LYIT Staff Working During Initial Period of COVID-19

Initial qualitative analysis for LYIT Executive Board
6 July 2020

270

Total Responses

Survey opened:Thursday, 18 June 2020

Survey closed: Friday 26 June 2020

Power point presentation guide

This power point presents analysis of the **qualitative data** generated in the LYIT Staff Survey. (The analysis of the quantitative data was presented to last week's Executive Board).

There are five questions in the data which provide an opportunity for free text responses:

Q 9 Have your caring responsibilities changed during the pandemic?

Q13 What devices do you use when you work remotely (select all that apply). Other Device, please specify

Q15 How have you been feeling in the context of remote working during the pandemic? Other Feeling(s) (please specify)

Q16 Please write any additional comments here about your current experiences of remote working.

Q17. Please write additional comments here about your priority needs and/or training requirements for the next academic year.

Question 9 Have your caring responsibilities changed during the pandemic?

In addition to the responses provided, respondents had the opportunity to reply "other, please specify"

Staff identified that they were now caring for :

pre-school and school age children;

children of extended family members;

vulnerable family members;

children with special needs;

new born children and elderly parents.

Question 13. What devices do you use when you work remotely (select all that apply)

Other Device, please specify

- Digital pen
- Head set
- Scanner/printer
- Sim for mobile data
- Osciloscope and multimeter
- Family lap top
- Microphone
- Personal monitor
- Home broadband
- LYIT VPN
- Communications apps eg zoom

Question 15 How have you been feeling in the context of remote working during the pandemic?

Other Feeling(s) (please specify)

In addition to the responses to the options provided staff identified a significant range of **negative** feelings:

Stress, isolated, overwhelmed, lonely, anxious, despair, anger, dissatisfied, disconnected, tense, upset, frustrated and having found this to have been a "challenging time" where some missed "friends at work and the social side of things"

Some staff described having more **mixed** feelings

Mixed feelings on different days and with different classes.

Feelings varied over the course of the college closure, however, levels of tensions and worry have eased as I adjusted to this new way of working.

In March/April my feelings of anxiety and upset were much stronger than now. Had I have answered this question then I think my these indicators would have been towards the "very much so"

Some staff described **positive** feelings

I feel that I am more productive working from home and have less distraction. It is less stressful

While it took a while to adapt to remote working at the start of the pandemic, I now feel content and in routine with it. I actually now feel more productive working at home as there are less distractions. I would love it if the option to continue working remotely is available a number of days per week from September onwards

Feelings. Student Engagement and the Student Experience

Academic and research staff described their experience of **student engagement** and feelings of concern in relation to the **student experience:**

*I find it can be **difficult** to build a rapport with students when working remotely.*

*It is **worrying** when students do not engage with the classes/material online.*

*I feel **worried** that I am not going to be able to provide the input and support that students deserve.*

*Due to the nature of the modules I teach, I **feel** the student has **missed out** immensely on the practical experience required to be competent and confident and with my lack of remote working experience this has also been a **negative** for both myself and learner*

Feelings – teaching on line/remotely (Academic and Research Staff)

Staff described how they **felt** about **teaching** during semester 2 of the current academic year and their concerns in relation to the forthcoming academic year:

over-worked - student numbers are too big especially to manage alone - approx 300 pieces of assessment to get through individually every semester - unequal distribution of work across college

online marking is additionally **challenging** - more time consuming and results in too much screen time - **bad for physical health**

It was a challenge to keep it all going producing real feelings of **anxiousness** during the lockdown both from a module delivery perspective as well as home. I **worried** about meeting the learning outcomes for on-campus modules and that the students didn't have access to the software that I required them to use.

Now, I am **concerned** about module delivering in September and being ready. I have always worked in the summer learning and preparing material for the next academic year. Previously, I have been able to do that because I organise for my children to do summer camps, however this year there are no suitable camps running.

I also feel **very anxious** about delivering material online from home in September due to the possibility of my children not being able to go back to school full time and no after school care available either.

Unsure of what I am doing … all I would like is for someone to do a week of lectures and show how to make them interesting and meaningful. Show me the starting point on my first week. Do it with a real [deleted] subject so that I have some sort of template to follow for the beginning. I do **feel really tense** at the thought of trying to engage online and **not feel foolish and useless**

Feelings. Balancing work and caring responsibilities

A significant number of staff described the impact of balancing work with caring responsibilities during this period. These response captures the experience of two staff members but the sentiments expressed were evident in a good number of response:

*At times it is unclear what the expectation is by management for staff working at home. With caring responsibilities and without childcare I have had to work my hours flexibly often early in the morning and late at night and there perhaps a reduction in output. My biggest issue with remote working is there should have been more discussions with staff at line management level on how they are managing their workload and planning at at team level on what was a priority. This is particularly important for staff in the context of caring responsibilities with young children at home. At times there has been little or no acknowledgement of the **stress** that this has placed on working parents without childcare during COVID19 especially when having to engage in homeschooling for their own child. Overall, the period has been fine but as we move into a new period of a blended approach then there needs to be consideration of staff and their personal circumstances on an individual level. What is lost in homeschooling is the informal communication between staff and management and a new vehicle needs to be considered to create two way communication to ensure staff aren't left to feel **isolated**.*

