



SUPPORTING STAFF AND FACULTY DURING COVID-19: LISTENING TO UG AND GRAD DEPARTMENT CHAIRS AND ASSISTANTS

FEBRUARY 2021

Summary of findings of Department Undergraduate and Graduate Chairs

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Executive Summary

The Undergraduate Chairs and Graduate Chairs and their assistants in the Faculty of Arts in Science at Queen's University were invited to share their thoughts and rate other participants' thoughts on how the university could better support them in their role during the COVID-19 pandemic. There were 53 participants who shared 69 thoughts and provided 1,113 ratings. Of note was that 29% of the participants had been in their position for less than a year; 67% reported that they felt that current timelines were inappropriate; 22% indicated that they were receiving less support now than before the pandemic; and 71% indicated that their mental health had been disrupted in the pandemic. After the ThoughtExchange was complete, we refined the themes generated from artificial intelligence software on the ThoughtExchange platform and used weighted averages to calculate thought ratings. The following themes emerged: operational considerations, effective communication, mental health and support; recognition and worker value; a need for more interdepartmental collaboration; increased training and support required; increased need for student support and increased student financial support. Implications and proposed actionable steps are presented based on these results.

Background and Context

With its discovery in Wuhan, China, and its subsequent spread around the world, COVID-19 pandemic has caused considerable concern and rapid change in our society. To manage the illness, governments have adopted extreme public health measures including shutting down all but essential services and industries; promoting hand hygiene measures; restricting travel and closing borders; and implementing social distancing, self-isolation and quarantine measures. These measures have created widespread disruption. Like other sectors, the education sector in Canada has been substantially impacted. Queen's made a decision in March 2020, to cancel classes for a week and finish the winter term of 2020 online. Subsequently, the 2020 summer and the 2020-2021 academic year is primarily online. The goal of this work was to review how undergraduate and graduate students, faculty and staff were managing throughout the pandemic and to understand how the university could be effective in supporting its stakeholders throughout the pandemic. This report focusses on the ThoughtExchange results for undergraduate and graduate chairs and their Assistants.

Researchers have indicated that the effects of COVID-19 on mental health and well-being are likely to be profound and long lasting and will extend beyond those who experience the virus. Living through the pandemic is a stressful event, and for some individuals and groups, they may experience the stress more acutely. For example, research from University College London suggest that self-harm and suicide thoughts during the pandemic are higher among women, Black Asian, and minority ethnic groups, people experiencing socioeconomic disadvantage, and those with mental disorders (Lob, Steptoe, & Fancourt, 2020). Longitudinal studies have further indicated that mental health has declined in the early stages of the pandemic, as evidenced by elevated rates of anxiety, depression, stress, suicide risk, and post-traumatic stress (Pierce, Hope, Ford, Hatch, Hotopf, John, et al., 2020).

It is becoming increasingly apparent that that the mental health of employees is being negatively affected by COVID. For university employees the pandemic has obvious implications for their mental health, but also for their engagement in work and their work productivity. Managing the pandemic is adding significantly to this stress associated with work due to health concerns, the uncertainty, the lack of control over the virus, and the new



way of working and interacting with colleagues. These stressors are likely cumulating over time and having significant impact not only to the physical and mental health but also to their ability to do their work. COVID -19 is a chronic stressor that is novel, unpredictable, threatening, and individuals lack control over. Understanding these employees' experiences is critical to developing harm reduction approaches to reduce and mitigate the risks associated with the pandemic.

ThoughtExchange Methods

A representative sample of both undergraduate and graduate students from all departments within the Faculty of Arts and Sciences at Queen's University were invited to participate in separate thought exchanges. Students were asked:

“How could Queen's University better support you in your role as an undergraduate/graduate chair or assistant during the COVID-19 pandemic?”.

Department Chairs and Assistants were initially invited on October 5th, 2020 via email to share their own thoughts in response to the thought exchange question and asked to rate thoughts (between 0-5, based on how important or relevant the thought is) that were shared by other students in the thought exchange. Prior to participating in the thought exchange, students were asked survey questions about their demographics and ability to cope during the COVID-19 pandemic. The thought exchange remained open for a duration of 13 days. Email reminders were sent to Chairs and Assistants once during the duration of the thought exchange being open, and on the final day of the thought exchange.

Upon completion of the thought exchange, we used the themes generated using the artificial intelligence software on the ThoughtExchange platform to analyze the thoughts shared by students. Weighted averages were used to calculate thought ratings. The baseline rating of a thought is 3-stars.

We reviewed and revised the AI generated themes and the thoughts that were included within each theme. Thoughts that were incorrectly placed were recategorized. Thoughts that were too dissimilar to other thoughts and were not able to be placed into any themes were not included in the analyses. The themes were refined through an iterative process involving two separate coders to ensure reliability. The two coders and the research supervisor met after the initial theme generation to finalize the theme sets and categorize any remaining thoughts. Themes were renamed to reflect specific actions Queen's University can take to better support students during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Description of Undergraduate and Graduate Chairs and Assistants Sample

PARTICIPANTS



53
Participants



69
Thoughts



1,113
Ratings

In total, chairs and assistants from 31 departments in the Faculty of Arts and Science were invited to participate in the ThoughtExchange. 54 of the invited chairs and assistants participated. Of the 54 participants, 26% (N=13) were Undergraduate Chairs, 24% (N=12) were Undergraduate Assistants, 26% (N=13) were Graduate Chairs, and 24% (N=12) were Graduate Assistants. Reporting the years they have been in their role, 29% (N=14) of respondents have been in their role for less than one year, 9% (N=5) one year, 9% (N=5) two years, 9% (N=5) 3 years and 41% (N=20) have been in their role for more than 3 years. Further, of the 54 participants, 57% (N=31) shared thoughts and 70% (N=38) rated thoughts in the exchange. In total, 69 thoughts and 1,113 ratings were provided by the participants.

Figure 1. What is your role?

