-results-and-analysis

\(^2\) For example, the Voice Project (http://www.voiceproject.com/surveys/employee_engagement)
Summary of Findings

Over the course of two months in 2016, 428 higher education staff, primarily professional staff, from nearly 59 institutions across Australia and New Zealand gave us their views on a wide range of employment issues. As well as answering specific questions, respondents also provided more than 900 comments to the online survey, providing further context to many of the important issues raised by the survey.

The clear majority of participants (394) indicated that their role was primarily professional in its responsibilities, and only 34 respondents indicated that half or more of their role was academic in nature. For the purpose of this report only those 394 respondents who self-reported as primarily professional staff were included in the analysis, in order to enable a more meaningful comparison with the professional and support staff responses from the THE survey in the UK (which collected responses from 1,454 UK ‘professional and support’ staff).

While the ‘third-space professional’ is of growing interest in both the UK\(^3\) and amongst ATEM members\(^4\), the very low number (34) of respondents in this survey who identified as operating in this space rules out any meaningful analysis at this stage.

The survey highlights some interesting findings and some intriguing differences between Australia/New Zealand and the UK:

- Most university staff find their jobs rewarding.\(^5\) A majority of staff feel satisfied with pay, conditions and professional development opportunities.
- While professional staff are very positive about their immediate team and rather complimentary of their department leadership they are more tentative about the performance of the leadership of their institution and are markedly different from their UK counterparts on this point.

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3 See, for example, the body of work by Celia Whitchurch.
4 For example, the published papers by Carroll Graham and Natalia Veles.
5 This very high level of satisfaction with their job is actually not specific to the tertiary education sector. The 2012 Survey of Working Life (Statistics New Zealand) found that 85 percent of employed people in NZ were either ‘satisfied’ or ‘very satisfied’ in their main job.
Background information

Respondents’ socio-demographic background

The most common profile for respondents to the ATEM Survey was that they were likely female with postgraduate qualifications, between 51 and 60 years of age and from European/Caucasian backgrounds.

More than three quarters of respondents were females (Figure 1), which is higher than the representation of females in either Australian or UK professional staff. For example, Australian Department of Education and Training data for 2015 indicate that females comprised 66.1% of the population of ‘non-academic’ higher education staff. Similarly, the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) data for 2014/2015 showed that females represented 62.7% of ‘non-academic’ higher education staff in the UK. This slight over-representation is not surprising as it is not uncommon for surveys to have a moderate to strong gender bias towards female.

![Figure 1: Gender distribution of survey respondents](image)

The level of education within respondents was generally high (Figure 2). A large majority of respondents to the ATEM survey had a postgraduate level qualification. Most other respondents had at least an undergraduate qualification and a very small number, less than 10%, had a level of education below university level. These findings about qualifications resonate with an earlier study of ATEM members. Davis (2014) reported that in a study of leadership for professional staff, her cohort of 226 ATEM members ‘were well credentialed, with 90% holding an undergraduate degree, and of those 35% held Masters and 4% doctorates’ (p. 375).8

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When compared to the age distribution in the Higher Education sector provided by the Australian Department of Education and Training (DEST), response ranges are similar (Figure 3). It is interesting to note that a small number preferred not to disclose their age range in the survey; considerably more people in the age range 51-60 completed the survey than was the DEST average; whilst considerably fewer than the DEST average in the age ranges covering <31-40 completed the ATEM survey.

Figure 3 - Age range of respondents compared to Australian data

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Education Policy and Management, 36(4), 371-382.
Respondents to the ATEM Survey were not particularly ethnically diverse (figure 4). Over 90% identified as European/Caucasian. The largest ethnic group outside of the European/Caucasian group was the Asian ethnic group with 5%. Australian Department of Education and Training data indicates that only 1% of full-time and fractional staff were indigenous in Australia in 2015 (all staff included, FTE equivalent).\(^9\) This figure corresponds to the proportion observed in the ATEM Survey.

Respondents’ Employment Status

Respondents were primarily employed in Australia and had been typically employed in the sector for a considerable length of time. Almost all respondents were employed full-time and were on a continuing contract. The average weekly working hours was 44 hours for full-time employees. Only a small number of respondents were not employed in the University sector. As might be expected given the relative sizes of Australia and New Zealand, most respondents to the survey were employed in Australia (Figure 5).