*Most of negative emotions came from trying to balance home life and work - which was totally brought on by Covid and not being able to access help with a young family. **Stress** was a huge feeling during this period - but not primarily caused by LYIT - just the situation of the juggling act!*

Feelings. Leadership, support and communication

Respondents described the following:

*Lecturing staff had to take responsibility for completion of courses, remote exams, advising students. **Very little support** for lecturing staff from admin. Such as remote access to x-drive files and desk top no equipment provided. Several lecturers had to buy new it equipment etc.*

***stressed** - extra workload lack of clear decision making from management and external regulatory bodies*

*lack of leadership and early decision-making has been the most **stressful** aspect*

***Frustrated** by lack of support from technical office and HR. Disappointed that while some of us are working tirelessly and rising to the challenging times other staff respond saying they are not working because of the pandemic.*

***frustrated** with the lack of contingency planning and anxious regarding the lack of quality assurance procedures at an institute level are the principle feelings.*

***Anxious** for the new academic year and workload. Worried will not get the support needed.*

*Sometimes I get **frustrated** when I need files or emails are not being responded to and answers are needed quickly.*

Feelings. Impact of uncertainty

Respondents described the following:

*The uncertainty that exists causes **anxiety**. e.g. are schools reopening? what will I do for childcare if schools do not reopen fully? If they can't attend school full time can they be at a childminders full time?*

*a lot of **uncertainty** ahead of new academic year*

***Anxious** due to uncertainty and lack of communication on plans for the future.*

Q16 Please write any additional comments here about your current experiences of remote working.

There were a range of negative, mixed and positive responses to question 16 broadly grouped around the following themes:

1. Inadequate broadband
2. Concerns relating to student engagement
3. Challenge balancing working from home with caring responsibilities
4. Lack of clear decisions and lack of clarity in communications from management/poor leadership/lack of consultation
5. Where good communication with manager/good support for remote working, staff described a positive experience
6. Challenges for remote teaching, particularly in disciplines with practical aspects
7. Home environment not always well set up for remote working
8. Variation in experience of support from functional areas (some very positive, some negative)
9. Higher workload for online
10. Lack of adequate equipment
11. Feeling that you are "always on"- hard to disconnect from work
12. Learned a lot from the experience of remote working
13. Lack of support for staff health and well-being
14. Missed social interaction
15. Staff, particularly PMSS staff, expressed a strong desire to continue with remote working a number of days each week
16. More/less productive way of working

The highest number of responses were in relation to the first three themes above

Negative/Mixed/ Positive

Respondents described a range of experiences. Here is a sample of negative, mixed and positive to give an insight into the breadth

Communication with students takes a lot longer online. Open door, always on mode is draining.

Save time on commute and wasteful meetings.

With further training and a longer time to adjust, I think there are many positives associated with remote working in the future.

Feel working from home is a better way of achieving a good work / life balance

I enjoy working remotely, however, it has been challenging trying to look after my children and complete my work at the same time, however, when the schools and creches re-open this could be resolved. I

I miss the college community, the day to day engagement with staff and students that energises me, therefore I would prefer to work on campus rather than remotely.

Q 16 – Student Engagement

- I find online learning somewhat alienating especially when trying to gauge student response/engagement. Remote working was necessary due to the pandemic but I really would prefer the classroom

- I am conscious of the fact that many students do not have good wifi and have modified my approach to be as inclusive as possible, with pre recorded lectures. Students appreciated this.

- I feel for students who cannot engage for whatever reasons and I am perhaps overly empathetic and put too much pressure on myself!

- Students will miss out so much re social aspects of being a student.

Q16 Work from home and caring responsibilities

- *Extremely hard to juggle homelife - ie children and the home – a lot of guilt in not achieving the best in both.*

- *It has been stressfully and pressurised working remotely in these circumstances because of lack of preparedness and having to care for children and a vulnerable relative.*

- *As we have a number of children I was trying to home school while always having my email turned on so wasn't giving the children the full attention they needed. Children who are not yet at school were being let watch TV more than normal so that I got some peace to work. Most of my work was done in the evenings often until 23:00-24:00…. This is not a complaint about remote working but just to highlight the realities of working from home at the dining room table while also being a full time parent. We also had to upgrade our internet package in order to facilitate homeschooling and remote working for 2 parents*

Q16 Communications/Decision Making/Leadership - concerns

- *Essentially we were left to our own devices....... literally. It was as if we were to "do our own thing". More Academic guidance would have been welcome*

