Impacts of C-19 lockdown on the work-life balance of BU academics

Preliminary results

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26th May 2020

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1. Brief introduction about this work

The idea for this research was first discussed amidst the chaos of the first week of lockdown. It was motivated by trying to understand the contrasting experiences colleagues (and indeed everyone else) were reporting as a result of the abrupt and drastic changes we were all forced to embrace both at work and in our personal lives. The key aim of this research is to **identify lessons learned** to inform what staff and universities can do to **improve the work-life balance of academics at present and in the longer term**. The data we are collating provide **essential evidence** of aspects that are **affecting academics' performance and wellbeing**, which must be considered and addressed by universities in the planning and decision-making that will **shape the 'new normal' academic environment**.

This research is conducted by a cross-faculty, small interdisciplinary team with expertise in social sciences (Prof Sara Ashencaen Crabtree), public health (Prof Ann Hemingway) and physical geography (Dr Luciana Esteves). On April 15th, we launched a pilot survey to collate data on the impact of C-19 lockdown on the work-life balance of academics initially targeting BU women academics members of the Women's Academic Network. A week later, we extended the survey calling for contributions from all academics across BU, the UK and beyond. **We have received 176 responses to date, 70 we could identify as being from BU staff** (63 from female colleagues).

The results presented here summarise the 70 responses from BU academics who consented to take part in the study. It is only possible to identify that respondents are BU staff if they provide their email or mention BU in their answers to open questions. Therefore, while it is possible that a higher number of responses are from BU staff, there is no way of specifically identifying them. As the initial pilot survey targeted women academics and only seven responses to the wider survey were identified to be from non-female BU staff, it is safe to assume that results are likely to reflect the experiences of women academics in the main.

The results we have presented so far are only part of the data and the analysis undertaken to-date is not extensive or complete. There are a number of aspects that are yet to be analysed, particularly regarding intersectionality, and the current state of analyses do not yet include statistical tests. The survey will remain open until May 31st, when we will then analyse all responses to improve our understanding of the impact of the C-19 lockdown on academics across the UK and beyond. The survey can be accessed here: tiny.cc/acad19 and is open to all academics. The answers received so far are providing a wealth of quantitative and qualitative data. However, **it is timely to disseminate these initial findings to highlight emerging issues that are relevant to be considered by universities planning new ways of working**.

The report is organised into nine sections generally based on the different themes covered in the survey. Section 2 describes how the work-life balance of respondents has changed during lockdown and Section 3 covers the aspects that have been considered to have a positive or negative effect. Section 4 identifies how the main concerns have changed from the start to the lockdown to the present and the perceived major challenges that will be faced after lockdown ends. Section 5 reports the usefulness of the support available to respondents and the coping mechanisms they have adopted during lockdown. Section 6 presents the changes respondents wish to retain after lockdown to benefit their work-life balance. Section 7 briefly shows respondents' perception of whether the C-19 outbreak and lockdown will result in long-lasting changes in personal attitudes. Section 8 characterises the demographic of respondents. Finally, Section 9 shares overall lessons learned from the analysis of the data collected so far.

2. How work-life balance changed during C-19 lockdown

Work-life balance during lockdown got worse for 59% and improved for 37% of the 70 BU academics who responded to the survey. The most common reason for worsening or improving work-life balance were '*workload increased*' (31%) and '*I could do what was needed and be at home/with family*' (24%), respectively (Figure 1a). There are differences between age groups, household size, career levels and across faculties but these should be considered with care as statistical tests are still to be conducted and number of respondents is low in some groups. Although there are differences across gender (Figure 1b), any differences between male and female respondents should not be considered representative of the wider community due to the small number of male respondents.
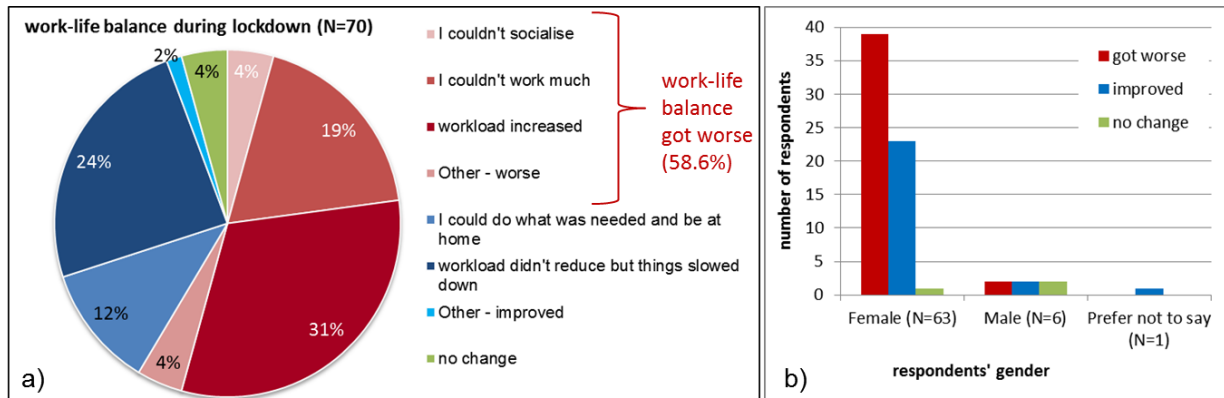

Figure 1. Changes in work-life balance of respondents during Covid-19 lockdown and the selected reasons for identifying positive or negative change (a) and reported changes per gender of respondents (b). Blue shades indicate work-life balance improved and red shades indicate it worsened.