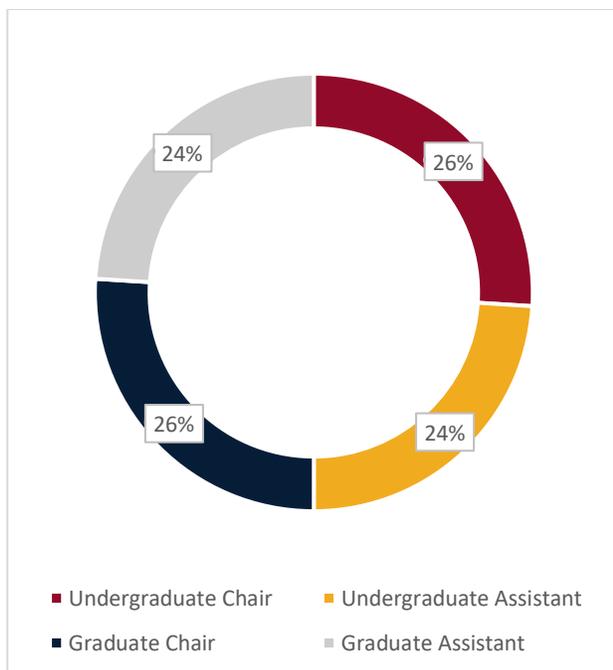
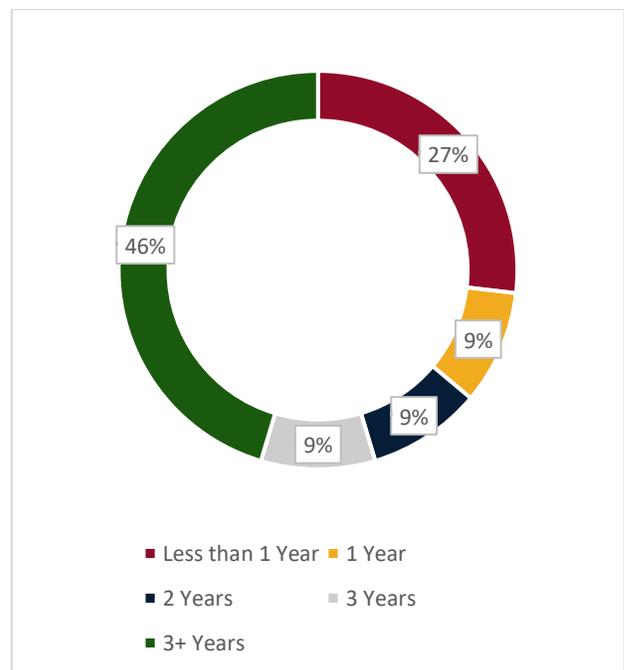


Figure 2. How long have you been in this role?



RESPONSES TO SURVEY QUESTIONS

Prior to sharing thoughts, undergraduate and graduate chairs and assistants responded to eight survey questions about their experiences with remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. Reporting on their workload since the beginning of the pandemic, 24% (N=11) of participants reported that their workload during the campus shut down has not changed, while 18% (N=8) reported a slight increase in workload and 51% (N=23) reported experiencing significantly more work than prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Reporting on support received during COVID-19, 22% (10) of respondents reported that they have felt less supported in the workplace, while 25% (N=25) felt that they are more supported in the workplace. Reporting on how disruptive COVID-19 and the campus shutdown has been on mental health, 9% (N=4) of participants reported that COVID-19 and the campus shutdown has not been disruptive, while 53% reporting that it has been disruptive, and 38% reporting a lot to extremely disruptive to their mental health. In response to a question about the appropriateness of their expected timelines for completing tasks, compared to before the COVID-19 pandemic, 22% (N=10) of participants reported that the appropriateness of the timelines to complete tasks is the same, 11% (N=5) reported that they are more appropriate, and 67% (N=30) reported that expected timelines for completing tasks are less appropriate than compared to before the COVID-19 shutdown. See **Figures 1-6** below for complete survey findings.

Figure 3. Compared to before COVID-19, to what extent do you feel supported in the workplace?

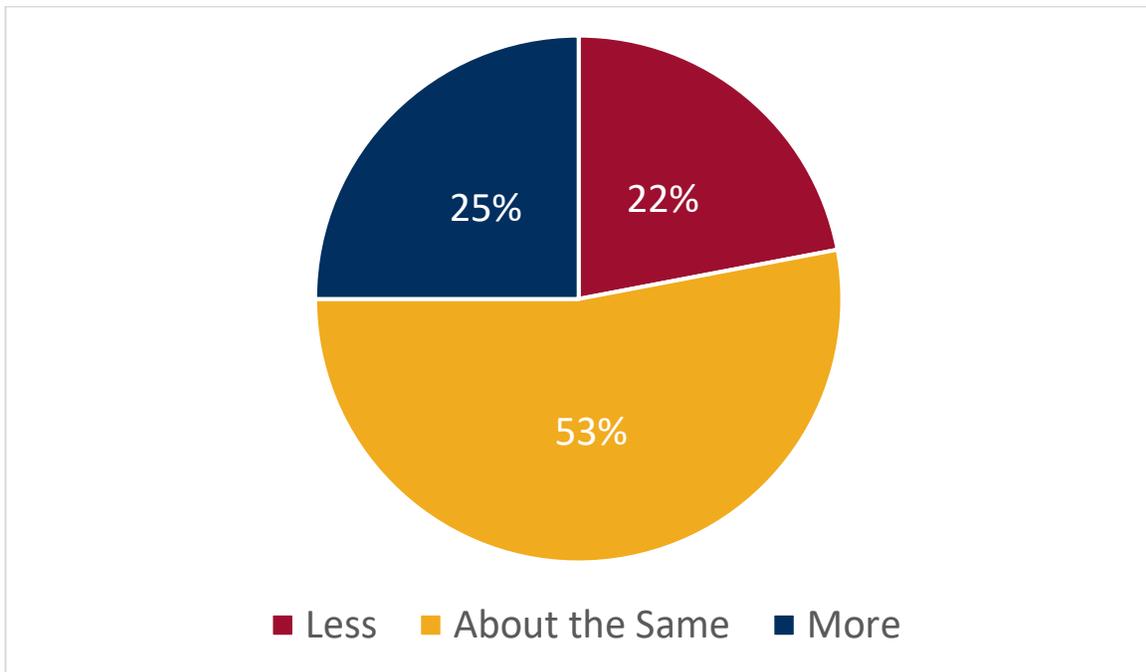


Figure 4. How disruptive has COVID-19 and associated Queen's Campus Shutdown been to your mental health?

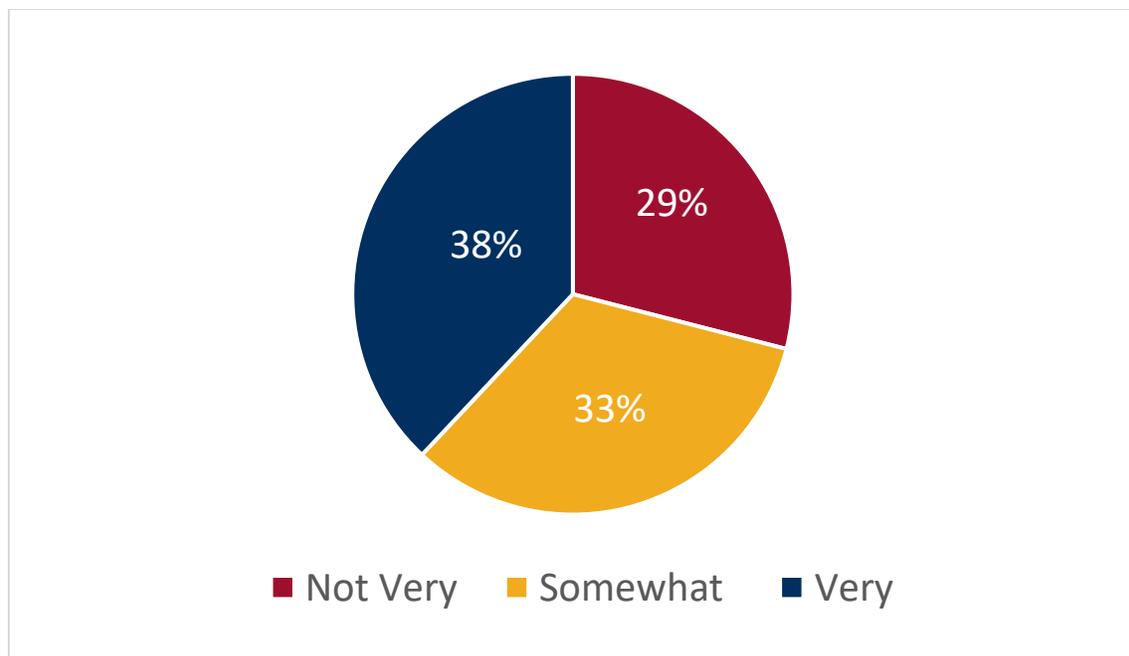


Figure 5. Compared to before COVID-19, how many hours a week do you work?

