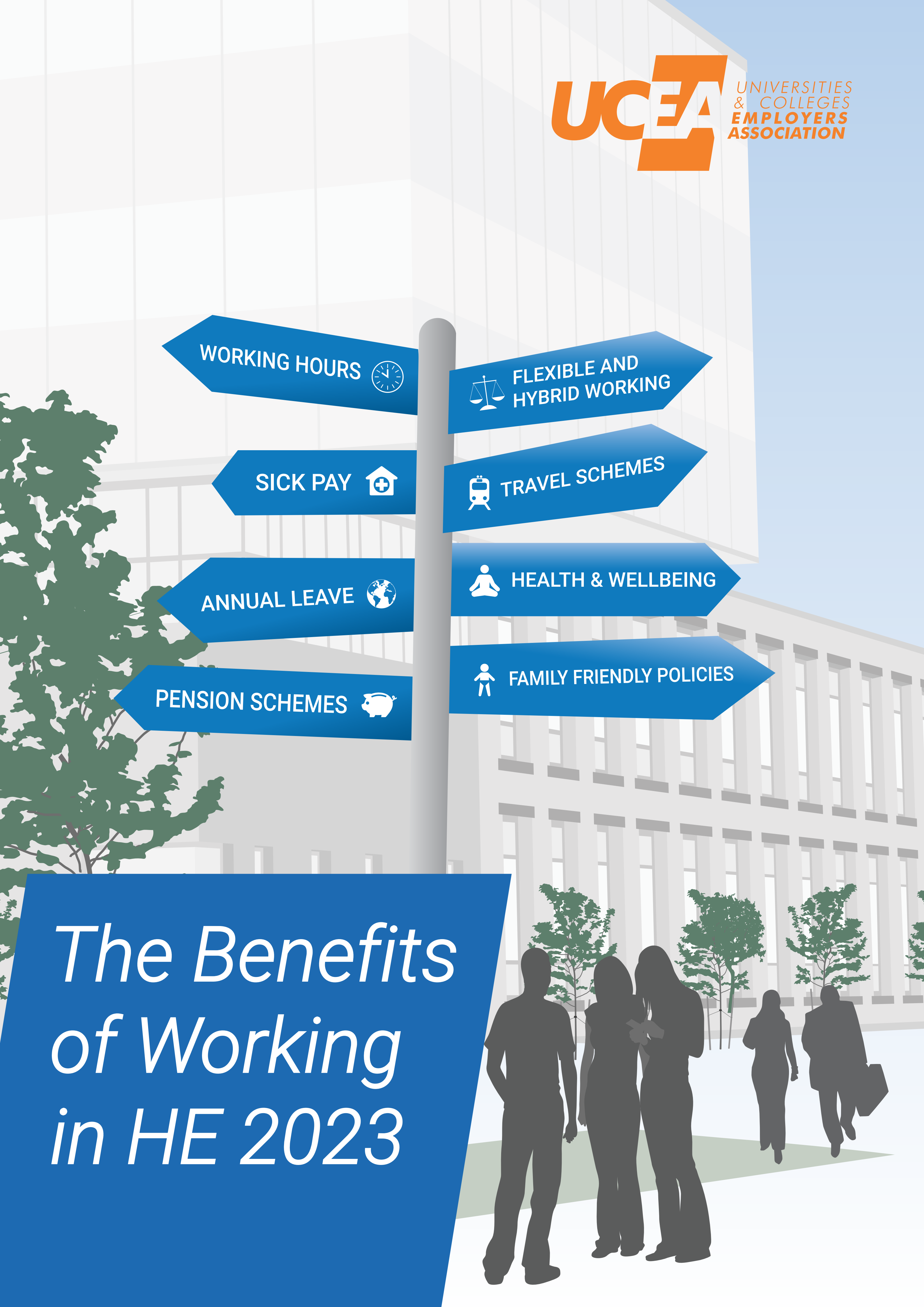
UCEA UNIVERSITIES & COLLEGES EMPLOYERS ASSOCIATION



The Benefits of Working in HE 2023

This Report was first published in December 2023 by the Universities and Colleges Employers Association (UCEA).

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Foreword

I am pleased to present the second UCEA report on the Benefits of Working in HE 2023 which gives an overview of both the financial and non-financial benefits that are being offered by our member institutions, an analysis of how these benefits compare with other sectors and a comparison with the results of the Benefits of Working in HE 2021 survey. This year, 93 HEIs took part (c. 55% of UCEA members), which is a significant increase on the participation in the 2021 survey in which 65 HEIs took part.

One of UCEA's Strategic Plan priorities is to "*support employer aspirations to enhance the employee experience*"; the deliverables for which have been outlined as providing guidance on Employee experience strategies and practice, an Employee Value Proposition (EVP) toolkit, including total reward, and work to promote the narrative of HE as a sector of employers of choice.

Whilst understandably pay remains a very important part of the overall reward package and even more so in the current inflationary environment, the value of the other benefits that HEIs provide to their staff is often understated, including when compared to other sectors, such as annual leave, flexible working, pension schemes, and family friendly policies.

This report helps to promote discussion on the range of benefits and good practice in reward in HE, while drawing on explicit comparisons with reward practices in other sectors, specifically highlighting a number of important areas where the sector offers more generous benefits than employers elsewhere.

We appreciate that these benefits can be overshadowed by an often-negative narrative and the current financial challenges being experienced by HEIs and many of their employees. However, it is important to note that in our survey a large proportion of HEIs reported that staff valued flexible working, annual leave and pension schemes and, in terms of intangible benefits, this year a large proportion of staff valued feeling pride in the HEI's values, the nice working environment, worthwhile work (81%) and working with like-minded people. The HE sector is very competitively placed in comparison to other sectors (on the benefits that the workforce value) but perhaps there is not much appreciation of this amongst the sector's workforce.

A recent joint survey between Isio and YouGov across a range of sectors found that 1 in 4 employees do not understand their benefits and hence undervalue them. Communicating these benefits as part of the overall employment package is key, for the entire workforce and prospective staff, and we hope that you will find the information in this report helpful in continuing to do so, to support your recruitment, engagement and retention strategies.

It is important to consider this report and its findings in the context of all the work that UCEA is continuing to deliver on employee experience, as benefits are just one part of the employee value proposition (EVP) that HE institutions offer. Following extensive work across the sector, UCEA has developed a range of materials relating to employee experience strategies as a whole, which can be found in the UCEA members' Employee Experience section of the UCEA website.

I would like to thank our member institutions that contributed information to enhance the richness of this report. It is important that the sector benefits from using the information, as the benefits of working in our sector are more varied than ever before and should offer a competitive edge in promoting and enhancing employee experience, within a sector of employers of choice.

Roshan Israni, Deputy Chief Executive, UCEA

Executive Summary

A total of 93 UCEA members participated in the survey, representing 55% of UCEA's current membership. This report updates and expands on the analysis from 2021 in which 65 member HEIs participated. In the current survey round, participating HEIs reported details of their policies on flexible working, health and wellbeing, family friendly benefits, sick pay, pension schemes, contractual terms, sabbatical leave and / or career breaks, paid leave, travel to work schemes and other benefits. This year's survey also has new questions which address schemes and policies that support employee voice (include staff surveys); equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) initiatives; and environmental, social and governance (ESG) principles across the sector.

This report benchmarks the survey findings against public and private sector comparators, by providing contextual data, highlighting the value of the often-generous provisions offered in higher education (HE). These include:

- Annual leave – the median basic entitlement across the sector is 35 days for academic staff and 30 days for professional services staff, exclusive of bank holidays and closure periods. The median leave entitlement is 25 days in other sectors.
- Family friendly policies – All HEIs enhance statutory maternity leave, compared with 67% of organisations in the wider economy. The median enhanced maternity leave policy in HE represents an equivalent of 18 weeks of leave at full pay.
- Flexible working – 97% of HEIs offer hybrid working, compared to 62% of employers in the wider economy. HE is also more likely to offer flexible working policies such as job sharing, part-time and term-time working than other sectors.
- Sickness absence pay allowances – After a year's service, employees receive a median of three months of leave at full pay and three months at half pay. Entitlements in other sectors typically provide a month of leave at full pay and a month at half pay after the same length of service.
- Pensions – 99% of responding HEIs offered one or more Defined Benefit (DB) schemes. Employer contributions paid into the DB schemes in HE equate to around 20% of salary in many cases. In contrast, 99% of FTSE350 companies offer new joiners a Defined Contribution (DC) scheme where employer contributions typically represent around 10% of salary.

If you have any questions on this programme of work, or would like to contribute with work from your institution, please contact Simon Sumner, Head of Employment Policy & Advice s.sumner@ucea.ac.uk.

If you have any queries about this report please email George Starling, Senior Research Analyst – research@ucea.ac.uk.

Background and methodology

Good work is intrinsic to individual wellbeing, supports a strong, fair society, and creates motivated workers, productive organisations and a strong economy (*CIPD Good Work Index 2023*). Pay and benefits are fundamental to 'good work'; the CIPD has developed seven dimensions of good work: pay and benefits, contracts, work-life balance, job design and the nature of work, relationships at work, employee voice and health and wellbeing.

The benefits packages provided by Higher Education (HE) employers are well-positioned to provide good work; the majority provide benefits that exceed the minimum required by law and that compare favourably with benefits in the public and private sector. These include generous pension provisions, annual leave entitlements, family leave entitlements, sickness absence pay and the offer of flexible and hybrid working. In particular, CIPD research has shown that flexible working arrangements support inclusion and diversity, which can lead to more satisfied staff as well as helping staff cope with work and family roles, lessening any conflict between the two *(CIPD Flexible working, teleworking and diversity: An evidence review, 2021)*. This research has also suggested that when organisations are perceived as being family supportive, this has a positive impact on job attitudes.

The benefits provided in the HE sector account for a significant part of the resource investment that Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) prioritise, and given the standardisation of the New JNCHES pay spine, they can play a key role in differentiating the total reward on offer in the HE sector.

The CIPD believes that employers should adopt a proactive approach to positioning their organisations as attractive to current and prospective employees, through both supporting the needs of current staff and inclusive recruitment (*CIPD Good Work Index 2023*); good benefits continue to be a major asset in recruiting, retaining and motivating high calibre employees, which is essential to retain the position of HE employers as employers of choice. Comparisons between HE, the public sector and wider economy can be helpful in promoting the sector as a sector of choice.

Objectives

One of UCEA's Strategic Priorities in its current Strategic Plan is to "support employer aspirations to enhance the employee experience". Within this strategic priority, UCEA is taking work forward that seeks to improve the collective narrative for the sector as employers of choice. This was one of the considerations when UCEA decided to conduct a repeat survey on Benefits of Working in HE (previously conducted in 2021) for the purpose of understanding current practice of both the financial and non-financial benefits of working in the sector. Through the completion and use of this survey, Members will be able to gain valuable insights as to what other HE employers in the sector are offering their staff, benchmark themselves across a range of employment benefits and use the material to help promote their Employee Value Proposition and Total Reward offering as part of recruitment and retention strategies and as part of developing their approach to inclusivity and wellbeing.

Methodology and sample

An online survey was disseminated to all UCEA members in August 2023. The survey closed on 6 October 2023.

Overall, 93 HEIs took part, which represents 55% of UCEA members. As this sample does not represent all HEIs across the sector, there are some limitations to the conclusions that can be drawn from the data. Nevertheless, this response rate should be considered to be a good and representative sample of benefit practices offered in the sector. For comparison, 65 HEIs participated in the 2021 survey round, with this representing 38% of UCEA membership.

Profile of participating HEIs

The breakdown of survey respondents included 39 pre-92 institutions (42%), 49 post-92 institutions (53%) and five other respondents. Post-92 institutions were marginally more likely to take part in the survey, with a response rate of 60% as compared to 57% of pre-92 institutions.

Table 1: Respondent profile by institution type

	Total HEIs	Responding HEIs	Response rate, %	% of sample
Pre-92 institutions	68	39	57%	42%
Post-92 institutions	82	49	60%	53%
Other	22	5	22%	5%
	172	93	55%	100%

Out of the 93 responding HEIs, 78 were based in England. Of these, 28 were based in London and the South East (30% of the sample) and 50 were based elsewhere in England (54%). Scottish and Northern Irish universities were well represented in the survey with respondents in these regions having responses rates of 53% and 67% respectively. Welsh HEIs were slightly underrepresented in the survey with only four out of the nine HEIs in Wales having participated, giving a response rate of 44%.

Table 2: Respondent profile by region / nation

	Total HEIs	Responding HEIs	Response rate, %	% of sample
London	60	28	47%	30%
Rest of England	83	50	60%	54%
Scotland	17	9	53%	10%
Wales	9	4	44%	4%
Northern Ireland	3	2	67%	2%
	172	93	55%	100%

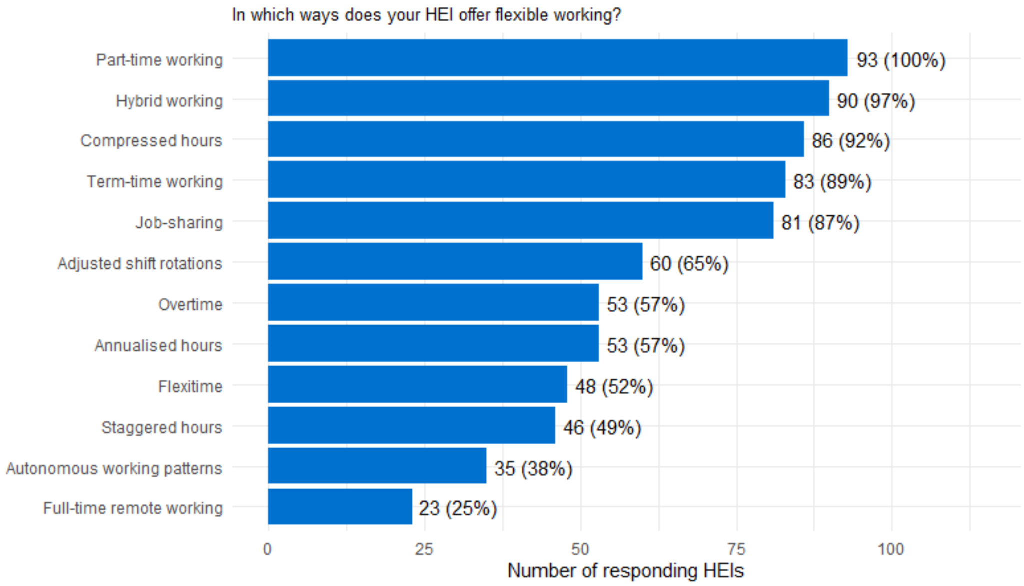
Flexible and hybrid working

Following the Covid-19 pandemic, many employers both within and beyond higher education implemented and / or continue to provide policies that allow their employees greater choice about how and when they carry out their work. These can either be implemented as a formal, institution-wide policies that expand on the statutory requirement to consider flexible working requests or they can be more informal arrangements with flexibility offered on a case-by-case or individualised basis.

In their *Flexible and hybrid working practices in 2023* report, the CIPD reported that employers are now more likely to implement and expand flexible working policies and two-fifths (40%) have received more flexible working requests following the pandemic. Employers view flexible working as beneficial through an improved ability to recruit and retain staff, better productivity, better work-life balance, and as a way to provide mental health and wellbeing support to staff. The same report also presents the results of an online survey of 2,049 employees regarding their organisations' flexible and hybrid working policies. Of these, the most common benefits that employers offered in other sectors were hybrid working i.e. regular home-working (62%), part-time working (51%), flexitime (33%), and full-time remote working (i.e. always working from home, 33%). Approximately one in four organisations offered compressed hours (24%) while one in five offered job sharing schemes (22%). It was less common for employers to offer term-time working (16%) or annualised hours (12%) to their staff.