![Country of Employment](image)

**Figure 5: Country of employment**

Respondents to the ATEM survey had generally had a long career in the sector (Figure 6). Over 32% had been working in the sector for 21 years and over, while more than two-thirds had worked in the sector for 11 years and over. Respondents were also likely to have worked for their current employer for a reasonable length of time. Close to two-thirds of respondents had worked for their current employer for 6 years or more.

However, mobility within institutions was revealed when respondents were asked about their current position, as over two-thirds had been employed in their current position for less than 5 years. These results echo similar patterns found in the literature for length of time in the sector, and length of time in current roles. That is, the results in this survey echo that professional staff are likely to be long-serving higher education sector staff but have not been in their current positions for very long. For example, Davis reported that 79% of participants in this earlier study had six or more years working in the sector with 53% of those reporting 11 or more years in the sector. Yet of these same long serving staff, 20% of respondents had been in their current role for less than twelve months, 34% between 1-2 years, and 25% for between 3-5 years, indicating that 75% of staff were in their role for five years or less (2014, p. 375).
Only a small proportion of respondents to the ATEM survey were employed part-time (Figure 7) and most were employed on continuing contracts (Figure 8).

**Figure 7: Length of employment**

**Figure 7: Employment status — full-time/part-time**
The average working time in a typical week for full-time employees was 44 hours (Figure 8), well above the standard contracted hours included in collective agreements in the sector. The majority of respondents (56%) indicated that they worked 41 hours or more during a typical week.

![Typical weekly working hours (Full-time respondents only)](image)

**Figure 8: Typical weekly hours — full-time respondents**

The vast majority of respondents were employed in the university sector (Figure 9). This reflects the membership base of ATEM in Australia and, to a lesser degree, in New Zealand.

![Type of Institutional Employer](image)

**Figure 9: Institutional employer**
Findings

Rewarding jobs and great colleagues, but what about our leaders? 89% of professional staff declared that they enjoyed working with their immediate colleagues. Similarly, the equivalent figure for the UK was 90%. One professional staff member, at an Innovative Research University in Queensland, says, ‘I work in a very supportive and collaborative team and have a great Manager!’, while another, at a university in Victoria, adds ‘Our little team at our research institute is wonderful and some of the best, most committed and talented colleagues I have worked with’. However, this respondent later moderates this very positive comment by saying ‘We are an oasis amongst the toxic and unhappy culture that persists across the broader university’.

![Bar chart showing performance of colleagues and leadership](chart.png)

**Figure 10: Performance of colleagues and leadership**

Respondents were not as complimentary when asked to evaluate the performance of the leader of their department as only 59% agreed that they were performing well. Again, these results mirror results found in the UK where 62% of professional staff agree with the same statement. Some of the reasons behind this finding may have to do with situations such as the one outlined by one person in an Australian Capital Territory university: ‘The most frustrating element of my role is having to do all the work (...) but my academic boss gets to present them and discuss them’ or a comment made by another staff employed in an Australian Regional University Network university: ‘The job is great and so are the internal clients I work with. BUT - my manager doesn’t care about staff. She cares about herself and how she looks to senior managers. She does this at a cost to the staff she manages. Feedback gets you nowhere and even punished. Some people are looked after whilst others aren’t’. 
The evaluation of performance of those further up the chain of command is even harsher, as only 35% of respondents agreed that the leadership of their institution is performing well. Once again this percentage was significantly less than for the leadership performance of their department. This apparent disconnect with overall leadership is perhaps part of the normal state of large organisations, or it could be a reflection of the often mentioned silo mentality in tertiary education institutions. Regardless of the explanations, it is likely to be of concern to senior management to see how poorly professional staff generally perceive the performance of tertiary education institutional leadership in Australia and New Zealand. Interestingly on this point, Australia/New Zealand and UK respondents differed, as UK respondents evaluated the performance of their departmental leadership and of their overall institutional leadership to be of the same quality, and higher than in Australia and New Zealand.

The issue of senior management and overall management leadership performance was one the topics which attracted the most comments.

Quite a few comments concentrated on the inadequate communication/connection of senior management with rank and file staff.

