Staff Engagement and Wellbeing Plan

1   Strategy 2033: A Culture of Good Work

Goldsmith's draft strategy to its purpose, vision and values. It has three core pillars:

- nurturing a distinctive learning environment;
- developing research to address the great opportunities and challenges; and • making social innovation central to what we all do.

These are in turn underpinned by two operational pillars:

- excellent student experience; and • creating a culture of good work.

Goldsmiths aims to become an employer of choice and invest in well-being and staff development stating that 'Good work values fairness, respect and professional development. Our pride amongst colleagues encourages others to join our community[1].'

2   Communicating and gauging staff opinion

As a first step a communications plan was developed, see section 11 below, involving regular communication with staff by the executive board on institutional priorities. It also supports the newly formed faculties to engage with their staff as the new structure is populated during this academic year, ready to become fully operational in September 2025.

Goldsmiths ran its first ever staff survey in March 2024, with the results reported to the senior management team.

3   What staff said

Goldsmith's staff survey took place at a difficult time for the College, while the Transformation Programme to put the organisation on a sustainable financial footing was ongoing. The survey was run by an external organisation and had a response rate of 33%. Most staff surveys aim to achieve response rates of between 40% to 60%. The NHS runs a large scale structured survey every year using a sample of staff. It achieves a 45-50% completion rate, so the Goldsmiths response rate is relatively low.

Engagement levels, however, were relatively high, as shown in table 1 below.

Table 1   Engagement levels

Percentage	Area
94%	Care about the future of the college
74%	Would like to be working here in two years' time
69%	Working here makes me want to do the best work I can
61%	Feel can be true to self at work
55%	Proud to work here
30%	Would recommend the college to friends and family

Source: Peopleinsight, March 2024

Staff liked their role and working in their team, as shown in table 2a below.

Table 2a What staff liked and did not like

Percentage	Area
77%	Teamwork
76%	Role

Source: Peopleinsight, 2024

They were less positive about a range of key issues, shown in table 2b below.

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Table 2b What staff liked and did not like

Percentage	Area
42%	Well-being
37%	Recognition
37%	Purpose of college
36%	Learning & development
36%	Right opportunities to learn and grow
35%	Communications
35%	Kept well informed

Source: Peopleinsight, 2024

The strongest results in the survey came from relationships with colleagues, shown in table 3 below.

Table 3 The strongest results

Percentage	Area
89%	Good relationships with colleagues
81%	Work helps college achieve its aims
76%	Sense of personal achievement from work

Source: Peopleinsight, 2024

The weakest area was expectation that the college would take any action as a result of the survey alongside not knowing how well it is doing or having a clear sense of direction, shown in table 4 below.

Table 4 The weakest results

Percentage	Area
17%	Action taken as a result of the survey
23%	I knew how well the college is doing of its aims
26%	Senior leaders provide clear vision of overall direction
27%	Does everything to support well-being
30%	My career development aspirations are being met

Source: Peopleinsight, 2024

The full survey report is appended at A.

4   Enabling plan: people and organisational development

A people plan was developed in 2023 which addressed the three strategic pillars of nurturing a distinctive learning environment, developing research to address the great opportunities and challenges, and making social innovation central to what we all do. Wide consultation took place, including engagement sessions where staff identified a range of issues for change or improvement. They wanted better handling of workloads, better working conditions (especially security of tenure) and better handling of organisational change. There were concerns about the effectiveness of administration, systems and processes. Commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion within recruitment and retention was a particular concern.

Working groups were formed which focused on:

- cultures, behaviours and values;
- inclusivity;
- well-being and welfare; and • development.

A plan was developed with eleven areas for action which are shown in table 5 below.

Table 5   Enabling plan: people and organisational development

Key area	Action
1 A strong community built on trust and dialogue	Staff voice in decision making
	Partnership with unions
	Fellowship between academics and services
2 A great individual experience	A better employee value proposition
	Inclusivity at the heart of the value proposition
	Resilience, wellbeing and welfare
3 A capable, agile organisation	Outstanding career, with tailored development
	Distinctive teaching and imitative research
	Socially innovative and digitally literate, grounded in sustainability
	Change appetite and service excellence
	A culture of performance and accountability

Source: POD, 2023

The plan has not been published and is appended at B.

