

# Bristol UCU Mental Health Strategy Consultation

Showing 92 of 92 responses

Showing **all** responses

Hiding questions **2, 3 & 4**

Response rate: 92%

**1** Please share your comments and thoughts on the University of Bristol Staff Mental Health Strategy:

Showing all 92 responses	
<p>I have read through strategy and it is simple first aid, no prevention cures.</p> <p>In Biological Sciences we double our student numbers but staff numbers went down, we are overloaded, stressed and at breaking point, we do NOT need fluffy classes and free tai chi, we need the causes of stress to be addressed</p> <p>REF, TEF, grant income and student recruitment will ALWAYS have higher priority to this university senior management than well being of staff</p>	<p><a href="#">407986-407977-40707641</a></p>
<p>Lack of time to do a good job. Each year the workload increases and resources do not. There is no longer any down time in which to catch up. Every day we have to prioritise the urgent and important items so a lot of the things that we could be doing to add value to our customers fall by the wayside. Even just doing the urgent and important things is not achievable in a 35 hour week so I frequently work much more.</p>	<p><a href="#">407986-407977-40707685</a></p>
<p>I have suffered mental health problems as a direct result of working at the University of Bristol. My workload was not properly managed whilst I was buying my first home. My manager was not supportive and I went off work with stress and given medication to ease my symptoms.</p> <p>I felt pressured to come back before I felt ready to come back to work. My medication had many unpleasant side effects which resulted in insomnia. My manager compared my side effects and mental health to another colleague which belittled me.</p> <p>I have since, on my own, found resources within the University of Bristol. However there is little investment in Staff mental health and training managers properly to deal with staff in similar situations.</p> <p>Since then, I have been assigned a new line manager and another member of the team has taken me under her wing. I feel more supported. However I am concerned that staff are still not getting the resources they need. There was a fantastic wellbeing course ran which I feel should be compulsory to line managers so that they understand the best way to approach this sensitive topic.</p>	<p><a href="#">407986-407977-40707616</a></p>

<p>Without strategies to clearly identify and deal with the causes of stress in the workplace, the University of Bristol Staff Mental Health Strategy simply pays lip service to the idea of promoting good mental health and supportively dealing with poor mental health. Furthermore, it doesn't reflect actual HR practice, which appears to be to attempt to sweep staff mental health issues under the carpet as quickly and quietly as possible.</p>	<p>407986-407977-40707726</p>
<p>In my opinion the causes of stress stems from the inability to manage any changes adequately:  Examples of these are with the management of major IT programmes: ERP (treated as a success and massively overrun), SLSP (started whilst ERP wasn't live and now extended), DWP (another major programme which brought some real issues around email and calendar).</p> <p>Also other projects, which don't go through proper channels and measured with success criteria (NWoW, office moves, ITS restructuring)</p> <p>The workload is extremely high and never prioritised, hence staff being overworked and stressed.</p>	<p>407986-407977-40707672</p>
<p>It's a very fancy sticking plaster. It's all very well providing wellbeing advisors, counselling, more opportunities for physical exercise, etc., etc. but one of the most important drivers for staff mental health is a total lack of life/work balance and the pressures of trying to be excellent at everything. Insufficient allowance is made in workload models for preparing teaching, marking (and giving fantastic feedback - it takes time!), conducting research, publication, obtaining grants, producing impact case studies and so on, plus the burden of administration gets ever heavier with very little allowance given for the time it takes up.</p>	<p>407986-407977-40707639</p>
<p>There is permanent low-level stress caused by a continual series of overlapping deadlines with not enough time to adequately complete, punctuated only by periods of high-level stress. Working evenings and weekends becomes the norm. However, this is only ever a short term fix: like plugging a leaking dam by hand. Constant monitoring of "output" and "workload" does not reflect actual working time, or quality of work; so there is little positive feedback. Life becomes the job; but the job feels out of control.</p>	<p>407986-407977-40707691</p>
<p>The workload issue is not addressed by the Staff Mental Health Strategy. My workload is completely unrealistic and doesn't seem tied to any kind of solid business goals. It feels a lot of the time like the objectives for me are being made-up by my line management as they go along without reference to the University strategy, industry standards or the data I produce. Clearly having an unrealistic workload is in itself a problem. However it feels like it's so high in part because there isn't a strategy behind the decisions that are being made, which is especially galling. This is incredibly stressful and leads to much higher job insecurity than is necessary because I can't ever see where my role fits in the larger plan and therefore cannot anticipate the genuine permanence of my role.</p>	<p>407986-407977-40707775</p>
<p>I do not think anyone working as an academic in one of today's universities needs to think too hard about reasons for stress. Universities have begun acting as profit-making businesses, whilst</p>	<p>407986-407977-40707695</p>

paying some ip service attention to traditional motivations for work such as inspirational teaching and long term research and scholarship. Not of all of this can be laid directly at the doors of universities themselves, since much of it stems from government policies. Nevertheless, there is little real recognition of what is occurring and certainly no open discussion by those in charge of university policy. Because of such absence of real leadership, more concerned with turning in a profit and pursuing shiny new capital projects, proper discussion of how best to operate within the present environment is largely absent. instead 'managers' all th eway down from the VC to departments have become a part of the same process of maximising 'income' and exploiting staff to do this. So, in particular, services such as HR and finance are increasingly managing academic's time doing administrative tasks with little consultation, often very unresponsive to requests for help and generally seeing their role as keeping control of what happens rather than as genuine partners in supporting academic endeavours. Wherever academics gather you hear the same complaints about poor leadership a them-us divide and low morale. It is fairly obvious why people are stressed. What is of course still so encouraging is that many of us still work hard, produce good research and scholarship and actually like teaching. You can share my remarks and name with whoever is prepared to take the remarks seriously!

I welcome the staff mental health strategy and think it signals a commitment to this issue. A few points that sprung to mind as I was reading it included:

- will the staff mental health strategy be amended to reflect the outcomes of the staff survey, or be clearer about how it does this? Findings included negative views about levels of stress and workload, poor communication from senior management, and poor management and involvement in change. An explicit link to these findings and alignment of the strategy to local action plans would be useful
- the causes of poor mental health that are work related (ie included stress and workload as mentioned above) are not mentioned - could the strategy include acknowledgement of this and outline (or link to) the actions the university is taking to combat this?
- the strategy states 'As an institution we recognise that broader university and sector-wide issues such as the gender pay gap, casualisation in the workforce and workload also contribute to overall wellbeing in the workplace. As such, this strategy is designed to complement the actions already underway' - again, could a link be provided to what those actions are?
- what work has been done to liaise with the various staff networks to get their views on how staff wellbeing and mental health could be supported?

Thanks for your action on this.

In my experience, the causes of stress and anxiety are related to unmanageable workloads, which have a concomitant impact on work-life balance / family life (perhaps particularly for part-time staff) - which in turn, makes workload demands feel even more unmanageable. Some of the workload demands are new initiatives / requirements that come from

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the workload demands are new initiatives / requirements that come from 'up high', and are often poorly communicated and/or the implications for staff 'on the ground' are not well thought through. Some of these initiatives require significant input from staff but we are not given the time or resources to develop and deliver them effectively. There is no time or space for reflection on teaching practices; teaching as a whole seems much less valued within the University than research - it doesn't seem to matter how good one is at teaching/supporting students, only grant capture and publications seem to count in terms of recognition, promotion etc.

A lack of recognition of effort and achievement by staff is demoralising - 'small' achievements (such as improving student experience and satisfaction, securing small research grants, or the 'day to day' work of being an academic such as peer reviewing papers, being an external examiner etc) seem not to be valued - or when they are noted, additional 'stretch' targets are set, making it feel that we can never do enough. So, in short, overly high expectations within the time available causes stress and anxiety.

The biggest issue is the way the job has evolved over the years. Of course we focus on long hours and the way in which the job encroaches into our private and family lives, and that's true. But what's also been the case is the way the quality of our working lives has been eroded, our autonomy on the job and that this has been matched by greater monitoring and audit. I don't mind spending my time writing and thinking etc. In fact, if I retired, I'd do a lot of that for free. And I love talking to young people about ideas, engaging with them. When the University manages those things so that those stimulating activities that I enjoy are turned into drudgery and burdensome toil, that's the kind of thing that makes me stressed, anxious and miserable. Respecting and trusting academic autonomy and control more would do wonders for academic mental health.

I sent a long reply to the university's consultation online. I should have saved it to cut and paste here, but I didn't... The gist is that I feel dismayed that the draft document does not in any way recognize the relationship between workload, stress, and mental health difficulties. We know from the Staff Survey results that workload levels are unsustainable and causing damage to staff mental and physical health. The consultation document needs to recognize that, and to make a commitment to making manageable workloads as one key part of this strategy.

We also know from the Staff Survey that there are serious problems with the management structure of the university. Confidence in the senior management hovers around 30%. There are reports of bullying as well as a toxic culture in many parts of the university. The lowest score in the staff survey is for 'Managing Change' -- since my arrival in 2013 the university has implemented a number of bungled university-wide initiatives that show no understanding of how local systems work (the decision to insist on 10 contact hours across the board, the imposition of the Arts2020 framework in my home Faculty being just two examples). There is a lack of democracy in the university and a top-down hierarchical structure. We need a change in senior management and we need a structural change in how the university operates. All of these problems are tied to staff workload, and to stress, and to the

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problems are tied to staff workload, and to stress, and to the deteriorating mental and physical health of staff.

I do not mean to suggest here that all mental health problems can be reduced to problems with workload and stress. Mental health difficulties have many sources and are not always situational. However, there is evidence from the Staff Survey that many staff are badly overworked, that there is a toxic culture of bullying in many parts of the university, and we know there is a causal relationship between these problems and Staff Mental Health. The University's strategy ought to recognize that causal relationship. If it were truly a 'holistic', 'institution-wide' strategy then it would not shy away from recognizing that fact, and committing to a wider change of workplace culture, structure, and practices.

It strikes me as problematic that the strategy includes no specifics about how the university plans to invest in improving staff mental health. Funding the Staff Counselling Service properly would be a great start -- it takes over six months to get an appointment.