- Senior management are not in touch with the morale of staff, nor seem to care that much. (Australia, RUN University)
- It is important that senior management operate with transparency if they want the respect of staff. (Australia, IRU University)
- Senior leadership decision making can be fairly opaque and managers and staff are ‘fed’ carefully curated views of institutional planning etc. (Australia, IRU University)
- There is a significant divide between executive management and leaders just below that level. Strategic decision-making is either not evident or not communicated. No-one is fooled by feedback opportunities that go nowhere but are intended to suggest to people that they are being ‘consulted’. (Australia, Go8)

Of potential concern to senior management, there were also a number of comments questioning the values driving decision-making at that level. Commercial imperatives were seen as conflicting with the ethos of the sector by some staff.

- Poor leadership at Senior Management level. No respect for staff or values. Money demand/driven. (New Zealand, North Island University)
- Senior Management are continually asking for budget cuts and as such vacancies are being held and more stress is going on workers. (New Zealand, North Island University)
- Our current senior executive team seem to be running the university like a private business, where they are paid a lot but communicate little to their staff. They expect us to get on with things as though nothing is happening when we all know that there are things happening, we just don’t know what they are because there is no communication. (Australia, IRU University)
- It is increasingly obvious that it’s all about funding and trying to increase student numbers in a largely saturated market. Striving to increase student numbers and cut back costs puts stress on all staff. (Australia, IRU University)
• The financial pressures are undoubtedly having an impact on the approach taken by senior management. (New Zealand, North Island University)

In some cases the dissatisfaction with leadership was driven by recent changes to the leadership team.

• It is amazing what a change in leadership can do. After 18 months with a new Vice-Chancellor my job has changed from rewarding and exciting to confusing and stressful. Under the last VC I was happy to give 110% but now I am expected to give the 110% but I resent it. (Australia, ATN University)

• I used to be proud to work in my current institution, but changes in the executive and the resulting devaluation of staff has really changed that over the past few years. (Australia, New South Wales, University)

• We had strong leadership VC but just changed and we have pockets of good leadership and some mediocrity. (Australia, Non-affiliated University)

Perhaps linked to this lower level of satisfaction with the level of performance of their overall leadership Australian and New Zealand professional staff were also less inclined to feel excited about their institutions’ future plan than their UK colleagues (55% vs 63%).

• I’m not happy about the way management takes tech heavy options to resolve issues that replace service staff rather than supporting those staff. At some point prospective applicants will decide which uni to go to based on service levels as well as course offerings. (Australia, Go8 university)

• We work in a research institute and are a small team committed to social justice. This does not get supported by the wider university other than lip service. They have told us that if we don’t provide hard $ profit from our projects, they will wind up our research institute. (Australia, Non-affiliated University)

• Administration in my institution has taken a back seat to marketing and talented senior staff have been pushed out to make room for marketers with no understanding of the HE sector. Combined with a glacial recruitment freeze this is not conducive to a good working environment. (Australia, Non-affiliated University)

• I believe our weakness is a lack of ‘whole of organisation’ perspective and org development more broadly. (Australia, Non-affiliated University)
**Reward and Well-being**

The vast majority of Australian and New Zealand respondents felt their job was rewarding (Figure 11). The proportion was marginally higher than in the UK professional staff population (82% vs 76%). However, it is important to put this figure in perspective, as a 2012 Survey of Working Life conducted by NZ Statistics found that 85% of employed people in NZ were either satisfied or very satisfied with their job. Another survey [Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia Survey11: Families, Incomes and Jobs](http://melbourneinstitute.unimelb.edu.au/hilda) conducted by the Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research found that between 2001 and 2009 mean satisfaction scores with jobs remained very high and stable at 7.7/7.6 out of a 10 point range in Australia.

- *I enjoy my work and the projects that I am working on.* (Australia, Institution not disclosed)
- *I am very happy with my work environment and the work that I am engaged in.* (Australia, Non-affiliated University)
- *I work in a great place.* (Australia, Other Is Selected)
- *Higher education is a very engaging sector to work in.* (Australia, Go8 University)

![Reward and Well-being](image)

**Figure 11: Personal reward and well-being**

Similarly, only 9% of respondents to the ATEM survey disagreed that their work was a source of satisfaction to them (Figure 12), while another 10% were neutral. These findings are once again very

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similar to the UK findings.

**Satisfaction and Pride**

In the UK the ‘pride to work for your current institution’ and ‘work satisfaction’ items received similar ratings, but in Australia and New Zealand there is a slight disconnect as 73% agree that they are proud to work for their current employer vs 82% being satisfied with their job (Figure 12). On the positive side 74% of respondents felt happy about the contribution that their institution made to the community and to society at large, and these levels were similar to the ones observed in the UK (80%).

