Professional services staff digital experience insights survey 2020/21

UK higher education (HE) survey findings

March 2022
Contents

3  Foreword from Charlie Ball

4  Key statistics

5  Executive summary

8  Theme one: you and your technology

10  Theme two: digital platforms and services at your organisation

12  Theme three: technology in your work

14  Theme four: your digital development

16  Hearing what professional services staff had to say

22  Get involved

22  Supporting you

23  Acknowledgements

NB: survey responses may not add up to 100% due to rounding or questions where professional services staff had the option to select more than one response.

This data is shared under Creative Commons licence: CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/)
Amongst the most profound long-term effects of the COVID-19 pandemic could be in the changes to the way that work is done.

Jisc’s digital experience insights survey for professional services staff in higher education (HE) shows that 92% of respondents were working virtually. Although this may seem an atypically large population, their experiences do not seem especially atypical of professional services staff across the country. The opportunity to examine a large population of hybrid workers and to gain their insights into their experience is invaluable for the HE sector in particular but also the wider understanding of hybrid work in general.

The digital experience insights survey examines questions on the issues and barriers to online working, how well institutions support online working (generally well, but with definite improvement possible), and respondents’ views of IT support. 87% of respondents stated that their experience of the support available for online working was at least ‘good’. Guidance on online working was also highly praised with 73% saying they’d received support and training.

Training is emerging as a potential issue in the wider debate, with UK plc’s long underinvestment in skills training starting to become a millstone to development and adoption of new practices. This survey examines that important question and found that, much as in the wider business world, the sector still has work to do. 16% of staff stated that they’d had an assessment of their digital skills, and only 10% said they had received recognition for developing digital skills. Most staff said they had little time to develop skills and a minority say they have had training. GDPR training was the most common, but still only taken by 30%. Only 14% said they had training in creating digital learning material, 7% in digital copyright, and 5% in social media management. As recruitment and retention issues look likely to continue in the foreseeable future, there is a real need for the sector to engage properly with training and development to ensure we conserve and enhance our workforce.

Another increasingly vexed issue has emerged about the support for the wellbeing of hybrid staff. This is likely to be a subject of considerable debate in the future and may represent a long-term roadblock to hybrid working. Our survey gains valuable insight into how staff have experienced these key issues. In one way it is reassuring that 72% of workers turned to their colleagues when they had issues, but it may highlight a need for new channels and forms of support for hybrid workers that perhaps need to be developed.

Overall, this is a valuable piece of insight not just into our vital HE professional services workforce, but into the experiences of all UK professional services workers as we all navigate into a future none of us expected two years ago. It shows we were perhaps better prepared than we might have thought, but also provides thought-provoking insight into what we need to do better and how we can do it. This survey shows we have strengths in IT and digital support that could be allied with more investment in training to help the HE professional services workforce feel confident they are ready for the challenges of the future.
Key statistics

The survey was conducted between October 2020 and June 2021. There were 4,056 responses from 14 universities. This represents 5% of all higher education institutions in the UK. 11 of these were based in England, one in Scotland, one in Wales and one in Northern Ireland.

The highest response rate from a single HE provider was 840 professional services staff (21% of their total professional services staff population) and the overall average response rate was 290 responses per organisation (on average, around 32% of the professional services staff population in each organisation).

Gender of participants

- 69% female
- 30% male
- 1% other

How many years had staff worked in their organisation in a professional services role?

- 10% less than a year
- 27% one to three years
- 27% four to nine years
- 36% ten years or more
Executive summary
The future of how and where we work

In one sense, this data is unique in that all of us who have worked from home in these last two years can relate to the findings. In another sense, the findings have much broader relevance because our graduates will be going into employment in similar roles beyond education and across a wide gamut of industries. The findings, ongoing research and experiences, will continue to push us forward in our understanding of the future of work and identify some key considerations as new hybrid models emerge for where and how we work most effectively and how the physical space available can be best utilised.