One other thing: the tagline that 'mental health is everyone's business' is disturbingly Orwellian and, in my view, has no place in this strategy. I would like to think that it is well-intended but I think it is written by someone who has no medical training nor legal training. My medical information is protected by law under the Data Protection Act 1998 and I have no obligation to disclose it to my line manager or my colleagues or my students or anyone else. Respect for confidentiality needs to be a key principle of the document. There is already a lack of trust with senior management and I certainly wouldn't trust the university with information about my health information.

Finally -- do we know who this strategy? Were mental health experts actually involved?

Ever increasing workloads, short term contracts, unreasonable expectations.

Often line managers fail to support staff to manage workloads, sometimes because they themselves are under so much pressure and sometimes because they forget all the other demands on time. We all seem to be pushed to deliver more grants, get involved with more projects, write more papers, demonstrate greater impact and be more involved with engagement. When you are on a fixed contract you aren't show that you can't cope because you know that your contract is less likely to be renewed.

(The so-called training to teach staff to support student mental health was awful by the way. You can't teach active listening and counselling skills via a video and there should have been much more institution specific information).

I've already commented on their consultation. I'm so glad the UCU has picked this up too. It's completely vacuous. There's a failure to understand the issues and no practical suggestions for improving mental health among staff. The biggest mistake the University have made is to assume that student and staff mental health issues share the same fundamental root. While it's much harder to understand

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the same fundamental root. While it's much harder to understand mental health issues facing young people, staff are typically a generation older and the causes of mental health issues are much easier to identify. To me the three main issues are: (i) workload and associated stress; (ii) poor line management (e.g. our HoS is line manager to ~70 people); (iii) lack of trust in staff to do a professional job (leading to unnecessary and insulting working practices being imposed.)

I'd happily forego a pay rise to have these issues taken seriously.

I agree entirely that there is an absence of any meaningful analysis of the causes of stress and anxiety for our staff. I commend the university for raising the profile of mental health awareness, but the emphasis appears to be focused on acknowledging its existence and offering assistance when people are in crisis rather than helping to prevent it in the first place.

Over the years here I've seen increasing pressure on staff in terms of workload and levels of expectation from senior management. A culture of managerialism rather than that of traditional collegiality in HE has led to an increasingly stressful environment in which to work.

I considered that the survey focused on "headline" issues of harassment, bullying, etc, but did not include what are much more common causes of stress for staff (especially pathway 1 staff): as a non-exhaustive list: high workload, almost impossibility to balance teaching, admin and research, stress in teaching due to tight timetabling in locations split across the University; stress due to increased marking load and reduced time to do marking for the summer exams; combining marking with teaching after the Jan. exams session; working in dusty, noisy, cold or otherwise unpleasant rooms. the limited attention given to the gender pay gap and poor salary increment offer this year (2% vs a national average of 2.3%) are also demoralising. A sense that pathway 1/academic working conditions are not a priority for the University

The strategy is well meaning and, as such, should be partly supported but it's dealing with outcomes rather than causes. To be put it crudely: the University can have as many wellbeing sessions as it wants but it will be hard for over stretched staff to attend them. If the University really wants to address issues of stress and low morale amongst academic staff (I can't speak for others) then it's need to stop de-investing in academic jobs, stop micro managing people, re establish trust in academics and their autonomy, have more clearly defined job roles that value academic expertise and don't treat time as elastic nor filling the holes created by poor centralisation processes, replace 'self service' models with proper support and stop expansion until the resources have caught up.

At its worse, the strategy could actually be a distraction from addressing these issues or a belief that they fix them.

As a final point, we need to be careful talking to students and staff so much about mental health and well being. I applaud the effort but it can

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<p>be counterproductive - people with mental health issues don't want to be reminded about it all the time - they might just want a bit of peace and space. What we need to cultivate in the University is an ethos not of talking about mental health per se but of being there to listen when people need us. I fear a lot of what we are doing is a little bit knee-jerk though I understand the pressures on senior management to respond.</p>	
<p>Uncertainty of research funding and therefore job security has an underlying effect on mental health. I currently don't know if I will have a job next August. A redundancy process has been started. There is therefore a general worry in my mind that I may end up unemployed and likewise a concern that maybe I should be looking for another job immediately, though I don't particularly want a different job if this one continues. I won't find out if I have a job in August until the end of June so the margins are very tight. There are all kinds of decisions to be made in the meantime about joining the redeployment pool, applying for other posts, or doing nothing and waiting - all of which have potentially life-changing consequences. If the university buffered such funding for a year so that I might have some time between finding out if my job will continue or not and having to find a new job it would be much easier to cope with - there would be a logical order to the decision making with proper information available. No amount of fluffy initiatives will help with this purely practical and extremely stressful problem!</p>	<p>407986-407977-40708855</p>
<p>As a Pathway One academic, I would identify two causes of stress and anxiety:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Because of an ever increasing teaching and admin load, I have limited time to do research and have time for my family as it grows up. I am aware that my research profile is short of what it should be at my level, but the extension of the academic year, reduction of Easter holidays, and particularly the ever increasing readiness of support services to contact academics regularly throughout the summer vacation with timebound requests have diminished the concentrated periods of research time that I experienced earlier in my career here.</li> <li>2. There is a strong sense that the nature of teaching and the vision for the curriculum in HE is changing very rapidly. At Bristol, this process is being directed very much from the top, with little discussion of how university-wide proposals affect very different programmes, and a lot of timetables for imposition. As an academic with lead responsibility for teaching in my School, I spend a huge amount of time with colleagues trying to map requirements onto our existing curriculum, knowing that these are making the curriculum worse for both teachers and students. We are using a lot of our innate capacity for innovation and clever solutions in pointless ways, and then don't have it for more useful areas of teaching and research.</li> </ol>	<p>407986-407977-40709023</p>
<p>Increasing the provision of support for wellbeing and mental health is a great step forward but there is a clear hole in the strategy which is the acknowledging the role the university may play in creating some (not all) problems.</p> <p>In my departmental experience, I have seen friends and colleagues handling far too much work and are simply stretched too thinly. I have seen this pattern a lot with friends and colleagues: 1) the academic staff are overworked but can manage to buy out teaching, 2) teaching is given to predominantly post-docs or staff at a similar level, 3) the</p>	<p>407986-407977-40707638</p>

<p>teaching staff are expected to deliver teaching often alongside managing their own research, 4) there is no long-term commitment from the university because ultimately the academic staff are expected to do this, 4) we go back round again. In short, fixed-term staff are used as a stop-gap. This is incredibly detrimental to the fixed-term staff because of the anxiety and stress of impending contract ends and the feeling that you can never turn down anything because you need all the experience you can get to get that next contract.</p> <p>I would also add the UCU have also missed this point during the pension strike. I raised the issue of post-docs striking being damaging to *long-term* security (not engaging in research that may be vital to getting the next contract; not being paid when you are saving/planning for potential gaps between contracts) but only received support for *short-term* security (we can supply food during the strike).</p>	
<p>Any mental health strategy needs to be rooted in the causes of mental health problems. For staff, much of this stems from unmanageable workloads (particularly around assessment periods). It is a question of addressing the cause rather than simple looking to treat the symptom.</p>	<p>407986-407977-40709707</p>
<p>I fully welcome the introduction of the mental health strategy document, and hope that it makes a difference to people through positive action. However, there needs to be more affirmative action on issues like the encroaching working day. People need to be encouraged to take more time off, and not to be constantly checking their emails outside of working hours. I hear on a regular basis of staff, particularly in professional services, who are answering emails to queries outside of their normal working day. People should feel that they can leave work behind and have a break from it. This uncovers issues where load is too high for current teams and so may require more resource. Getting people to "cope" with loads by effectively extending their working day because they have access to email is not acceptable. Things have to change here and leaders of the University need to set the example.</p> <p>On another note it would be helpful if there was more actual openness about mental health and people's stories about their experiences. Having had mental health issues myself I would be perfectly happy to share my experiences with my colleagues so the stigma of these issues was reduced. I think the more we talk about our experiences with grappling with these issues (as sufferers of mental health) the better we will be able to deal with them. Others may gain from knowing that it is perfectly "normal" to be holding down a high-powered job while suffering from anxiety, depression and debilitating mental health issues. This is happening all the time.</p>	<p>407986-407977-40708968</p>
<p>Well - let's be honest - its not hard is it.....</p> <p>Massive increase in student numbers on top of the usual research-side pressures  Decrease in pay  Screwing over of pensions  = staff morale problems, stress and mental health problems  If our senior management can't work this out for themselves they are incompetent.</p>	<p>407986-407977-40709351</p>

<p>Fake consultations, surveys, ppl sitting around in meetings talking for hours (including yourselves), and "action plans" will not solve the problem. The management have shown they do not care about their staff over several years and are being judged by their actions. We are now on the precipice of serious problems with potentially irreversible consequences. The new breed of snr management apparently don't actually understand the importance of their staff, and seem to live in a complete bubble.</p> <p>If we have the best interests of HE at heart, we need to find mechanisms to get rid of them and replace them with a University "civil service", that manages with consent under the direction of democratically appointed senior academics.</p> <p>The idea that a new kind of management is important for strategic direction in HE, or that there is anything fundamentally that hard about running the Uni competently, is a mirage created by self-interested parties who contribute next to nothing to the core mission of the University (and in my opinion are actively damaging our reputation and long term sustainability).</p>	
<p>It is fine as far as it goes.</p> <p>But the 'strategies' do absolutely nothing to identify the underlying causes of mental health. They are not at all strategic because they lack a credible analysis of the problem to be addressed. As such, any new services will just suck in more and more resources as the problems get worse.</p> <p>The proximate cause of these seems to me to be the number of dysfunctional systems we rely on for teaching and administration. The unsettled timetable is a background cause of stress and anxiety. Driven by student over-recruitment, not enough teaching administrators or lecturing staff. Exacerbated by the Temple Quarter project.</p>	<p>407986-407977-40710107</p>
<p>The attention to student mental health issues is to be welcomed but seems to come at the expense of staff mental health as we are asked to look out and support students as well as colleagues, which can result in significant pressures. This is only one of a number of additional aspects to our workload with no commensurate reduction in other areas.</p>	<p>407986-407977-40710774</p>
<p>The strategy is fine in as far as it goes, but that is not very far. Whatever Cornerstones get laid down and discussed, the point remains that Staff stress levels are high because of the increased work load due to expanded student numbers. There are many aspects within a School of the Staff Student interface which are linear in the number of students we have. We may crowd the lecture theatres to capacity but the staff/tutor/supervisors/seminar leaders have to handle those people. We have had a nominal couple of extra staff to deal with this, but again a doubling of numbers (or whatever it is) over 5 years has not seen the concomitant increase in staff support to deal wth the linear increase.</p> <p>The causes of stress seem unaddressed by the Strategy.</p>	<p>407986-407977-40710649</p>
<p>The proposed strategy largely avoids mention of the major cause of</p>	<p>407986-407977-40707772</p>