![Satisfaction and Pride](image)

**Figure 12: Satisfaction and pride**

**Workload and work-life balance**

The THE survey highlighted ‘the excessive hours worked by academics’ as a major issue in the UK.Interestingly the issue of workload and work–life balance seems to also be very salient in the Australian and New Zealand professional staff population. Most staff in Australia and New Zealand (76% vs 57% in the UK) declare that they work regularly over their contracted hours (Figure 13).
Figure 13: Workload and work-life balance (1)

Comments provided around workload and working time indicated that often this overtime was not recognised officially (Figure 14).

- *I work well above the contracted hours but no flexitime or paid overtime. Whether it is acknowledged financially, NO. Acknowledged as a "Pat on the back", yes. (Australia, ATN University)*
- *Many colleagues work long hours without recognition or reward (Australia, Non-affiliated University)*
- *I often have to work extra hours/weekends just to keep up with it all, and this is not paid. In other institutions I could get time off in lieu, but not here. (Australia, IRU University)*

There were some concerns expressed around the lack of sufficient workforce available to complete tasks allocated (Figure 14).

- *Part-time workers never get to leave on time, so over the course of a year you have worked lots of unpaid overtime (Australia, RUN University)*
- *There is not enough staff within the team I manage, the employer’s systems are inadequate. (Australia, IRU University)*
- *Workloads are high and extra hours are required to cope with this. (Australia, Go8 University)*
- *Required outputs of current role are not achievable within the time allocated (part-time) (Australia, Non-affiliated University)*
A common sentiment was that workloads have tended to increase over the years.

- I believe workloads have increased since beginning working in this sector (Australia, Non-affiliated University)
- I love my job, but like lots of people I spend too much time here (Australia, Non-affiliated University)
- I believe workload has increased incrementally over the years to a level no longer sustainable. (Australia, Non-affiliated University)
- Increasing workload is a serious concern. (Australia, Non-affiliated University)
- One of the key issues regarding conditions is the continuing increase in workload combined with the continuing decrease in staff numbers. This is slowly but consistently eroding the current level of satisfaction and sense that the employer cares about employee wellbeing and that reasonable workloads are assigned. (Australia, ATN University)
- There is an increasing amount of over work and stress occurring in our office and elsewhere. (Australia, Non-affiliated University)

Some staff felt like working overtime was just a normal part of the expectations attached to their positions.

- I am in a management role and need to work the hours necessary to complete tasks as others depend on me. (Australia, RUN University)
- Expected to overwork as a standard practice. (Australia, Non-affiliated University)

However, working long hours does not always necessarily equate with a sense that the workload assigned to professional staff is unreasonable, as 58% still think that the workload assigned by their
employer is reasonable (Figure 14).

- I am pretty good at managing work-life balance. I have put in some extra hours due to current challenges that will continue through to the end of the year. Extra resources have been made available. I have seen some evidence of weakening in our EB but as someone who is close to the end of their career I am less concerned. I am more concerned with the lack of engagement of employees both individual and as part of a union... but that is their choice. (Australia, Non-affiliated University)
- Senior roles can require a lot of hours. Can sometimes be difficult to keep these to a reasonable level knowing the work is needed. Doesn’t necessarily mean the employer is sanctioning doing more than is reasonable. (Australia, Non-affiliated University)
- There seems to be such an expectation about demanding jobs with high pay and high workloads that sometimes it’s hard to know just what a reasonable workload is. (Australia, Go8 University)
- I work long and hard by choice, not by direction. This is what keeps me motivated and energised. This is independent of the conditions under which I am required to work. (Australia, Other Is Selected)
- I enjoy my job but need to be constantly challenged with new projects of a grand scale. This leads me to look for new employment opportunities so that I can fulfil my personal needs. I can never spend too much time working! (Australia, Other Is Selected)
- I feel that my personal work ethic has the greatest influence on my decision to work extra hours. (Australia, ATN University)
- I think that I am learning to manage my own well-being and work life balance so that I can avoid my job having a negative impact on my health. However the demands of the job, particularly the distinct peak and troughs in workload, are a challenge in this regard. (Australia, ATN University)
- I am in a management position where I am expected to work the hours required to do the job - no overtime/TOIL permitted (New Zealand, North Island University)
- My workload is reasonable, but only if I do the bare minimum, often your success is predicated by how many hours you have to spare for “extra” but hugely important tasks and if you want to go the extra mile (which is how you get ahead) (Australia, Non-affiliated University)

This apparent contradiction is further elucidated by the proportion of respondents who declared that they spend too much time working. While the proportion of 42% is high in absolute terms it does not match up with the proportion who report working overtime (76%) indicating that, for a significant proportion of professional staff, working over their contracted hours is not seen as being an issue. However, in the UK the proportion of professional staff thinking that their workload is unreasonable is much lower at 28%.