- *LYIT has sufficient resources to do remote working well, and with notice can be even better in the future.   However the absence of any leadership from senior management was a huge problem. The staff responded extremely capably and efficiently however the lack of direction and clarity from senior management caused significant dismay and anguish and was ultimately embarrassing for the Institute. This continued throughout and remains a huge issue.*

- *Would like to have weekly Q and A regarding queries in relation to technologies in relation to remote working. Felt I had to learn v quickly.*

- *I feel the lack of information or guidance for support staff is disappointing. Some offices are working full time and other staff are working not at all or shorter hours which gives staff the feeling of unbalance*

Q16 Communications/Decision Making/Leadership – working well

- *It was necessary. We got on with it. Management reacted quickly to shutdown and provided scaffolding for lecturers and students*

- *Remote working works well when you have a manager that is supportive of you working remotely and has the confidence in you that you are carrying out all your work duties effectively from home.*

- *LYIT staff very helpful with any enquiries, and great support from line manager.*

Q16 Workload

- *Remote working is very time consuming*

- *I find the time commitment much higher, and feel I am developing content and modes of delivery only for a temporary situation*

- *Long hours, much more responsibility, harder to get a feel for student progress. Some students struggling. No quitting time almost 24hr available*

- *There's no way a move to online teaching for large groups can be managed by a single lecturer (1 lecturer: 130 students) with no additional investment in extra staff - and so far no sign of management recognising that a whole plethora of issues need addressed in order to ensure quality and sustain retention of large student numbers who have little experience in self managed remote learning*

- *Emotional well being was ignored, advice on how to proceed was missing and often it seemed we worked alone with no queries about an endless workload.*

Q17 Please write additional comments here about your priority needs and/or training requirements for the next academic year.

Priority needs expressed fell into three broad areas:

1. **Equipment** (Broadband, technical equipment, workstation)

2. **Policies and protocols** on remote working generally and in relation to teaching, learning and student engagement

3. **Clarity of communications and decision making** by managers/senior management – what teaching, when teaching , how teaching etc

Q17 Needs- Equipment

Reliable broadband/mobile data

Technical Equipment
- Laptop/desk top/ipad
- A/V Equipment (including webcam, headset, equipment to create video content)
- Discipline specific software
- Discipline specific equipment, such as digital pen, microscope, equipment to present mathematics problems, visualiser
- Additional screen
- Data storage
- Remote whiteboard
- Printer/printer access
- Work phone

Workstation
- Appropriate desk and chair

Q17 Needs- Policies and Protocols

Respondents identified the need for the following:

- *Protocols for remote working (across all institute functions)*

- *Priority to inform students of their new way of learning and their responsibilities at an institute level. An institute approach to blended learning and assessment is required to ensure equality and fairness*

- *If remote teaching is to continue there must be an Institute wide agreed protocol on responding to email demands*

- *Protocols on which platforms are to be used for teaching and learning and for communications*

- *GDPR and storage of data*

Needs- Communications in relation to next semester

Priority needs open communication to staff about what is happening when and how they are needed on campus. Blocking of online classes on stay at home days if possible. Clearer directions about what will happen next from management. Directions in the future as to examination methods, assistance for staff in same from other requisite

Clarity as to expectations in regard to 'remote emergency teaching'.

I would like some clarity as to what is acceptable with respect to delivering on-campus modules online in September?
In order to be prepared I plan on delivering them completely online(with some timetabled in-class sessions for class tests and discussions over the semester). I feel this provides the student with more regular delivery instead of practical sessions every 2 weeks or some such other format that has been documented... I would like to know if it is acceptable?

I would like clarification on subjects for next semester so that I can progress my own ability in online teaching and have sufficient time to prepare what is a very different method of delivery for us.

If moving to online then clear coordination / directions in terms of what is expected

Q17 Please write additional comments here about your priority needs and/or training requirements for the next academic year.

Respondents identified the following **training requirements** for the next academic year:

- Training for **students** to enable them to engage with on line teaching
- Training to **support** and **monitor** student engagement
- **MS Teams**, including hosting meetings
- Technology and equipment require to support **online teaching**
- Quality **pedagogy**, including pedagogy relating to online assessments
- **Blackboard/Blackboard** collaborate
- Basic training and advanced training in **online teaching tools**
- Greater **accessibility of training resources**
- How to **set up modules for remote learning**
- Training to **support remote events**
- Regular training on the suite of **Microsoft products** and other platforms to **support efficient remote working**
- Training on **managing/mentoring staff remotely.**

Respondents highlighted the need to **prioritise training** and to **dedicate time** for training
the extra time to absorb and apply that learning is what I struggle to find at the moment

I have not been offered any training to update my IT skills while employed in LYIT. I feel that long standing members of staff should be encouraged to attend training every couple of years at

Please start with the basics - set up a package/facility so that a lecturer can deliver a traditional-ish lecture from home. I can do a great job teaching my subject areas- don't ask me to re-invent (and supply) the wheel!