<p>stress at work, primarily overworking and unrealistic expectations. Workloads appear to be every increasing and there is no joined up thinking to ensure a suitable and achievable balance for individuals. This seems to have been exacerbated by the emergence of a 'two tribes' culture (Professional Services and Academic staff) as the demands of each group on the other creates a gap in accountability. It seems pointless to have a MH strategy that focusses on treatment of and dealing with MH issues while avoiding addressing their root cause. Increasing opportunities for physical exercise, for example, is worthy but should be accompanied by also addressing the overwork issue to reduce the stress the 'exercise' is supposedly treating.</p>	
<p>The strategy does not address the root causes of staff mental health issues including disconnect between the workload allocation model and how many hours staff to work in reality to discharge all their functions in the increasingly demanding framework of REF, TEF where more work is required of staff with no realistic credit allocation in the work allocation model and sufficient salary. Lack of adequate remuneration is a key stressor especially for junior staff who have less / no savings and are not paid enough to move forward in life ( eg save to purchase a property). This is more acutely for junior staff who live away from Bristol and incur significant additional expenditure without any contribution from the university (travel and accommodation) to just be able to work.</p>	<p>407986-407977-40710884</p>
<p>I am leaving the university because of stress. My return to work after a period of illness was very poorly managed. I was made to feel unvalued, insecure, and pushed to meet new, unreasonable targets under threat of non-confirmation. Overall, my experience at Bristol was one of constantly playing catch-up, fraught interactions with colleagues over eleventh-hour deadlines (especially around marking), ever-changing systems and admin staff turnover, intrusive and dictatorial performance management, mock-REF madness eating into annual leave, and generally not having any down time.</p>	<p>407986-407977-40710019</p>
<p>I do not think the survey addresses a key issue with mental health and well-being - the power imbalance that manifests itself in staff review and supervision, and ultimately in employment, progression and promotion opportunities. The legacy of patronage, which gives professors and chief investigators power over their staff team, means that staff are not confident in raising issues because they worry it will be held against them in the future. This is unlikely to be in the form of overt bullying - it is more likely to be their contract coming to an end with coffee and cakes and a short speech wishing them well in the future.</p> <p>If the University wants to implement and manage 'change' then an important change has to be in the way senior staff understand and exercise power. "I suffered and so should you" is not good enough.</p>	<p>407986-407977-40710493</p>
<p>I think that little is being done for staff mental health. I believe that much more should be done in order to avoid reasons for stress on the staff that come from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- working constantly overtime due to (among other things) duties that many times prove unnecessary</li> <li>- being under temporary contracts, or worse, being hourly paid staff makes one believe that s/he cannot say no to anything s/he is asked to do</li> </ul>	<p>407986-407977-40710878</p>

- feeling under the threat of students to whom we have made believe that, having paid high fees, they can expect to be said yes on whatever they ask (additional stress is on women, whom the students tend to respect less for reasons that obviously go beyond this institution)  
- being part of an environment in which real human contact among colleagues is not encouraged enough and makes many staff members feel isolated or not an integral part of the department/school they belong to

The university seems to push mental health issue as a completely individual problem, why the causes are sometimes related to work and systemic issue within the university.

As new hire and a junior lecturer. Some of the issue:

- low salary vs rental price making it very hard to move with family within the area (many postdocs in my research group are also in the same situation).

- very little support for new teaching staff. We are sent to teach without any training. We are hired for our research profile. The solution (i.e. CREATE) is inadequate as it comes after teaching duties have started, other measures are of a box-ticking type to absolve management of any responsibility in regards of the quality of the course delivered. Learning on the job probably works, but seem unfair for the students you have during your first year.

- Administrative staff push responsibility onto lecturers. Type of answers I received "I only click on the button, you have to figure out why you cannot upload the exams" (person in charge of organising the exam) or "I only do the schedule, you have to contact X or Y to address conflicts" (two teaching duties at the exact same timeslot and that was the answer of the person responsible for the scheduling). As a newly hired staff, it is very distressing.

- Tutoring for the well being of students is a joke. Newly hired staff were told 3 days in advance of their responsibilities, with no documentation of what those responsibilities entail.

- Probably, the most glaring issue: incomplete instructions given for last minute deadlines. Information circulated about some internal deadline the week before, with very vague instructions. Administration complaints about low staff participation (<10%), this time accompanied by the actual details of what staff members were supposed to do (information that was not available in the first place).

All of this results in staff feeling they are fighting against an administration that does not care. Plus the feeling of being in a situation of constant rush with no ability to organise oneself properly, because nothing is communicated sufficiently in advance and/or clearly. This also come in conflict with research duties that determine one future career. I believe this is 1) very stressful for staff; 2) extremely detrimental to students.

I am a former member of staff and therefore I can't access Bristol University's new policy document so I can't comment on this directly. However I would like to relate my own experience of mental health at

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Bristol.

While working as a lecturer at Bristol I was subjected to a campaign of bullying and harassment by my line manager, a professor at Bristol. This lasted for over a year and eventually resulted in my being dismissed by the university under very dishonest circumstances.

This bullying resulted in my suffering from workplace-related stress. Physical symptoms included asthma and allergies, which were reported to management. I was referred to occupational health, who recommended a stress risk assessment be undertaken by the departmental safety officer. This was done and several recommendations were made to senior management to make changes to the way I was being line managed. As a result I was given a meeting with senior management. At this meeting I was told they were not prepared to make the required changes unless I first filed a formal grievance against my line manager, which I was specifically advised to do by three managers including the deputy head of department. However, when I did file the grievance outlining specific examples of bullying and showing how this resulted in physical and mental health problems, the university refused to consider my grievance. In a letter which directly contradicted the information previously given by senior management (and the university have freely admitted this) I was informed that a person under ISR has no right to file a formal grievance for any reason, even for such serious allegations. The university has never investigated nor taken seriously these allegations and refused to consider them at my appeal hearing. No changes were ever made to management despite recommendations being made by OH and the H&S officer and bullying continued unchecked.

In conclusion, I would like to state that the university does not take mental health seriously, refuses to address the causes of stress. I believe I was dismissed in retaliation for filing a grievance related to mental health.

A PR exercise, designed to make it look as if they care / are doing something.

If they don't know the main causes of staff stress already they need to do some "change management" of the senior leadership team.

It seems they want to continue in the same expansionist, market-led, profits-driven, corporate business strategy then put a "wellbeing" sticking plaster over all the harm they have caused.

Show some goddamn leadership or see this ship sink.

I said much of this in my response to the university consultation (though admittedly it didn't ask me to). The causes of poor mental health in staff seem to me to be relatively straightforward:

#### 1. Workload

There is too much work and not enough people to do it. This applies to academic staff and colleagues in professional services. For instance, the admin team in the school of humanities is so short-handed that a few

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weeks ago everyone in HUMS was sent an email asking that we do not send our subject administrator's emails. There were good operational reasons for this decision - email traffic was too high, and they needed to focus on essential processes. But it is also sort of absurd for a whole academic school to be asked not to contact their administrators, and this is not a situation that should have been allowed to come to pass. This team has not been adequately resourced following schoolification and particularly following the expansion in student numbers (when there were 60-70 students per year in the department of English there were 4.0 FTE in administration: we are subsisting on something like an ad-hoc 1 at the moment, and even our 'full capacity' is less than 4, even though student numbers have tripled, staff numbers have just about caught up, and recent university initiatives have dramatically increased the complexity of our curricula (and, in particular, the type and number of assessments). I've said this before, but this institution needed to think more carefully about the qualitative impact expansion would have, and not just the quantitative: the nature of our work has changed, not just the volume. Our colleagues in professional services work incredibly hard but they are not superhuman. A side effect of an under-resourced administrative team is that admin tasks are devolved to academics, increasing workload and reducing efficiency / quality of administration (frankly, not all academics are good at administration). The high turnover of administrative staff both compounds this problem and is one of its causes (there is a drain on experience and institutional memory, there is insufficient capacity to train new staff, and as a result job satisfaction plummets: imagine how it would feel to have an overly high workload and little idea of how best to tackle it). Employ more people, and improve their pay and conditions so that they stay in their jobs.

Speaking personally, I can only assume that I was hired because there was what seemed at the time to be a reasonably well-founded perception that I would be very good at my job - excellent, even. And sometimes I do excellent work. But it is becoming vanishingly rare. High workload means you have hundreds of brilliantly colleagues who are often only able to produce adequate work. I constantly feel as if I am flying by the seat of my pants, in terms of research, teaching, and administration. This does not improve my wellbeing.

## 2. Power and Governance

Power needs to devolve from the senior management team to the people who deliver the work that maintains this institution. High workload is one thing, but having weeks and months if not years of work undone because of an initiative imposed from above (as happened with the eradication of three 2-year old units in English by way of the requirement for 1st year students to take an open unit or Bristol Futures unit), or being asked to do extra work on initiatives which your experience and expertise and much available scholarship demonstrate to be ill founded, is another. The landscape changes so quickly that it is difficult to be enthusiastic about any new project, especially ones related to teaching, because an increase in contact hours or new curriculum framework or something else might render a carefully designed and road-tested unit defunct. As staff have been saying for years, we are not asking for consultation, which usually proves to be empty (I remember being assured that Bristol Futures would be an add-on or supplement not impacting the integrity of our curricula for

on or supplement, not impacting the integrity of our curricula, for instance). We are asking for the power to determine our own priorities and workload locally. This means that the Senior Team have to relinquish some power. SMT should be directed by the needs of the communities they serve, and not vice versa.