5   Good work

The concept of good work is not new. It was introduced to UK government in 2017 through the Taylor report[2] which, in turn, was recognised with the government's good work plan in 2018, containing 53 individual recommendations[3]. The Institute for the Future of Work published a good work charter in 2018 and the good work index, the CIPD's annual survey, began in 2019.

The CIPD[4] defines good work as work that is:

- is fairly rewarded
- gives people the means to securely make a living
- provide opportunities to develop skills and a career and gives a sense of fulfilment
- delivers a supportive environment with constructive relationships
- allows for work-life balance
- is physically and mentally healthy for people
- gives people the voice and choice they need to shape their working lives
- is accessible to all
- is affected by a range of factors, including HR practices, the quality of people management and by workers themselves.

Good work and engagement are intertwined. The Gallup survey of global workforces in 2023[5] concludes that engaged employees are more likely to innovate and produce high quality work. The CIPD's good work index finds the quality of relationships and management support is consistently related to various aspects of engagement. Arguably the main impact of the concept of good work is to raise awareness. It is aspirational and lacks concrete measures, hence the need for a plan.

6   Engagement in the UK

The concept of engagement

Engagement as a concept gained traction in the early 2000s. In 2009 the government commissioned the MacLeod report[6] entitled '*Engaging for Success'*, citing convincing evidence of an engaged workforce and improved performance.

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Despite having no common understanding of what employee engagement is, it has gained traction over the last decade, becoming embedded into mainstream management thinking. This view is exemplified by the CIPD's statement in 2024:

'Employees who have good quality jobs and are managed well will not only be happier, healthier and more fulfilled, but are also more likely to drive productivity, better products or services and innovation. This mutual gain view of motivation and people lies at the heart of employee engagement[7]'.

Investment in engagement

The liberal, western, pluralistic view of the organisation of work is that organisations have a responsibility to the people who work for them, and much of this is enshrined in legislation. Even in 2012 organisations were reporting investment of USD 720 million annually on improving engagement[8]. The UK has taken it most seriously but trails G7 countries in productivity. Highest engagement levels are reported in the USA and Canada although in north America a perk approach to engagement produces temporary spikes which are measured in engagement surveys but have little impact overall. The evidence of any link between job satisfaction and performance is small. Writers criticise organisations for focusing on surveys which make them think that they are doing something positive.

Critics of prevailing HR practice

Bob Briner professor of organisational psychology, Queen Mary University, is a prominent critic of the prevailing HR practice with its plethora of contradictory definitions. He concludes that it is most helpful to see engagement as a workplace approach designed to ensure that employees are committed to their organisation's goals and values, are motivated to contribute to organisational success, and are able at the same time to enhance their own sense of wellbeing.

David Guest, professor of organisational psychology and human resource management, King's College, London maintains that there is evidence that awardwinning workplaces show some evidence that they are better at performance but that effectively what they have done is create a climate that supports good human resource management practice. Rather than follow fashion and getting hooked on an easy option, which often means bringing in consultant to conduct a survey, Guest recommendation is to concentrate on good management and good HR practice.

Approach to engagement

Employers can shape their view of engagement to suit the context in which they operate, from a broad church with a multifaceted focus on people management to a narrower managerial approach. The research does <u>not</u> show a good correlation between engagement and performance. The CIPD recommends organisations take a narrower more specific view of engagement, an approach that aligns with the current research on engagement and is more likely to lead to effective decision making.

Measuring engagement

Engagement in the UK is measured through the CIPD's annual good work index survey of job quality in the UK. Around half of workers feel enthusiastic and immersed in their work. This proportion is remaining steady. Only 30% feel full of energy and 20% are exhausted, with not much change in these indicators over recent years.

Characteristics of successful employee engagement

The characteristics of successful employee engagement make use of a range of good people management and learning and development practices. It aligns communications, HR policies and systems, and learning and development, and is cross organisational. It has active buy in from senior management and line managers. The CIPD questions if this is engagement or simply good management practice[8.]

7 Well-being and engagement

Guest[9] argues that the pursuit of a link between HRM and performance has been pursued at the expense of a concern for employee well-being and that the changes in the nature and context of work support the case for a greater focus on well-being, which in itself may offer an alternative approach to high performance. The changes at work and in the conditions surrounding work risk eroding well-being. Rapid technological change is a mixed blessing with working from home seen as positive, but information technology can increase demand and create overload. There is evidence that when the right HR practices are in place with the necessary resources these help to enhance both well-being and individual performance.