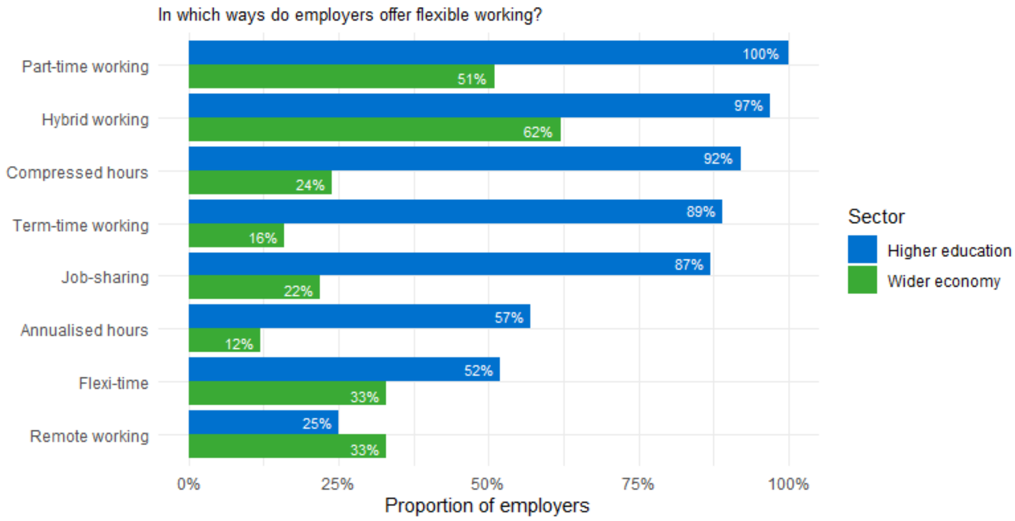
As part of their formal policies, all 93 responding HEIs reported that they offer part-time working (100%). Almost nine out of ten offered compressed hours (92%), term-time working (89%), and / or job-sharing (87%). Approximately two-thirds of HEIs offer adjusted shift rotations (65%) and just over half offer overtime (57%) and annualised hours (57%). Flexitime is offered by half of the survey respondents (52%). It was less common for HEIs to offer autonomous working patterns (38%) or full-time remote working (25%).

Figure 1: Considerations for flexible working



When compared to employers in the wider economy, higher education employers are notably more likely to offer a formal policy on various aspects of flexible working. Hybrid working was offered by 97% of HEIs as opposed to 62% of employers elsewhere. Similarly, higher education employers were more likely to offer term-time working (89% in HE; 16% in the wider economy), part-time working (100%, HE; 51%, wider economy), job-sharing schemes (87%, HE; 22% wider economy) and flexitime (52%, HE; 33% wider economy). HE employers are also more likely than the wider economy to offer annualised hours and flexitime and remain competitive with regard to remote working.

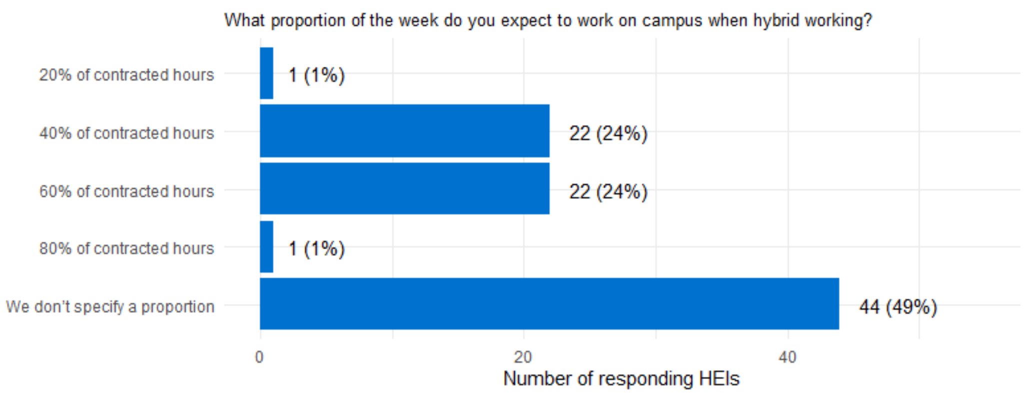
Figure 2: Comparison of flexible and hybrid working policies across sectors



Compared to the 2021 Benefits of Working in HE survey, there have been some changes in the prevalence of how flexible working is offered within the formal policies of responding HEIs. The previous survey round collected data between July and September 2021 when remote working, arising from the Covid-19 pandemic, was the norm for many HEIs across the UK. The main change in policy has been a switch from offering full-time necessitated remote working to offering hybrid working. While 73% of HEIs offered full-time remote working in the previous survey, only 25% of respondents currently offer it. Conversely, hybrid working policies are now offered at 94% of respondents, up from 43% in 2021. This means that almost all employees in the sector have retained the ability to work remotely in some capacity.

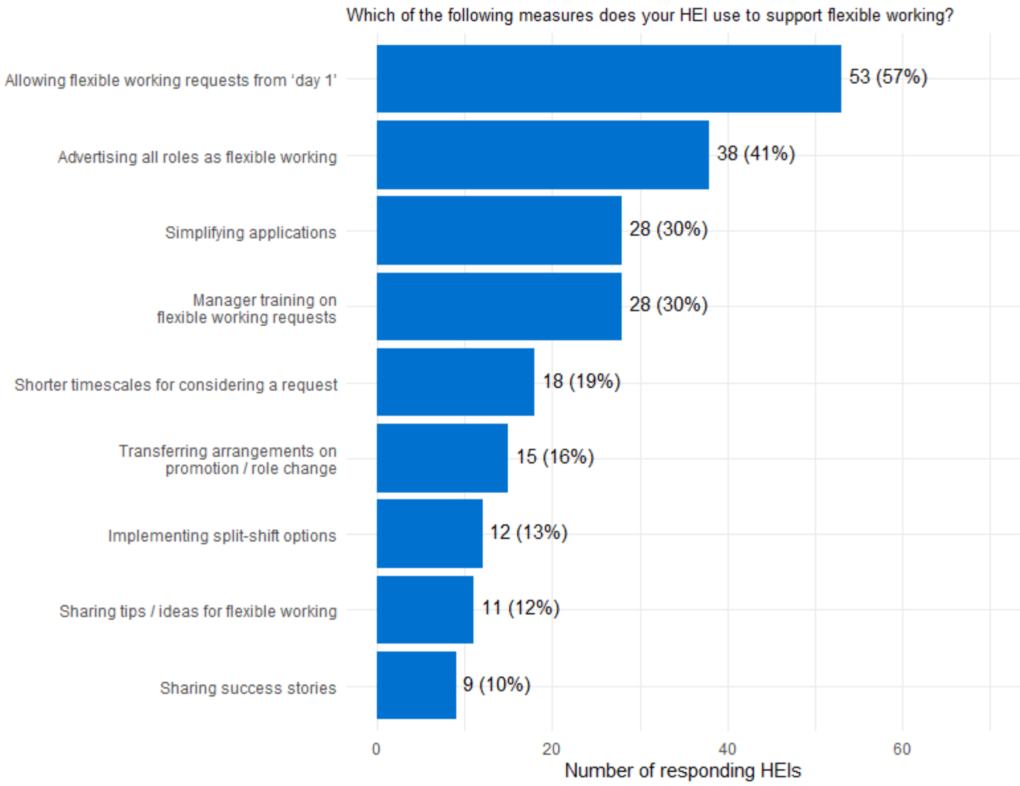
Across the 90 responding HEIs that offered hybrid working, almost half (44%) did not have specific expectations about the proportion of time which they require to be worked on campus. A similar proportion of the sector (48%) require staff to work on campus for between 40% and 60% of the working week, which equates to typically two or three days a week for full-time staff. A minority of respondents have policies which require on-campus working for lower or higher proportions of the week, with this comprising 2% of responses.

Figure 3: Expectations regarding hybrid working



All of the 93 responding HEIs have implemented one or more measures in order to support flexible working. The most common measure was allowing flexible working requests from 'day one' of employment (57%). From 6 April 2024, [the Flexible Working Bill] will make 'day one' requests a right for all workers. It was also common to implement measures such as advertising all roles as offering flexible / hybrid working (41%), simplifying applications by removing the requirement for staff to state the reasons for their application (30%) and providing manager training on handling these requests (30%). Less than one in five HEIs reported shortening the timescales for considering a request (19%), automatically transferring arrangements on promotions / role changes (16%), implementing split-shift options (12%) and sharing success stories (10%).

Figure 4: Measures to support flexible/hybrid working



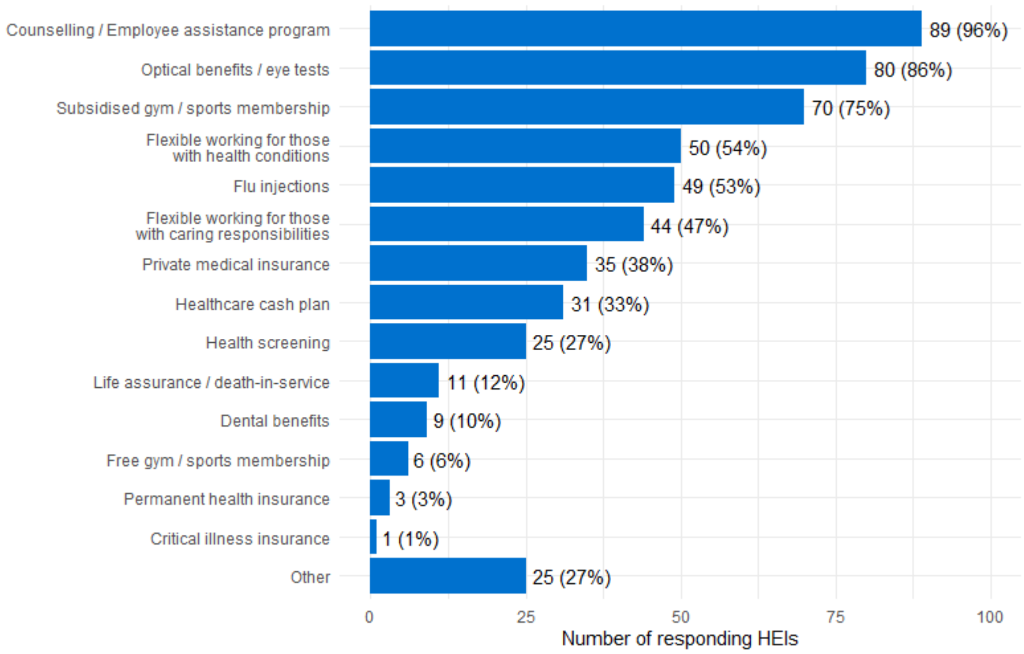
Comparisons with the 2021 Benefits of Working in HE survey indicate some changes to the measures that HEIs use to support flexible working. In 2021, only four out of five responding HEIs offered one or more measures to support flexible working, while the 2023 survey found all respondents to have implemented at least one measure to support flexible working. Beyond this, the number of HEIs that allow flexible working requests to be made from 'day one' has increased by 24 percentage points and the number advertising all roles as having flexible working arrangements has increased by 10 percentage points.

Following the Covid pandemic, just over a quarter of responding HEIs (28, 30%) indicated that they had introduced hybrid working as a formal policy. Fourteen HEIs explicitly commented that they had not made changes to their formal flexible working policy in this period, with respondents often noting that the formal changes made to hybrid working were often sufficient to provide staff with greater flexibility or that informal arrangements have permitted greater flexible working. Amongst those institutions that had introduced hybrid working, many commented how these new policies have benefitted staff and the organisation. Specifically, survey respondents reported that flexible and hybrid working has resulted in greater productivity, improved work-life balance, lower rates of sickness absence, and a reduction in commuting costs and time. In addition to this, HEIs noted that hybrid working has enabled them to more easily attract talented staff and to access a larger recruitment pool.

Health and wellbeing

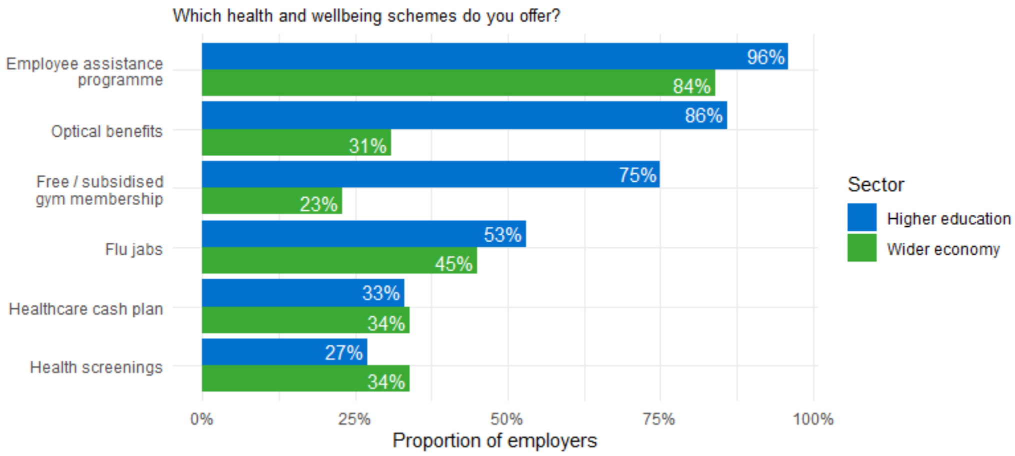
In their 2023 Benefits and Allowances survey, XpertHR reported that four-fifths (84%) of a sample of 200 employers offered an employee assistance programme, typically offering this to all staff. Four-fifths of employers (80%) offered life assurance and 64% offered private medical insurance. While private medical insurance was almost always available to directors (98% of responding organisations), only half of employers (50%) offered this to staff in general. Around a third of organisations (34%) provided health screenings to staff. About half of responding organisations offered flu injections (45%), a third (31%) offered optical benefits (such as eye tests for all staff) and about a quarter (23%) offered either subsidised or free gym membership.

Figure 5: Healthcare and wellbeing benefits



In higher education, almost all HEIs (96% of the sample) offer their staff counselling services or Employee Assistance Programmes, as opposed to 84% in other sectors. Optical benefits and eye tests are offered by 86% of HEIs as compared to 51% of HEIs in the previous survey round. It should be noted, however, that eye tests are [required by the Health and Safety Executive] if requested by staff that use DSE (display screen equipment). As in the previous survey round, three quarters of HEIs offer subsidised access to gym facilities and 6% provide free access: this compares favourably to other sectors where less than one in four employers offer either of these benefits. It is notable that many of these benefits which are commonly provided by HEIs are less common in other sectors. For example, optical benefits are offered by 86% of HE employers and compared with 31% of employers elsewhere. HEIs are around three times more likely to offer subsidised gym membership (75%) as employers in the wider economy (23%). Higher education offers healthcare cash plans and health screenings at comparable rates compared to other sectors.

Figure 6: Comparison of health and wellbeing benefits across sectors



Around half of HEIs provide flu jabs (54%), up from 35% in the previous survey round. 54% of HEIs offer flexible working for those with health conditions and 47% do so for those with caring responsibilities. A third of HEIs offered healthcare cash plans (33%) and a quarter (27%) offered healthcare benefits. Only one in ten (10%) offered dental benefits.

Private medical insurance is offered by 38% of responding HEIs. As in other sectors, approximately a third of respondents (11 HEIs) stated that this benefit was exclusively offered to senior staff or executive team members. Though 12% of survey respondents offer life assurance / death-in-service schemes, such schemes are likely to be available to most staff in the sector, as each of the Defined Benefit (DB) schemes in higher education offer death in service cover, typically at a rate of three times salary as a lump sum. Defined Contribution (DC) schemes that represent an alternative to LGPS also typically offer this via an insurance policy. Very few HEIs offered permanent health insurance and critical illness cover as healthcare benefits.

The other health and wellbeing benefits that respondents reported included support for menopause, mindfulness and wellbeing programmes, subsidised canteen food, multi-faith chaplaincies, occupational health schemes and programmes to help with addiction (e.g. smoking, gambling, drugs and alcohol).

Family friendly policies

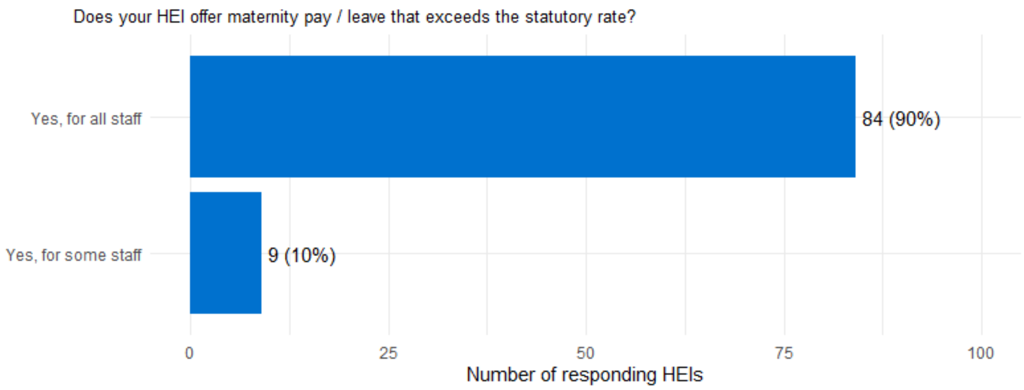
Maternity leave and pay

Statutory entitlement to maternity leave allows for a total of 52 weeks of leave. The statutory rate of pay is 90% of an individual's average weekly earnings (before tax) for the first six weeks of leave. For the next thirty-three weeks, pay is set at the minimum of either £172.48 per week (the statutory payment rate for 2023/2024) or 90% of average weekly earnings (whichever is lower).

