Continuous Improvement Review Process for COVID Response

Supporting Educational Support Professionals During COVID-19

Dr. Wendy Craig
Wanda Beyer, M.Ed.
COVID Review Overview

1. Teaching and Learning
   i. Survey faculty (university wide)
   ii. ThoughtExchanges UG students, graduate students, UG and Grad Chairs, and Heads (FAS)
   iii. ThoughtExchange Educational Developers
   iv. Environmental scan of teaching resources, practises, supports and services, and policies and procedures
COVID Review Overview

1. Mental Health and Remote Learning Environment
   a. Partnership with UFLOURISH Survey for UG and Grad students
   b. Developed UFLOURISH for Staff and Faculty

2. Organizational
   a. ThoughtExchange with Heads (FAS)
Educational Support Professionals
ThoughtExchange Question

“How could Queen's University better support you in your role during the COVID-19 pandemic?”
ThoughtExchange Process

Electronic Invitation
- Educational Support Professionals at Queen’s

Thought Exchange
- Exchange open for 13 days
- Sharing and rating of thoughts

Data Analysis
- Themes generated by artificial intelligence
- Themes reviewed and refined
ThoughtExchange Participants

Educational Support Professionals

57 Participants
45 Thoughts
835 Ratings
ESP Thought Exchange Results
ESP Demographics

Roles
- 5 Educational Developers
- 14 Instructional Designers
- 9 Educational Technologist
- 9 Educational Leaders
- 10 Other

Years of Experience
- 19% Less than one year
- 11% One Year
- 23% Two Years
- 6% Three Years
- 41% More than Three Years

CHILDCARE AND DEPENDENTS

- 62% Yes
- 38% No

ACCESS TO CARE

- 41% No Access
- 27% Part-time
- 18% Full-time
- 14% NA
How disruptive has COVID-19 been on mental health?

- 13% Not at all
- 51% Somewhat
- 36% Somewhat

How disruptive has COVID-19 been?

- Timelines:
  - 7% Less Time
  - 31% Same Amount of Time
  - 62% More Time

- Sick & Vac Days:
  - 8% Less Time
  - 60% Same Amount of Time
  - 32% More Time

- Support:
  - 37% Less Time
  - 36% Same Amount of Time
  - 27% More Time

- Hours:
  - 62% Less Time
  - 31% Same Amount of Time
  - 7% More Time
Create Connections
Reduce Workload
Effective Communication
Recognize and Value Work
Operational Considerations
Support Well-being
Encourage PD and Training
Coordinate Support for Instructors
Improve Family Support
Average Rating by Theme for ESP
Theme: Improve Family Support

having an actual plan for parents who run into childcare issues (especially with daycare closures common and often with little/no notice) allow people to carry over more vacation than normal, especially because everything is so unknown

4.1 ★★★★★☆ (23★★)

More support for parents now homeschooling children We're not only asking instructors to transition- we're asking ourselves to become educators as well! Surely together we could rally resources/support.

4.0 ★★★★★☆ (20★★)

Provide shorter business hours Trying to work from home with a 9 year old meant he was left to fend for himself, and made it extremely hard to homeschool. We gave up.

3.0 ★★★★☆☆ (8★★)
Theme: Coordinate Support for Instructors

The university could have been more strategic about coordinating supports from different units.
There was initially duplication between educational support units in terms of remote support.

Collaborative approaches to support instructors across faculties
We continue to operate in silos rather than work collaboratively. A centralized model would be helpful and then individual faculties could tailor.
Theme: Encourage Professional Development & Training

| Support for new employees in a fully remote environment is key. | 4.1 ★★★★★ (21%) | Ranked #1 of |
| Difficult to onboard new employees when they cannot do ad-hoc learning on the job. Absorbing knowledge from colleagues on the fly is hard online. | | |
| Still support professional development | 3.8 ★★★★★ (21%) | Ranked #2 of |
| Particularly now, we need to stay current and informed to be competitive and offer the best solutions. With all hands on deck this is often neglected. | | |
| Encouraging employees to join virtual conferences | 3.5 ★★★★★ (21%) | Ranked #3 of |
| For Professional development and connection | | |
Theme: Support Well-being

The two shut-down days created by the Principal were so valuable to mental health. Can we do more? Can they be pre-planed and announced? A day when you can disconnect from the constant flow of email is so beneficial to mental health.