The strategy does not tackle the root causes of mental ill health at the university, and treats mental health as though it is something people bring to work like they do their handbag! The issues the university should focus on tackling are those that it can influence such as short term contracts / insecure working for pathway 2/3 staff and unrealistic expectations for pathway 1 staff - particularly as it relates to the recruitment and progression procedures which are archaic at best. Putting people under huge amounts of stress to succeed in research (at least some of which is outside of their control) while ramping up the teaching workload is clearly a contributor to depression and anxiety in the workforce. I don't mean that support mechanisms aren't important but its ridiculous to ignore the roots of mental ill health, many of which are controllable. The university also needs to regulate far more strongly the use of email and calendar, which take over people's lives at all levels of the organisation - it is clearly unacceptable to put appointments in other people's calendars without consent or expect responses to emails outside of working hours, yet this happens every day.

I replied to this consultation to say that it is great that they are proposing not to discriminate against people experiencing mental health issues but they also need to consider how the University is causing mental distress via:

1. Insecure employment contracts - how can you have good mental health when you have unemployment hanging over you, possibly the loss of your home, and falling into poverty? Even so called 'permanent' contracts which are tied to external funding create this insecurity. If you do find another job, it is often in a different place to where you live, so you will also be experiencing another threatened loss of your community or family and your regular activities etc

2. Workload - not having time to rest and maintain yourself and your life can lead to mental distress, as well as the stress of having to do everything quickly and intensely and anxiety about meeting deadlines.

3. Bullying - obviously this is very bad for the mental health of the targets. Even being ignored or excluded (considered mild bullying compared to some I have experienced) has the same psychological impact as being physically hit, according to studies. Bullying is a result of 1 and 2 - stressed professors taking out their distress on vulnerable, dispensable workers without secure contracts.

4. Replacing staff with technology - the endless disappearing of finance and other support staff and their replacement by technology which frequently does not work is very frustrating and a source of daily stress. What support that is available is 'faceless' - we no longer have names and faces to relate to just the name of some system hyphen support.

I could go on, but basically poor mental health is caused by stress and the University is creating stress for its staff which will also impact on the students. No amount of voaa and meditation classes can make up for

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Students: the amount of yoga and meditation classes can make up for this.

The solution is simple - use the £47.3 million in profits the University made last year in profits to employ more support staff and more academic staff on secure, meaningfully permanent contracts.

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We all have a responsibility for staff mental health and need to work together on it. Both reducing the sources of stress and coping better with it (this isn't an either/or). Empathy for each other is the start.

We need good, compulsory training for managers and leaders in the organisation to understand the implications of their actions. Managers should routinely consider the impact of their actions on staff wellbeing.

Individual staff need quick, responsive access to counselling, coaching, sleep clinics, etc etc on demand.

The university should review its written and unwritten ways of operating. Eg large scale reorganisations of departments seem to inevitably take a long time, and have very negative effects on staff wellbeing. Smaller piecemeal changes could be more effective.

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I am not alone in saying that the university management does not talk about or ask about the causes of staff stress and anxiety and is not willing to engage in this sort of talk. In contrast, the causes of student stress are openly discussed.

In my experience (now and in the past), causes of stress and anxiety in the work place include these:

being on a series of insecure contracts;

feeling that you have to work evenings and weekends because of the culture (including unhealthy email habits);

being treated differently because of gender (including pay);

being afraid to speak out because you know every time that you don't conform, your card gets marked a little more by the layer of indentikit management that sits above you; the culture of pressure to tick meaningless boxes in order to "get on" is soul destroying;

accumulating more and more things added to your role every year (too much work);

constant change - particularly not being supported by professional services in my role because staff change so often that no one knows how to do the job or there are not enough staff employed;

narrative of competition in the sector and crazy growth strategy has physical impacts, eg on workload, but is also imbued with the sense of apocalyptic dread as we race to the bottom - I feel that management tell the story this way on purpose to frighten us;

<p>worry about pension and not being about to ever buy a house - should I live somewhere else or change career?</p>	
<p>It corporate bollocks</p> <p>Workloads, working conditions and equity are what the university should be addressing to improve our wellbeing and mental health</p>	<p>407986-407977-40712634</p>
<p>There are some really important and positive measures in the new UoB Staff Mental Health Strategy, particularly around positive behaviours and cultural attitudes to mental health. However, it strikes me that it avoids the central issues which cause HE staff mental health problems, many of which are additional to the general mental health issues that face both the wider population and the student body. First, is workload in HE and Bristol, under-resourcing meaning that staff are stretched -- whether that be in administration, teaching or research. Second, is precarious contract agreements which are so widespread, placing unbearable pressure on early career researchers. Third, is the cyclical pressures associated with particular times of the REF cycle, which in some Schools places huge pressure on particular staff members. These are not easy to solve, but until they are at least considered any strategy will only be a sticking plaster and won't last long. Mental health is not just about moments of crisis or about changing behaviours - it stems from actual working conditions too.</p>	<p>407986-407977-40712583</p>
<p>As a line manager of a team of 9 professional services staff, a number of whom have ongoing physical and/or mental health issues, I find that looking after the wellbeing of my staff is extremely time consuming and has never been given enough importance alongside the other duties and tasks associated with my role. If managers are expected to play an increasingly larger role in supporting staff mental wellbeing then this should be recognised in job descriptions, training and support, and remuneration.</p> <p>The University of Bristol relies heavily on the good will of its staff, particularly in professional services, who are prepared to go the extra mile to cover sickness absence of colleagues or recruitment gaps lasting several months. It is very difficult to keep student offices staffed appropriately because the centralised FSTA interview panel process is not keeping pace with demand. We wait several months to fill vacant posts, calling on existing staff to work above and beyond. This becomes wearing and demoralising because it feels that nobody really cares about us.</p>	<p>407986-407977-40712138</p>
<p>I feel that the strategy doesn't appear to name the causes of stress and anxiety, and reads like lip service to the idea that staff wellbeing really matters. Does the University genuinely want to understand what the root causes of mental ill health are?</p> <p>I have worked at a number of universities in fairly similar roles, and have never been pushed to the point that I have been in this job. I work far too many hours, at some times of year to the detriment of my personal life and my mental health, and don't feel that anyone particularly cares about this</p>	<p>407986-407977-40711726</p>

about this.

For what it's worth, I believe that the key causes of stress and anxiety in my area of Professional Services are:

1. The expectation by the senior team/senior management that ambitious targets can be met, but without the necessary resourcing to do so without pushing staff beyond what is reasonable, both in terms of workload and working beyond their grades.
2. The inability of managers to push back on their manager(s)/senior leadership, meaning staff 'on the ground' have no choice to take on additional activities, and put in extra hours to get things done
3. Lack of strategic leadership, meaning (very limited) time is wasted
4. A blame culture in some managers and a sense that you are not being backed by your manager(s), who are quick to point the finger and focus on how to justify mistakes, for fear of disappointing their managers/senior leadership.

Training for managers on how to deal with mental ill health is lacking, currently issues are swept under the carpet and not taken seriously. I'm not sure that a quick online training course will do the job in many cases. This should be more than a tick box exercise.

NWOW has, at least for some teams, had a detrimental effect on staff wellbeing, so the focus on creating space/time for 'fun' activities, whilst laudable, is less important than creating a day-to-day work environment that works for people. The 3rd floor on 31 Great George Street for example has far too many people, is noisy, and doesn't allow teams to sit together any more. Not only is this bad for team morale and cohesion but it is a disaster when it comes to new staff joining or people returning from time away (e.g. mat leave). Apart from this, the toilets and kitchen facilities are inadequate for the number of people on the floor. Other teams/divisions on the other hand, both in GGS and other buildings, have plenty of space, which does make us feel like we've got a raw deal. When we're supposed to be at the forefront of promoting the University, this does seem a little rich!

The idea of additional activities for wellbeing is a good one (I would for example, appreciate being allowed to take an extra 30 mins at lunch to exercise) but the sad fact is that because of workloads, many of us simply won't have the time to take advantage of these initiatives.

I'd like to be sure that an evidence-based approach is taken. In other words, the strategy is implemented and then there is a follow-up assessment to determine whether it has impacted staff well being across all staff, not just those that seek help or who actively engage with the process.

My suspicion is that alongside specific workplace pressures, a more general chronic and potentially important pressure is simply the number of hours that people work. This impacts the opportunity to engage with friends and family outside office hours which, in turn, affects mental health. I'm sure that my mental health would improve if I had a lunch

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break and worked under 40 hours per week. As a senior academic I always work 50+ hours and I rarely take my holiday entitlement. As someone with a young family and elderly relatives this inevitably takes its toll. Despite my best efforts I don't see a clear path to reducing my hours while meeting the expectations of my role. I'd like to see how forming a strategy will effect a meaningful change in work-life balance, and I suspect this view is shared by many of my colleagues.

My strong recommendation is that working hours are audited, both before and after the implementation of the strategy.

Although on page 5 the strategy acknowledges issues around the gender pay gap, casualisation and workload, these are not discussed at all in the Mental Health Strategy. The stresses upon colleagues owing to opaque workload models is one of the key areas that the University Management can take a stance on, rather than suggesting that things like more physical exercise will reduce the mental pressures on colleagues dealing with burdens such as online marking, and the burdens of caring for the mental health of their students.

Another key issue that affects many colleagues's mental health is casualisation. There are ways in which the University could again take a clear stance on measures to improve the lives of colleagues working on fixed term/temporary/part-time casual contracts. One to ensure that contracts for hourly paid teaching are issued months in advance of the work starting, and not months after the work has started. Providing more career and mentoring support for colleagues on casual contracts.

Overall, more investment in staff recruitment - with clear EDI principles in recruiting - would relieve some of the burdens over workload and casualisation. Although the University constantly tells us that they have limited budgets for staff salaries, the University should reprioritise budgets and invest more in staff salaries, healthcare for staff, and recruiting more staff to deal with growing student numbers in certain subject areas.