In its 2022 *Employer focus on working parents* report, the CIPD showed that two-thirds of the 2,000 responding employers (67%) offered a policy that was more generous than statutory maternity pay. For public sector organisations, 87% offered policies that exceed statutory maternity pay. Across all respondents, a fifth of employers (21%) offer 26 weeks of enhanced maternity pay at or near the full rate of pay followed by 13 weeks at the statutory maternity pay (SMP) rate or 90% of the average weekly earnings. 18% offer between 4 and 13 weeks of enhanced pay at or near the full rate of pay.

In higher education, a larger proportion of employers offered generous maternity leave policies relative to organisations in other sectors. While 67% of employers in the wider economy offered an enhanced maternity policy, all employers in HEIs offered enhanced maternity pay / leave to some or all of their staff. This is an increase from 95% of HEIs last year. 90% of respondents (84 HEIs) reported such policies for all staff. A further 10% of HEIs indicated that they offered enhanced policies to at least some of their staff. These HEIs typically required staff to have a certain length of service or to return to work to be eligible for the enhanced policy.

Figure 7: Do you offer enhanced maternity leave or pay which is more generous than Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP)?



When reporting enhanced policies for maternity leave and pay, 92 responding HEIs reported policies for all staff, including the length of service required to be eligible, the number of weeks of leave given at or near full pay, the number at half pay and the number at the statutory rate of pay. The most common eligibility policy, reported by 31 HEIs (34%), was to require 26 weeks of service. A further 15 HEIs (17%) reported that staff were eligible from the beginning of employment.

Table 3: Weeks of paid maternity leave in enhanced policies

	LQ	Median	Mean	UQ	HEIs
Maternity leave at full pay	6	14.5	14.2	18	92
Maternity leave at half pay	12	12	14.2	16	47

Across 93 HEIs, individuals received a median of 14.5 weeks at full pay. This figure exceeds the offer of between four and thirteen weeks in other sectors. A total of fifteen HEIs had a policy of offering 26 weeks at full pay. A further 47 HEIs reported offering a median of 12

weeks at half pay. When leave at full pay and half pay is combined, employers offered the equivalent of 18 weeks at full pay under these enhanced policies at the median. When calculated this way, this matches the median of 18 weeks of full pay equivalent that was reported for higher education in the 2021 Benefits of Working in HE survey.

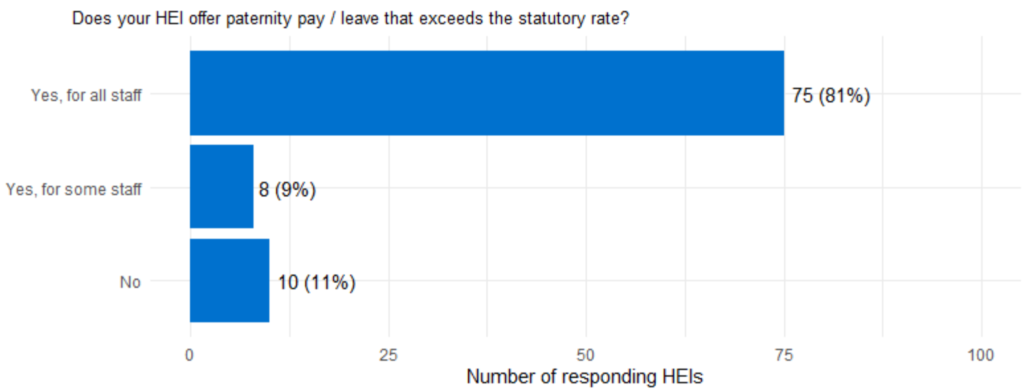
These policies typically supplemented the statutory rate of maternity pay that individuals receive for paid leave for at least 39 weeks: For example, a policy providing twelve weeks of leave at full pay and twelve at half pay would then provide fifteen weeks at the statutory rate. Many of the reported policies often offered an option to receive a specified number of weeks at the full rate or to receive half pay over twice as many weeks: for example, a policy may allow eighteen weeks of leave at full pay or nine weeks at full pay and eighteen at half pay.

Paternity leave and pay

Statutory entitlement to paternity leave allows for either one or two weeks of paid leave. The statutory rate of pay during these two weeks is the minimum of either £172.48 per week (the statutory payment rate for 2023/2024) or 90% of average weekly earnings (whichever is lower).

In 2022, the CIPD reported that although 49% of employers provided the statutory policy of one to two weeks of leave, 9% provided up to a month's leave and 13% provided between five and 28 weeks of leave. In terms of paid leave, 64% of employers offer enhanced paid paternity leave. 16% provide two weeks at full pay, 8% provide up to four weeks, and only one in ten (9%) provide between five and 28 weeks of leave.

Figure 8: Do you offer enhanced paternity leave or pay which is more generous than Statutory Paternity Leave (SPL)?



75 HEIs (81%) provided enhanced paternity pay and leave that exceeded the statutory entitlement to all of their staff and a further 9% provided it to some staff. As with maternity pay / leave, these HEIs typically required a certain length of service before staff were eligible for enhanced paternity policies. Across the 82 HEIs who reported providing leave at full pay, the median was to provide two weeks of full pay, with 52 HEIs doing so. The previous Benefits of Working in HE survey also reported that the median policy in higher education was to offer two weeks of paid leave. This is favourable compared to other sectors, where 33% of employers provide two or more weeks of paid leave. A further four HEIs offered three weeks of leave at full pay, 11 HEIs offered four weeks of leave at full pay, one HEI offered six

weeks of leave at full pay and one notably offered 26 weeks of leave at full pay, to match what was offered in their maternity leave policy.

Table 4: Weeks of paid paternity leave in enhanced policies

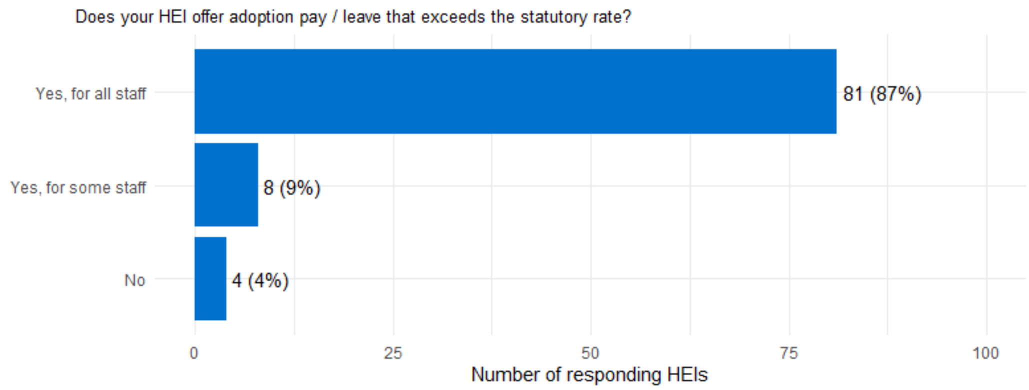
	LQ	Median	Mean	UQ	HEIs
Paternity leave at full pay	2	2	2.5	2	82

Adoption and surrogacy leave

Statutory entitlement to adoption and surrogacy leave allows for 52 weeks of leave. Paid leave is given for a total of 39 weeks. As with maternity leave, the statutory rate of pay is 90% of an individual's average weekly earnings (before tax) for the first six weeks of leave. For the following 33 weeks, pay is set at the minimum of either £172.48 per week (the statutory payment rate for 2023/2024) or 90% of average weekly earnings (whichever is lower).

The most recent XpertHR survey on adoption / surrogacy leave policies was conducted in 2021. Across a sample of 375 organisations, 53% offered enhanced leave and / or pay for staff members adopting a child. This represented 84% of the responding organisations that offered enhanced maternity policies.

Figure 9: Do you offer enhanced adoption (or surrogacy arrangement) leave which is more generous than Statutory Adoption Leave (SAL)?



87% of responding HEIs (93) reported that they offered a policy to all staff that was more generous than the statutory rate and eight offered enhanced policies to at least some of their staff. Length of service again commonly determined staff eligibility for enhanced policies.

Table 5: Weeks of paid adoption leave in enhanced policies

	LQ	Median	Mean	UQ	HEIs
Adoption leave at full pay	6	14.5	13.9	18	86
Adoption leave at half pay	12	12	14.1	16	45

Across 93 HEIs, enhanced adoption policies provided a median of 14.5 weeks leave at full pay, closely matching policies on maternity leave. A total of 13 HEIs offered staff 26 weeks of adoption leave at full pay. A further 45 HEIs reported offering a median of 12 weeks leave at

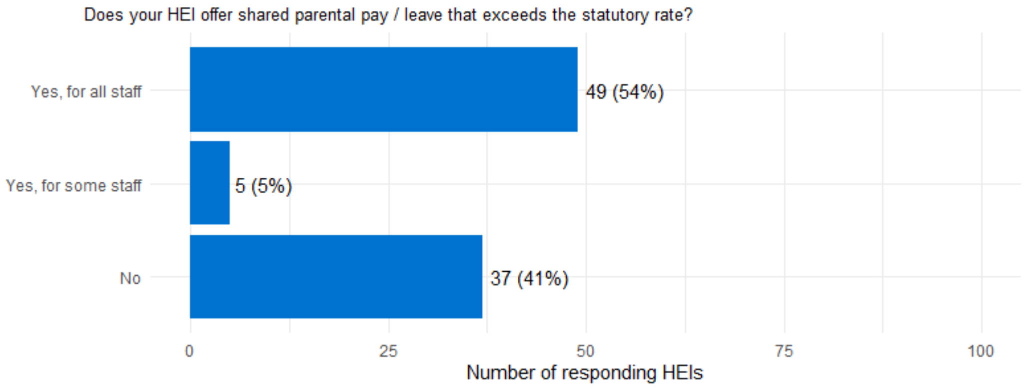
half pay in addition to leave at full pay. When leave at full pay and half pay is combined, adoption leave policies represented the equivalent of 17.5 weeks at full pay at the median. As with maternity leave, these policies typically supplemented statutory pay to cover a period of 39 weeks or more.

Shared parental leave and pay

When an employee and their partner choose to take less than 52 weeks of maternity or adoption leave, the statutory entitlement to shared parental leave allows the rest to be taken as Shared Parental Leave (SPL). Similarly, when less than 39 weeks of maternity or adoption leave and pay (or maternity allowance) is taken, the rest can be used as Statutory Shared Parental Pay (ShPP). The pay received across this time is set at the minimum of either £172.48 per week (the statutory payment rate for 2023/2024) or 90% of average weekly earnings.

The most recent XpertHR survey on shared parental leave policies was conducted in 2021 and found that a quarter of participating employers (25%) offered shared parental pay that was more generous than the statutory rate. In the public sector, 45% of employers offered such a policy. Where shared parental pay is offered, this was matched to their enhanced maternity pay offering at four-fifths of organisations.

Figure 12: Do you offer enhanced shared parental leave or pay which is more generous than Statutory Shared Parental Leave?



By contrast, 54% (49 HEIs) offered an enhancement on ShPP for all staff members with a further five (5%) offered an enhancement to at least some of their staff. Eligibility for the enhanced policy typically depended on length of service. A greater proportion of employers in HE therefore offered enhanced policies relative to those in the wider economy.

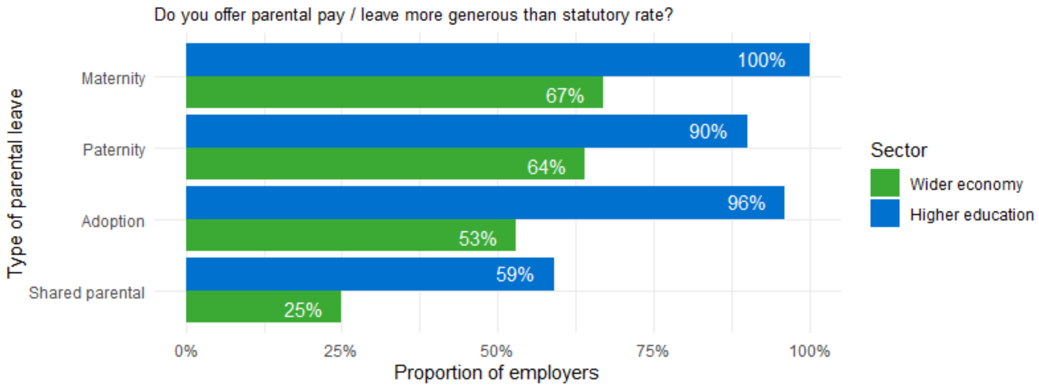
Table 6: Weeks of paid shared parental leave in enhanced policies

	LQ	Median	Mean	UQ	HEIs
Shared parental leave at full pay	8	15	14.0	18	49
Shared parental leave at half pay	12	12	13.8	16	22

The median number of weeks of leave on full pay across the 49 responding HEIs was 15, with 22 HEIs providing a median of twelve weeks at half pay. When provisions for full pay and half pay are considered together, enhanced policies represented the equivalent of 16 weeks of leave at full pay at the median.

The 93 responding HEIs were more likely to offer enhanced leave and / pay under their policies than organisations in other sectors across maternity, paternity, adoption and shared parental leave policies. While all HEIs offered enhanced maternity policies, a 2022 CIPD survey showed that only two-thirds of employers in other sectors did so (67%). This survey further showed that 64% of organisations offered enhanced paternity leave in the wider economy, as compared to 90% of HEIs. Benchmarking data from a 2021 XpertHR survey shows that 53% of organisations in the wider economy offer enhanced adoption policies and that 25% offered enhanced shared parental policies. By contrast, almost all HEIs (96%) offer enhanced adoption policies and three-fifths (59%) offer enhanced shared parental leave.

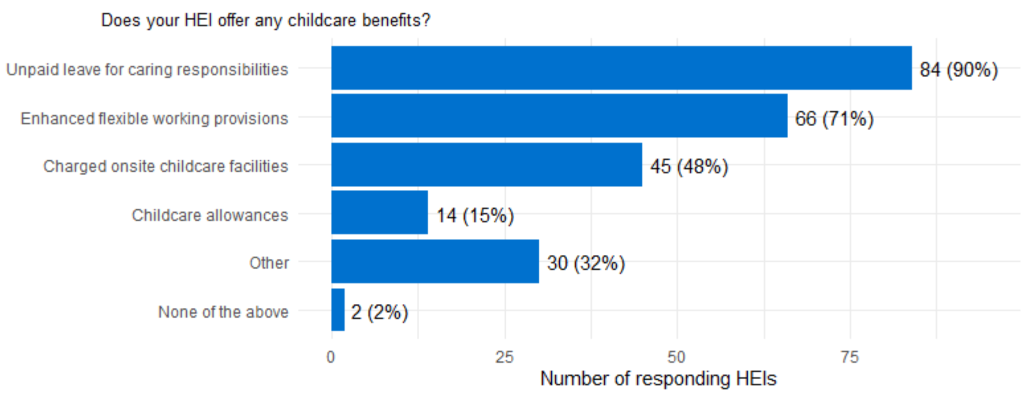
Figure 13: Comparisons of parental pay / leave across sectors



Other family friendly policies

In their 2022 survey analysis, the CIPD reported that flexible working was a common benefit offered to support parents, with 34% of responding employers offering remote / hybrid working, 28% proactively promoting these schemes and 29% offering flexible start / finish times to support school drop-off and pick-up. 16% of employers offered an option to buy additional leave for childcare reasons. Childcare provisions were less common with only 8% offering this through salary sacrifice and 4% offering an on-site nursery. 24% of employers did not have anything in place to support employees with caring responsibilities.