Like their UK counterparts, Australian and New Zealand professional staff saw their employers’ attitudes towards their caring responsibilities positively: the already large 62% of professional staff in the UK who say that their university is supportive is even exceeded by the 73% who agree with this statement in the Australia and New Zealand sample.
Academic standards

39% of professional staff respondents agreed that their institution had compromised on student quality in their drive to increase or preserve student numbers, whereas 25% were neutral (Figure 15).

![Academic Standards](image)

**Figure 15: Academic standards**

A similar proportion felt that international undergraduate students in their department did not generally have a level of spoken and written English adequate for degree level study but many respondents selected a neutral answer perhaps because as professional staff they felt less in a position to comment on this aspect. Still, some of the comments on this issue are very concerning:

- *English is a real issue across the sector (Australia, Not selected)*
- *English language levels are a constant issue within the sector (Australia, not selected)*
- *English language proficiency in international students is a serious problem across the entire sector, which is driven by the need for enrolments. This is unlikely to change unless the Government raises language standard requirements for temporary and permanent residency visas. (Australia, Non-affiliated University)*
- *English language skills are a big issue - not just for international students but also domestic students for whom English is a second language (New Zealand, North Island University)*
- *I deal with misconduct and exclusion where students will need to provide personal statements. The written English is atrocious. It’s interesting to note that these students would have achieved a high IELTS score obtained from overseas but does not translate into the actual practice. (Australia, ATN University)*
- *International post graduate students do not speak and write English at a level that is adequate for degree level study either (Australia, IRU University)*
- *Some international students obviously have faked their English language entry qualifications - they cannot string two words together (Australia, Go8 University)*
Job security

One finding of the UK survey was that job insecurity was a key issue for many academics, as 40% felt like their jobs were not secure; whereas, the proportion was much lower amongst UK professional staff (19%).

On this measure in Australia and New Zealand, practically a quarter of professional staff disagree that their job feels secure, while 60% agree that it feels secure. While this is far from the levels observed among UK academic staff, it is still a high proportion of insecurity compared to UK professionals (Figure 16).

Many of the comments around job security centred on the seemingly constant cycle of restructures taking place in the sector:

- Currently in a restructure. It’s being going for over 12 months! (Australia, Go8 university)
- Despite a positive outlook overall for universities, there is uncertainty at the individual level around ongoing employment. Government policy inaction exacerbates this feeling. (Australia, IRU University)
- I don’t think anyone feels 100% secure in their job any more. The sector - and our institution in particular it seems - is undergoing too much radical change for there to be a sense of complete security. (Australia, Non-affiliated University)
- In universities where redundancies have been pre-empted for well over 6 months and are slow to eventuate, the workplace atmosphere is extremely toxic and compromises individual mental health. (Australia, Non-affiliated University)
- The relentless restructures have removed any sense of job security. (New Zealand, North Island University)
- The top level of management is too remote and there is too much constant restructuring to ever settle down and get the work done (Australia, Non-affiliated University)
- There is a constant restructure, and I know at this time, staff in another section do not feel secure. It depends on the section manager as to whether the department will be supportive of a person with a disability and then only if they were a family member. We do not have any staff with a disability in this department. (Australia, Non-affiliated University)
- We have a review in progress which is stressful (New Zealand, South Island University)
- The current issues within my institution have meant there is uncertainty around job security. This means my staff are sometimes worried about potential changes which are still unknown. Due to the non-release of information I am also unable to allay their fears because I cannot give them the answers they seek (whether good or bad). (Australia, IRU University)
- We are going through a merger and the changes do lead to periods of stress (New Zealand, ITP)
- The constant changes, renewal, restructures at a number of institutions within the sector is very disruptive and demoralising for long-term professionals (Australia, Go8 University)
- My position has just been declared redundant so satisfaction levels are variable. (Australia, Go8 University)
- My university is placing change upon change on their staff with little support and terrible systems with no long term thought to if they are an improvement, they are at best stop-gap measures and wasteful. (Australia, Go8 University)
• My dissatisfaction is due to a takeover of our campus by another university. My job has been changed (downgraded) and the overlords are inflexible and take no notice of our problems or suggestions. I used to feel proud of where I worked and I used to know I was good at my job. Now I'm just dreaming of retirement. (Australia, Federation University Australia)

