We asked staff:

" **What are the most important things we need to do to keep everyone connected and productive while working remotely?** "
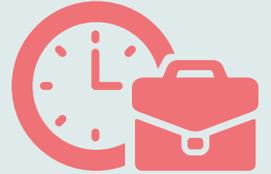
They answered:

Mental health

Increase accessibility to mental health services to support work/life balance

Flexible Hours

Maintain flexibility during and after COVID with respect to work hours and working at home

Equity

Provide customized support based on unique needs

Communication

Incorporate regular updates and promote timely information sharing

Professional Development

Invest in training staff and provide mentorship

Operational considerations

Carry vacation time to the coming year

Provide funding for work supports at home

Connectedness

Help integrate new employees into the Queen's community

Learn more about how the Faculty of Arts and Science is responding below.

Staff Initiatives Emerging from COVID Review

Themes	
Supporting Our People	

1. Connectedness	1. Develop best practices for connecting while working remotely (virtual coffee breaks, bring your pet to a meeting):
	  • After advertising widely to the FAS community, a small but engaged group of staff – including five volunteer Hosts – participated in a pilot approach to virtual coffee breaks in June and July 2021.
	  • While those who attended seemed to enjoy the experience, it is (as yet) unclear whether the low participation rate is indicative of faculty-wide "Zoom fatigue" and waning interest in virtual events in general, or if the spring/summer timing (particularly after a very busy year) may have dissuaded some from attending.
	
	 2. Disseminate best practices for connecting to and staying connected to team members.
	
	 3. Build Communities of Practice to share best practices (Department Managers, Undergraduate and Graduate Chairs and Assistants, Department Heads):
	  • Conversations with Associate Deans, Department Heads, Department Managers and staff have revealed that while Communities of Practice already exist in some form for certain roles (eg: Undergraduate Chairs) this is still a relatively new/unexplored concept with tremendous potential for growth and positive impact.
	  • A focus group – including both Department Managers and Undergraduate Assistants/Program Assistants – was hosted in March 2021 to solicit initial input on the concept of Communities of Practice (COP), its potential usefulness for FAS department staff, and topics/themes of interest.
	  • As part of a June 2021 survey to all FAS staff, Department Managers were asked to rank topics/themes of interest for COP discussions (as identified by March 2021 focus group participants). **Strategic planning**, **systematizing/documenting processes**, and **modernizing processes** were ranked most highly, with additional interest in discussing **cross-training** to alleviate sick-leave coverage issues etc, and in **identifying training gaps** as part of broader professional development plans.
	  • Of the June 2021 survey respondents, a total of 15 Department Mangers expressed interest in participating/learning more about COPs, and 11 indicated interest in learning more about the possibility of leading a COP as a professional development opportunity.

2. Mental Health	1.	Communicate with staff, providing links to mental health resources.
	2.	Develop "Healthy Communities" suite of events, resources and opportunities in support of positive mental, physical, and social well-being: • Introduced in May 2021, Healthy Communities events, resources, and opportunities have been designed - based on feedback/themes from the December 2020 ThoughtExchange - to support the mental, physical, and social wellbeing of FAS staff and faculty. • Seven virtual events and/or workshops have been hosted to-date, with 198 total registrants. The vast majority of post-event survey responses have been positive, with 91% of respondents to-date selecting "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with respect to their overall satisfaction with the event they attended. • Where possible, video recordings from virtual events have been posted on the Healthy Communities webpage to allow for increased flexibility and accessibility for those who were unable to attend live sessions. • https://www.queensu.ca/artsci/staff-and-faculty/support/healthy-communities
	3.	Partner with Athletics and Recreation for virtual workout sessions.
	4.	Disseminate resources to support work/life balance as part of Healthy Communities offerings.
	5.	Encourage managers to facilitate mental health breaks during day.
	6.	Communicate online mental health supports through EFAP http://www.queensu.ca/humanresources/wellnessaccessibility/employee-and-family-assistance-program
3. Communication	1.	Hosted 3 *Community Assembly* town halls to listen to concerns and provide answers to frequently asked questions. Also reprovided information on remote working guidelines and mental health supports.
	2.	Working with FAS HR and the Return to Campus committee supported Managers through online meetings to address specific measures for departments, units and schools regarding: safety plans, public health order requirements, remote work arrangement, and vaccination policy.
4. Flexible Work Hours	1.	Maintain flexibility in the work place during and after COVID with respect to hours and working at home through Remote Work Arrangement procedure and implementation.
	2.	Deploy manager guidelines and resources for working remotely, addressing flexible work arrangement for staff with caregiver