Figure 14: Childcare benefits beyond pay and leave

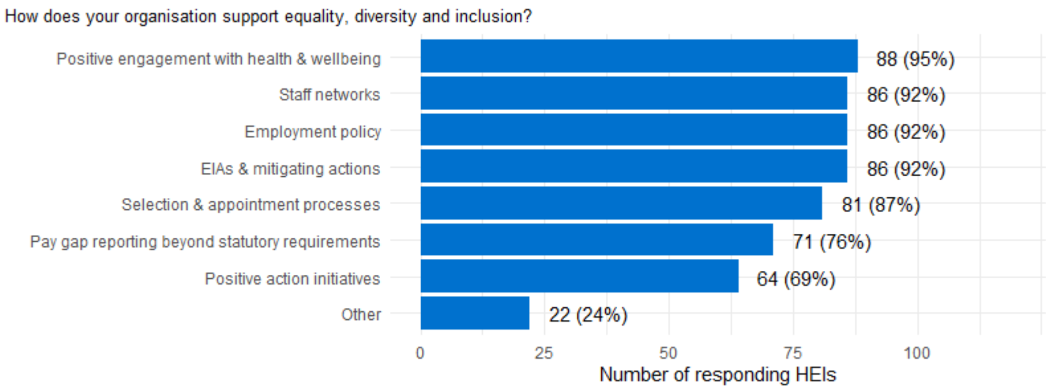


In higher education, 98% of respondents reported having at least one scheme to support parents. 90% of employers offer unpaid leave for caring responsibilities. While only approximately a third of employers in the wider economy offer / promote flexible working to support parents, over two-thirds (71%) offered these benefits in higher education. Almost half of HEIs have onsite childcare facilities (48%), as opposed to 4% of organisations in other sectors. 15% of HEIs offer childcare allowances. In terms of the other benefits provided, eight HEIs reported offering emergency leave for caring responsibilities with the typical allowance being five days of paid leave. Eight HEIs reported offering childcare vouchers to individuals who had joined the scheme before it was ended in October 2018. Elsewhere, responding HEIs reported onsite baby changing / nursing facilities, paid leave for fertility treatment, wellbeing support for family members and salary sacrifice schemes for childcare.

EDI initiatives and ESG principles

All responding 93 HEIs reported having at least one of the following initiatives in order to promote equality, diversity and inclusivity. Over 90% of organisations promoted positive engagement with health & wellbeing (88 HEIs), ran staff networks (86), supported EDI through their employment policies (86) or conducted equality impact assessments and took other mitigating actions (86). Over three-quarters of responding HEIs promoted EDI through their selection and appointment processes (81 HEIs, 87%) or through pay gap reporting (71 HEIs, 76%) beyond the statutory requirement to report gender pay gaps. A total of 64 HEIs implement positive action initiatives.

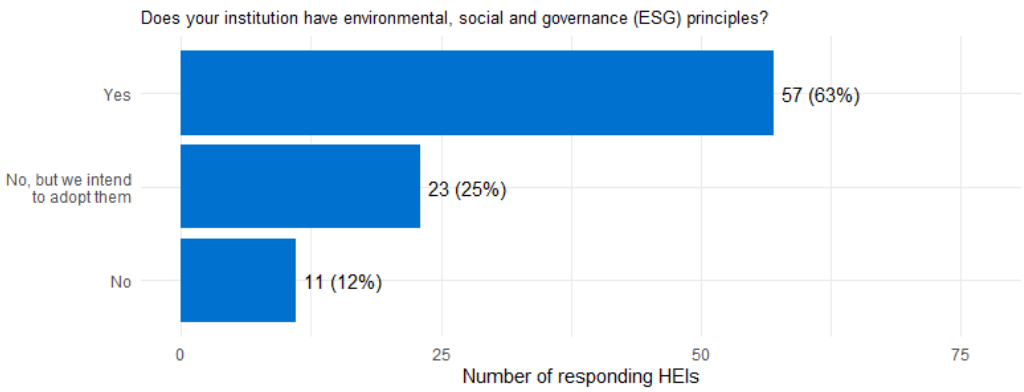
Figure 15: Initiatives to promote equality, diversity and inclusion



In terms of other initiatives that HEIs offered, responding HEIs frequently mentioned Advance HE's Athena Swan and Race Equality Charters in this domain. Athena Swan supports and promotes gender equality in the sector. As of December 2023, Advance HE reports that a total of 29 HEIs have a Silver award level and that a further 29 HEIs have a Bronze award. The Race Equality Charter has 101 members with 42 having a Bronze level award and two HEIs having a Silver award. Stonewall and Disability Confident were highlighted as further external accreditations. Responding HEIs also mentioned undertaking initiatives such as staff and manager training on EDI topics, having Equality Champions, and Menopause Cafe groups.

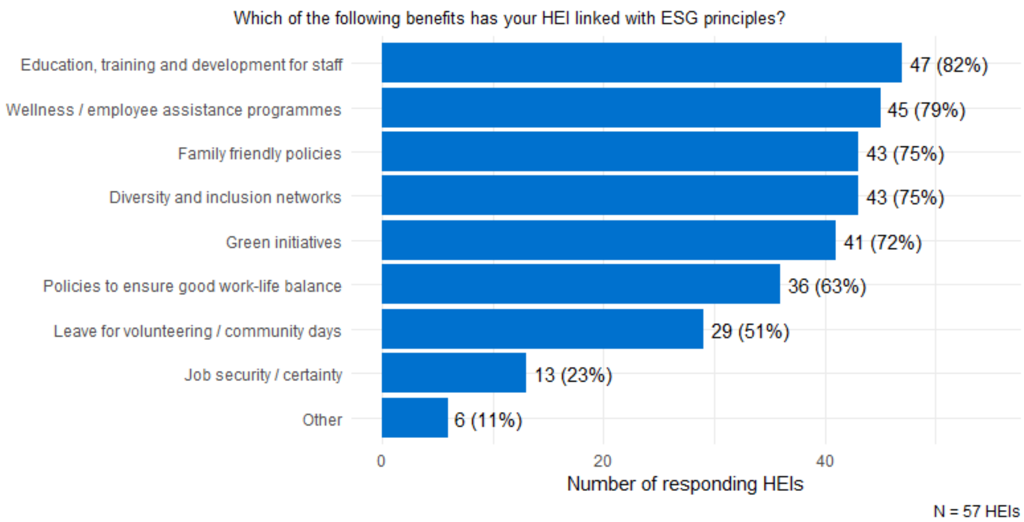
In a 2023 KPMG survey of approximately 6,000 workers, environmental, social and governance (ESG) principles were reported to be becoming more important to the UK workforce. 46% of respondents indicated that they want the company that they work for to commit to ESG with this increasing to 55% within staff aged 25-34. The proportion who seek engagement with ESG is almost as high in those aged 18-24 (51%) and those aged 35-44 (48%). 82% of employees indicated that it was important to be able to link their values with those of their organisation. ESG was reported to have real implications for recruitment with 20% of respondents reporting that they have turned down job offers when an organisation's ESG commitments did not align with their values.

Figure 16: ESG principles across higher education



Approximately two-thirds of HEIs (63%) reported that they have ESG principles with a further quarter (25%) reporting that they intended to adopt them. Amongst the 57 HEIs that reported having ESG principles, it was most common for HEIs to link staff education, training and development (82% of HEIs) to these principles. Approximately three quarters of HEIs linked employee assistance programmes (79%), family friendly policies (75%), diversity and inclusion networks (75%) and green initiatives (72%) to their ESG principles. A smaller number of HEIs linked policies on work-life balance, volunteering and job security to their ESG principles.

Figure 17: Benefits that are linked to ESG principles



In terms of other ESG-related policies, ten HEIs reported having a sustainability strategy, typically by aligning with the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Seven expanded on their green initiatives through commitments to reduce carbon emissions, become carbon neutral or become carbon zero. Eight HEIs expressed ESG principles either as part of an organisational strategy or a more specific strategy related to HR, culture and / or social responsibility.

Sick pay

Statutory Sick Pay provides staff, where eligible, with £109.40 per week (the statutory payment rate for 2023/2024) for a period of up to 28 weeks. To be eligible, individuals must be classed as an employee, earn an average of at least £123 per week (the earnings threshold for 2023/24) and have been ill for at least four consecutive days.

In a 2021 policy discussion paper *What should an effective sick pay system look like?*, the CIPD reported that there was considerable variability in the length of service required and the amount of sick pay provided. Across all sectors, 62% of employers offered occupational sick pay to all employees, while 86% did so in the public sector. While 33% of employers had policies where employees qualified from day one, 19% required three months' service and 37% required six months' service or more. The most common approach reported was to provide six months of leave at full pay with 31% of all employers offering this and 60% of public sector employers offering this. Nevertheless, one in five employers (18%) offer a month or less of paid leave and 21% offer two or three months of leave.

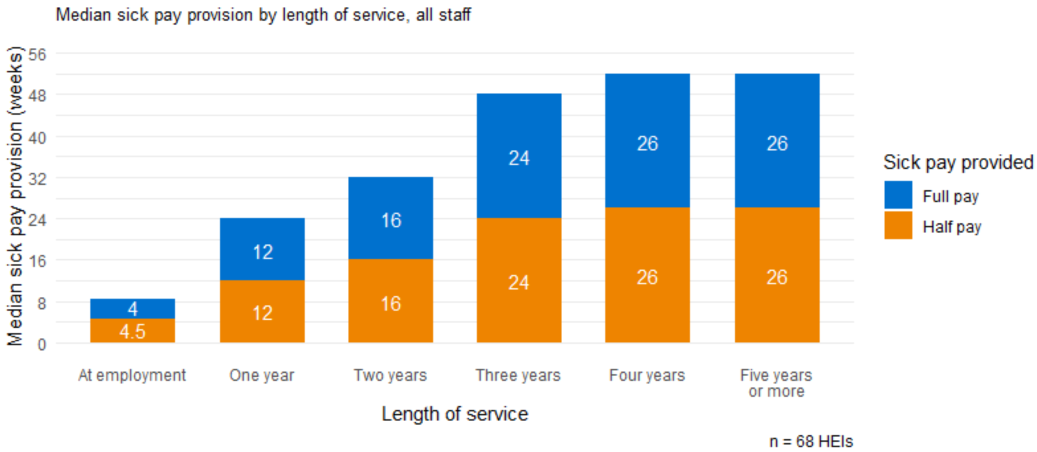
In 2019, XpertHR reported in their occupational sick pay survey that 92% of 301 participating organisations offered occupational sick pay that exceeded than Statutory Sick Pay (SSP). 78% offered this to all staff. At 35% of employers, employees qualified for this benefit from day one while approximately a quarter (28%) required six months service. Around one in ten required a year's service. After a year's service, over half of employers (53%) offered a month or less of occupational sick leave at full pay and the same amount at half pay. A fifth of employers offer three months or more of sickness absence leave at full pay (20.4%).

In the current survey, all responding HEIs provided information on their sickness absence pay policies, with 91 of these reporting that they paid an enhancement on Statutory Sick Pay. 88 HEIs reported how sick pay entitlements improved with length of service. Of these, 68 HEIs reported common policies that applied to all staff equally and 20 HEIs reported separate sickness absence pay policies for academic and professional services staff.

Length of service and sick leave

The chart below **(Figure 18)** shows that HEIs typically operate a policy that provides staff with a similar amount of sick leave at full pay and at half pay. At the beginning of employment, the amount of leave provided to staff across the 68 HEIs that report an equal policy for all staff is four weeks at full pay and four and a half weeks at half pay.

Figure 18: Median sick pay provision by length of service

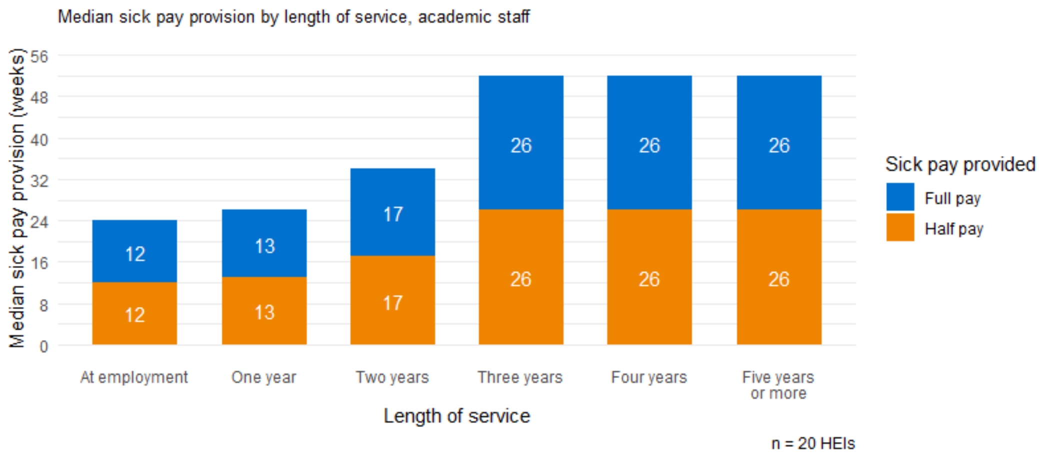


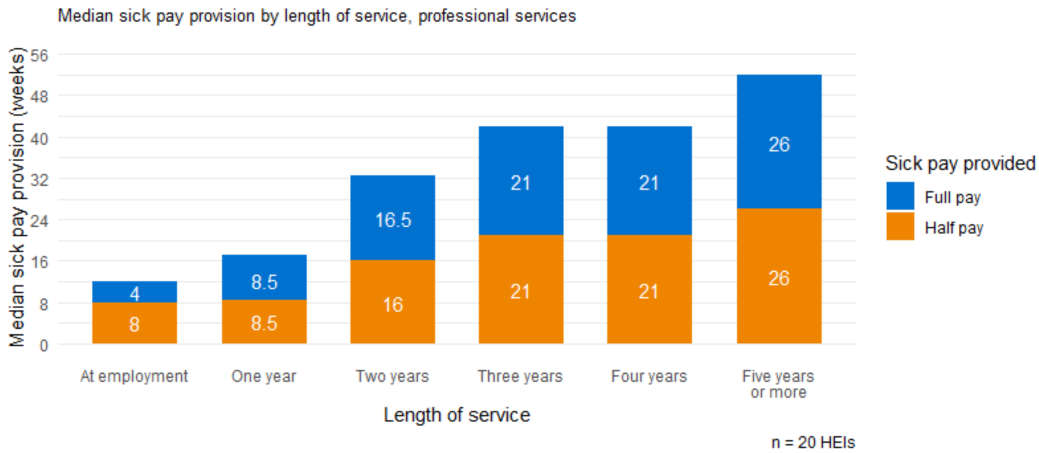
At the median, these policies improve to provide 12 weeks at full pay and 12 weeks at half pay after one year's service and a median of 16 weeks at full pay and 16 weeks at half pay after two-years' service. After three years' service, the median amount of paid sick leave represented 24 weeks at full pay and 24 weeks at half pay. These policies reach a maximum after four years' and five years' service and provide six months (26 weeks) of leave at full pay and six months at half pay.

Occupational sick pay in HE therefore compares favourably with the benchmarks provided for the wider economy. While the median policy in HE provides three months of leave at full pay after one year's service, XpertHR reported that other employers typically offered a month or less at full pay after the same length of service. Though the CIPD reported that six months of leave at full pay was a common offering, this is by no means offered by most employers and the length of service required to obtain this benefit is unclear. Policies in HE are therefore more generous given that the median employee in HE can access this amount of leave after three years' service.

When compared with the previous Benefits of Working in HE survey, the enhanced policies in the sector have generally been maintained or improved slightly. As of day one of employment, the median sick pay policy in 2021 offered four weeks of leave at full pay and two weeks at half pay, meaning that current policies offer an additional two and a half weeks at half pay. After three years' service, the median policy in 2021 offered 21 weeks of leave at full pay and the same again at half pay. In 2023, this changed to 24 weeks leave at full pay plus 24 weeks at half pay. The policy after five years' of service is the same across the 2021 and 2023 survey rounds, offering six months of leave at full pay and an additional six months at half pay.

Figures 19 & 20: Median sick pay provisions by length of service and staff group





The charts above provide additional detail about how occupational sick leave varies across academic and professional services staff. This is reported for the 20 responding HEIs which reported separate policies for these staff groups. Occupational sick pay tends to be more generous for academic staff than for professional services staff. While academic staff receive a median of 12 weeks of leave at full pay and 12 weeks at half pay as a day one employment entitlement, professional services staff receive a median of a month's leave at full pay and two months at half pay. Though policies for academics do not change after three years' service (i.e. six months at full pay and six months at half pay), academics and professional services staff receive equal amounts of sick leave after five years' service.

Pension schemes

All 93 respondents provided information about the pensions schemes that they offered. HEIs were specifically asked about whether they used USS, TPS / STPS / NITPS, LGPS / LGPS(S) / LGPS(NI), NHS Pension Scheme / NHSPS(S) / HSCPS, SAUL, self-administered trusts, UCRSS and NEST. HEIs could also report the details of other schemes.