• I am concerned with the current trend of 'reviews' which have outcomes that change our job descriptions without consultation (Australia, RUN University)

• I enjoy my job and institution, though at times feel we have lost some stability with the constant change we are undergoing. At the end of the day people are our strongest resource. Having genuine care, and investing in building the right culture, I think are key to a high performing institution. (New Zealand, North Island University)

• This university is undergoing significant structural change, and several staff do not feel this employer is supportive and caring. (New Zealand, North Island University)

• Huge financial pressures at this institution are resulting in ugly, one size fits all job cuts and project rationalisations. Unless you are in a pet project of the leadership group, you are fighting for recognition and reward. (Australia, Non-affiliated University)

Interestingly, 31% of professional staff believed that metrics-based performance measures could lead to redundancy in their department (Figure 16). It is unclear from the results of this statement is being used by respondents to evaluate how much pressure there is on their academic colleagues or if they are commenting on potential redundancies for professional staff as well.

![Figure 16: Job security](image-url)
Listening to staff

The failure of managers to listen to staff views was identified as a major source of frustration for academic staff but not for professional staff in the UK survey. A troubling result in Australia and New Zealand is the fact that 29% of respondents felt that they could not make their voice heard within their institution (see Table 1 -Appendix – Summary of Quantitative Findings), as is exemplified by the following comments:

- I know that my manager values the work that I do, but I never hear the Senior Executives speak about the importance of my subject area. (Australia, RUN University)
- I feel my opinions don’t matter a lot. (Australia, IRU University)
- Decisions are made at the top with no consultation with day to day users of new systems or policies. (Australia, Non-affiliated University)
- Management do not support staff or listen to concerns. I used to love my institution but it has changed dramatically and there is a lack of support for lower level staff (Australia, IRU University)
- My negative answer re ‘my job feels secure’ is because of a review that proposes disestablishing the existing structure with no job loss, BUT with a change in reporting lines, which is essentially a demotion for most team members (New Zealand, Not-specified)
- Lack of open communication about changes is distressing (Australia, Go8 University)

Still, just over the majority of Australian and New Zealand professional agreed that they felt like they could make their voice heard within their institution (51% agree with that statement versus 58% in the UK) so this negative sentiment was not shared by most respondents (Figure 17).

Figure 17: Listening to staff
Employment Conditions

Employment conditions were definitely viewed as being very positive by professional staff in the sector and many comments emphasised this aspect of the sector’s workplace environment. Comments helped to identify that the implementation policies and agreements at the level of the institution were heavily dependent on their interpretation (which can be either more positive or negative) by local managers:

- **Conditions are very good at universities compared to the private sector.** (Australia, ATN University)
- **It is very important to distinguish between 'my institution' and 'my manager' with many of the statements above, for instance, my institution may be supportive of staff with caring responsibilities - but if 'my manager' is not, despite policies and guidelines, it can become a very challenging situation.** (Australia, Non-affiliated University)
- **My team and manager are supporting of flexible working arrangements but this is not necessarily true of all areas of the organisation (New Zealand, ITP)**
- **My immediate manager appreciates the work I do and the extra efforts I make and is very vocal in telling me this, but my manager does not have the authority for this to make any difference to the difficulties I face.** (New Zealand, North Island University)

![Figure 18: Employment conditions](image-url)
Survey Methodology

To compile the ATEM Tertiary Education Sector Workplace Survey 2016, we used an online survey to solicit opinions of higher education employees from across Australia and New Zealand, during six weeks in May and July 2016.

There were 428 respondents. Of those, 394 (92%) classified their role as being primarily ‘professional and support’ in nature. The gender split is 336 female and 95 male, and 12 respondents who did not identify their gender. The vast majority of respondents (91%) identified as European Caucasian. Coincidentally, a similar proportion was based in Australia (90%).

Each respondent was presented with 34 statements about their institution12 such as “I would recommend working at my university to others”. They were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the statement on a five-point Likert scale: strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, or strongly agree.

In the table, the total percentages of all respondents who disagree or agree with a question are based on the survey’s raw data. As such, they may differ from the sum of the figures in the table, which have been rounded.