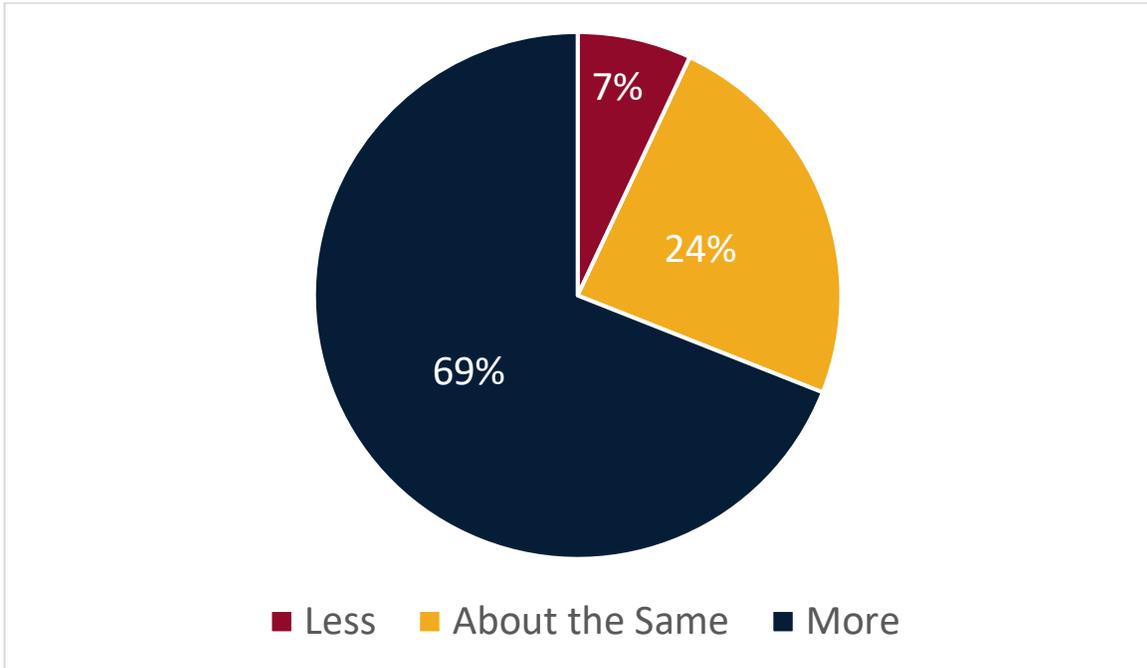


Figure 6. Compared to before COVID-19, to what extent are the timelines to complete tasks appropriate (e.g., the timetable)?

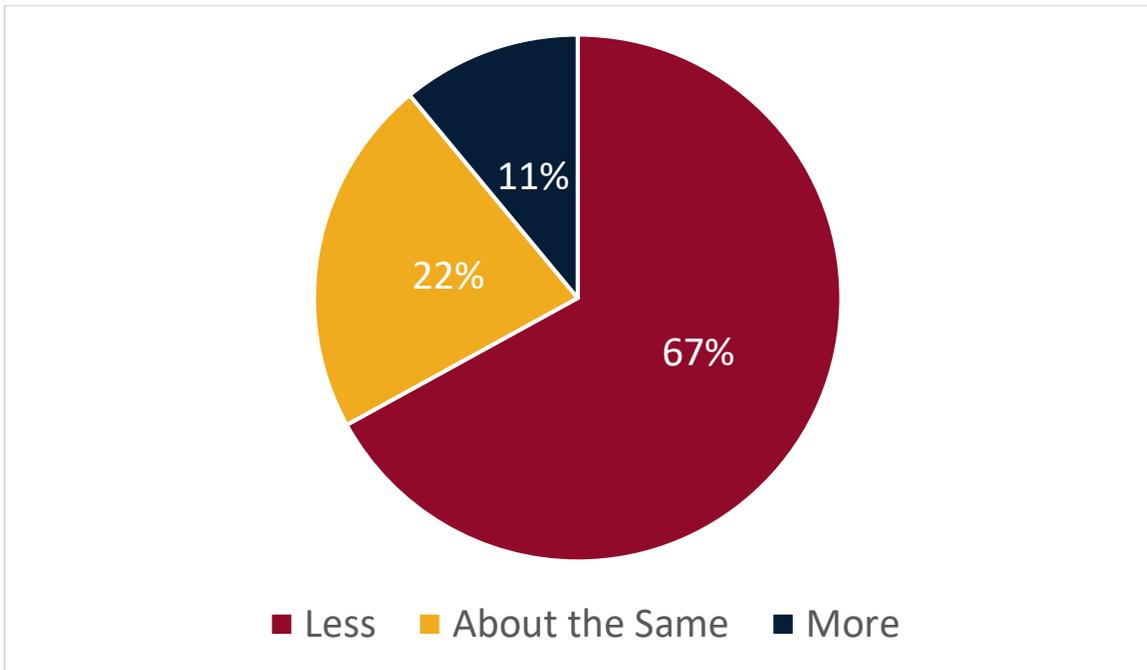


Figure 7. Compared to before COVID-19, do you have the resources required to support students?

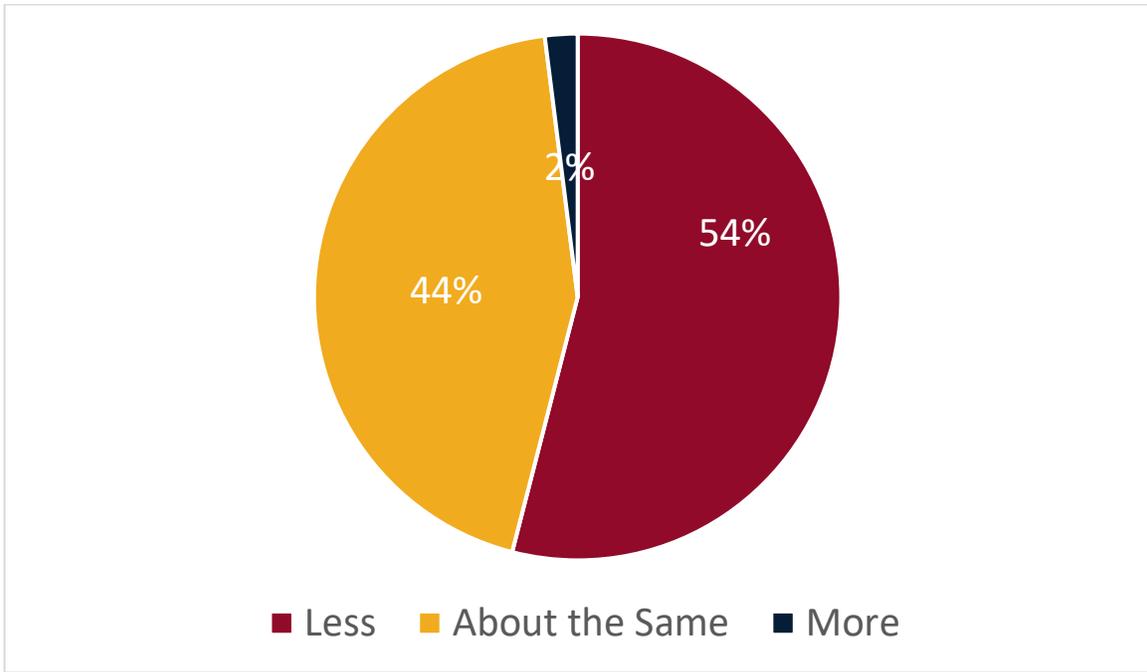


Figure 8. Compared to before COVID-19, to what extent do you feel like you can take a vacation/sick day?