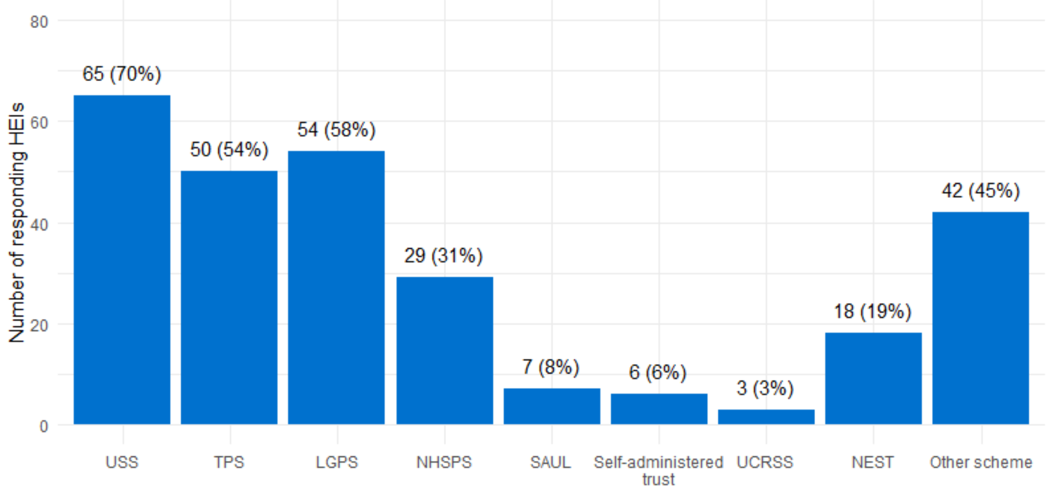
This survey indicated that 99% of responding HEIs continue to participate in and sponsor a range of Defined Benefit (DB) schemes, both private and public service. Employer contribution rates currently paid by HEIs into these DB schemes often equate to over 20% of salary. These schemes are available to the majority of staff entering the sector and include USS, TPS, LGPS, NHSPS and SAUL.

A 2018 survey by Willis Towers Watson showed that 99% of new hires joining a FTSE 350 company are offered a Defined Contribution (DC) scheme. Though it doesn't cover scheme eligibility, the fact that the 2022 edition of this survey reports on the use of these schemes across 233 FTSE 350 companies indicates that DC schemes remain the norm in amongst the largest private sector employers across the UK. Nevertheless, DC schemes have become more common across HE and are usually offered to professional services staff. We are now starting to see a small number of HEIs offer a DC scheme as an alternative to academic staff in TPS. The employer contribution rates paid by HEIs into a DC scheme which is offered as an alternative to a DB scheme of around 10% are comparable to the contributions paid by FTSE350 companies. The minimum contributions that must be paid into a pension scheme under the automatic enrolment regulations are a total contribution of 8%[1] with at least 3% employer contribution.

The 2023 XpertHR Benefits and Allowances survey reported that DB schemes are relatively uncommon in the wider economy. Across 200 organisations, 13% offered a final-salary scheme and 11% a career-average scheme. 75% of organisations operated DC schemes. The median employer contribution rate for these DC schemes was 5% while the median employee contribution rate was 5%.

Though the 2023 survey reported data across a total of 15 public sector employers, it did not analyse the types of pensions scheme that these employers offered to their staff. The most recent data for public sector schemes is from 2022, which reported on 11 public sector employers. Of these, five offered career-average schemes and two offered final-salary schemes.

Figure 21: Pensions schemes offered across higher education



Out of the 93 respondents, 65 offered USS to some or all of their staff (70%). Of these, 38 HEIs (58%) reported that they primarily offered the USS to academic staff and / or those on higher grades. These were typically pre-92 institutions which offered other staff a self-

[1] Auto enrolment contributions are paid on salary between £6,200 and £50,000

administrated scheme, NEST or another scheme. A further 18 HEIs (28%) only offered USS to existing members of the scheme with all of these being post-92 institutions.

A total of 34 HEIs offered USS in combination with either the TPS, LGPS, or both. USS was typically offered to academic staff on higher grades in these cases. Nine HEIs who were based in London and the South-East offered USS alongside SAUL. At the date of publication, the current employee contribution rate for USS is 9.8% for members with employers contributing 21.6%. From January 2024, the employee contribution rate will decrease to 6.1% and the employer contribution rate will decrease to 14.5%. USS is a hybrid scheme providing both DB and DC benefits to members. The defined benefit element of the scheme accrues 1/85 of each year's salary up to a threshold of £40,000. A DC pension is built up on any salary above the £40,000 threshold with members receiving 20% of their salary (8% employee and 12% employer) above £40,000 into their DC pot. Members are also entitled to a one-off cash lump sum of three times an individual's DB pension which is tax-free up to HMRC limits. From April 2024, the accrual rate will increase to 1/75 of salary each year up to a salary threshold that UCEA expects will be approximately £70,000. Members will continue to build up a DC pension on salary above the salary threshold.

50 HEIs said that they allowed for new employees to join TPS. Of these, 43 (86%) offered TPS and LGPS, typically offering academic staff TPS and professional services staff LGPS. These HEIs included 24 that offered USS as well, typically for senior academics or individuals who were already in the scheme at the time they became employed by the HEIs. Six HEIs offered TPS alongside other schemes. As of December 2023, the employee contribution rate for the TPS scheme is tiered at between 7.4% and 11.7% of salary, depending on the employee's salary and the employer contribution is 23.68% (see UCEA's infographic on pensions contributions for further information). This will increase to 28.68% in April 2024. The normal accrual rate for the scheme is 1/57 but members can choose annually to pay "faster accrual" additional contributions in order to accrue CARE benefits at rates of either 1/55, 1/50, or 1/45 of their pensionable earnings.

A total of 54 HEIs offered LGPS with 41 (76%) specifically offering it to professional services staff and TPS to academic staff. A further ten HEIs primarily offered LGPS to professional services and USS to academic staff. The employee contribution rate for the LGPS is tiered at between 5.5% and 12.5%, depending on the employee's salary.

29 HEIs with medical or dental schools offered the NHS Pension Scheme to clinical academics or those who had already been members of the NHSPS at the time they joined the HEI. The employee contribution rate for this scheme is tiered at between 5.1% and 13.5%, depending on the employee's salary. With effect from April 2019, the employer contribution increased to 20.6% in England & Wales though medical schools in England & Wales receive funding support which means that they pay around 18%. In Scotland, the employer contribution is 20.7%. All active members accrue a pension of 1/54 of salary.

Seven respondents based in London and the South East offered the SAUL pension scheme. Each of these HEIs offered SAUL to employees on lower grades alongside USS for staff on higher grades. The employee contribution rate for the SAUL CARE pension scheme is 6% and the employer contribution rate is 21%. The accrual rate for this pension scheme is 1/75 of an individual's salary. From 1 April 2023, new entrants to the scheme have been enrolled in the DC section called SAUL Start with an employer contribution rate of 16% and a member contribution rate of 6%. Members remain in SAUL Start for their first three years of employment after which they move to the SAUL CARE section.

Eighteen HEIs said that they offered the NEST pension scheme. Eight HEIs reported using this scheme for casual workers, three for those on lower grades and a further three for those who had opted out of the other pension schemes. Across seventeen HEIs that reported this data, the employee contribution rate ranged between 1% and 5%, with the median being 5%. Employer contribution rates ranged from 3% to 9% with the median across survey respondents being 3%. The contribution rates suggest that HEIs are using NEST to provide benefits around the auto-enrolment minimum.

Six HEIs reported offering a self-administered pension scheme. Four HEIs reported using this type of scheme for existing staff on lower grades while the other two reported using it for new hires. The employee contribution rates for these schemes ranged between 3% and 10% while the median employer contribution rate was 10%.

Table 7: Employer contributions rates for pension schemes

Pension scheme	LQ	Median	Mean	UQ	HEIs
NEST	3%	4%	4%	4%	17
Self-administrated scheme	7.8%	10%	11.6%	14.5%	6
Other schemes	9.3%	17.4%	15.6%	20.3%	6

A total of 42 HEIs offered other pension schemes. Amongst these, eight HEIs named plans that were run by Aviva, five named schemes by Scottish Widows, two by Legal and General and two by Aegon.

Only one HEI reported that they allowed employees to join the University & Colleges Retirement Savings Scheme (UCRSS).

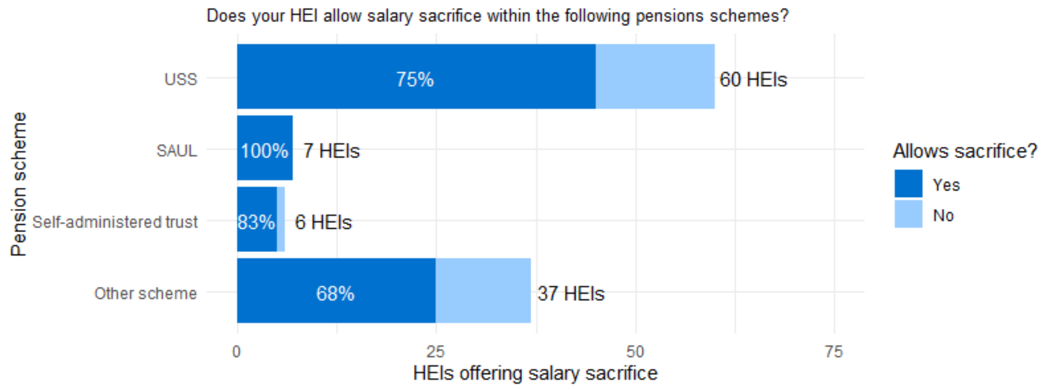
Where this data was available, responding HEIs were asked to estimate the proportion of eligible staff who participated in each pension scheme (i.e. the staff who had not opted out after being enrolled into the scheme). Across 24 HEIs, the median of the estimated participation rate for USS was 89%. Median participation rates for other schemes were comparably high, with HEIs reporting 90% participation in TPS (30 responding HEIs), 91% for LGPS (27 HEIs) and 100% for NHSPS (10 HEIs).

Table 8: Participation rates in selected pension schemes

Pension scheme	Median	Mean	HEIs
USS	89%	84.8%	24
TPS	90%	89.8%	30
LGPS	91%	87.5%	27
NHSPS	100%	94.2%	10

The survey also asked HEIs whether they allowed salary sacrifice for pension contributions in the schemes which allow this. 45 HEIs out of the 60 that offered USS (75%) indicated that they allowed salary sacrifice as did all of the seven HEIs that offered SAUL. Five of the six HEIs that offered self-administered trusts allowed salary sacrifice. 25 of the 37 HEIs that offered other schemes (68%) allowed salary sacrifice within those schemes.

Figure 22: Do you offer salary sacrifice for pension contributions?



While DC pension provision is increasingly common within HE, particularly in respect of professional service staff, HEIs are putting in place generous contribution structures that compare favourably to the largest employers in the UK. This coupled with the vast majority of academic and academic related staff having access to DB pension schemes including USS, TPS and NHSPS mean that HE staff have access to some of the best pension schemes available to any worker in the UK.

Working hours and annual leave

Working hours

The (ONS) Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) shows that the median number of basic paid hours worked in the United Kingdom was 36.9 hours in 2023. The median was generally comparable across nations with Scotland and London having slightly lower medians of 35.4 and 36.1 hours per week respectively.

Table 9: Basic paid hours worked, ASHE

Description	LQ	Median	Mean	UQ
United Kingdom	29.3	36.9	32.5	38.0
England	29.6	37.0	32.6	38.0
Scotland	28.0	35.4	32.8	37.5
Wales	28.0	36.9	33.0	38.4
Northern Ireland	27.6	37.0	32.3	39.8
London	34.0	36.1	33.6	37.6

For additional context, the 2023 Survey of Annual Hours and Earnings reported that the median number of paid hours worked was 35 hours for higher education teaching professionals, 35 hours for further education teaching professionals and 32.5 hours for secondary education teaching professionals.

In the current survey, 73 responding HEIs reported a specified length of working week as a general policy for all staff while 26 reported data specifically for academic staff and 29 reported it specifically for professional services. In terms of the policies reported for all staff, the median number of contractual hours worked in the HE sector (36.25) was slightly lower than the UK median across all sectors.

Academic staff were contracted for a median of 36.75 hours per week across 26 HEIs, with four reporting that academics had no specified hours. At these HEIs, academics were required instead to work to fulfil the duties of the post. Professional services staff have a slightly lower median number of contracted hours at 36.25. The lower and upper quartiles are the same across all staff groups, at 35 hours and 37 hours respectively.

Table 10: Basic weekly hours

	LQ	Median	Mean	UQ	HEIs
All staff	35	36.25	36	37	73
Academic	35	36.75	36.3	37	26
Professional services	35	36.25	36.1	37	29

Within their survey responses, HEIs reported having implemented longer working weeks for certain subgroups of staff, such as security staff, manual staff, and cleaners / porters.

Annual leave

The statutory entitlement to annual leave, under the Working Times Regulations 1998, provides a minimum entitlement of 5.6 weeks of annual leave in each leave year. For full-time staff who work a five-day week, this amounts to 28 days leave inclusive of statutory leave.

The latest XpertHR survey, conducted in 2019, reported annual leave policies for 600 staff groups across 363 organisations. The median basic annual leave entitlement was 25 days in the private sector and 26 days in the public sector. Both of these figures exclude bank holidays. Entitlements in the public sector tend to be more generous, as shown by the greater mean and upper quartile relative to the private sector. The CIPD Reward Management Survey, published in April 2022, aligns with that by showing that 82% of organisations offer their employees at least 25 days' leave (excluding public holidays).

Table 11: Annual leave outside of HE, excluding bank holidays (days)

	LQ	Median	Mean	UQ
All	23	25	25	26
Private-sector services	23	25	24.9	26
Public sector	25	26	29.7	34

Source: XpertHR Benefits and Allowances survey, 2019

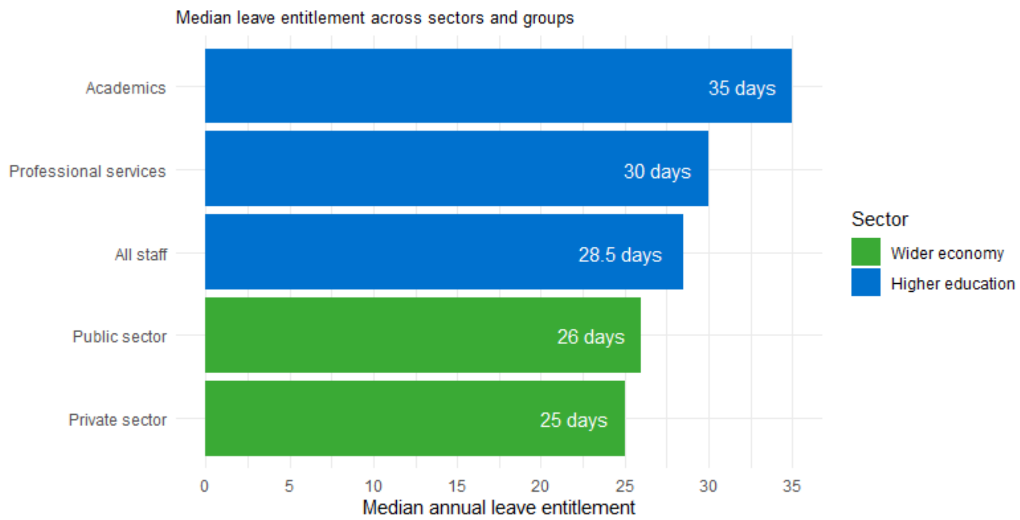
In the current higher education survey, responding HEIs could indicate either a general policy for all staff or separate policies for academic staff and professional services staff. Responding HEIs could also reported whether and how leave entitlement increased with length of service. The table below indicates the general policies that 31 HEIs reported for at least one of these staff groups.

Table 12: Annual leave entitlement by staff group

	LQ	Median	Mean	UQ	HEIs
All staff	26.8	28.5	28.7	30	32
Academic staff	35	35	34.3	35	48
Professional services	26.5	30	29.4	30.8	18

All staff have a median of 28.5 days of leave excluding bank holidays and university closures, exceeding the median seen across both the public and private sectors. The median leave entitlement for academic staff (35 days) is greater than the upper quartile for the public sector. Leave policies tend to be more generous for academic staff than professional services staff (median of 30 days). As shown in the chart below, this means that leave entitlements are more generous in higher education than for either the public or private sectors.

Figure 23: Annual leave entitlements across sectors



HEIs could also report whether and how annual leave entitlement increased with length of service. Five HEIs reported such policies for all staff, thirty-one for professional services staff only and just one for academic staff only. At the five HEIs which did so for all staff, these policies provided between zero and three additional days of leave after three years' service and between one and five days after five years' service.