The 34 statements included in the survey corresponded to four sections: Personal, Pay and Conditions, Politics, and Workplace Atmosphere. The survey allowed participants to write comments on each of these aspects and also about their institution in three categories: “things my university does well”; “areas in which my university could improve”; and an open box for any further comments.

The THE independent online survey was first developed by THE in consultation with Rob Briner and Yiannis Gabriel, professors at the University of Bath School of Management, after discussion with individuals from professional bodies and trade unions, including the University and College Union, the Association of University Administrators and Universities UK. The THE survey was used as a model for the ATEM survey and adapted to the Australian and New Zealand context by a working group overseen by ATEM’s Council.

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12Three statements from the THE survey were removed from the ATEM questionnaire because of their lack of relevance in the Australian and New Zealand contexts.
References


## Appendix – Summary of Quantitative Findings

Table 1: Summary of quantitative findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>AU/NZ Agree</th>
<th>UK Agree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>AU/NZ Disagree</th>
<th>UK Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I find my job rewarding</td>
<td>394</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>9.35%</td>
<td>6.78%</td>
<td>2.34%</td>
<td>9.11%</td>
<td>14.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I generally experience high levels of well-being in relation to my work and job</td>
<td>393</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>19.67%</td>
<td>15.69%</td>
<td>3.75%</td>
<td>19.44%</td>
<td>22.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My work is a source of satisfaction to me</td>
<td>394</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>9.58%</td>
<td>8.64%</td>
<td>1.64%</td>
<td>10.28%</td>
<td>9.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My research is a source of satisfaction to me</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>24.07%</td>
<td>5.56%</td>
<td>0.93%</td>
<td>6.48%</td>
<td>1.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My teaching is a source of satisfaction to me</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>24.68%</td>
<td>3.90%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>3.90%</td>
<td>1.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am happy about the opportunities for personal growth and development offered to me by my employer</td>
<td>393</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>17.84%</td>
<td>15.73%</td>
<td>11.03%</td>
<td>26.76%</td>
<td>26.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement</td>
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<td>AU/NZ Agree</td>
<td>UK Agree</td>
<td>Neither Agree nor Disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>AU/NZ Disagree</td>
<td>UK Disagree</td>
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<td>----------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am looking to leave my current job</td>
<td>384</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>19.86%</td>
<td>31.10%</td>
<td>22.01%</td>
<td>53.11%</td>
<td>58.20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>I spend too much time working</td>
<td>393</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>24.59%</td>
<td>25.29%</td>
<td>5.62%</td>
<td>30.91%</td>
<td>46.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel my job has a negative impact on my health</td>
<td>394</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>22.66%</td>
<td>32.48%</td>
<td>10.75%</td>
<td>43.22%</td>
<td>65.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am proud to work in my current institution</td>
<td>393</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>19.44%</td>
<td>6.09%</td>
<td>3.28%</td>
<td>9.37%</td>
<td>9.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My institution offers a fair deal to its employees in terms of pay</td>
<td>394</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>11.68%</td>
<td>8.88%</td>
<td>2.57%</td>
<td>11.45%</td>
<td>16.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My institution offers a fair deal to its employees in terms of working</td>
<td>394</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>10.98%</td>
<td>7.71%</td>
<td>1.87%</td>
<td>9.58%</td>
<td>12.90%</td>
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<tr>
<td>conditions and benefits</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>My employer cares for the well-being of its staff</td>
<td>394</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>20.09%</td>
<td>16.36%</td>
<td>6.54%</td>
<td>22.90%</td>
<td>21.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes I feel the institution takes advantage of me</td>
<td>393</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>24.12%</td>
<td>27.87%</td>
<td>6.79%</td>
<td>34.66%</td>
<td>49.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My institution is supportive of staff with caring responsibilities</td>
<td>379</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>17.76%</td>
<td>9.25%</td>
<td>1.70%</td>
<td>10.95%</td>
<td>9.70%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Statement</td>
<td>Responses</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>AU/NZ Agree</td>
<td>UK Agree</td>
<td>Neither Agree nor Disagree</td>
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<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>AU/NZ Disagree</td>
<td>UK Disagree</td>
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<tr>
<td>I often work more than my contracted hours</td>