The Strategy does not mention the mental health issues faced by staff who have experienced racism in the workplace. It would be good for the University to draw up more robust and open policies and acknowledgement about the stresses colleagues from black and minority ethnic backgrounds face in relation to racism.

I think the key issue is that structural factors are not addressed or discussed in the strategy. Workload is perhaps the most obvious example. There are, though, others. The scale of change, often poorly managed change, has increased workloads, but is an independent source of stress in itself. Better cost/benefit analysis incorporating fully the impact of staff would lead to some initiatives simply never happening. We need better testing processes (I'm thinking here especially of IT changes) to inform that cost/benefit analysis.

Having read the strategy, I cannot help but feel that it is all too vague and will not be applied in practice. I think that the general culture and attitude underpinning the university needs to change. I do not think there is a willingness to truly discuss the stress and pressure staff are under, or indeed the impact of the academic pressures that our students are under

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students are under.

Resourcing of staff is a serious issue in our department. In our service, we have been waiting over a year for a permanent Receptionist to be appointed...and the job advert has not even gone out yet! To take over year to advertise and appoint a member of staff seems absolutely ludicrous to me. This has had a negative impact on the whole team and, in particular, the only permanent Receptionist already in post.

There is no mention of a standardised flexible working policy in the strategy. This remains at managers discretion. I think that this should be a policy across the university as flexible working practices are proven to have a positive impact on staff wellbeing and empowering staff to manage a healthy work/life balance. Flexible working does not just refer to hours worked during the day, but also to the possibility of 'wellbeing days' (days off that can be taken when we need them, rather than using sick days, paid parental leave, working from home to be more standardised (at the moment, we have to provide justification for this when we want to work from home).

There is too much of a hierarchical approach to the university. This needs to be discouraged. Every single member of staff comes with their own skills, experiences and ability to contribute to each team across the university. Each individual's contribution should be valued and encouraged, despite their pay grade. This change in attitude alone would do a lot to improve staff wellbeing.

Line managers should receive training in mental health so that feel more equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to support their staff effectively.

There is much more I want to say but, ironically, I am too busy and do not have time! A lot of what I want to say is in relation to my own service and the issues there and may not be all that applicable to the university wide staff strategy.

We are constantly required to take on additional tasks in addition (rather than instead) of existing work loads, and yet we are also expected to maintain the highest standards in all that we do. Academics have multiple and often conflicting priorities made more challenging by increasing teaching loads; time consuming student feedback and ever increasing student support on top of the continued expectation to produce internationally leading research papers and win grants in a hyper-competitive environment. We all want to do our best but there is no time to do anything properly - this is a major stress!

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It is vague and unambitious. It does not address the causes of stress and mental health issues at work, e.g. unrealistic workloads, stress, not being recognised for doing work well. The entire document only mentioned workload once. Of course, it behoves management to close their eyes to the underlying problem, because although simple to address, it will cost money. The proposal for collecting and analysing data on staff mental health also lacks clarity. The strategy should address how data on workload and mental health issues will be collected, evaluated, correlated and used to address imbalances where they are detected. I expected to see plans for University-wide consistent workload evaluation and plans to protect staff who complain about

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<p>workload evaluation, and plans to protect staff who complain about workload from being disadvantaged in progression and promotion processes. The current model simply assumes that it is sufficient for workload to be evenly distributed across members of a Faculty; i.e. as long as most people are managing about the same amount of work then it's ok. This is a fallacy. Currently, most academics feel that they cannot even complain about their workload because the problem will simply be transferred to another colleague. And what was that nonsense on sleep clinics. It was very presumptuous to assume that our problems stem from poor sleep hygiene. How about giving academics enough time to do their work during the day so they don't have to spend nights doing it? Frankly, the entire document was an assault on one's intelligence.</p>	
<p>I think that the key cause of stress and anxiety for staff at Bristol is 'heavy workloads'. Over the years we have seen an increase in students numbers. In my own department we do not have enough staff to undertake all work that is necessary to complete. This brings a lot of pressure on my colleagues and myself, particularly, when covering for absent staff due to sickness.</p> <p>Sadly, the University is not acknowledging the cause of the problem. It is vital that the University start looking at the cause of stress and anxiety and find a solution to address the real cause of the problem.</p>	<p>407986-407977-40714514</p>
<p>It is a sticking plaster for the University's expectations of staff. Higher education is underfunded and the number of students we are expected to teach and look after in any pastoral sense really is unmanageable and certainly not sustainable.</p> <p>Bristol is the most top-down institution I have ever worked in.. and I have worked in other Universities and government science labs. Local school managers are just not listening, all the focus is on the students ..but don't they realise if you don't look after your staff ultimately it is students who will suffer anyway.</p> <p>I really would like to see some pushing back to senior management where expectations are unrealistic. The tough "macho" success culture is ugly and we wonder why we have such mental health problems in Bristol</p>	<p>407986-407977-40715922</p>
<p>My workload is totally unmanageable. Work is planned and requested with no consideration to our capacity to deliver it, there is no real way to challenge this, and no money for extra staff. Staffing levels have fallen significantly but workloads have increased. It is unsustainable and I often feel overwhelmed. this needs to be dealt with to improve my mental health,</p>	<p>407986-407977-40717602</p>
<p>This 'strategy' is a little like me going to a GP exhibiting a range of unpleasant symptoms but instead of making a diagnosis she instead says that "our aim is to care for your well-being". "Yes," I might answer, "I would hope for that. Now what actually will you prescribe to help me...?"</p>	<p>407986-407977-40718478</p>
<p>I can easily identify the major source of stress in my life at the moment - one that has tangibly affected my mental health: the REF. I am under explicit pressure to produce a certain number of items at a high quality in a short timeframe. While the departmental language has couched this in terms of 'support we can offer you', there is also clear expectation that I produce this work by a certain time, and some veiled threats of having to 'justify myself to xx committee' if I don't. The interactions I had with my Head of Department and FDR about this occurred just after I</p>	<p>407986-407977-40720438</p>

with my head of Department and I DV about this occurred just after I returned from annual leave (taken at the very end of a long summer working!) and I felt like I should not have gone on leave, even though I was fully entitled to, and needed a break.

The feeling of being told, basically, that the work I've produced so far is not good enough by the standards of this particular metric, has been a big blow to my confidence and has taken a long time to process. I have set aside a planned book and don't feel like I would be supported in any funding applications by my Department. At the lowest moments, I have felt like a hamster on a wheel, just churning out what is expected and useful to the Department. At these times, I feel like my value is not as a colleague, but simply as a producer of papers.

So when the source of my mental health concerns is the University, and the system of ranking and rating our research and determining our value, then I don't feel confident that I will find the support I need at work.

The University got its Academic staff into this dark place: I do not trust it to get us out.

It is quite simple: staff are stressed because of the ever escalating demands the University places on them, year in, year out. I have raised this in my own staff review and development interviews and paperwork over the last 8 years, and what has been done by the University to alleviate my stress? Two words: Absolutely nothing.

I have worked here as an Academic a long time now, and over that time (especially in the last 10-15 years) there has been a continual and grinding erosion of "Academic freedom". The University management has driven this decay internally and been complicit with external powers doing the same thing.

For Academics the University should begin to alleviate and reverse the erosion of Academic freedom by hiring more Academic staff and Admin staff to support Academics in their academic duties. Anything else will be simply shuffling the deckchairs on the Titanic.

There are several causes of stress, however the main one is workload - both acute and chronic. This can be seen in the way the working day is by necessity endless (only way to get round to answering emails/doing all work is by working late evenings and weekends. All evenings and weekends), and this pace now has to be maintained continuously (the terms are too long, and the 'vacations' in between filled with marking or graduate teaching, or open days, or fieldcourses, or other admin workload). I am currently finding it extremely difficult to find any time that I am 'allowed' to take as holiday since nearly all weeks have some sort of teaching or admin deadline in them.

How we have internalised this constant pressure was really brought home to me recently. My youngest child was in the paediatric intensive care unit (PICU). While we were there, one of the PICU nurses asked us what we did, and on being told we were academics that worked for the university told us that PICU had great eduroam connections. and that

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University told us that they had great career connections, and that other academics who had had children in PICU previously had commented that it had been great to be able to continue working while in PICU. It worries me that as a group, University academics are now notorious for prioritising keeping afloat at work above so much else - including their mental health at a phenomenally stressful time such as when having a child recovering from a life-threatening illness.

The main causes of stress and anxiety are fairly obvious across Professional Services - we are not appreciated as human beings any more. We are expected to do too many things in too short a time, with more work arriving daily and very little time to finish anything off satisfactorily. Then when things go wrong we find that we are working in a blame culture where everyone has a fear of admitting fault to their seniors. Our senior managers claim that everything is a "resounding success" whilst we know that projects are failing, people are breaking and our output is sub-standard. Very intelligent, capable people who understand how to improve things in the University are leaving by the dozens, to be replaced by temps and contractors who don't know how things work and won't be here long enough to care about it. More people brought in "from the commercial sector" who don't understand the key factors in how to improve the University and take months or years to get up to the speed of experienced staff here.

All of this starts with the senior management team, who don't seem to recognise that they cannot keep telling departments to do work without resourcing it. Big project like Temple Quarter will fail because it's just another of the many, many juggling balls that we are trying to keep in the air. Creating a DVC to manage it is fine at that level but can you clone the rest of us too, so we have some breathing space and can deal with these pressures?

Can we also be allowed to get things wrong, without an inquisition and finger pointing? True creativity and innovation only exist in an environment where people are allowed to fail and try again, and again, and again.

I have read the strategy, and find it difficult to respond. This is all too amorphous. To summarise - the University will adopt range of strategies for the benefit of individuals, schools and the University as a whole with a commitment to explore the causes and measure the success of strategies. That pretty much covers all the bases. Everything is very sensible, ought to be in place already, and does not include the sort of language and vision that is going to promote a step change in attitude or belief.