This is the third in our series of reports looking at the digital experiences across higher education throughout the ongoing global COVID-19 pandemic. Previously we have looked at the experiences of students1 and of teaching staff2 and we now have data from the professional services staff. These staff perform a wide variety of roles across our universities; some, like librarians, directly linked to the daily activities of supporting students, teaching and learning, and some who undertake a wide variety of other roles, for example in finance, IT, data, administration and estates management.

Many of the professional services staff in universities will not have previously had an opportunity to work from home, and few would have chosen to make such a transition at short notice and with limited time to prepare – the fact that they did so efficiently and with minimal disruption to business is testament to their professionalism. Broadly speaking, the experience was positive for staff and offered flexibility and some benefits to work/life balance, something many staff would like to see continue. Staff were pragmatic about aspects of the experience that were less positive, and constructive in their suggestions for how this can be improved.

Improving productivity and working practices

87% of professional services staff rated the quality of support for online and remote working as ‘best imaginable’, ‘excellent’, or ‘good’. Organisational support that helped make this so included:

- Establishing clear policies and protocols for home working that set out aspects such as what equipment is available to support home working, operational protocols, how to access support
- Ensuring managers were aware of, and fully understood the benefits of remote working and the positive aspects that both the organisation and individuals can experience
- Publishing a list of what systems and software is available, including a description of the purpose and key features and, where appropriate, how combining these can support productivity – some staff were unaware
- Communicating regularly with all staff across the organisation and in one central place to ensure staff were kept informed and included; with teams and departments; and through supportive 1:1 conversations with line managers
- Guidance on protocols and etiquette when working collaboratively on line, and encouragement to share top tips and effective practice
- Clearly signpost a wide range of training options in a variety of formats: for specific technologies and specific functions, ensuring the training time and mode is equally available to part-time staff

1 [Student digital experience insights survey 2020/21: UK higher education (HE) survey findings, September 2021](https://ji.sc/he-student-digital-survey-2020-21)
2 [Teaching staff digital experience insights survey 2020/21: UK higher education (HE) survey findings November 2021](https://ji.sc/he-teaching-digital-survey-2020-21)
Having the right tools for the job

There are advantages to organisations as well as individuals in encouraging staff to work from home, not least that it potentially frees up space that could be better utilised for other purposes. Yet not all staff had adequate or up-to-date devices, software or suitable places to work, or knew how to request equipment and support. One approach suggested was to offer an individual audit, or ‘working-from-home health check’ for all staff to ensure that they have appropriate equipment and home set up if required to work from home (including space) and are made aware of what support is possible for others that you may want to encourage to do so. Consider:

• What devices and software are needed for that role
• What additional equipment (screens, chairs, mice, keyboards) are required
• Clear guidance on ergonomics and set up plus access to specialist advice for adaptations that individuals may need
• Advice on basic set up and signposting to common trouble-shooting guidance
• Allowances for staff to purchase and reclaim expenses for equipment or consumables, any limitations around these and the process for claiming reimbursement

Wellbeing

All stakeholders are equally important in the educational eco-system, yet some professional services staff felt their needs were given less attention than other audiences. Just as for students and teaching staff, some staff found working remotely difficult and felt isolated from peers and support.

• Listen to, and work with professional services staff – their feedback is vital in moving forward
• Ensure that line managers are supported to check-in regularly to maintain contact, wider connections and to identify and address concerns
• Consider the best ways of replicating face-to-face peer support online, including both structured and informal opportunities
• Actively promote wellbeing for remote working, including encouragement to switch off and manage wellbeing

There is clearly more work to do in accommodating the shift to hybrid working and further investigation needed into different working models, spaces and practices. Surveying your professional services staff is a good place to start in opening up discussions with this key stakeholder group to build new models of future work that will benefit all.