		responsibilities: https://www.queensu.ca/humanresources/return-campus/remote-work-arrangements
		3. Deploy Remote Work Arrangement Procedure: https://www.queensu.ca/humanresources/return-campus/remote-work-arrangements
5. Equity Considerations		1. Support managers to ensure staff have needed equipment/supplies (e.g. chair, computer monitors, office supplies, etc.) and work space they need to work at home.
		2. Support manager to recognize diversity in ability to work and in time of work and manage appropriately. Managers provided resources on the parameters around flexible arrangements for work hours, meeting deadlines use of technology for remote work scenarios, managing hybrid teams and communication.
6. Professional Development		1. Develop onboarding supports for new staff.
		2. Continue to provide training on best practices to work remotely.
		3. Create community of practices. (Notes below to incorporate)
		4. Encourage cross training of staff.) this can be referenced under communities of practice)
		5. Introduce FAS Learning & Development fund to support staff who pursue continuous work-related knowledge and skill improvement: - Developed in close consultation with the FAS Learning & Development Advisory Team, the FAS Learning & Development fund will provide assistance to staff who chose to build new skills and develop in their current or future roles. - Staff are eligible for up to $1,000 of funding per year, with applications due in October 2021 and January 2022 for this fiscal year. - Fund Procedure and Request Form are located on the Healthy Communities webpage: https://www.queensu.ca/artsci/staff-and-faculty/support/healthy-communities
7. Operational Considerations		1. Created an option for staff to apply for flexible work week in the Remote Working Agreement.
		2. Develop a *Strategy for Excellence, Equity & Enrichment in Service* (SEEES): - The SEEES project is also deeply rooted in the faculty's "commitment to supporting our people", and work on this project has identified a number of emerging challenges and opportunities connected to the major themes outlined in this document. - Key milestones to-date: i) Preliminary consultation with Dept. Heads and Mangers/Administrators led to the identification of several emerging challenges and opportunities within FAS including:

	increasing workload/capacity strain; the need for increased professional development opportunities and mobility for staff; and specific areas for increased resource support.
	ii) In June 2021, staff were asked to weigh in on these emerging challenges and opportunities as part of a faculty-wide staff survey. With a response rate of 35% (129 surveys returned), respondents ranked **Marketing & Communications**, **IT Support**, **Remote & Online Learning**, **Human Resources** and **Student Accommodations** as the areas with the greatest potential to alleviate strain, increase staff/faculty support, and enrich the student experience if resourced appropriately.
	iii) Survey respondents also noted the need/desire for: **process streamlining**, **shared/centralized approaches for certain support functions**, **enhanced communication** across FAS, increased access to **education/training** in key areas, more opportunities for **collaboration** and **cross-training**, and expressed **concerns about EDII** issues and how these would be addressed as part of the project approach.
	iv) Additional data gathering and benchmarking research has helped to expand our understanding of emerging challenges and opportunities – and potential approaches - from both internal and external perspectives.
	v) Focus groups and ThoughtExchanges to explore key challenges and opportunities were hosted between July – Sept 2021, with 62 staff focus group participants, and 142 total staff and faculty ThoughtExchange participants (non-unique).
	3. Introduce FAS Administrative Calendar: • As part of enhancements to onboarding resources and supports, an FAS Administrative Calendar was developed to provide a consistent reference point for new and current Managers/Administrators. • In addition to key academic dates/deadlines, the calendar includes reminders, standard operating procedures, and links to resources for key administrative tasks/processes (eg: PDP process, RTP process, Timetabling etc). • As of June 2021, the calendar is available on SharePoint for Managers and Administrators' ongoing reference.