This is not an action plan, rather more a mood shift or acknowledgment of problem with commitment to explore the issues. Why not put in place an effective MyReview programme that reveals the problem at an individual level and train management teams to gather the information and implement plans. Convince me that MyReview has captured the demands of the employees and management have systems in place to react to this. MyReview is bottom up with minor element of signposting and often at the wrong time of year to bring about change. And on that front - I have spent more time on staff survey and this mental health strategy than my own case through MyReview.. and no time to engage in the paperwork for a promotion process I have lost confidence in.

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<p>There are too many initiatives running in parallel and their failure to deliver at a time of rapidly increasing numbers of UG and PGT students without resource is stretching our ability to cope.. we are at breaking point. Governance review, SLSP, promotion review - what is the state of play with each of these? The last of these concerns me most... stop rewarding fast-track external-esteem cash generators who are more likely to be the root cause of angst in the teams that support them or cover the teaching they might have delivered. Recognise that the foundations for a good university are those back at base, creating community, engaging locally, being available, flexible, caring... reward them, promote them, celebrate them, and most importantly, look after them.</p>	
<p>The University's Staff strategy is typical of its staff strategies: it is dismissal dressed up as consultation. It is nothing but platitudes, stating and re-stating the obvious, and vague condescension. It does not address the obvious causes of staff stresses: overcrowding of the student body (my school regularly timetables based on less than 100% attendance, we have students sitting on floors, and are asked by management to knowingly contravene fire regulations: there is no room for the numbers we are required to take); consequent over-work due to increased teaching demands on staff; irrational senior management demands for increased REF output in a stressed environment with fewer resources; and, reductions in pay, including proposed cuts to pensions that will impoverish futures. Management at this university is woeful in its disregard for anything but it's blind ideological self-regard. I love my work; I have come to hate my job at this university.</p>	<p>407986-407977-40732856</p>
<p>It fails to mention the elephant in the room that is the ever increasing workload that academic staff are expected to cope with. There have been further delays with workload modelling in our school (no surprise there as I'm sure this would illustrate the disparity between staff workloads and an expectation that is completely unattainable whilst maintaining a healthy work-life balance!</p> <p>Tinkering at the edges with staff "well being week" and advice on mindfulness and to be physically active (when do we have the time?) may help with the symptoms but does nothing to address the underlying causes of work-related stress.</p>	<p>407986-407977-40733620</p>
<p>Apologies, but I think that the Bristol Staff Mental Health Strategy is just a pile of well-meant but fogging words. I've waited more than six months to get an appointment with a counsellor and as long as the number of counsellors isn't increased or vouchers for external counsellors are given out, I do not see any improvement by launching the new strategy.</p>	<p>407986-407977-40735120</p>
<p>Key cause of staff stress:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. far too much to do, meaning working long hours, sometimes through the night (missing sleep altogether)</li> <li>2. spending too much time trying to sort out HR, staffing, finance, and contracting issues, meaning no time left for project work. Shortage of HR, finance, and contracting staff and support means that this takes a frustratingly long time, preventing academics from focussing on getting</li> </ol>	<p>407986-407977-40737158</p>

frustratingly long time, preventing academics from focussing on getting grants and delivering the work promised

Solutions:

1. Provide sufficient numbers of staff and systems to support the academic work done in the university
2. Value the work that staff do in terms other than pure monetary profit

I'm sure there are innumerable causes of stress and anxiety at work, but just a few that myself and/or my colleagues have experienced (in no particular order) include:

The constant pressure for Pathway 2 staff of being on fixed-term (or euphemistically called 'open-ended' contracts) with little or no job security.

Allied to this, as well as the stress of not being sure if your job will continue beyond a certain time point, the pressures of having to look for and hopefully obtain future employment while still trying to write up findings from the previous job because paid time to do so is not properly protected. And failure to write papers, of course, affects future career prospects.

Working part-time because jobs are not properly funded, and yet still having to try and cram all the work that is required into a few days a week.

Having to do a second job outside UoB (because of part-time work and lack of security) - which means less ability to be flexible in either job.

Lack of supportive line management - because line managers are themselves under pressure and over-stretched.

I love both my jobs (both in academia although at different institutions) but the demands and pressures over the years have definitely increased and in recent months I have witnessed a number of friends and colleagues having to take time off for work related stress, while I suspect others are not far behind.

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Having completed the surveys for both staff and student mental health strategies, it feels like the staff one is simply a tweaked version of the student one with no identified next steps yet. I appreciate that student mental health is incredibly high profile and needs to be addressed, however this has been managed by front line staff (such as admin, tutors, supervisors) who have little training in the area and have suffered as a result of feeling like any negative action a student takes is therefore on them. Which is not necessarily the job they signed up for. This should be acknowledged as a problem as despite the changes in staffing to address student mental health, this will still take place. There is also the toll taken on people (such as FEMs) who have to manage things like appeals - reading 50+ appeals from students who have had bad things happen to them, with a hard deadline for making a decision is tough going for those who have to do it. Aside from the student-related activities, this also ignores the systemic problems within the university and higher education as a whole which

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problems within the university and higher education as a whole which contribute to stress and anxiety for academic staff members (eg precarious contracts, demands placed by things like the REF and TEF, environment of working extreme hours etc etc). This should be looked at, rather than treating the symptoms and moving the onus of mental health management onto the staff member suffering by suggesting that they need to engage more in self care or whatever in order to cope better (with an implicit suggestion that you've not tried hard enough at self care if you're still depressed afterwards), rather than looking at the bigger picture.

More flexibility needs to be given to manage and support staff. Usually, this is best done at departmental level, and it is very effective if department is a non-toxic one. For my own circumstance, I had an agreement with my department that would have enabled me to complete a book for REF two years ago. The agreement cost nothing financially, as replacement teaching was already in place. However, this was undermined by the previous head of school and the dean at the time, who said no deals could be done and that the work load was the work load, regardless of workloads in previous years. The upshot for me was several weeks off work due to stress brought on by the acrimonious manner in which the entire situation had been managed, and the sudden increased workload at the last minute for me. Six months later, the dean said that departments did need to be more flexible to support staff in completing REFable outputs: exactly the opposite of what he had done in my own case. And no apology was ever forthcoming from him.

"Mental health" is not "absence of illness" but an expression of vital energies driven by feelings of autonomy and self-respect.

The primary causes of (di)stress for \*academic\* members of staff are the removal of autonomy and the loss of a sense that they are respected and trusted by the institution.

Academics are people driven by curiosity and by a "work ethic" directly proportional to their own sense of passionate engagement and mission. By introducing a progressively more managerialist and reductive approach to both teaching provision and research, this is being supplanted by a culture of bad faith where staff and students alike feel like fodder for a project of institutional aggrandisement that they do not own.

More basically, specifically and internally, the "professional services" of the university increasingly feel like a hostile, ignorant, and woefully inept bureaucracy, treating academic staff as a "resource" and not as the owners of the academic enterprise.

Fundamentally, academic salaries are not high relative to potential earnings within the Professions. Members of academic staff were invariably the stellar performers among their cohorts as students at university. However they are content to sacrifice monetary goals in favour of the security and freedom to pursue their interests, and the pleasure of working with colleagues and students in curiosity-led and non-commercialised (not instrumental) relationships. Their choice of career has been driven by passion for their work as teachers and learners engaged in a process of open-ended discovery. That should be

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learners engaged in a process of open-ended discovery, that should be fully acknowledged in terms of respect and freedom, and the "university" should be there to serve their mission and not the other way round.

As far as teaching and learning are concerned, the university should not be a sort of super "trade school" for the commercial world, but a place of social and intellectual leadership, and students should therefore know that to be part of it is a privilege and not simply a commercial investment. This means re-discovering the energies of learning, with less focus on formulaic standardisation and more risk.

Great that the University is taking this initiative and to set it out as an ongoing conversation. Was interested to read about the new services offered including Employee Assistance Programme and Report and Support - I was not aware of the EAP, great to be given this resource.

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Two comments

1. Recent training delivered within CREATE: Handling Difficult conversations (Mon 29 Oct 2018) - simple but excellent and effective insights given in this course on how to diffuse conflict and improve effective communication could be made available more generally to all staff (perhaps embedded in the staff review process? perhaps embedded in the Acceptable Behaviour Policy?)

2. We need to talk about the elephant in the room: the fact that doing more in less time is endemic in our H.E. system. As hard as I try not to, I work way more hours than paid (regularly working 5 days when paid to do 4) and so do most of my colleagues. When I try to stick to my hours, this is undermined by the fact that my peers, who do not have the childcare commitments, are able to step into my shoes to do the task to which I have said no - they do so because they are keen to get promotion. Doing more for less is endemic in our system: we cost our time too low when applying for grants in the hope that this will make us successful, then do not have time to deliver quality work in the time allotted. I have just written myself out of an application to extend a grant, because I thought it would make the extension more acceptable to the funders - in reality I will still be called on to work on the project 'in my spare time'. How do we as individuals protect ourselves against an entire system, (in which UoB is just one but nonetheless a very powerful agent) which is always demanding more of us than we have resource to give?

I have recently been on maternity leave and have, in the last 6 months of it, been treated really badly by HR and not had much support from my own HoD. It is a stressful and challenging time in anybody's life to have a small baby, sleepless nights, so many things to figure out and on top of that try and stay active at least a bit in academia (impossible to stop completely anyway). But then to load on top of that really inconsistent communication, to outright offensive emails and lack of consideration is another matter. I did not feel heard in my case against HR's maternity payment claims from me (arguing I had been overpaid). And it really caused me a lot of stress. I almost completely lost faith in Bristol as my employer. Only after prolonged dispute and with the help from UCU, was it possible to return to normal and for me to get over this. But if say someone already had some stress or mental problems and had that

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Someone already had some stress or mental problems and had that experinece, and maybe not heard of the work of the union in time (say they are from abroad and think joining a union is an offence, or what have you), this might have sent them into a possibly very bad state. This stress was caused by Bristol HR. And as such the university should behave better in the future, consider individual cases, rather than claim "equality" issues in treating their employees on a case by case basis. The capitalist culture of employment, getting most out of staff at minimum input and without consideration of their wellbeing and future, is proliferating a culture of stress and likely health impacts. I think stress is probably particulalry high among new parents, especiallu mums, as they are still doing the lion share of housework and childrearing... and then get paid less for all their efforts on top of that, or worse, get told to paid their dues back to University!