Systems, technical issues and support

Unsurprisingly, technical issues and easy access to support were the most commonly cited problems and when these occurred they not only caused disruption to working practices but considerable anxiety and stress. Ways of combating these might include:

• Reviewing and streamlining systems, monitoring reliability, speed and functionality
• Investigating what support options best support hybrid working models as practices and technologies have changed considerably
• Comprehensive technical support and guidance for all aspects of working from home, including for issues relating to home set up and access
• Consideration of dedicated or emergency hotlines or ways of triaging urgent support needs
Support from Jisc

Membership services

Building digital capabilities (https://digitalcapability.jisc.ac.uk) helps organisations to support staff to develop their digital skills and practice and includes our innovative discovery tool.

Digital experience insights (https://digitalinsights.jisc.ac.uk) will help you to gather and analyse your own data from your students, teaching staff, professional services teams and researchers.

Guides and resources

Strategy and infrastructure

- How to shape your digital strategy (https://ji.sc/shape-your-digital-strategy)
- Vision and strategy toolkit (https://ji.sc/vision-strategy-toolkit)
- IT infrastructure review and key findings (https://ji.sc/IT-infrastructure-review)

Inclusion and wellbeing

- Digital inclusion (https://jisc.ac.uk/guides/digital-inclusion): a toolkit for senior leaders in higher education
- Digital wellbeing briefings (https://ji.sc/digital-wellbeing) for senior managers and practitioners
- Code of practice for wellbeing and mental health analytics (https://ji.sc/wellbeing-analytics)
- Online safety (https://ji.sc/online-safety): keep your organisation’s staff and students working safely online

Communities of practice

- Accessibility and inclusion (https://ji.sc/accessibility-community)
- Digital leaders (https://ji.sc/digital-leaders)
Theme one: you and your technology

In theme one we aimed to establish how and where staff were working and whether they had experienced any problems.

Mode of working (could select one option)

- 6% physically on site
- 12% a mix of physically on site and online working
- 82% online working (either alongside others or on your own)

The majority of professional services staff were working online, very few were working on site or a mixture of physically on site and online.

Where were staff working online? (could tick all that applied)

- 95% at home
- 12% on campus in your office, work spaces, libraries etc
- 0% off campus in public spaces (eg cafes)
- 1% I have not been working online

While a small number of professional services staff were working on campus, the majority worked from home.

Problems encountered when working online (yes/no responses)

- 34% poor wifi connection
- 18% access to online platforms/services
- 11% need specialist software
- 9% no suitable computer/device
- 9% no safe, private area to work
- 7% mobile data costs

The top four problems all relate to access to technologies necessary to function effectively and are potentially significant barriers to continuation of business.

Use of assistive technologies (could tick all that applied)

4% of all professional services staff who responded to the survey said that they used at least one of four assistive technologies.

- 1% screen readers (text to speech)
- 2% dictation (speech to text)
- 1% alternative input devices (eg switches)
- 2% screen magnification
- 96% none of these

Only 18% of those who said they used assistive technologies had been offered support to do so.
Staff quote:

“VPN is at times very unreliable. I have to access a shared drive via it, and the connection often drops. That means accessing and editing documents on the shared hard drive becomes almost impossible. Same issue with accessing specialised software that I need for my role, which can only be used while connected on the VPN.”
Theme two: digital platforms and services at your organisation

In theme two we looked at how well professional services staff felt their organisation supported them with the technology they needed to work remotely – the digital platforms, systems and services. Also important is how effectively the organisation communicated with them, facilitated collaboration online and to what extent organisations involved professional services staff in decision-making about online working.

Organisational systems, services and support

The percentages of staff who agreed with statements about technology in their organisation were:

- 81% enabled to access online systems and services from anywhere (15% neutral, 3% disagreed)
- 77% communicated effectively online eg email, messaging, notifications (19% neutral, 4% disagreed)
- 71% provided a good online environment for collaboration (26% neutral, 3% disagreed)
- 51% supported to use own digital devices (39% neutral 11% disagreed)

The majority of staff were able to access online systems and services from anywhere and reasonably high numbers agreed that their organisation communicated effectively and provided a good online environment for collaboration. Only just over half agreed they were supported to use their own devices – something that may have been helpful for both individuals and the universities if this were in place.