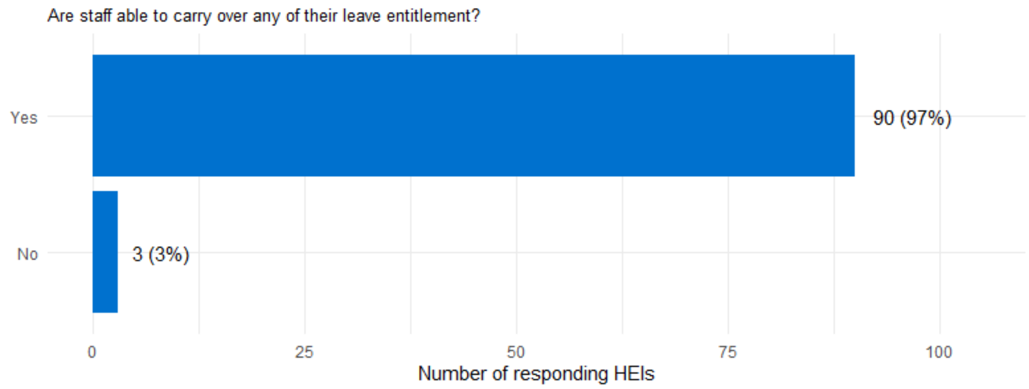
The table below indicates how the median and mean amount of leave for professional services staff increases with length of service. The median policy at point of employment is 25 days and 28 days after five years' service. The mean values indicate that HEIs grant an additional half day of leave at between two and three years' service and three and a half days after five years' service. As in the previous survey round, the leave entitlement of academic staff did not tend to increase with length of service: no data is reported since only one HEI reported having this type of policy.

Table 13: Days of annual leave for professional services by length of service

Length of service	Median	Mean	HEIs
At beginning of employment	25	24.5	31
One year's service	25	24.8	31
Two years' service	25	24.9	31
Three years' service	25	25.2	31
Four years' service	25	25.4	31
Five years' or more of service	28	28.0	31

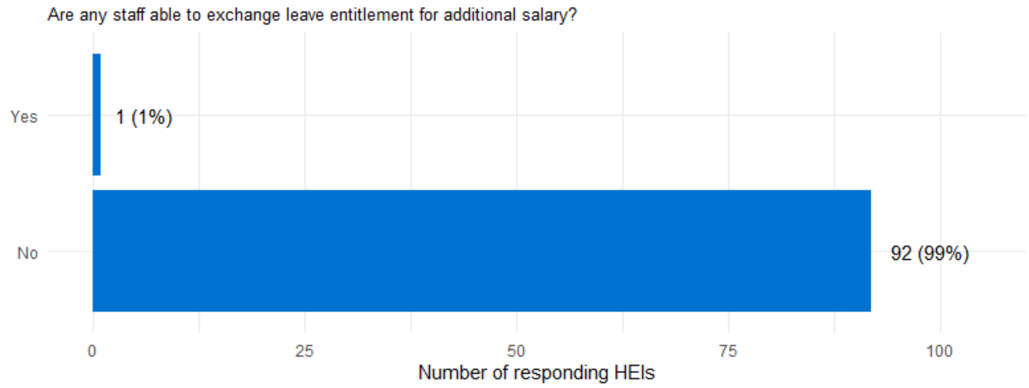
97% of respondents (90 HEIs) allow their staff to carry over part of their annual leave entitlement across years. The most common policy, reported by 86% of the 88 HEIs that specified their policy, allows staff to carry up to five days of leave over. Seven HEIs allowed more leave to be carried over with four allowing ten days to be carried across years. The median policy reported here matches the median from the previous survey round.

Figure 24: Carrying over leave entitlement



While only one HEI allowed staff to exchange unused leave entitlement for additional salary, 39% of respondents (36 HEIs) reported that staff could purchase additional annual leave entitlement. At the 34 HEIs that reported the details of these policies, staff could typically purchase an additional two weeks (10 days) of leave with this being the median policy. In the previous survey round, a total of three HEIs reported that staff could exchange unused leave for additional salary. Purchasing additional leave remains a fairly common policy in higher education with 42% of HEIs having reported such a policy in the previous round. Typical policies in that round allowed staff to purchase up to ten days of leave.

Figures 25 and 26: Exchanging and purchasing leave entitlement



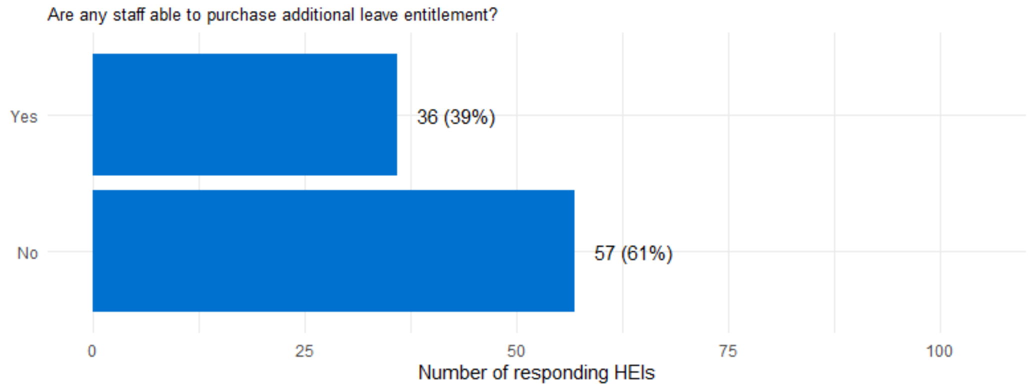


Table 14: Maximum amount of additional annual leave that can be purchased

	LQ	Median	Mean	UQ	HEIs
Days of annual leave	5	10	10.7	10	34

Notice periods

Under the statutory entitlement, employees with continuous service of between one month and two years' service are entitled to at least one week's notice from the employer. Employees with two years' continuous employment or more are entitled to one week's notice for each complete year, up to a maximum of 12 weeks' notice if employed for twelve years or more.

All 93 responding HEIs provided information about their notice period policies by either reporting a general policy for all staff or separate policies for executive team members, academic staff and professional services staff. Of these respondents, 60 HEIs reported individualised policies for each of the three staff groups.

Table 15: Length of notice period by staff group, in weeks

	LQ	Median	Mean	UQ	HEIs
Professional services	7	9	8.9	11	69
Academic staff	11	12	12.6	13	73
Executive team members	13	19	19.5	26	70
All staff	8	9	9	12	18

This table shows the typical length of notice periods by staff group. Across the 18 HEIs that reported general policies, the median policy required that staff give eight weeks' notice. The median notice period for professional services staff was nine weeks across 69 responding HEIs. This was shorter than the median notice period of twelve weeks that was reported for academic staff across 73 HEIs. A small number of respondents indicated that academic notice periods are required to align with term dates. Unsurprisingly, executive team members were reported to have the longest notice periods, with a median of 19 weeks across 73 HEIs. For executive team members, the lower quartile represented a notice period of three months while the upper quartile represented six months.

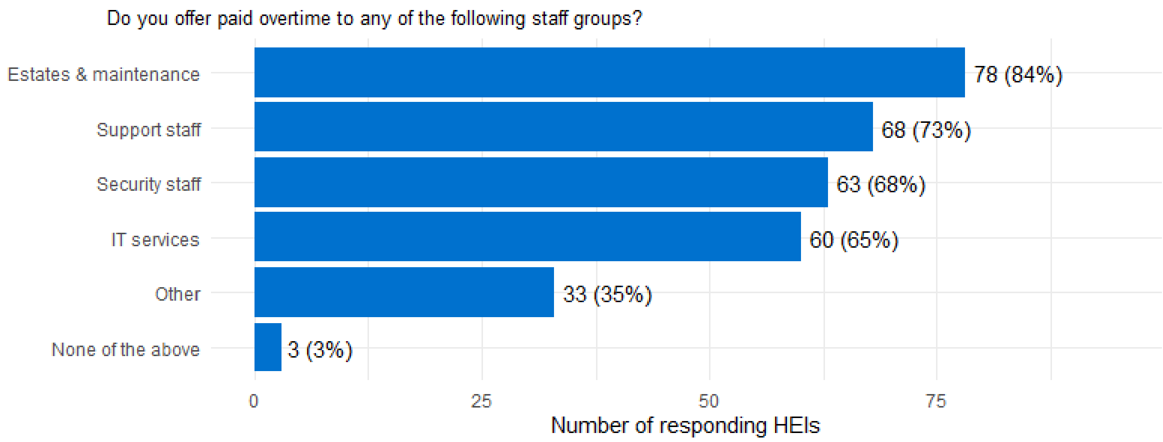
When compared to the previous survey, the policies reported are broadly similar. Academic staff were reported to have a median notice period of twelve weeks across both the current survey and the survey collected in 2021. The current median notice for professional services staff at nine weeks is greater than the median of four weeks reported in the previous round. This figure stands between the figures broken down by seniority that were reported in the 2021 survey, with the median notice period for those on lower grades in professional services being four weeks and the median for higher grades being twelve weeks. The median notice period of executive team members in the 2021 survey was 16 weeks, as opposed to the current median of 19 weeks.

Shift allowances and overtime

The current survey asked HEIs about their policies for overtime and other additional payments such as which staff groups were eligible for these payments and the multipliers that were offered. The survey additionally asked about shift allowances, call-out payments and standby payments for these groups.

All but three HEIs (97%) reported offering overtime to one or more staff groups. In the 2021 Benefits of Working in HE survey, 94% of responding HEIs offered overtime. This policy was most commonly offered to estates and maintenance staff (84%), support staff (73%), security staff (68%) and staff working in IT services (65%). Approximately a third of HEIs (35%, 33 HEIs) reported offering overtime to staff groups beyond these. Amongst these, 19 HEIs reported that staff on lower grades were eligible for overtime, though this was typically applicable to professional services roles only. The other eligible staff groups that responding HEIs reported offering overtime to included staff in library services, student support services, events and catering, and student recruitment.

Figure 27: Eligibility for paid overtime by staff group



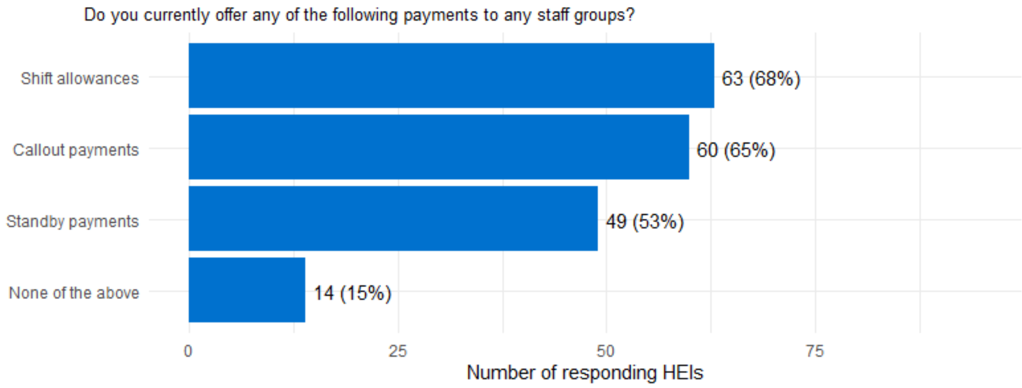
Overtime policies typically differ on the basis of the day of the week that the employee is working on. Four-fifths of the responding HEIs (81%) offered and reported on overtime rates for the normal working week and the first and second rest days (i.e. Saturday and Sunday) and similar proportion (80%) did so for bank holidays and / or closure days. In the previous Benefits of Working in HE survey, approximately two-thirds of HEIs offered overtime on each of these days.

The multiplier for overtime depended on which day the overtime was worked. Three- quarters (75%) of respondents offered a multiplier of 1.5 on weekdays and Saturdays, meaning that policies were highly consistent across the sector. Four-fifths of responding HEIs offered double pay for overtime taken on Sundays (79%) as well as for that taken on bank holidays and other closure days (82%). The median multipliers for each day reported in the current survey were the same as those reported in the 2021 survey round.

Table 16: Overtime rates per day

Days	LQ	Median	Mean	UQ	HEIs
Normal working week	1.5	1.5	1.4	1.5	75
1st rest day (Saturday)	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	75
2nd rest day (Sunday)	2	2	1.9	2	75
Bank holidays and/or closure days	2	2	1.9	2	74

Figure 28: Other additional payments

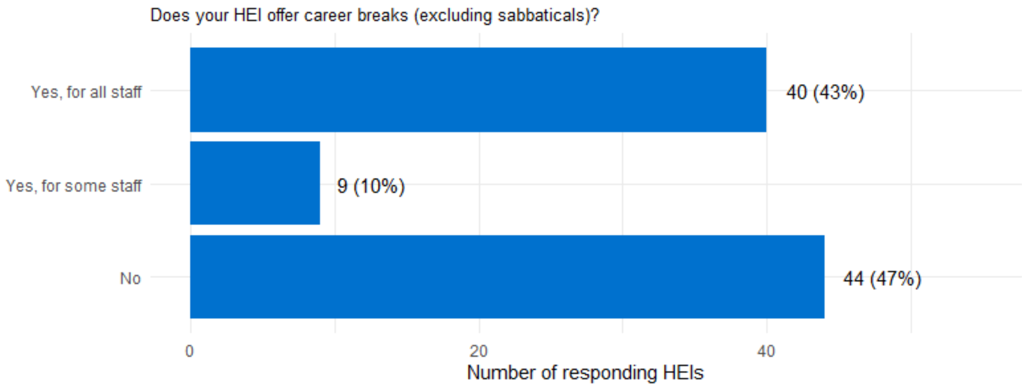


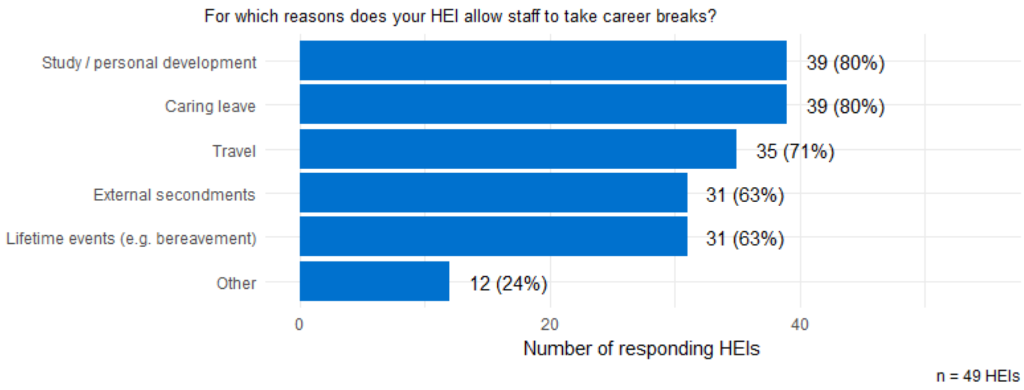
In terms of the other additional payments that HEIs used, 68% offered shift allowances, 65% offered call-out payments and 53% offered standby payments.

Career breaks and sabbatical leave

Over half of responding HEIs (53% or 49 HEIs) stated that they offered career breaks with 40 offering these to all staff and nine offering them to some staff. These policies specifically excluded sabbatical leave. Of these 49 HEIs, 35 gave additional detail about the policy by specifying the eligibility requirements, the length of paid and unpaid leave offered, and / or the frequency at which these breaks could be taken. Career breaks were typically offered for study or personal development (80% of respondents), caring leave (80%) and travel (71%). These breaks were also offered to allow staff to take secondments at external organisations (63%) or to respond to certain life events (63%).

Figures 29 and 30: Eligibility for career breaks, excluding sabbaticals





Staff were typically eligible to take a career break after a median of two years' service with the lower and upper quartile being one year and three years respectively. Only three HEIs had no service requirement associated with their policy and seven HEIs required five years' service. Policies usually required between one and three years between breaks with some HEIs reporting that staff could only take one break during their employment. Career breaks typically provided a year of unpaid leave at the median. Only three HEIs offered paid leave as part of their policy.

Table 17: Conditions on career breaks

	LQ	Median	Mean	UQ	HEIs
Weeks of service to be eligible	52	104	113.3	156	36
Weeks between periods of leave	52	104	163.8	260	19
Maximum number of weeks of unpaid leave	52	52	88.8	117	36

A similar proportion (56% or 52 HEIs) reported that they allowed staff to take sabbatical leave compared to those that offered career breaks (53%). Of these, 38 HEIs said that the policy applied to academic staff members only, eleven said that their policy was open to all staff, and 3 said that the policy applied to certain academic and professional services staff.