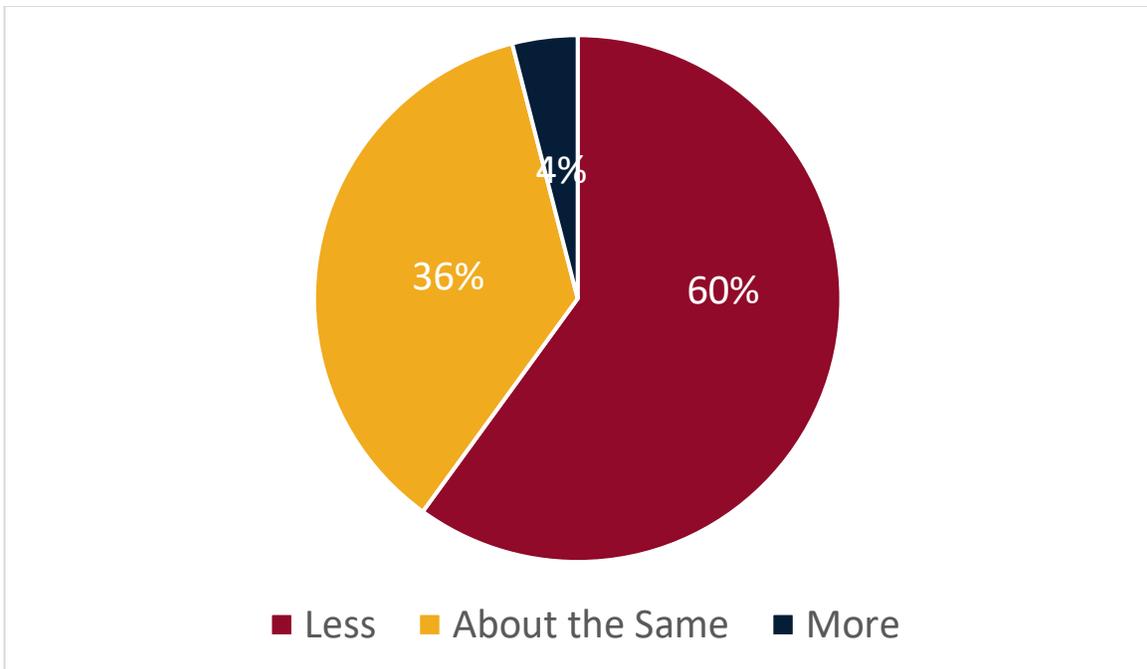


Figure 9. Do you have any children or dependents?

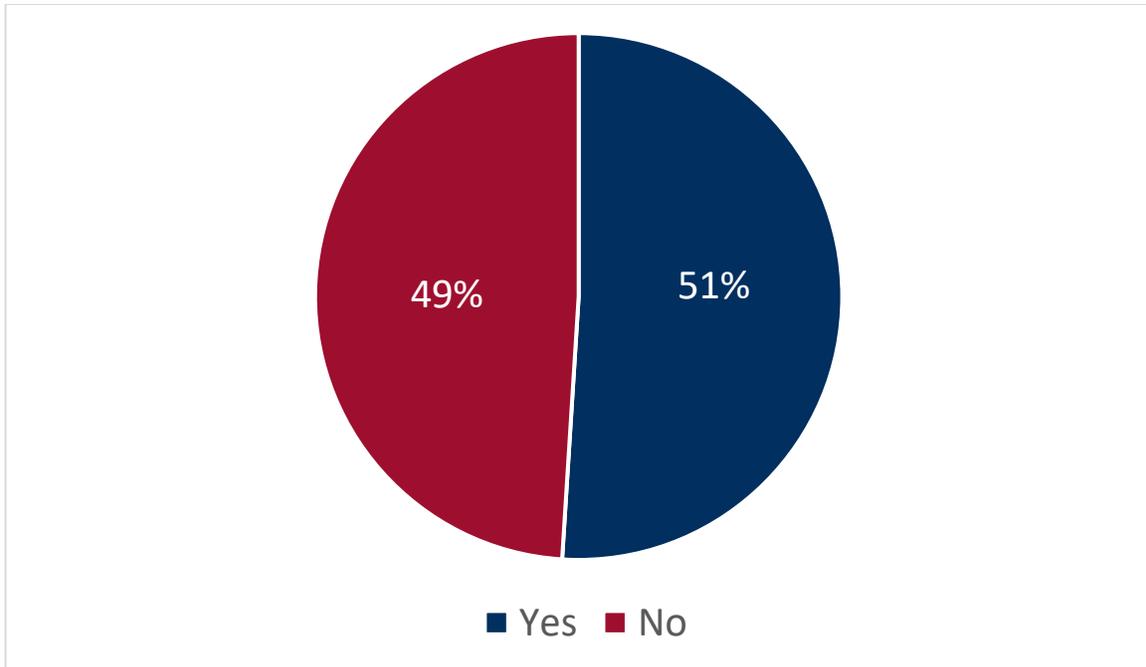
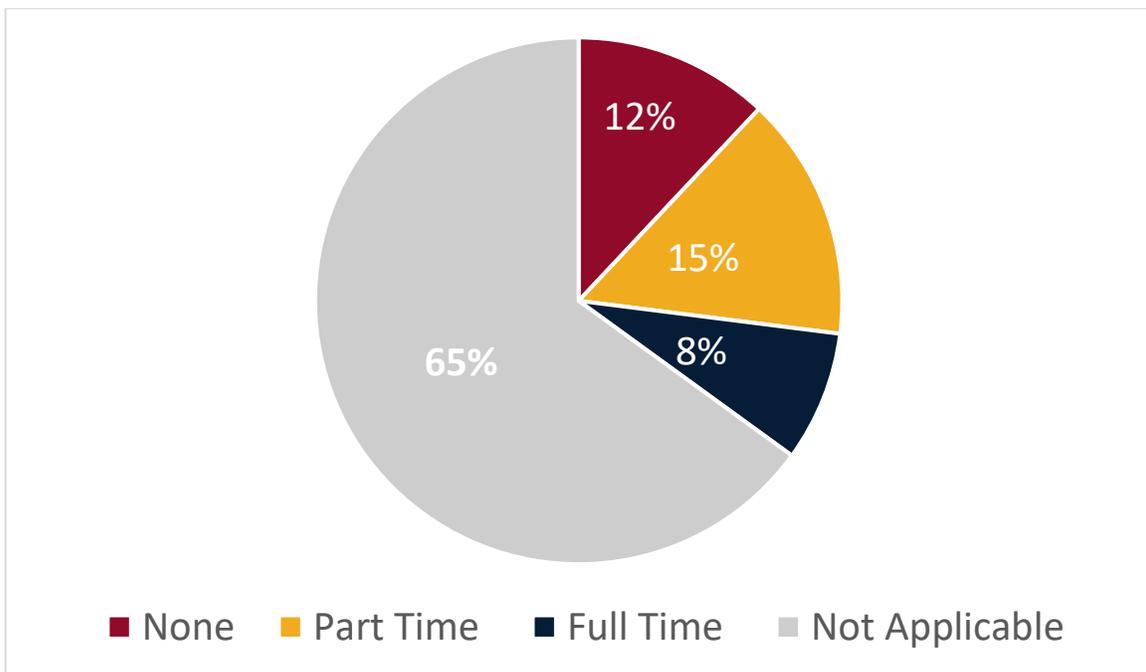