Move to a 4 day week Many staff are exhausted due to the high workload, Zoom fatigue etc. A 4 day work week would help to significantly alleviate stress.

Regular check ups on employees who live alone To ensure they are safe mentally and physically
Theme: Operational Considerations

Provide documentation confirming that it was necessary for us to work from home for the 2020 tax season. Many of us have been working more than we normally would have before the Pandemic. It would be nice to be able to deduct work from home expenses.

3.8 ⭐
Ranked #13 of 43

It was very helpful to have access to some educational technologies. I think the next step would be to ensure that we continue to access those past the pandemic.

3.2 ⭐
Not enough ratings to rank
Theme: Recognize & Value ESP

Allow for more carry over vacation time. The COVID situation required more time from us to support instructors in the transition to remote. We could not take our vacation time as preferred.  

The university could have recognized that the additional work would require significant overtime and offered this. When working under duress to meet institutional needs, employees shouldn’t feel that they have to sheepishly ask to be remunerated fairly.  

Celebrate the wins together! Even though we are all working away, we are still meeting our deadlines. This is a bigger accomplishment than before and should be celebrated.
Theme: Effective Communication

Have more direct communication with senior management. It's important that senior management understand what work is being done at the grassroots level to avoid making decisions that show a lack of empathy. 3.8 ★
Ranked #15 of 43

More transparency in workplace communications. Working remotely it can feel like hierarchical structures prevail & there's less room to effect/influence positive change that's "above your pay grade". 3.6 ★
Ranked #24 of 43

Provide consistent messaging. We received multiple messages from multiple stakeholders that conflicted with each other. Decide on a policy, write it down, and distribute one msg. 3.5 ★
Ranked #28 of 43
Theme: Reduce Workload

**Hire more staff** The workload requirements were extreme before the pandemic, and now even more so. Hearing that colleagues feel they can't take vacations is terrible. 4.0 ★
Ranked #10 of 43

Filling out PDF-based timesheets is so cumbersome. Can Queen's develop a light-weight system for Casual workers to input their hours into a webform? Moving PDFs around via email clogs inboxes and also requires some casual staff have PDF software on their computers. 3.5 ★
Ranked #25 of 43

It would be nice to have more people for the volume of work. But I think leadership is doing the best they can with the resources they have. 3.3 ★
Ranked #33 of 43
Theme: Create Connections

Create socially distanced co-working spaces on campus for employees who need motivation and peer support to continue working. Some individuals at home at struggling with the lack of social interaction, or just not being near people in general.

Encourage more non-work related activities between staff members to replace the lost informal/casual time. Zoom meetings feel a bit more formal than sitting in a room together, so it's hard to have those casual warm ups and check ins.
Take Home Messages

- Reducing workload by hiring more staff, simplifying processes, and sharing resources
- Improving communication by being strategic in decreasing the volume and removing the barriers to communicating with senior administration
- Recognizing the value of the work by acknowledging work in a meaningful way and providing adequate renumeration of time
- Supporting well-being being cognizant of those living alone or taking care of dependents
- Continue to support professional development and opportunities for social connections
- Celebrating the wins!
Next Steps

● FAS is creating an action plan with concrete next steps, metrics, and timelines to address concerns in short term and long term

● Monitoring and assessing progress on proposed actions will continue

● A webpage will be created where progress can be viewed
Take Home Messages

- We are in this together
- These are challenging times for all and we recognize that!
- Committed to supporting and are responding with concrete actions
- Grateful for the work you do every day
- Critical learning to help us in time of COVID but also opportunity to understand what we do well and how we can do better moving forward
Thank you for making a difference by sharing your thoughts