Figure 31: Eligibility for sabbatical leave

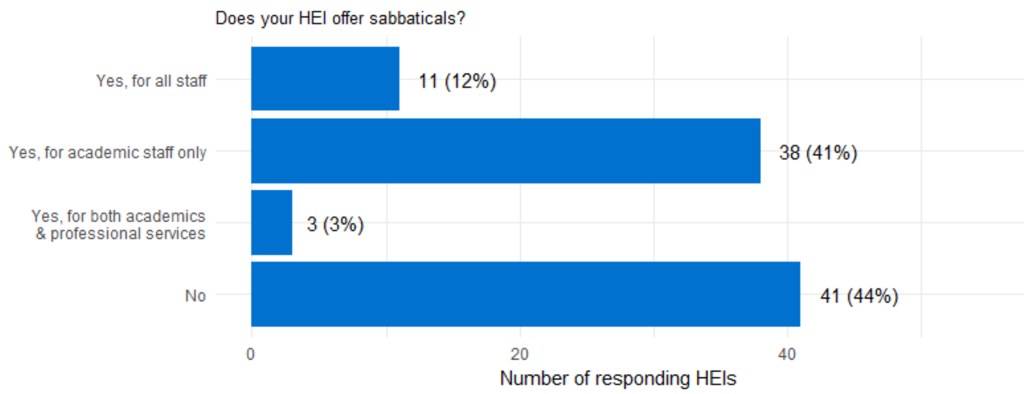


Table 18: Conditions on sabbatical leave

	LQ	Median	Mean	UQ	HEIs
Weeks of service to be eligible	104	156	141.1	156	32
Weeks between periods of leave	104	156	160.5	260	15
Weeks of maximum paid sabbatical leave	16	26	35.2	52	23
Weeks of maximum unpaid sabbatical leave	52	52	53.9	52	13

A total of 38 HEIs reported one or more aspects of their policy on sabbaticals. The required length of service for taking a sabbatical leave was three years, with the lower quartile being at two years. Academic staff were typically required to have a gap of three years between sabbaticals with the quartiles representing two and five years respectively. When sabbaticals were paid, the amount of paid leave given was typically under a year with the median being six months. The lower quartile of 16 weeks indicates that sabbaticals are typically longer than a single semester while the upper quartile was a year. Of the 13 HEIs that provided unpaid sabbatical leave, almost all reported providing up to a year of unpaid leave.

Paid special / emergency leave

The CIPD Reward Management Survey, published in April 2022, reported a wide range of paid special / emergency leave benefits. 86% of responding organisations provided paid leave for bereavement and 64% did so for jury service. This report further indicated that public sector employers were more likely to provide this benefit than private sector firms. A greater proportion of employers forecasted that they would spend more on paid leave (16%) than those that forecasted spending less on it (4%).

Almost all of the responding HEIs (95%) reported that they granted paid leave in special or emergency circumstances. This could either be given through a formal policy or be decided on a case-by-case basis or by managerial discretion. In the previous survey round, all but one of the responding HEIs reported offering paid leave to some or all of their staff.

Compassionate leave and bereavement were the most common reason for this type of leave, with 86 HEIs offering a median of five days of leave. Several respondents reported providing staff with additional leave dependent on their relation to the deceased and whether they are responsible for funeral arrangements.

62 HEIs provided paid leave to provide emergency care or support to dependents, offering a median of five days of paid leave. For general caring responsibilities, 26 HEIs reported offering a median of five days of paid leave.

Table 19: Entitlement to special / emergency paid leave dependent on type

Days	LQ	Median	Mean	UQ	HEIs
Compassionate leave / bereavement	5	5	6.1	6.8	86
Emergency care / support to dependents	3	5	4.5	5	62
General caring responsibilities	3.3	5	4.7	5	26
Study leave	3.5	5	5.3	5	22
Jury service / acting as a witness	10	10	10.2	10	21
Fertility treatment / antenatal care	5	5	4.4	5	27
Performing public duties	10	12	11.9	16	37

22 HEIs reported formal policies for allowing staff to take paid study leave, with this representing a median of five days of leave. A further 13 HEIs reported that the amount of study leave that they gave was typically granted on a case-by-case basis or at a manager's discretion. Four HEIs offered a half day of annual leave for each formal examination. While 21 HEIs reported offering a median of ten days of paid leave for jury service or acting as a witness, a further 47 HEIs reported that they granted leave at full pay for the duration of the case.

A further 22 HEIs reported that they did not provide a specific amount of paid leave for fertility treatment or antenatal care and instead had informal policies that accommodated a reasonable amount of paid leave on a case-by-case basis.

The median amount of paid leave given for public duties was 12 days across 37 HEIs. Many respondents indicated that the amount of leave provided depended on the function being served: for example, policies offered five days for serving as a school or college governor, ten days for those acting as magistrates, and up to two weeks for those serving in reserve forces.

The policies that were reported in the current survey round were broadly comparable to those reported in the Benefits of Working in HE report in 2021. At the median, HEIs offered their staff five days of compassionate / bereavement leave, five days of leave for caring for dependents and 10 days of leave for jury service.

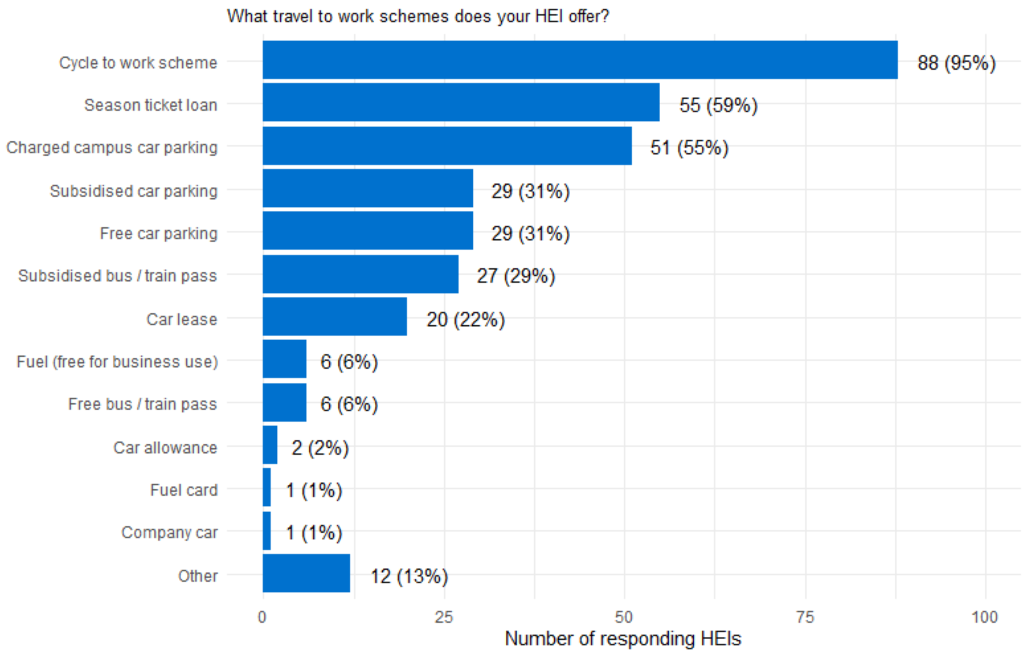
Travel to work schemes

In their 2023 Benefits and Allowances survey, XpertHR reported that 65% of 200 responding organisations offered cycle-to-work schemes and 65% offered free parking. 45% offered a car allowance and 30% offered a company car. Within these schemes, 77% of organisations only offer a company car to directors and only 3% made car allowances available for all staff. These types of benefits have declined in the last ten years: in 2013, 43% of employers offered a company car, a decline of 13 percentage points. In their 2021 survey, XpertHR reported that two-fifths of organisations (44%) offered an interest free loan for season tickets for public transport usage.

The 2022 CIPD Reward Management Survey reports similar travel schemes in operation at 217 organisations. 52% of organisations offered cycle-to-work schemes, with 94% of these offering it to all staff. 75% offered either free or subsidised parking to at least some of their staff. 37% of organisations offered a company car to some staff but only 2% offered this to all staff. Though 47% of responding organisations made a car allowance available to directors, only 5% did so for all staff. 30% of organisations offered travel season ticket loans to some or all of their staff.

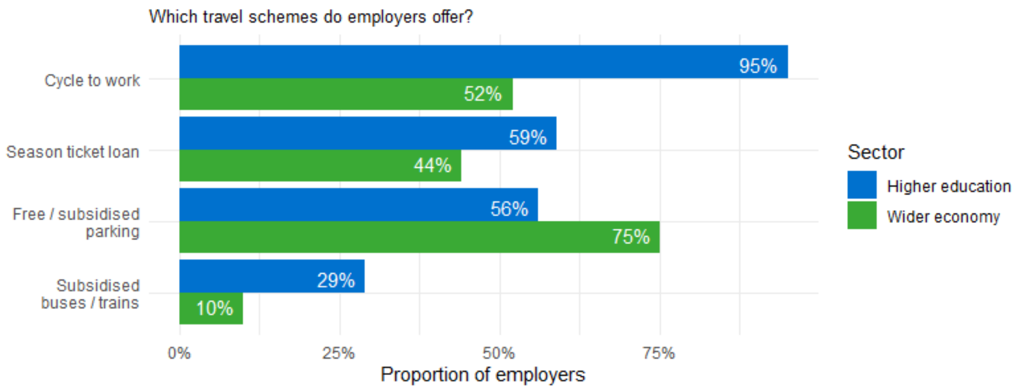
Of all the travel-related schemes reported in higher education, cycle-to-work schemes were the most popular benefit adopted with 95% of responding HEIs (93) reporting that they provided a scheme. These schemes were therefore more common in HE than in other sectors. Season ticket loans and car parking provisions, albeit at cost to staff, were made available by 59% and 55% of responding HEIs respectively. Around 30% offered subsidised bus passes, car parking and free car parking. Just under a quarter of HEIs offered car leases and a small number provided free bus passes, fuel for business travel and car allowances.

Figure 32: Travel to work schemes offered



The travel-related benefits offered in higher education are more generous than those offered in other sectors. While 95% of HEIs offer a cycle-to-work scheme, only 52% of employers in other sectors do so. Similarly, it is more common for HEIs to offer season ticket loans (59%) and / or subsidised bus / train services (29%) than in other sectors where 44% offer season ticket loans and 10% subsidise bus or train services. Offering free or subsidised parking was, however, more common in the wider economy (75%) than in higher education (56%).

Figure 33: Comparisons of travel schemes across sectors



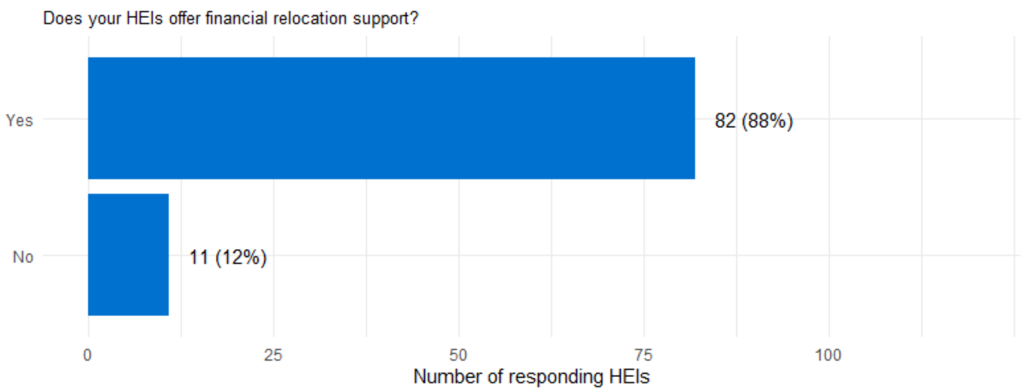
In relation to the 2021 data, season ticket loans (59% in 2023) and cycle to work schemes (95%) remain high in prevalence in the sector, with these policies having been offered by 66% and 97% of HEIs in 2021, respectively. The number of HEIs providing charged parking has decreased to 51% from 66%. Nevertheless, the proportion of HEIs offering free parking has increased to 31% from 20%. The proportion of HEIs offering car lease schemes has also increased to 19% from 8%.

In terms of other schemes provided, five HEIs provided salary sacrifice schemes to give their employees the chance to either own or lease an ULEV (Ultra Low Emission Vehicle) and two offered paid onsite electric vehicle charging.

Relocation schemes

Nine out of ten HEIs (88%) offered their staff financial support when relocating. The allowance for relocating typically represented between a tenth and a twelfth of an individual's basic salary with values typically being capped at £8,000 to comply with [HMRC guidelines on these schemes](). Amounts greater than this were uncommon as employers are required to pay National Insurance on these but some HEIs did report paying these amounts on a case-by-case basis for specialist or senior roles. These schemes were typically offered to new starters that did not live close to their new employer or those that were not based in the UK. The qualifying distance typically required staff to be located more than 30 miles away from their new employer and to move to within 30 miles. These schemes are typically offered to senior staff or those above a certain grade and were typically limited to individuals on long-term or permanent contracts.

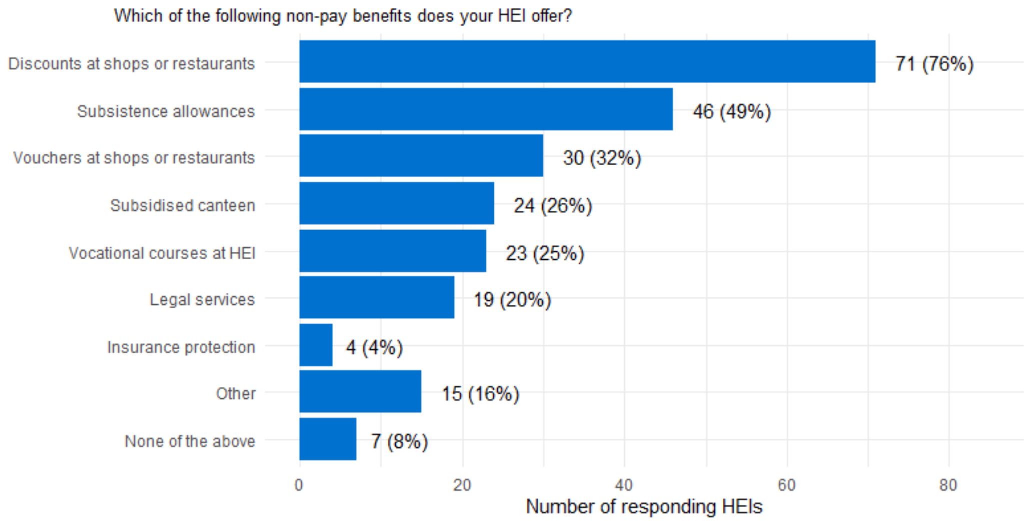
Figure 34: Financial support for relocation



Other benefits

In their 2023 Benefits and Allowances survey, XpertHR reported that around a third (31%) offered a staff discount scheme with the discount on the organisation's own goods and services. As part of subsistence allowances, three-quarters of organisations (75%) reported covering overnight expenses with the median value typically being £130. Two-thirds (63%) covered evening meals, with the median cost being £25. 16% provided a subsidised canteen. 61% pay their employees' professional membership fees.

Figure 35: Non-pay benefits



In terms of non-pay benefits that HEIs report, three-quarters (76%) offer discounts at shops or restaurants and around half (49%) provide subsistence allowances to their employees. Around a third (32%) offer vouchers for shops and restaurants. A quarter offer a subsidised canteen (26%) and vocational courses (25%) and a further fifth (20%) offer legal services. Amongst the 16% that offer other non-pay benefits, respondents offer healthcare or travel related benefits, will writing services, Totum (formerly NUS extra) cards, and support with home technology.

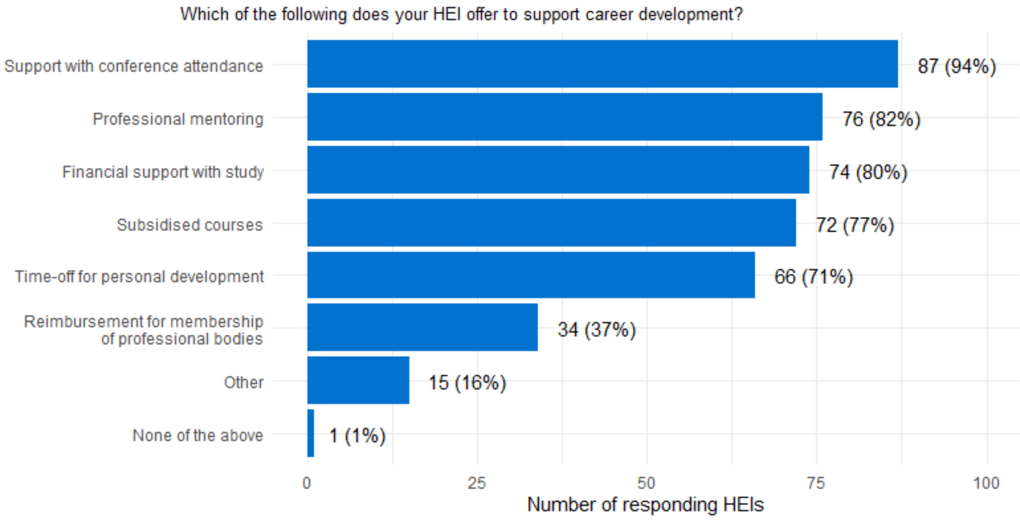
When compared with data from the 2021 Benefits of Working in HE report, discounts at shops or restaurants remain the most common benefit, with this having been offered by 70% of HEIs previously. There has been an increase in the number of HEIs offering subsistence allowances (30% to 49%) and subsidised canteens (13% to 26%). Elsewhere, the rates at which HEIs offer vouchers at shops and restaurants (29% in 2019), vocational courses (30%) and legal services (17%) remain consistent.

