Continuous Improvement Review Process for COVID Response

Supporting Department Heads during COVID-19

Dr. Wendy Craig
Kyla Mayne, M.Sc.
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)
Department Heads ThoughtExchange
ThoughtExchange Question

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

Electronic Invitation
- Sample of Department Heads

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

31 Participants
43 Thoughts
366 Ratings
Length of time in role

- Less than 1 year
- 1 year
- 2 years
- 3 years
- More than 3 years

Percent
How disruptive has the COVID-19 pandemic and Queen's campus shutdown been to your mental health?

- Not at all disruptive: 96%
- At least a bit disruptive: 9%

Compared to before COVID-19, how many hours a week do you work?

- Less: 9%
- About the same: 91%
- More: 0%
Compared to before COVID-19, do you have the resources to support faculty, staff, and students?

- Faculty/Staff:
  - Less: 4%
  - About the Same: 35%
  - More: 61%

- Students:
  - Less: 20%
  - About the Same: 23%
  - More: 68%
Compared to before COVID-19, to what extent do you feel supported, and the communication has been effective?

- **FAS Support**
  - Less: 31%
  - About the Same: 30%
  - More: 39%

- **FAS Communication**
  - Less: 52%
  - About the Same: 9%
  - More: 39%

- **Senior Leadership Communication**
  - Less: 68%
  - About the Same: 27%
  - More: 5%
Compared to before COVID-19, to what extent: Are the timelines appropriate and are you able to address EDI Initiatives?

- Timelines:
  - Less: 77%
  - About the Same: 23%
  - More: 0%

- EDI:
  - Less: 20%
  - About the Same: 41%
  - More: 41%
### Frequency of Thoughts by Theme

- **OPERATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS**: 12 thoughts
- **COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY**: 11 thoughts
- **REDUCE WORKLOAD**: 5 thoughts
- **SUPPORT MENTAL HEALTH**: 5 thoughts
- **MODIFY MERIT PROCESS**: 3 thoughts
- **EQUITY**: 3 thoughts
- **CREATE RESOURCES**: 3 thoughts
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Average Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OPERATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REDUCE WORKLOAD</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MODIFY MERIT PROCESS</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EQUITY</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUPPORT MENTAL HEALTH</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CREATE RESOURCES</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Word Cloud of Key Ideas

departments
international
clear
covid
workload
merit
staff
planning
faculty
positions
system
universities
health
competition
worry
head
time
fall
work
learning
hard
"Preferred suppliers" for goods has resulted in a monopoly situation with correspondingly exorbitant prices. Given our budget situation, these monopolies and correspondingly inflated costs, make no sense.

Provide more flexibility in purchasing (acquire takes far far too long)
We cannot replace computers in a timely manner (it takes 3 weeks as opposed to 3 days via a commercial supplier)
Theme: Reduce Workload

The role of Head has become completely undesirable in many departments with consequence of high turnover rates. Pandemic conditions exacerbate this. Greater uncertainty in department; planning made more difficult; service in general undervalued.

Pandemic exacerbated workload inequalities. Staff and most faculty working overload. Worried for those also in caregiving roles, or precarious health. obvious.
Theme: Modify Merit Process

Please, please work with QUFA to modify merit. The idea of merit in this situation is absurd even if it reflects pre-COVID work. The merit system is demoralizing for all except the few "winners."

Get rid of merit assessments. Everyone is working flat out. Productivity affected by so much. Faculty don't need a competition for points to work hard. Merit rewards are especially inappropriate now & for years to come.
Theme: Communicate Effectively

Provide clear communication on international graduate student tuition changes (equalization, ITAs, etc) Graduate student recruitment is already underway. We cannot respond to International student inquiries, or plan, without clear information.

there were too many chaotic meetings in the spring and summer. I missed a few voluntary ones. However I then missed important information. if the meeting is voluntary, and important topics are discussed, we need access to the info.
Theme: Equity

The faculty has a long established practice of dividing the faculty into 'strategic' or 'privileged' departments, and the excluded rest. The voices of excluded departments are seldom heard; this is contrary to the principle of diversity.

The needs of minority programs are seldom addressed. These issues may be small to the majority of departments, but crucial to the minority department. Small problems turn into big problems which be difficult to fix.
Theme: Support Mental Health

Need advise on how to help fatigued faculty members. Too many emails increases workload and frustration.

I thought I was handling things well; then became mentally exhausted and suffered from lack of in person contact. Because I thought I had things under control and I didn’t.
Theme: Create Resources

Create all PDF forms (such as appointment data sheets) in a manner that lets us sign them electronically. Having to print data sheets and then scan and send seems like an unnecessary waste of time, and makes the challenges of working remotely more acute.

OnQ has a VERY steep learning curve. The course building page is far too cluttered, with too many bells and whistles, redundancies, and customizations Faculty are really struggling to get their courses online. Simplify, and offer more course templates.
Key Findings

- Department Heads are overwhelmed with the increased workload during this time – they have significantly less resources and more responsibilities to manage.

- Heads want to see changes in merit pay processes and want more equity in policies across the board.

- Department Heads highlight operational considerations that could be improved, such as department-level planning and purchasing.
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