Figure 10. Do you have access to child-care of support for your dependent?



Department Chair and Assistants ThoughtExchange Results

OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS

Undergraduate and graduate chairs and assistants shared that they are experiencing a greater sense of burden and stress because of the campus shut down and shift to remote learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Chairs and assistants expressed frustration with the university's decision-making process and modes of communication, citing numerous issues with the workload and work cycles expected of their roles in this remote working environment.

Displayed in **Figure 11**, "*Operational Decisions*", "*Communication Decisions*" and "*Mental Health and Stress*" were the most frequently shared thought categories for respondents. These themes captured the frustration of chairs and staff regarding the lack of transparency and consultation during decision making process, the feeling of disregard for staff and faculty burden and expectations by the administration, and frustration stemming from communication errors that have resulted in confusion, burden and unnecessary work. Respondents repeatedly expressed that they felt immense burden from their duties and that the senior administration was failing to account for this burden when making strategic decisions and imposing timelines on departments. The lack of transparency in the decision-making process, and confusion over communication streams, has resulted in many chairs feeling overwhelmed in their roles and unprepared to support their students, which has resulted in increased stress levels, anxiety and burnout for some who are feeling the impacts of isolated working.

Chairs and assistants also shared a desire for better position training and onboarding, including specific support and resources to help manage their departments and students during the COVID-19 pandemic (see **Figure 11**, "*Training and Support*", "*Student Support*", "*Student Financial Support*"). Chairs and assistants feel unsupported in their effort to help mitigate the burden that students face as a result of the campus shut down, including direction on how to best support students socially, academically and financially. Specifically, several thoughts expressed a desire for the senior administration to make strategic decisions regarding financial support for students who face undue financial burden as a result of extended academic stay. Several Chairs also expressed a desire to develop a communication stream between departments to allow Chairs and staff to communicate challenges, best practices and share resources (see **Figure 11**, "*Inter-departmental Communication*").

The rating of themes differentiated slightly from the frequency of thoughts (See **Figure 12** for theme ratings). Communication decisions was the highest rated theme with an average scoring of 4.3/5 stars from raters which indicates that the thoughts regarding communication needs is the most valued theme in this group. Following was *“Inter-departmental Communication”* with an average rating of 4.2/5 compared to its low frequency, suggesting that while not a common thought of respondents, it was highly valued by this group. *“Operational Decisions”* and *“Mental Health and Stress”* both had an average rating of 4/5 signifying significant interest and value from participants, and as indicated before, both were highly related to each other.

Particularly interesting from this ThoughtExchange is the theme of *“Worker Value and Recognition”*. This theme had the fourth more frequently shared thoughts but was the lowest valued when participants rated the thoughts. Within this theme, several respondents (N= 5) reported that they felt supported by the University during the pandemic and did not expect anything more from the administration. However, participants who rated these thoughts, rated them much lower than others with the average weighted rating for this theme being 3.5/5. Raters favored one thought about developing a formal recognition system for staff during the pandemic, but generally rated all other thoughts in this theme around the medium, with one thought *“I feel that I have been fully supported by Queen’s and by my home department”* at an average of 2.9/5 for the exchanges lowest rated thought. This may suggest that while some respondents are feeling supported during this pandemic, that same value is not shared by a number of stakeholders in this exchange.