Involving professional services staff in decisions about online working

- 32% were given the chance to be involved in decisions about online working (46% neutral, 22% disagreed)

Only a third of professional services staff agreed they had a chance to be involved in decisions about online working, over a fifth disagreed. Home working offers benefits to staff and universities and it seems likely to continue for some roles and for at least part of the working week. It makes sense to engage staff in discussions about how to make this work best for all.

The online environment

The percentages of staff who agreed with various statements about their online working environment were:

- 79% safe and secure (20% neutral, 1% disagreed)
- 75% reliable (21% neutral, 5% disagreed)
- 56% easy to navigate (33% neutral, 10% disagreed)
- 53% well designed (38% neutral, 9% disagreed)

High numbers agreed that the online environment was reliable, safe and secure but only just over half agreed it was well designed and easy to navigate – this is an area for improvement, and one to discuss with staff to identify issues and potential solutions.
Staff quote:
“I am able to work almost uninterrupted in a familiar environment and in the current circumstances, I feel safer working from home than sharing an office.”
Theme three: technology in your work

Theme three explored how technology had been used whilst working online, the range of work activities and the overall quality of support for online and remote working.

Overall quality of online and remote working (could select one option)

Professional services staff gave a very high rating for the quality of support for online and remote working. 87% rated it as 'best imaginable', 'excellent', or 'good'.

- 4% best imaginable
- 39% excellent
- 45% good
- 10% average
- 2% poor
- 0% awful
- 0% worst imaginable

Range of remote working activities (could tick all that applied)

The percentages of professional services staff who said they had carried out the following remote working activities in the last two weeks prior to taking part in the survey were (can tick more than one):

- 89% live video meeting
- 85% uploaded documents to shared drive
- 57% worked with team members eg on a shared presentation/report
- 37% supported other staff/students to work online
- 37% managed communications with staff/students about the ongoing situation
- 16% held online drop in session(s)
- 13% produced learning resources or 'how-to' videos

Professional services staff were actively involved in a range of remote working activities and in supporting other students and staff.
What responsibilities does your job role include? (tick all that apply)

Professional services staff fulfil a variety of roles:

- 10% teach students
- 28% support students/staff with their digital skills
- 33% support the use of digital resources
- 34% support the use of digital systems
- 15% trial technology innovation projects
- 49% none of these

The majority of professional services staff were not involved in supporting online teaching and learning although roughly a third were involved in one or more activities cited here.

Staff quote:
“Our team has improved skills. We are now comfortable working with a larger range of programs and are working collaboratively and efficiently on shared documents.”
Theme four: your digital development

How well supported did professional services staff feel in getting to grips with remote working? Theme four looked at the guidance and opportunities professional services staff were offered to develop their digital skills and whether they felt these were enough to help them achieve the expectations placed upon them.

Overall support for online working (could select one option)

Overall, professional services staff were very positive about the support they received for working effectively online. 79% rated it as ‘best imaginable’, ‘excellent’, or ‘good’.

- 4% best imaginable
- 28% excellent
- 46% good
- 18% average
- 3% poor
- 0% awful
- 0% worst imaginable

Confidence in aspects of online working

The percentages of professional services staff who agreed with questions set specifically in the context of the current pandemic situation were:

- 68% could access all the organisational support services they needed online (25% neutral, 7% disagreed)
- 62% working online made them feel safe (35% neutral, 3% disagreed)
- 61% the working expectations placed on them had been reasonable (23% neutral, 16% disagreed)
- 41% the concerns of staff and their representatives were being heard (44% neutral, 15% disagreed)

Staff were moderately positive in aspects of working online during the pandemic although less than half felt that their concerns were being heard.