When compared with other sectors, higher education remains competitive with regard to non-pay benefits. A greater proportion of HEIs provided discounts (76%) than organisations in other sectors (31%). HEIs are also more likely to provide subsidised canteens, though subsistence allowances are less common in HE than elsewhere. Vocational courses also appear to be fairly unique in the higher education sector.

Supporting career development

The current survey also asked HEIs how they support the development of their staff. Over nine in ten HEIs (94%) offer support with conference attendance. Around four-fifths offer professional mentoring (82%), financial support for studies (80%) and subsidised courses (77%). Over two-thirds provide time-off for personal development (71%; see also the section on Career breaks) and just over a third reimburse staff for membership of professional bodies (37%).

Figure 36: Initiatives to support career development



Total reward statements

Most HEIs that responded to the survey (91%) reported that they do not provide a Total Reward statement for staff which explains the value of all of the benefits that they offer. Only eight HEIs did so (9%). Amongst these, only two HEIs had statements which explained all benefits, as opposed to just contractual benefits, such as annual leave or pension schemes. In the last survey round, eight HEIs reported explaining reward in this way, with this representing 13% of respondents due to differences in participation rate across survey rounds.

Flexible benefits

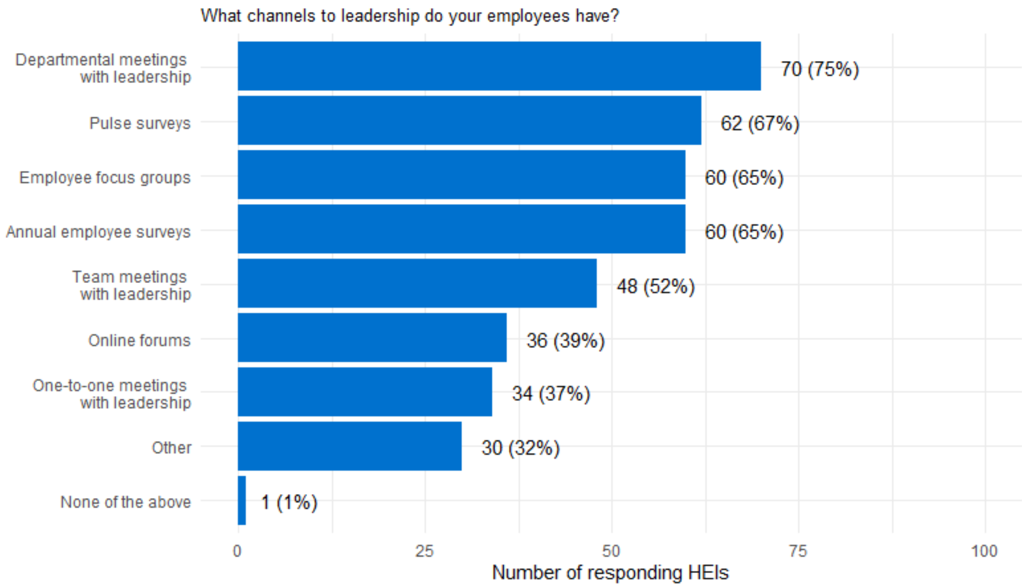
Only nine responding HEIs (10%) reported that they offered a flexible benefits scheme where employees can choose the benefits that are the most relevant to them. Nine HEIs reported offering this type of scheme in the previous survey round, with this representing 14% of respondents due to a greater participation rate this survey round. These flexible benefits typically included health and wellbeing schemes, travel schemes, family-friendly benefits, and retail discounts.

Employee voice & staff surveys

Employee voice

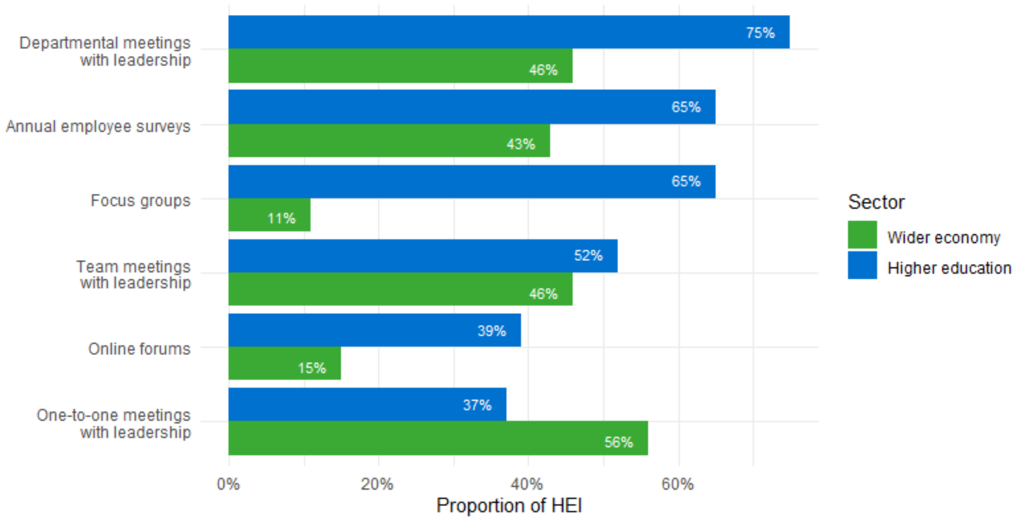
In their 2023 Good Work Index report, the CIPD define employee voice as 'the ability of employees to convey their views to senior managers' and view it as a key driver of organisational change. In a survey of 5,139 employees, they assessed the availability of a variety of channels to communicate with management and how staff rated these. One-to-one and team meetings with senior members of staff were available to 56% and 46% of employees respectively and were rated positively by 73% and 66% of respondents. Team meetings with leadership were available to 46% and rated positively by 66% of staff. Employee surveys were available to 43% but only reported as positively by 44% of staff. Less common channels included departmental meetings (24%), online forums (15%) and focus groups (11%).

Figure 37: Employee voice channels to leadership



75% of respondents reported offering departmental meetings with senior staff and half offered team meetings (52%). Each of these are positive channels for engagement and were more common in HE than in other sectors. Around a third of HEIs reported offering one-to-one meetings (37%), as compared to over half (56%) elsewhere. Two-thirds of HEIs conducted pulse surveys (67%), focus groups (65%) and / or annual employee surveys (65%), with the latter two being more common in HE than other sectors. Two out of five HEI offered online forums (39%) with this being more common than the offering in other sectors (11%).

Figure 38: Comparisons of employee voice channels across sectors

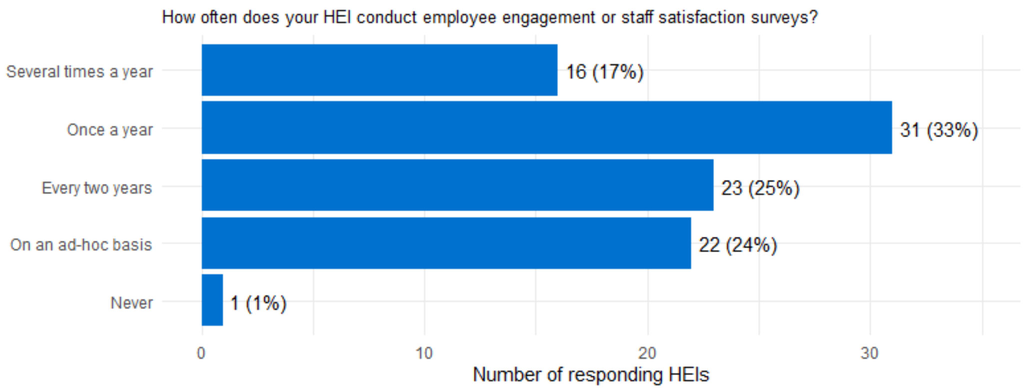


In terms of other channels offered, nine HEIs reported employee surveys on a non-annual basis and a further 11 hold Vice-Chancellor briefings that enable two-way communication with senior leadership.

Staff surveys

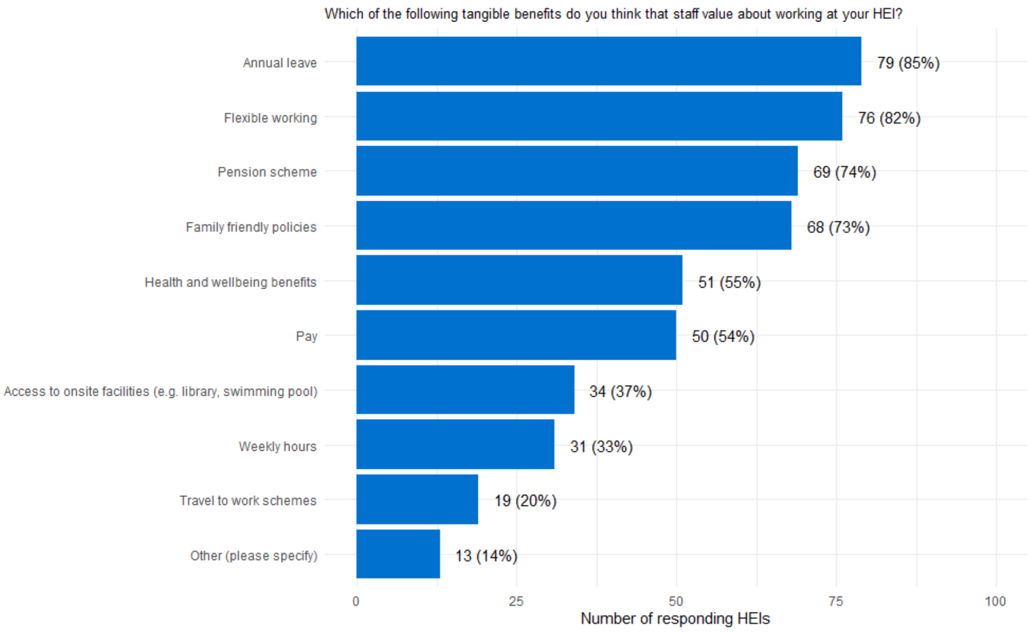
HEIs also reported how frequently they conducted employee engagement / staff satisfaction surveys which included reports of the tangible and intangible benefits valued by staff. A third of HEIs conduct these on annual basis (33%) and 17 conduct surveys more than once per year. Approximately half of HEIs conduct them on a less frequent basis with 25% conducting them every two years and 24% doing so on an ad-hoc basis. When compared to the results from the 2021 Benefits of Working in HE survey, the 2023 survey shows that HEIs are conducting these surveys more frequently. While only a quarter (25%) of HEIs conducted surveys on an annual basis or more frequently in 2021, half of HEIs reported doing so in the 2023 survey.

Figure 39: Frequency of staff surveys



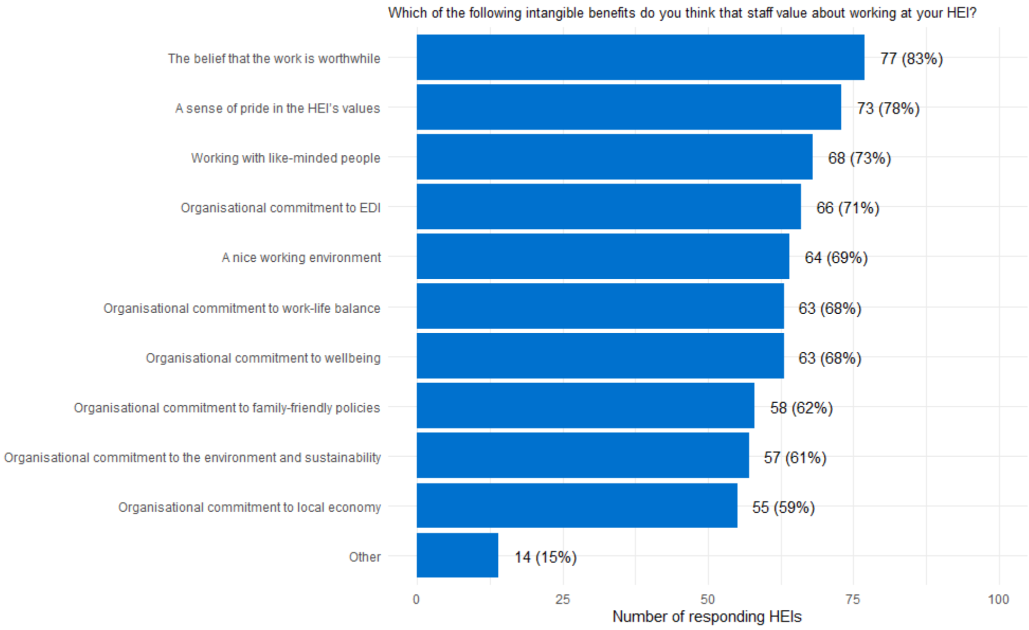
In terms of tangible benefits, more than four-fifths of HEIs reported that staff valued policies on annual leave (85%) and flexible working arrangements (82%). Around two-thirds reported that staff valued pension schemes (74%) and family-friendly policies (73%). Health and wellbeing policies were reported as being valued by staff at 55% of HEIs. Each of these aspects of reward ranked higher than pay, which about half of HEIs reported that staff value as a tangible benefit (54%). It was less common for HEIs to report that staff valued onsite facilities (33%), policies on weekly hours (33%), and travel to work schemes (20%).

Figure 40: HEIs' reporting of the tangible benefits that staff value



In terms of intangible benefits, four out of five HEIs reported that staff value feeling that work is worthwhile (83%) and take pride in their HEI's values (78%). More than two-thirds reported that staff value working with like-minded people (73%) and the nice working environment (69%). Organisational values were also commonly valued by staff such as commitments to EDI (71%), work-life balance (68%), staff wellbeing (68%), environmentalism and sustainability (61%) and the local economy (59%).

Figure 41: HEIs' reporting of the intangible benefits that staff value



The previous report asked HEIs about which three tangible and intangible benefits staff valued the most about working in the sector. The current survey asked about each of these types of benefits separately and there was no limit to the number of benefits that HEIs could select. Nevertheless, as in the 2021 survey, a large proportion of HEIs reported that staff valued flexible working (88%), annual leave (70%) and pension schemes (69%). In terms of intangible benefits, this year a large proportion of staff valued feeling pride in the HEI's values (86%), the nice working environment (84%), worthwhile work (81%) and working with like-minded people (59%).

While pay was reported as being valued across 32% of HEIs in 2021, this increased to 54% in the latest survey. Though the survey did not ask HEIs to comment on why staff valued different aspects of reward or why this had changed over years, it is likely that pay is more valued with the current high level of inflation and the pressures arising from the cost-of-living crisis. Despite this, pay still ranks fairly low in terms of the range of tangible and intangible benefits. This suggests that employees in HE value pay as part of a broader total reward package rather than viewing salary the sole reason to work in HE as a sector.

Conclusion

Employers within the sector should use this resource to help communicate the positive reward benefits within their HEI and more broadly within the sector and to understand the ways in which they could seek to expand their current employee value proposition (EVP). As well as providing internal comparisons of reward policy, this benchmarking resource advocates for HE as an employer of choice through detailed comparisons with the typical policies that are offered in other sectors. Policies within the higher education sector continue to be very competitive, with annual leave, family friendly policies, flexible working arrangements, sickness absence pay allowances and pensions schemes being the most attractive benefits relative to those provided in other sectors.

With the current high inflationary environment, UCEA hopes that this report puts HE employers in good stead with their workforce. UCEA recognises the ongoing pressures of the cost-of-living crisis and that it is of heightened importance for employers to communicate the attractive total reward package that they offer to their staff. On its part, UCEA will continue its work towards building a narrative that reflects the sector's competitive offering. UCEA will also seek to engage with its members about their reward policies and broader topics within Employee Experience, continuing in its goal to document and advocate for positive reward practices in higher education.

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