<td>390</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>10.38%</td>
<td>11.56%</td>
<td>2.12%</td>
<td>13.68%</td>
<td>30.00%</td>
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<tr>
<td>If I work extra hours, it is acknowledged by my manager</td>
<td>384</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>23.26%</td>
<td>25.90%</td>
<td>6.00%</td>
<td>31.89%</td>
<td>24.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My work responsibilities allow for a healthy work-life balance</td>
<td>392</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>23.24%</td>
<td>19.01%</td>
<td>7.04%</td>
<td>26.06%</td>
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<tr>
<td>The workload assigned to me by my employer is reasonable</td>
<td>393</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>19.67%</td>
<td>16.63%</td>
<td>7.49%</td>
<td>24.12%</td>
<td>17.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The leadership of my institution is performing well</td>
<td>392</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>23.00%</td>
<td>21.83%</td>
<td>11.74%</td>
<td>33.57%</td>
<td>22.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am excited about the institution's future plans</td>
<td>393</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>27.40%</td>
<td>13.82%</td>
<td>5.39%</td>
<td>19.20%</td>
<td>15.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My institution has compromised on student quality in its drive to increase or preserve student numbers</td>
<td>381</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>25.30%</td>
<td>27.23%</td>
<td>6.99%</td>
<td>34.22%</td>
<td>46.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pressure to give students better marks has increased at my institution</td>
<td>296</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>41.77%</td>
<td>27.13%</td>
<td>11.89%</td>
<td>39.02%</td>
<td>23.60%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Statement</td>
<td>Responses</td>
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<td>Agree</td>
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<td>UK Agree</td>
<td>Neither Agree nor Disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>AU/NZ Disagree</td>
<td>UK Disagree</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am happy about the contribution made by my institution to the community and to society at large</td>
<td>390</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>19.81%</td>
<td>5.19%</td>
<td>1.42%</td>
<td>6.60%</td>
<td>8.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The leadership of my department is performing well</td>
<td>387</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>15.20%</td>
<td>15.68%</td>
<td>10.69%</td>
<td>26.37%</td>
<td>24.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe that metrics-based performance measures could lead to redundancies in my department</td>
<td>344</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>39.84%</td>
<td>22.99%</td>
<td>4.81%</td>
<td>27.81%</td>
<td>30.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My job feels secure</td>
<td>392</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>17.14%</td>
<td>15.73%</td>
<td>7.98%</td>
<td>23.71%</td>
<td>18.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would recommend working at my institution to others</td>
<td>392</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>17.88%</td>
<td>11.06%</td>
<td>2.59%</td>
<td>13.65%</td>
<td>13.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoy working with my immediate team of colleagues (the 5-10 colleagues I work most closely with)</td>
<td>393</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>7.75%</td>
<td>1.88%</td>
<td>1.41%</td>
<td>3.29%</td>
<td>4.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My institution has a fair and effective Equal Opportunities Policy</td>
<td>390</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>18.20%</td>
<td>4.96%</td>
<td>1.89%</td>
<td>6.86%</td>
<td>8.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My institution is supportive of employees with a disability</td>
<td>382</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>20.72%</td>
<td>4.82%</td>
<td>1.20%</td>
<td>6.02%</td>
<td>5.60%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Statement</td>
<td>Responses</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>AU/NZ Agree</td>
<td>UK Agree</td>
<td>Neither Agree nor Disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>AU/NZ Disagree</td>
<td>UK Disagree</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can make my voice heard within my institution</td>
<td>393</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>21.31%</td>
<td>19.20%</td>
<td>9.37%</td>
<td>28.57%</td>
<td>24.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My subject area is valued by my institution</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>18.15%</td>
<td>16.17%</td>
<td>7.92%</td>
<td>24.09%</td>
<td>13.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In general, international undergraduate students in my department speak and write English at a level that is adequate for degree level study</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>35.59%</td>
<td>30.18%</td>
<td>8.56%</td>
<td>38.74%</td>
<td>11.60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Web http://www.atem.org.au
Email info@atem.org.au
Author/s:
Mirosa, R; Abela, P; Davis, H; Graham, C

Title:
2016 ATEM Tertiary Education Sector Workplace Survey: Results and Analysis

Date:
2017

Citation:
Mirosa, R; Abela, P; Davis, H; Graham, C, 2016 ATEM Tertiary Education Sector Workplace Survey: Results and Analysis, 2016 ATEM Tertiary Education Sector Workplace Survey: Results and Analysis, 2017, pp. 1 - 39

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