Where do professional services staff go for help with working online? (could tick all that applied)

- 72% colleagues
- 68% IT/e-learning staff
- 52% online videos and resources
- 37% department or team leader
- 21% friends and family
- 6% don’t need help
- 4% library staff

The majority of professional services staff turned to colleagues for help, closely followed by IT/e-learning staff. This makes it important that peer support mechanisms are available online as well as in face-to-face situations.
Support and guidance

The percentages of professional services staff who agreed they had received support for online working and digital skills development were:

- 73% support for working online/away from campus (23% neutral, 4% disagreed)
- 41% guidance about the digital skills needed in their job role (43% neutral, 16% disagreed)
- 28% time to explore new digital tools and approaches (43% neutral, 29% disagreed)
- 16% an assessment of their digital skills and training needs (45% neutral, 39% disagreed)
- 10% reward and recognition for the digital skills you develop (43% neutral, 47% disagreed)

Staff generally felt they were supported to work online or away from campus but less than half agreed with all other statements and high numbers disagreed. Offering an assessment of individual digital skills and training needs will help to inform the guidance and support needed as well as facilitating the development of new approaches.

Developing the digital skills of professional services staff

The percentages of professional services staff who said they were offered support or training to develop digital capabilities were low (could tick all that applied):

- 30% keeping student data safe under GDPR
- 23% equality and accessibility legislation
- 22% basic IT skills
- 21% specialist software for your role
- 20% protecting your privacy in online spaces
- 19% behaving safely and respectfully online
- 14% creating digital learning materials
- 7% digital copyright and licensing
- 5% managing social media and/or public web pages

The low numbers are a surprise given the overall satisfaction rating of 79%. Organisations who took part in the survey have an opportunity to look at their own data and explore how this could be improved.

Staff quote:
“Offer training - it was a steep learning curve and I feel that although I have really developed my skills and enjoy working from home, I could be much more productive with more training.”
Staff quote:
“I have learned new digital skills that I will use going forward (Zoom, Teams, webinars) and have been able to reach wider audiences using these technologies.”
Hearing what professional services staff had to say

Professional services staff were asked to say what they thought were the most positive and negative aspects of remote working, how they felt the support for online and remote working could be improved and what one thing they felt their universities should do to help them work effectively online. Their responses reveal that working preferences are individual – what some professional services staff really like, others do not.

The most positive aspects of remote working

There were 3,399 free text responses to this question. Professional services staff liked:

### Improved working practices
The move to remote working had a positive impact on many areas of working practice with respondents citing:

- Increased flexibility in terms of working patterns, being able to manage their workload, being able to offer greater flexibility to students and colleagues
- Feeling more connected, involved, able to keep in touch with colleagues; noting improved contact with colleagues and students and in cross-team working; more efficient ways of getting in touch, being able to be more responsive; the value of video meetings and the ability to communicate more regularly
- Improved productivity, time management and efficiency from less distraction and fewer interruptions, new productivity tools and ways of working
- Learning new digital skills and new ways of working
- Improved access to files and documents and to software and systems as well as to a wider range of colleagues. Some also felt it was easier to communicate with students too
- Protected time and space from interruptions, and reductions in being affected by the stress of others or office politics
- Improved collaboration, being able to involve more people, be more inclusive, share documentation, screen-share. Some felt this created more of a level playing field and that location was no longer an obstacle to participation
- Centralised support as opposed to smaller distributed services

### Wellbeing and work-life balance
Respondents also found many positive aspects for their mental and physical wellbeing:

- Many cited that working from home gave them a better work-life balance and was convenient (saving time and money from lack of commute), and some said that they felt less stressed and less tired
- Feeling less isolated
- Finding the environment better – calmer, more comfortable, quieter, safer, enjoying natural light and fresh air, contributing to a greener environment by not commuting, feeling in control of their own environment, feeling more in control generally and enjoying being able to move around
- Those with health conditions or chronic illness were able to work online when they may otherwise have been unable to work on campus
- Some felt that online and remote working was more inclusive (to those with ADHD, disabilities, mental health issues)
The most negative aspects of remote working

There were 3,161 free text responses to this question. Professional services staff disliked:

### Technical issues
- Access to reliable wifi, sufficient bandwidth and speed was a problem that staff found stressful and that caused anxiety. This had a broader impact on working life and on wellbeing
- It could be difficult to connect to and use the essential systems that staff needed to access to do their jobs. Some reported being unable to access them at all or unreliable connections, slow speeds, system crashes and drop outs. Some experienced loss of work when trying to use shared drives
- Not all staff had the devices, equipment or software they needed. Older devices/versions of software affected connectivity and functionality and some staff reported having to buy their own equipment and consumables or having to upgrade their broadband at their own expense. Screens that were too small, lack of headsets/microphones or cameras also caused problems
- Finding it difficult to support students who experienced technical issues or who did not have access to appropriate devices, software or wifi
- Technical teams found it hard to carry out important systems updates remotely
- Staff found it difficult to get timely assistance and technical support, particularly in emergency situations
- The quality of sound and video was not always sufficient to support necessary interactions

### Reduced wellbeing
- Staff reported feeling isolated, lonely and disconnected. They missed the support from colleagues, the unplanned informal but serendipitous meetings, and also the social interactions. Some felt that their struggles were less visible when working remotely, had they been in their usual work environment they felt that colleagues would have noticed when they needed help and would have provided support
- Not having a private or dedicated place to work with an appropriate ergonomic set up, sharing space with others in household, impact of work station on personal life/space was intrusive
- New starters found it difficult to get to know colleagues, understand the organisational hierarchy and know where to go for help. Managers supporting new starters also experienced difficulties in providing the right level of support
- Being online all the time was difficult physically and mentally. Some staff struggled to balance home and work and felt that the lines between the two became blurred, saying they felt they were ‘always on’ or ‘living at work’. Others reported an increase in sedentary practices, poor posture and eye strain as well as reduced concentration and motivation
- Managing dispersed teams when working remotely was harder and it was difficult to provide personal support
- Redirected calls to personal mobiles infringed on personal life when students contacted staff out of hours

### Disruption to working practices
- Finding it hard to work collaboratively, conduct creative work or to explore new ideas
- Insufficient communication and feeling ‘out of the loop’, discord and misunderstandings, challenges in managing large group conversations and ensuring communication is inclusive and accessible to those with disabilities
- Feeling overwhelmed and overloaded with some reporting that work took longer, there were too many long/back-to-back meetings with insufficient breaks, too many conversations and too many channels to keep track of (not all of them well-structured or managed)
- Lack of protocols (or observance to protocols) for accessing and editing shared documents as well as version control when colleagues work offline
Staff quote:

“I’m working far longer hours than when on campus and am finding it more difficult to differentiate work and private life.”
Improving the support for online and remote working and helping professional services staff to work effectively online

Professional services staff were asked what one thing their organisations should do to improve the support for online and remote working (2,409 free text responses) and what one thing their organisation should do to help them work effectively online (1,525 free text responses). There were many positive comments expressing satisfaction for what had been done to support professional services staff and some could not suggest any improvements, while others gave pragmatic and constructive responses. They wanted universities to:

**Continue to support remote and online working**
The move to online teaching raised significant issues that have made it difficult for some to continue to deliver effective teaching. Perceptions were that these challenges were not always overtly recognised by senior management. Issues included:

- Many staff would like to continue to work online/remotely or to adopt hybrid/blended working models as they found them to be efficient and productive and felt that they improved their work/life balance
- Establish clear flexible working policies that articulate the benefits and set out realistic levels of support
- Investigate and research effective protocols and practices in online working
- Some suggested that all staff have a ‘home working health check’ or audit to ensure they are properly equipped for their role

**Technical support**
- Several staff reported receiving good/excellent/outstanding support – others had a different experience and sought more responsive support or suggested ways of addressing volume of support required, for example using:
  - Triage systems to filter out the most urgent needs
  - Live chat for immediate responses
  - Setting up a dedicated staff IT support line
  - Running surgeries and drop-in sessions
  - One central location/hub aggregating all guidance, clearly structured and signposted
- Some felt more support staff were required
- Develop more personalised approaches in providing support to reflect diverse needs, ensuring the timing and availability also met the needs of part-time staff
- Support specifically designed around home-working was also suggested, accommodating everything from setting up equipment, environment/furniture, display screen equipment (DSE), effective policies and collaborative practices

**Staff quote:**
“The support I have received has been excellent, quick responses clear instructions and friendly interaction with support staff.”