I have had a student suffering from mental health, who was threatening to commit suicide (a few years ago) and I could not find anybody at the university to help. I have to deal with it myself and it was a very stressful time for me.

Also, in late 2010, around Christmas, my husband was dying with cancer and I decided to 're-organise' my teaching duties in February as I didn't want to leave everything to the last minute and my classes not covered. I successfully managed to do that with my colleague ( who I have replaced, in 2 occasions earlier when his father and mother died). Then, I was asked to attend a meeting with the head of department and HR representative about my 'situation. I was treated so badly and was told that I cannot impose that on my colleague and have to take leave of absence without pay...I was so stressed, crying every day, not sleeping, suffering from a complete breakdown that my doctor decided to give me time off on a sick leave. The doctor told me to go away and disconnect completely from work. Then, I received a letter from HR telling me that I have to keep in touch with the university and tell them how things were going. I felt that was inappropriate as they were mainly responsible for my stress ( to keep in touch with them!?!).

I came back after few months and was still depressed. I had no support whatsoever!.

Due to the grieving and no support, I got again depressed and have to have psychotherapy sessions to help me with my state. At that time, I was having a problem with somebody in the department. I had a meeting with the HoD and this person, plus her 'line manager'.I thought it was informal, so I didn't take anybody or had my union rep with me. It was very badly orchestrated meeting. I left, crying, more stressed than ever, told that I was the troublemaker. Few months later, when given some additional teaching without being told time to prepare, I was so stressed that my doctor, again, told me to take three months off, for stress and depression. I only took 1 month and came back as i didn't want my colleague to have to deal with additional work.

I still suffer from depression due to lack of sleep and other factors but never talk about it and never take time off. I believe that some support and time off when necessary is what needed ( in my case anyway).

In 2009 the University of Bristol celebrated its centenary.

At this time many staff at the university had already endured a job evaluation process which had dragged on for years. Many staff found the process deeply distressing. I witnessed on several occasions valued colleagues break down in tears as a result of either being told that the

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colleagues break down in tears as a result of either being told that the job descriptions they'd been forced to write themselves hadn't scored sufficiently highly to merit their current pay grade, or in the case of line managers, having to notify highly valued team members that their pay would be frozen or cut. I personally witnessed a line manager break down in tears in the public street outside their place of work after having to inform a valued colleague of a distressing job evaluation result.

Having completed the job evaluation exercise a process review was then imposed during which similarly caused great distress and anxiety amongst worrying numbers of valued staff.

In my opinion these two processes fundamentally changed what had up until that point been a very respectful, motivational, healthy and mutually beneficial relationship between the university as an employer and its staff. For all of the two decades of my employment here previous to these two events we felt not only valued by the university as employer, but also cared about too.

Many colleagues lamented that the university had lost its human touch. Many felt dismayed at the way their employer has imposed and conducted these processes. Many felt huge disappointment that the happy and healthy relationship between themselves and their employer had been destroyed.

What has followed since has been enduringly and increasingly stressful; a serious decline in pay in real terms, increasingly insecure employment and the casualisation of employment contracts. Managerialism and ever increasing workloads, pension entitlement reductions and threats of future pension entitlement reductions.

While the university is to be commended for addressing the subject of mental health amongst its staff, far more important is that the causes of it need to be properly considered, identified and rectified.

Prevention is always better than cure. In the case of mental health it is the only way to address it.

Would be good to know what will be done about increasing workloads which undoubtedly contribute to stress. Everyone I know / work with is really committed to doing a good job but are stretched to the limits. I feel that I can't say I'm not coping with the volume of work as it makes me look rubbish / inefficient / incapable!

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WORKLOAD, WORKLOAD, WORKLOAD. Ridiculous administration created and added to the workload of academic staff, complete mismatch between the need for research and teaching-related tasks. I still haven't started drinking, but I do smoke much more the last year.

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Oh, and I don't give a \*\*\*\* about the Temple Quarter campus. It won't improve my mental health. But every time I sit in the garden of the Hawthorns I cry inside that this beautiful place of relaxation and unwinding with colleagues will be destroyed for a library.

The strategy does not fully acknowledge that the culture within the university is causative of many of the mental health issues. A culture of sink or swim, competition and managerial bullying persists. Team work is

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<p>actively discouraged. Emails are sent by senior staff at all times of day or night and even when you are on al. There needs to be a policy on holding emails particularly how containing bad news until working hours and when support is available. In a meeting with my hod.. I was told 'you will probably leave this room feeling devalued'. I did. And did anyone check on me in the subsequent days? .. No!. Line managers are not selected on the basis of their ability to promote mental wellbeing so the strategy may fail in this aspect</p>	
<p>I welcome the policy and the emphasis on mental health. However, one of the most important things an employer can do for mental health is to improve working CONDITIONS. This is not a focus of the 'prevention' strategy, as follows:</p> <p>Prevention - Integrating healthy behaviours and promoting positive mental health within the workplace: We will support our staff to adopt the University Professional Behaviours. We will better promote the benefits of healthy lifestyles and participation in sport and physical activity via promotion of wellbeing facilities and opportunities available to staff.</p> <p>Healthy lifestyle, sport, and 'professional behaviours' do not overcome issues associated with workload. The university needs to recognise that to really improve the mental health of its staff it needs to invest more money in its staff, not only through mental health support services and signposting (although of course these are valuable), but in numbers. Teaching and marking workloads, the demands of online marking, turnaround times, and poor administrative support (due to their own overwork) are more important things to address than 'wellbeing' as it is understood in this strategy.</p> <p>I acknowledge that the strategy says that 'As an institution we recognise that broader university and sector-wide issues such as the gender pay gap, casualisation in the workforce and workload also contribute to overall wellbeing in the workplace. As such, this strategy is designed to complement the actions already underway, and is complementary to the Student Mental Health &amp; Wellbeing strategy.' but I think it's really impossible to separate these. What are the actions already underway in relation to casualisation and workload, in particular? These should be integrated into / embedded in the strategy as well.</p>	<p>407986-407977-40758604</p>
<p>The University is failing to address the main causes of issues with mental health and wellbeing for staff - excessive workloads. The doubling of student numbers, the associated extra admin and large increases in the everyday admin (e.g. it used to take 30 mins to sort out expenses after a trip, it now takes a couple of hours, or I used to get told how much money I had in grants but now I am expected to be an accountant as well as a scientist.</p>	<p>407986-407977-40763789</p>
<p>It is difficult not to think of the University's so-called Staff Mental Health Strategy as disingenuous, given their sole focus on student wellbeing and satisfaction. The silent yet dramatic increase in staff workload as a result of the University's anxiety to meet (and even anticipate) student demands is increasingly throwing the work-life balance of staff members out of proportion, with next to no remediating measures on the part of the University. Even initiatives to promote staff health and wellbeing</p>	<p>407986-407977-40763992</p>

<p>the university. Even initiatives to promote staff health and wellbeing have been eroded drastically over recent years, e.g., the pre-tax membership deals for staff at the University's Sport Centre (abandoned in 2017/18), the £5/year 'shower membership' for staff members cycling into work (ibid.), etc. Add to this the fetishisation of lead tables, metrics, etc. - most notably in the form of the TEF, which, in essence, again is based primarily (if not indeed entirely) on student satisfaction ratings -, and you get a situation where staff physical and mental health needs are relocated to the very bottom of the priority list. Finally, the University's passive and entirely reactive attitude towards Brexit and the future of their many EU staff has done nothing to assure the latter as to what will happen post-March 2019, giving them no sense of security whatsoever and adding to an already stressful situation. Entirely disappointing.</p>	
<p>For me the major cause of stress is the fact that the increase in student numbers and the number of courses (notably PGT) is not matched by an increase in staff numbers, at least not in the number of staff responsible for directly teaching/supporting students (and that includes Library staff).</p>	<p>407986-407977-40768288</p>
<p>The main problems are arising from workload. We are having to use student management and online marking systems that are not up to speed - despite having been promised solutions for years. Better systems would reduce stress levels. In addition, major changes such as the new curriculum structure are pushed onto us without a chance for meaningful input. We are wasting a lot of time to enact a semblance of democratic participation, but management is unwilling to listen and pushes their agenda onto us.</p> <p>The underlying problem, however, is the systemic overwork of staff on all levels. We need to reduce the constant pressures of teaching and research to have healthy staff.</p> <p>The strategy document is full of buzzwords and meaningless phrases. It is great to raise awareness - but as long as structures aren't changing, it will be difficult to stay sane in this environment. As an example: the uni will "promote the benefits of an active life" - but has insufficient numbers of showers for staff commuting to work by bike, has cancelled the 1-pound-per-month-shower-only gym membership scheme some years ago, and still charges us for using sport facilities instead of making them free for staff.</p>	<p>407986-407977-40769061</p>
<p>It is great that the university now includes staff in it's mental health policy (It has primarily focussed on students and ignored staff)  Unfortunately, in both groups, it focusses on how to handle known mental health and nothing on the cause i.e. for staff, workloads (vast increase in student numbers with little increase in staff numbers), low pay awards, worse pensions, excessive and rapid changes (SPR / ERP/ new ways of working etc. - all happening at the same time - it feels like change for the sake of change and not well tried or even thought out before implementation) plus the total change of senior management who appear less willing to listen to staff or work with unions and managers (poorly trained?) who do not follow procedures and unfairly treat staff</p> <p>All this has resulted in increased work, worse work / life balance, worse</p>	<p>407986-407977-40769349</p>