Figure 11. Frequency of thoughts across themes

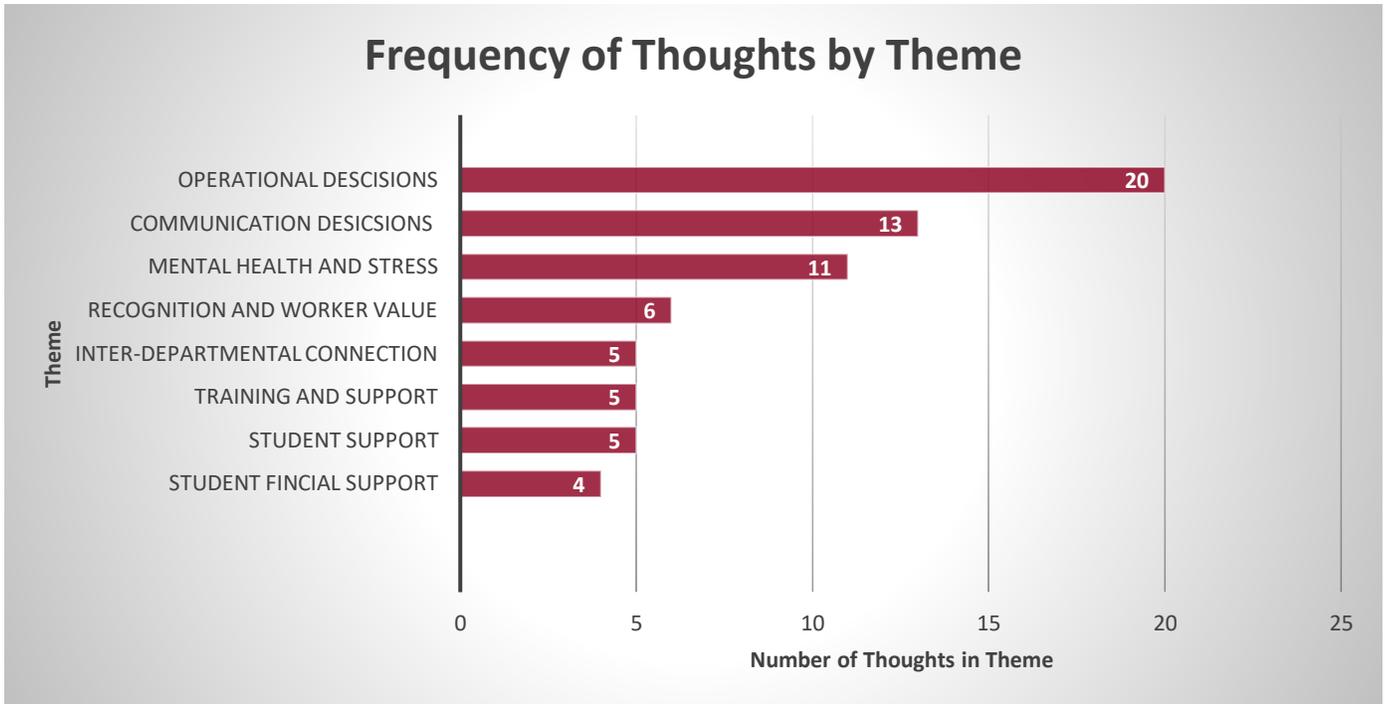
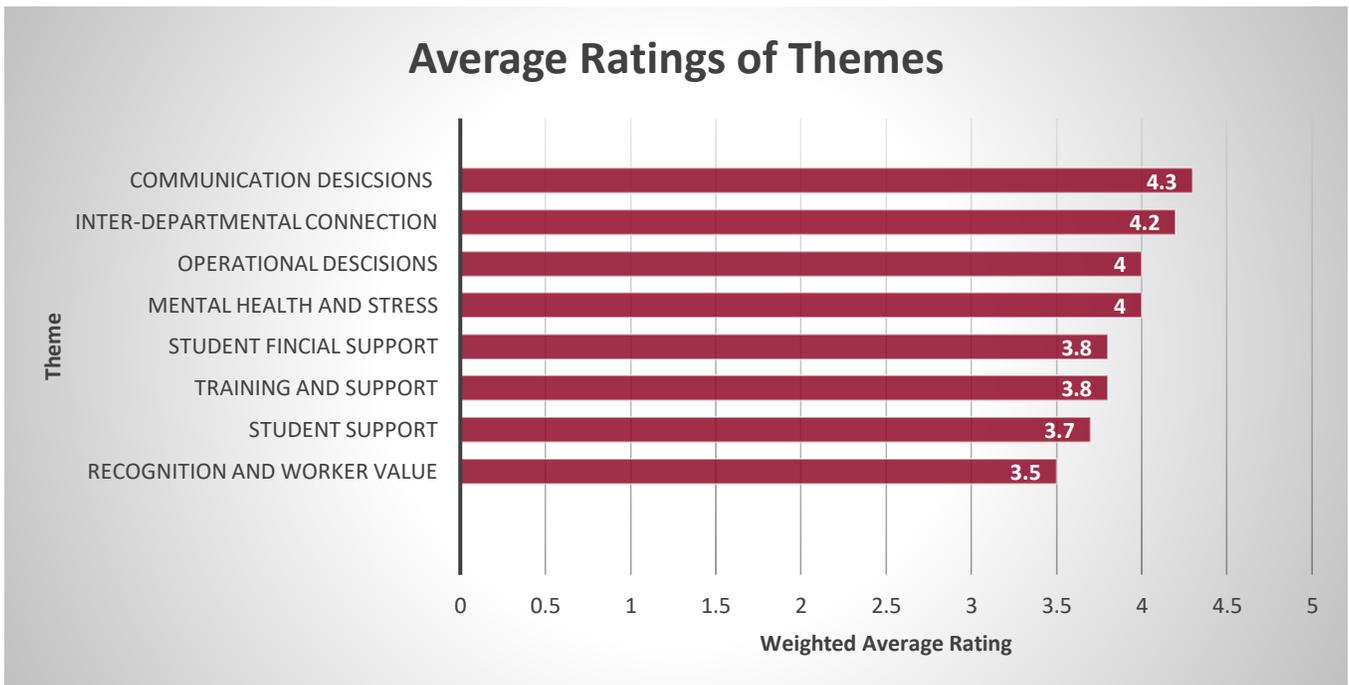


Figure 12. Average rating of thoughts within each theme



Theme Analysis

THEME 1: OPERATIONAL DECISIONS

Theme Summary:

- Undergraduate and graduate chairs and assistants shared that the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting campus shutdown, which required the university's administration to take on and make numerous high-level strategic decisions, created a lot of pressure and stress for their roles. Chairs reported that they felt pressured to complete their normal duties while also supporting their respective departments through a transition to remote learning. Numerous respondents shared that they would like for the administration to review the timelines that chairs are expected to complete tasks in and take into consideration, the difficulty that chairs are facing when administrating their departments during COVID-19. Chairs and assistants expressed that the turnaround for deliverables and the expected timelines for task completion are not being accounted for in major strategic decisions which is impairing their ability to manage the front-end of their administration. Chairs would like to see an increased attention paid to the expected turnaround on actionable decisions. Further, many participants feel as though the administration should be working to prioritize the student experience through this pandemic and reflect these priorities in the strategic mandates and goals extended to the faculty's departments. Below are some example thoughts.

Example Thoughts:

Make big decisions sooner. Over the summer many important and impactful decisions were left too late, resulting in increased workload at the front end (e.g. UG office).

More lead time for tasks coming out of the Faculty Office. Given our much heavier teaching loads this year (due to converting our courses for remote delivery), it is very hard to carry out new tasks quickly.

THEME 2: COMMUNICATION DECISIONS

Theme Summary

- Undergraduate and graduate chairs and assistants shared many concerns about the communication methods being used by the administration. Respondents expressed concern that the university and faculty have not established clear and transparent methods for

communicating information to departments and their respective administrations. Chairs feel that the communication streams currently employed by the administration are not effective and have resulted in instances of mixed messages, inconsistent information, and confusion over responsibility for decisions being made during the COVID-19 pandemic. Chairs and assistants would like a more consistent and effective means of disseminating information, with emphasis on ensuring that all relevant stakeholders are receiving the same information and directions to prevent from further confusion and unnecessary strain. Further, chairs also thought that more attention need to be directed at communicating strategic decisions that will adjust or create new work timelines. Below are some sample thoughts:

Example Thoughts:

We need time and notice. We just received notice that we are expected to be in synchronous video marketing sessions for prospective students with less than 2 weeks notice.

Consistent communication between leadership and to those is departmental leadership roles. Information circulates but at times what's said on one committee is at odds with another

THEME 3: MENTAL HEALTH AND STRESS

Theme Summary:

- Chairs and assistants expressed that COVID-19, the campus shut-down, and the resulting shift to remote learning has impacted their mental health by adding considerable stress at work. Respondents stated that the expectations for their roles during the shift to remote learning has negatively impacted their mental health and wellbeing. Chairs highlighted task timelines and deadlines as the most significant factor on their mental health, sharing that the expectation for them to carry out their normal duties and meet pressing deadlines, while shifting to off-campus work and learning, has resulted in a lot added stress and exhaustion. Furthermore, respondents expressed concern about the continuing trend of numerous major adjustments to the universities COVID-19 plan, and the impact of the constant change on the wellbeing of staff and students. Chairs reported difficulty in performing their role in their department while also supporting their students and staff with an abundance of continuous change. Participants reported that the ever-changing policy and strategic priorities of the institution has caused undo anxiety and overburden in

their work. Chairs ask the administration to consider reviewing the expectations and deadlines of chairs duties, specifically when making critical decisions that impact department administration during remote learning.