**Equipment and tools**
- Provide appropriate equipment that is up-to-date and of sufficient specification to perform the tasks required (eg software, screens, ancillary devices)
- Don’t expect staff to provide/use own equipment and provide financial assistance to reimburse costs (eg devices, broadband, printing supplies)
- Conduct a comprehensive audit of needs for every individual to establish an accurate picture of the issues. Use this to underpin and inform a home-working policy that ensures fair access for all
Establish and maintain a schedule of what devices, software and support is available and the purposes/functions of each

Those affected by poor wifi would appreciate support packages to improve their home access

Staff quote:
“Ask staff how it’s going (regularly) and what equipment they might need to make it work better.”

Systems
• Simplify and streamline systems
• Invest in better/more robust and more reliable remote desktop systems
• Improve the speed and functionality of systems
• Migrate more core systems to digital

Training
Generally there was a call for a comprehensive and wide range of training topics presented in a variety of formats including videos, how-to guides, 1:1 or personalised training and for these training options to be better promoted to ensure staff are aware what is available. Two specific requests that were cited several times included:

• Training on how to integrate systems effectively
• Sharing of effective practices, top tips, how to get the most out of the software and systems

Staff quote:
“Provide specific support aimed at professional services staff. Our online needs and workings are very different to that of students and academics.”

Policies and working practices
• Establish clear and supportive policies to support remote working. Ensure these are well documented, standardised and cover all aspects (eg technical, wellbeing and flexible working practices).

Communicate these widely and seek out and share effective practices

• Encourage collaborative working practices
• Consider setting up small satellite centres where those without suitable home set-up/environment/space can work safely

Communicate
• Ensure regular communication takes place at all levels as remote working can make some people feel more isolated than when physically working in an organisational setting. This should be available via a central and easily visible and accessible location/channel

Staff quote:
“Perhaps support with reimbursement of costs eg internet usage or electricity costs, especially for those on lower income or with families. This would enable them to work online and remotely and to benefit from the digital world.”

Wellbeing
• Demonstrate a commitment to providing a consistent duty of care to staff as well as students by ensuring line managers check in with individuals regularly. This provides an opportunity to address concerns and provide early interventions
• Consider options for replicating both formal and informal traditional face-to-face peer support activities online
• Offer online health and wellbeing checks/audits
• Help people to ‘disconnect’ to combat feelings of being overwhelmed and ‘always on’

Listen and engage
• Genuinely listen and respond – several commented that this survey was a great way to open up discussions and start productive conversations. There is clearly an appetite to engage professional services staff and their representatives in dialogue about how to improve the overall digital experience.
Get involved

See the digital experience through the eyes of your professional services staff

Our 2021/22 digital experience insights surveys are now open. If you would like to find out more about the digital experience of your professional services staff or if you are interested in participating in our other surveys for teachers or students, please contact us at help@jisc.ac.uk putting ‘digital insights’ in the email subject line.

Find out more at https://digitalinsights.jisc.ac.uk

Supporting you

Higher education strategy 2021-2024: powering UK higher education

See how our HE strategy for 2021-2024 (https://ji.sc/he-strategy) will support universities towards a technology-empowered future.


Learning and teaching reimagined

Working with you to help plot your organisation’s path to the future of higher education.

- Read the report (https://ji.sc/ltr-a-new-dawn), learning and teaching reimagined: a new dawn for higher education.

- Explore the research, visions of the future, examples of emerging good practice and tools to get you started (https://ji.sc/ltr-reimagined).

Let’s work together to transform your digital experience

Contact your account manager (https://jisc.ac.uk/contact/your-account-manager).
Acknowledgements

Our thanks go to our expert panels of higher and further education representatives, who assisted us in shaping this report, and all the universities and colleges who took part in the professional services staff insights survey this year.