Guest's findings, based on empirical evidence, suggest five sets of HR practice which are:

- investment in employees
- provision of engaging work
- positive social and physical environment
- voice
- organisational support.

8 What does this mean for Goldsmiths?

How do we achieve a culture of good work? Based on the literature, the recommendation is to focus on good management and good HR practice with the engagement and well-being plan laying out the actions over a two-year period, beginning in January 2025.

9 Engagement plan key areas for action

The plan is divided into nine areas for action which are:

- recognition and reward
- empowerment
- development
- good management
- looking after our staff
- hiring
- investing in people management systems
- equality, diversity and inclusion.

There is a total of thirty individual actions associated with the plan, which is appended at C. The detail of the Goldsprints' project is laid out in 10 below. Equality, diversity and inclusion is so central to Goldsmiths that it has its own plan, a selection of which is shown in section 11 below and the communications plan is shown in section 12 below.

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10   Make It Happen

The Make It Happen initiative is designed to catalyse staff engagement through fastpaced, self-directed, and self-led leadership towards a simple project or initiative for completion within 100 days and to offer focused development to those participating (with a maximum of 50 participants).

A pilot will focus on professional services staff. Future iterations could include all staff. In the pilot five teams will have100 days each to complete an initiative that has been agreed and will be championed by the executive board. All successful projects will be able to select an executive board sponsor or champion (executive board members will have to pitch to be selected). The pilot scheme will run from April to July 2025. The project outline and timescales are appended at D.

11 Equality, diversity and inclusion

Equality, diversity and inclusion is a central Goldsmiths' value and has a plan for management action covering the next three years. The key areas for action are shown in table 6 below.

Table 6 Equality, diversity and inclusion: three-year plan key areas for action

Key area
Promote a culture of belonging
Build trust within all Goldsmith's communities
Make an anti-discrimination approach central to ways of working at Goldsmiths
Continue work on equality charter marks
Attract, retain, and develop talented people from diverse backgrounds

Source: POD, January 2025

The plan is appended at E.

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12   Communications plan autumn and spring terms

A communications plan for engagement with staff was developed in 2024. The events taking place have included:

- a pulse survey in September 2024
- engagement with the Goldsmiths' leadership group
- campus connect events
- faculty engagement
- 'Future Goldsmiths' intranet page
- weekly newsletter
- mapping of local/departmental bulletins.

A series of campus connect sessions have taken place, in person and on line, where the vice chancellor, supported by members of the executive board, outlined Goldsmiths' strategic aims to staff, followed by a question and answer session. The full plan is appended at F which summarises the events taking place in the autumn term and lays out the proposal for the spring and summer terms.

13 Next steps

There are three main steps:

i   produce detailed measures and outcomes for each action

ii   determine the priorities and timescales

iii produce a plan to engage and communicate with staff regularly on the proposed course of action and progress

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Appendices

A   Goldsmiths Engagement Survey 2024
        Peopleinsight

B   Enabling Plan
       People & Organisational Development
       Goldsmiths, University of London
        2023

C   Engagement and well-being plan
       Key areas for action
       Goldsmiths, University of London
        January 2025

D   Goldsprints
       Project overview
       January 2025

E   Equality, diversity and inclusion
       Three-year plan
       POD, January 2025

F   Engagement plan 23/25   Term 1 summary report
       Proposal for terms 2+3

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References

1   Goldsmith 2033
        Council paper summer 2023, updated June 2024

2   Good work: the Taylor review of modern working practices
        Department for Business and Trade and Department for Business, Energy and
        Industrial Strategy
        July 2017

3   Good Work Plan
       HM Government
        December 2018

4   CIPD Good Work Index
       June 2024

5   State of the Global Workplace
        Gallup
        2023

6   Engaging for Success: enhancing performance through employee engagement
        A report to Government
        David MacLeod and Nita Clarke
        2009

7   Employee engagement and motivation
        CIPD
        July 2024

8   Is it 'engagement' or simply good management practice?
        CIPD
       August 2017

9   Human resource management and employee well-being: towards a new analytic
        framework
        Guest, D
        Human Resource Management Journal, Vol 27, no. 1, 2027, pages 22-28