Example Thoughts:

Exhaustion. Can we just focus on our core mission now - teaching, getting through term, and maybe recruitment? Faculty and department admins have been going flat out through the summer and fall. You will see the long-term impacts if the status quo isn't changed.

by making bigger decisions early enough that staff can act on these decisions with appropriate timelines and deadlines. I feel like this entire year has been extremely reactive instead of proactive. Staff had to work extremely hard under lots of stress.

THEME 4: INTER-DEPARTMENTAL CONNECTION

Theme Summary:

- Undergraduate and graduate chairs and assistants identified that means to communicate between departments and other faculty with shared responsibilities could be greatly improved upon. Chairs shared that they should be welcome to a stream of communication between departments as a way to share best practises, communicate shared challenges and make more efficient, their overlapping duties and tasks. Chairs feel that having a structured communication stream between departments would help in the overall administration of the faculty and their students.

Example Thoughts:

Facilitate ways for departments to share best practices amongst each other - many staff are in similar roles but have no contact with each other. Shared resource that gives examples of processes/procedures that are common to all FAS depts (i.e. timetabling, tracking student progress, etc).

It would be nice to know what other departments are going through with regards to helping graduate students. Eg, we spent a lot of time dealing with online thesis defense processes. Everyone on campus was doing this, a more unified approach couldn't helped.

THEME 5: RECOGNITION AND WORKER VALUE

Theme Summary:

- Several respondents shared that Queen's University is doing a good job when it comes to supporting them and recognizing their work. Some chairs shared that they feel supported by Queen's and the ability to work from home is a welcome change to the process.
- Some participants suggested that formal means of communicating worker value and recognizing worker commitment during this time could be improved.
- While this theme was the fourth highest in terms of thought frequency, it was also the lowest overall rated theme.

Example Thoughts:

COVID created crises that took a great deal of time--I don't think that Queen's could do much to support us through that time, we just had to cope. However I think that we could be given more teaching release/other admin release for a year in order to compensate for lost research productivity.

A formal way to send "Kudos". Truly, we work with phenomenal people. It would be great if there was a system to send a formal "kudos" to acknowledge kindness and collegiality

THEME 6: TRAINING AND SUPPORT

Theme Summary:

- Chairs shared that training and support for their role needs to be improved, particularly for faculty who are brand new to the role. Chairs expressed their desire to have a centralized training and onboarding program for those who are new to the role, to ensure that they are prepared for the expectations and duties of the role. Chairs expressed that the lack of training is hindering their ability to effectively manage during the COVID-19 crisis, which has greatly expressed the impairments of chairs who are not familiar with the role and prescribed duties. Some respondents suggested more training sessions, greater resource materials, and access to a mentor or previous chair as potential solutions.

Example Thoughts:

Training for people taking over as undergraduate/graduate chair.

We are supposed to be authority figures but there is so much to learn in a regular first year. Isolation and changing policies have made it harder.

Training sessions and resource materials. It would be great to have centrally organized comprehensive train for those in new roles to learn the basics. More written resources/guides would help

THEME 7: STUDENT SUPPORT

Theme Summary:

- The stress and burden brought on students because of the closure of campus, the stresses of living in a global pandemic and sudden shift to remote learning, has been noticed by departments and their chairs. Participants shared that they are concerned for the mental wellbeing of students, and do not feeling equipped well enough to effectively help their students through this pandemic without adding more burden to their experience. Chairs expressed concern for the academic and social wellbeing of their students while making note of their lack of expertise in addressing and supporting these issues. Chairs ask for more resources and direction on how to best assist their students, in both academic and social needs.

Example Thoughts:

Are there ways to engage without adding to the sense of burden.

Students seem pretty overwhelmed and it is difficult to generate ways of engaging without adding to this sense of burden.

Are there non-academic activities, especially for first year students we can promote to help students feel more connected. Students seem to be in great need for making connections, but this goes well beyond the scope of academic activities.

THEME 8: STUDENT FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Theme Summary:

- A separate from student support, several Chairs shared that they do not feel equipped to help students who are in financial need as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Chairs are concerned about their students who are delayed or expected to extend their academics because of losing their lab space, fieldwork study, or as the result of other interruptions such as mental health. Chairs would like to see the administration provide more guidance and support to departments regarding mitigating financial stresses for students. Further, chairs would like to have greater clarity from the administration regarding immediate, short-term, and long-term financial support for students.

Example Thoughts:

Financial support for student who need extensions. Students are stressed about interruptions and setbacks and are worried about financial implications of timeline extensions (e.g., tuition)

Biggest challenge is helping students through delays caused by Covid-19. Students are negatively affected by lack of workspace and no fieldwork. It's important we figure out funding for yr. 5 due to delays.

ThoughtExchange Implications and Recommendations

The COVID-19 pandemic and closing of Queen's University's campus, which resulted in a shift to a remote working and teaching environment, has been a challenging environment for departmental chairs and assistants to manage. While Queen's University and the Faculty of Arts and Science have made a considerable effort in helping direct, administrate and manage departments, their faculty, staff and students, undergraduate and graduate chairs and assistants have identified numerous areas that they believe need to be improved upon for them to successfully administer their programs while also caring for their own mental health and wellbeing. Academic chairs and assistants shared that unobtainable work timelines and challenging workload expectations, have negatively affected their working environment considering the campus shut down. Respondents shared that they were under a lot of pressure to perform their standard duties, while also managing the shift to remote working and learning in a continuously changing work setting. Chairs and assistants feel that the increased workload, coupled with the stresses and limitations of working in isolation, have not been adequately addressed by the university and the faculty. Along with continuous changes in strategic planning, chairs and assistants shared a growing concern about the institutions ability to communicate with all its stakeholders, including students, faculty and staff. Many respondents shared that the university and faculty have not effectively communicated with them, resulting in undo stresses, unnecessary work, and a greater sense of burden on staff and faculty.

Respondents reported an onset of burnout because of stress, exhaustion, and frustration brought on by the increased workload and sudden shifts in procedural direction made by the faculty. These findings concur with previous research conducted by the Quality Matters during Spring 2020, which found an emergence of concern about time and timelines by institutional members engaged in remote learning. Survey respondents reported that the time pressure to accomplish the transition to remote learning had a negative impact on staff and faculty, who were expected to accomplish new directives regarding remote learning, without interfering with normal institutional business (Garrett, Legon, Fredericksen, & Simunich, 2020). These concerns are also consistent with predictions for the administration of higher education institutions for the fall. Indicators for the remote Fall 2020 semester, predicted that the move to online study and remote programming, would cause extensive strain on university staff



(Holden and Veletsianos, 2020). Further, a recent study of faculty, staff, and students in Ontario, reported that the quality of their working and learning experience has greatly deteriorated as a result of the social isolation, increased levels of stress, and lack of institutional support during campus shutdowns. Financial insecurity, care demands, and the isolation of working from home were identified as major points of stress for staff, who also reported significantly increased workloads to deliver programming for students (Ontario Confederation, 2020). The experiences of department chairs and assistants during the campus shut down has had negative implications on their mental health. The implications of the stresses brought on by the pandemic and increased pressure to perform is of concern and can have serious negative effects on the physical and mental capabilities of staff due to burnout (World Health Organization, 2019).