<p>working conditions often with minimal support. Wouldn't it be better to tackle the key causes before they damage someone's health? (or are staff just expendable??)</p>	
<p>I am pretty staggered by how vapid the supposed 'strategy' is. It reads as meretricious cant. There is not one concrete proposal offered. It does not talk about the causes of stress and depression (both of which were, in my case, being bullied by senior managers). For me, the cause more generally was the lack of democracy in this institution, the top-down, 'executive' model of management. This stifles voices, makes us afraid to speak out, and diminishes our autonomy. There is also no way of reporting the causes of stress without being asked to sit face-to-face with the person causing it. HR has been pretty hopeless in my case, even writing in a recent referral that I suffer from diabetes (I don't!) and taking sentences straight from the 'report' written about me by the bullying senior managers, whose comments were all later overturned! My stress was caused in part by erratic, kneejerk, aggressive emails from management. This institution's embrace of hierarchy and dislike of community needs urgently to be addressed. Most recently, another senior colleagues wrote to a lower minion to complain about the way I write emails. Apparently it is not bland or formal enough. We are reaching the stage of resembling the thoughtpolice of Orwell's 1984!</p>	<p>407986-407977-40788210</p>
<p>Quite a lot of hot air here. The components of happiness are already well-established by researchers: a feeling that one is respected and valued, *autonomy* in one's work, a sense of community. This is the opposite of what happens now. Staff in the same department are scattered in several different buildings, pushed into tiny offices, and have to deal with endlessly changing regulations and initiatives for marking etc.; the one communal space we have in woodland road is cold and unattractive. The other way to raise staff morale, of course, would be for the university to apologise for trying to steal our pensions, refund lost strike pay, and commit to no changes to the current scheme. This will do a lot more than silly Christmas videos.</p>	<p>407986-407977-40799708</p>
<p>Staff mental health strategy is a step in the right direction, and I agree that the glaring omission is the lack of commitment to tackling the underlying causes of all stress, depression and poor mental health and wellbeing among staff. Personally I believe these to be due to an erosion of trust, loss of control and a lack of respect.</p> <p>Combating stigma is not the same as targeting the cause. It is only reducing 1 barrier of many surrounding mental health. Also this does not align with the 'Fitness to study' policy where as soon as someone admits a mental health problem, they are told to suspend and go home.</p> <p>Doing a couple of modules on MyReview does not make me a student counsellor so I shouldn't be expected to be treated as such. In my research, I would defer a serious suicide risk case to a clinician/GP but when dealing with a student if I do or say the wrong thing it becomes my responsibility?</p> <p>The principle of the 24/7 support and advice line is welcomed, although I am concerned about the fact that the organisation running this is linked to the insurance company AVIVA. Also because staff have 24/7 support,</p>	<p>407986-407977-40799604</p>

<p>there seems to be the mistaken belief that staff are available to students 24/7.</p> <p>I am also concerned over how the data monitoring will be used. What data will be collected? How confidential will the be kept and will it be linked to career and progression?</p> <p>I am amused at how much extra senior management has been created...head of counselling, director for personal tutors, PVC for student experience. More top down control over what we should all be doing! Maybe if they spent the money on more counsellors there wouldn't be a 4 month waiting list!</p>	
<p>I agree 100% that the University is not addressing the causes of stress and anxiety. Notably, this includes the large increase in workload due to the numbers of students and restructuring of some departments. It may also include the badly managed changes that have impacted users.</p>	<p>407986-407977-40816430</p>
<p>I would like the University to properly understand and take seriously the problems that arise for many staff members from the cumulative effect of significantly excessive work-hours on both physical and psychological well-being. I say this as someone who has routinely worked over 60 hours a week (not infrequently over 70, and at times over 80) for the University for the past two decades and who longs one day (but with little hope) for a manageable work-life balance. There needs to be a shift away from a culture that expects us to keep doing more and more to one that acknowledges we are doing too much and that tries to address this. In other words, there needs to be a clear recognition that institutional expectations (including the 'interrogation dynamic' arising from regular auditing and reviewing of 'performance levels') and heavy workloads are themselves THE CAUSE of the problems of poor morale, stress, exhaustion, insufficient sleep, and in many cases depression / emotional difficulties. Addressing the culture of competitive over-working can't just be cosmetic and shouldn't take the form of a line manager at a staff review asking a colleague if they can cut corners on their essay marking, teaching preparation or time spent one-to-one helping students. Such requests, when made, are not usually in the interests of the colleague reclaiming one day per weekend as a work-free day (which is often impossible) but are driven instead by the desire to increase the colleague's research output rate. This way of thinking and managing needs to stop. Active steps need to be taken to reduce both workload and the kind of monitoring and evaluating that (however benignly exercised) pressures staff into ever-longer working weeks and ever lower morale, with all the attendant mental health challenges that this fosters.</p>	<p>407986-407977-40838127</p>
<p>In general terms I welcome the university management's interest in promoting mental health. The important thing for me is that mental health services are not run simply in order to get people back to work as quickly as possible.</p> <p>It's also important for the individual to be able to look at what it is about their situation that is unique to them but also there needs to be a willingness for the organisation to understand and act on evidence that workloads, management styles, university policies etc etc. sometimes have a negative effect on the well being of its staff.</p> <p>Crises, dramas and very visible symptoms seem to be the spur to action in many cases, but I think attention also needs to be given to less apparent suffering and distress</p>	<p>407986-407977-40848670</p>

apparent suffering and distress.

Finally, I would hope that mental health support at the university would embrace a really broad range of interventions.

My view on key causes of staff stress/anxiety:

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NWOW – has been awfully stressful for a lot of people involved and I believe damaging to staff well-being in both the short and long term. What is supposed to be a flexible solution is rigid in that there is no alternative if your office has been NWOW'ed! Being pushed into using online communication methods is isolating and not always appropriate. It is much harder for people to just pop and speak to someone about an issue.

Well-being efforts are massively focussed on the paying customer and it does not feel like the university really wants to address the well-being of staff. Interactions with HR are stressful in their own right with little transparency and HR unwilling to commit to anything – they are weaselly. Interactions feel accusatory and hostile. I don't think staff feel valued – particularly professional services staff.

The media attention to student well-being places enormous pressure on staff with every interaction with students taking on more weight – it feels like we are under a microscope and living in fear that an innocent email will be taken out of context and result in a student hurting themselves. This is thrown at us by students/parents on a regular basis almost as a threat along the lines of: 'with all the attention Bristol has had I'm surprised you cannot be more flexible on this', 'I'm shocked that you have said no considering how much Bristol has been in the press, oh didn't I mention that I have serious mental health issues that you should have been aware of'. This makes me feel defensive and on edge as we genuinely do try to take care of our students well-being but it isn't always evident to people.

The assumption that we are all able/in a good position ourselves to deal with student well-being. Simple things like recognising that some staff must leave at a precise time so cannot just stay and deal with a distressed student at 4.55 on a Friday. There seems to be little recognition that staff do have lives outside of work. Really a lot of students need a reality check that what they find stressful is nothing in comparison with what some staff are dealing with and yet they still manage to come to work, meet deadlines and manage to do a good job! People who are employed with a specific remit of looking after student well-being are overstretched constantly leaving other front-line staff to pick up the slack.

There is little consideration from the university for people who are carers. Not just parents but people with complex home situations that can be emotionally and physically exhausting.

All mental health training seems to be focussed on staff supporting students – how about some training for students so they can support each other and equally raise the issue of staff well-being with them. If well-being is truly everyone's concern this should go both ways with students realising that they have responsibilities to all of those around them.

<p>Policies decreed from on high then dumped on frontline staff to implement with no real instruction other than 'make this work'. It is galling to then get the PR spin email of 'this was a great success' when in reality everyone was tearing their hair out as it was a nightmare.</p> <p>Transitions of various sorts - joining the university (stress of starting a new job, possibly combined with relocation (moving to a new house); organisational change (uncertainty, change of role, change of responsibilities, change of line management, change of team/colleagues, change of working environment, change of working pattern); voluntary change of job: as above</p>	
<p>There are two things that cause me stress at work.</p> <p>I'm on short term contracts. In the last 5 years I have not had a contract that lasted longer than a year. I find it difficult to plan for the future not knowing every year if I will be made redundant at the end of TB2.</p> <p>I don't feel we provide students the support and time they deserve because student numbers have increased.</p> <p>I don't think these are being addressed by the strategy and I can't imagine these are particular to me.</p>	<p>407986-407977-40857071</p>
<p>The strategy is OK as far as it goes, but seems to ignore the underlying causes of stress and anxiety. I believe a comprehensive change in working and management culture is needed. This would include prioritising achievable workloads and limiting staff working time. More attention needs to be given to tasks that waste staff time (e.g. uploading and downloading from Blackboard) and to policies that impact adversely on both staff and student wellbeing. For example, in English the 10-hour contact time policy has increased staff and student workload, is limiting the time students have left for reading, and means staff are increasingly teaching at antisocial hours (e.g. 5-6pm) that are not good for either staff or student family life. The completely unachievable administrative workload in the School of Humanities has led to a great deal of stress-related sickness among administrators there in the last 5 years, and to a rapid turnover of staff. Staff wellbeing is also adversely affected by not having shared lunch hours, local common areas where they could eat lunch together. The lack of meaningful line management, where both academic and administrative staff very rarely get feedback, discuss their career progress, or are helped to manage their workload, is another major problem. (At one annual meeting with my manager, I was told that the answer to achieving my unachievable workload was to stop attending meetings and send emails at the weekend. This struck me as poor advice in many different ways.) The culture of perfectionism, too, where we are told all our research output should be 4*, creates a hostile and stressful environment. All of this needs to be addressed even more urgently than the presenting symptoms of mental health problems.</p>	<p>407986-407977-40863656</p>
<p>A major problem is lack of confidence in the senior team, and finding a member of the senior team (in whom there is little confidence) leading this work, is cause for concern.</p>	<p>407986-407977-40868076</p>

Unfortunately, this university is giving more importance to the Student's Mental Health Strategy than Staff's.

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The University has a duty of care that they are not doing it. There are more and more colleagues suffering from mental health related issues caused by some managers and the university hasn't been as helpful as they should be.

The university should increase the Mental Health Staff.

I welcome many of the initiatives in the strategy, and it is good to see Bristol addressing this issue head-on.

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It would be extremely helpful for academic staff to have transparent workload models. This would not only ensure equity of treatment, but might dissipate anxiety and resentment at perceived imbalances and unfairness. I note this to be a major source of unhappiness and stress.