Undergraduate and graduate chairs and assistants expressed frustration over the numerous communication challenges that they have faced through the COVID-19 pandemic. Chief among these challenges is inconsistent information and improper consideration given to the timeliness of communicating decisions that impact their roles and duties. Many respondents shared that the current communication streams are not sufficient and are prone to misrepresenting information or convoluting it. Communication issues of this type have been identified as potential major barriers and breakdowns for higher education institutions to overcome. In developing a toolkit for academic leaders, Antonio Fernandez and Graham Shaw from Barry University (2020) suggest that communication breakdowns between administration and staff and students is a detriment to the functionality and productivity of the online campus. Effective leadership during crisis management has to employ clear communication strategies that utilize transparency to build trust and confidence in their process (Edmondson, 2020). Research on previous major disruptions in educational settings has shown that effective communication from senior leadership builds trust in the institution, while also relaying a sense of communal progress that can reduce anxiety (Cowen, 2020; Mackert et al., 2020).

Department chairs also expressed frustrations about the expectations of their roles regarding training and supporting students. Some respondents shared that they feel unprepared to perform their roles as they have not received proper training about their duties and responsibilities, particularly pertaining to the management of their department during COVID-19. Some chairs expressed a desire for a better overall on-boarding process, with more streams for mentorship and role development. Other respondents expressed a desire for the Faculty to

examine how department Chairs and staff should best support their students in terms of academic, social and financial support. Chairs would like to be more involved in mitigating the stresses and anxiety faced by their students but need senior administration to provide guidance, support, and resources.

Drawing from the issues, asks, and suggestions drawn from the exchange, we suggest the following recommendations to better support department Chairs and Assistants in the Faculty of Arts and Science moving forward:

1. IMPROVE TRANSPARENCY AND TIMELINESS OF MAJOR DECISION PROCESSES

- Consider timelines, dates and new expectations for chairs and staff when making critical administrative and teaching decisions
- Enable Chairs and staff to provide meaningful insight into the decisions that impact their roles and duties directly
- Provide chairs with ample opportunity to, plan for and enact new tasks and directives established by Faculty decisions and directives
 - Consult with Chairs and staff about major decisions to ensure that deadlines are feasible
- Standardize and make public the decisions process, including who or which committee is responsible for individual portfolio decisions
- Facilitate more open dialogue between the Faculty and the department Chairs regarding major decisions and directives

2. IMPROVE AND STANDARDIZE COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE FACULTY AND THE DEPARTMENTS

- Establish consistent means of disseminating, advertising and reporting all communications regarding teaching and learning, staffing, students and administrative decisions
- Establish clear expectations for communications from the Faculty by:
 - Indicating who is responsible for disseminating information from the Faculty
 - Establishing a webpage or virtual space specifically for department administrators that will display all decisions and directives relevant to department administration

- Establish a Faculty lead contact for department administrations to expect communications from and to contact regarding new directives from the faculty
- Ensure all communication from the Faculty is consistent
 - Ensure all websites, webpages, emails, and information documents contain the same information to prevent from confusions and added workload
 - Provide students, faculty, and staff with the same, consistent information to ensure all stakeholders are made aware
 - Establish email lists with each individual department to ensure that all relevant stakeholders are included on relevant communications
- Provide department administrators with a means of formally communication with other departments and their respective administrators
 - Establish a committee or re-occurring meeting space for department chairs to meet throughout the COVID-19 pandemic
- Facilitate greater dialogue between department administrators and the faculty regarding communication strategies and programs
 - Provide a medium that allows Chairs and administrators to provide real-time feedback

3. REVIEW AND EVALUATE THE EXPECTATIONS OF DEPARTMENT CHAIRS, THEIR DUTIES AND WORK TIMELINES

- Reducing workload and limiting new or 'extra' duties from the mandate of chairs until the COVID-19 pandemic is no longer and students, faculty and staff have returned to campus
- Review department priorities and strategic plans and work to reduce new tasks and duties expected of departments until the COVID-19 pandemic is no longer and students, faculty and staff have returned to campus
- Consult with Department Chairs and staff to separate department priorities from extra initiatives to help elevate burden on Chairs and Staff
 - Provide additional support and mentoring for new department Chairs
- Develop and provide Chairs and department staff with a calendar pre-populated with their work-cycle and deadlines
- Establish departmental assistance at the Faculty level for Chairs and administrators who require assistance meeting necessary deadlines

- When possible, work to extend deadlines and reduce the amount of re-doing tasks (e.g. Timetabling) to help decrease workload
4. REVIEW TRAINING AND SUPPORT DEVELOPMENT FOR CHAIRS AND DEPARTMENT STAFF
- Develop a department Chair onboarding and training module to help assist new Chairs transition to their role
 - Assess existing resources for department chairs
 - Develop new resources where appropriate to help new and existing chairs perform their role
 - Assess potential for a mentorship program for Department Chairs
 - Provide chairs with a calendar or standardized documentation of their work cycle, including timelines, deadlines and important dates
 - Improve onboarding process for new chairs and provide training on role responsibility, work cycles and department administration
5. REVIEW SUPPORT FOR DEPARTMENT CHAIRS AND STAFF REGARDING STUDENT ASSISTANCE AND SUPPORT DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC
- Establish clear and transparent expectations for department administrators to support students during the COVID-19 pandemic
 - Provide clear expectations for the duties of chairs and staff
 - Develop a webspace or portal for department administrators to access resources relevant to their supporting of their students during COVID-19
 - Review and develop resources for department administrators regarding the supporting of students during this pandemic
 - Direct departments to existing resource regarding the academic and social engagement of students during remote learning
 - Establish clear strategic decisions regarding student financial support for students
 - Particular focus should be given to students who have been academically compromised due to the campus shut down (e.g., closing of labs and field work spaces)

ThoughtExchange Conclusions

The undergraduate and graduate chairs and assistants ThoughtExchange results revealed several key areas in which Queen's University, and more specifically the Faculty of Arts and Science, can better support them in their roles. Respondents shared that work expectations and work timelines, coupled with the isolation of working from home due to the COVID-19 campus shut down, have resulted in many members experiencing strain and stress in their work. Chairs and assistants shared that the nontransparent decision-making process, along with communication barriers and challenges, has contributed to a cumbersome work experience. Respondents provided important feedback on these processes, including more consultation during decision making greater attention to the potential imposed workload that strategic decisions may place on department administrators, and timely decision making. Further, chairs and assistants also suggested that the university and faculty review how they are communicating with all stakeholders to ensure that information being disseminated is communicated effectively and consistently. This will help alleviate the stress on stakeholders. Chairs and assistants also reported on the need for better training and. For example, the current training and onboarding process for new chairs is not sufficient. Further to their training and resources, chairs and assistants also expressed concern about their ability to support their students through the academic, social, and financial strains brought on by the COVID-10 pandemic. Respondents expressed that the university and faculty can better support them and their students through short term directives such as tools, training, and resources for administrators, and in the long-term through timely and transparent strategic planning.

A number of items from the ThoughtExchange have been actioned, or are in planning to be considered and addressed, and some items require participation of different areas of the university and cannot be actioned by the Faculty of Arts and Science independently. Further information on the FAS response to the items raised through Covid Response ThoughtExchange will be posted on this webpage (quartsci.com/leading-and-listening) in the coming weeks and months.

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