A higher proportion of academics under the age of 40 (82%) indicated that their work-life balance has worsened during lockdown when compared with other age groups (Figure 2a). Half of these academics reported that work-life balance worsened because they '*couldn't work much*' and half indicated that '*workload increased*'. For academics in their 50s or older, the key reason for worsening of work-life balance was the increase in workload.
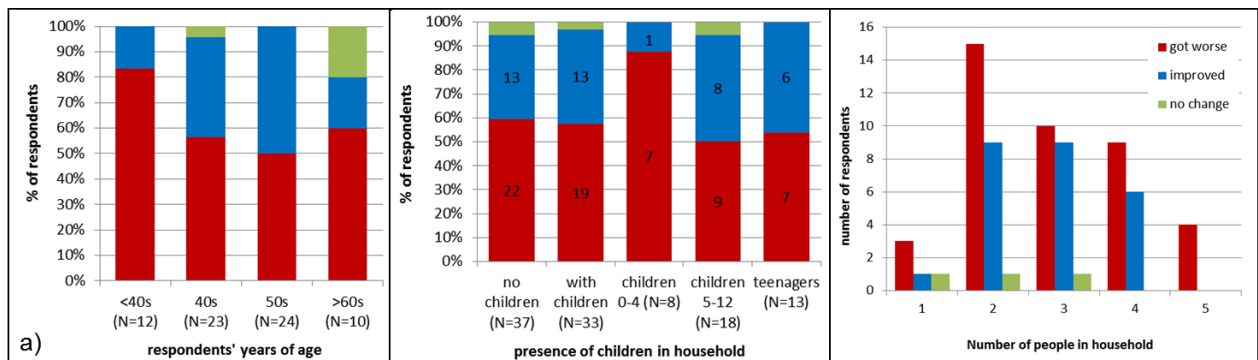

Figure 2. Changes in work-life balance of respondents during Covid-19 lockdown per age group (a); presence of children in the household (b) – the group 'with children' includes children ages 0-12 and teenagers; and household size (c).

Qualitative data revealed that for some academics the lockdown situation has greatly exacerbated workloads relating to managing students, particularly those on professional programmes, as indicated by this respondent' (here and in other quotes, parts are omitted to preserve anonymity):

> "[I] am working extremely long days (average of 12 to 16 hours) as both a mother and a worker. Support for student nurses and cover for colleagues while off sick has increased and

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requires a lot of personal emotional resources. [I] am having to deal with a lot of emotions masked as initial anger and frustration and to de-escalate this to support students. Little or no [time] for own research despite deadlines."

Attempting to maintain 'business as usual' behaviour under exceptional conditions was felt to be incredibly stressful, particularly if this was felt to be unrecognised and not duly accommodated.

"Total email and video-meeting overload and stress. Everything is done by email and with huge pressure to respond quickly to prove I am working and not slacking off. This may be my own fault / perception but it isn't helped by multiple requests from Faculty and Dept for responses within very short deadlines."

There are considerable differences in respondents' home working situations as can be illustrated by these comments from two respondents under the age of 40:

"I usually have to commute for […] hours each day. I have been able to get up later, and have […] more hours in my day, which means that I have been able to exercise at home and feel healthier. I have a quiet home with an office space, and so have been able to work mainly without disruption."

"My husband and I are now trying to negotiate our full time work schedules around each other. He earns a lot more and works for […] so is prioritising his schedule, whilst I am struggling to even manage to attend meetings and live teaching sessions as they clash with his. We have […] children, no personal space, and it is very intense. I had to take a week off work to care for the children whilst my husband was ill […]. This caused me work stress, as well as worry for him."

Seven out of the eight respondents (87.5%) who live with children under the age of 5 years have reported that their work-life balance have worsened (Figure 2b), most indicated that they '*couldn't work much'*. However, no major differences were found when comparing groups of respondents who live with children (under 20 years of age) and households without children. Interestingly, work-life balance got worse for a lower proportion (50%) of respondents who live with children aged 5-12 years than for the ones who do not live with children (60%) (Figure 2b). Further, work-life balance has improved for a higher proportion of respondents who live in a household of three people (45%) than in other household sizes (<40%) (Figure 2c). The hardships imposed particularly on academic mothers of small children was heightened by a fear of falling behind in their work and being judged as failing in comparison with other colleagues:

"My main worry is that I cannot keep up with my work and am still being compared to colleagues without children. This is normally hard enough but now it just feels impossible, especially with having to negotiate this with my husband's schedule. I don't feel like there has been much recognition of these issues by my line manager and colleagues (e.g. programme leaders). They are saying we should only do as much as we can but are still expecting lots of hours of real-time online teaching."

Balancing work and childcare and/or home-schooling was mentioned as a negative effect on work-life balance during lockdown by 18% and 7% of respondents, respectively. Although the impacts are great on the ones affected, childcare does not seem to be the main cause affecting the differences in responses between the group under the age of 40 and other ages. In fact, 87% of respondents in their 40s live in a household with children (12 years old or younger) and yet the proportion of this age group reporting worsened work-life balance was lower (55%) than the proportion of respondents with no children (60%). However, respondents who live in a household with younger children seem to be more negatively affected. Many respondents report not being able to do any research-related work.

"Home schooling as a single parent. I have an R&R to do and have no idea how I will get any space to do this. I've just spent all morning doing fractions with my 9 year old who is dyslexic and needs a lot of support. This has been the only disadvantage and I know I'm lucky to have a home office. Without this, it would be so hard.'

"At first obviously it was not clear how/whether COVID would affect us beyond affecting international travel/networking. Later it became clear it would have a huge impact on university life/work but once the scramble to online teaching and assessment started to level out that was more or less fine, now it is the daily grind of trying to do the same amount of work in a less familiar/more long-winded way, with less time available (due to childcare commitments) and worrying about my academic future due to concerns over student recruitment and the ongoing viability of the university, as well as my own career which I suspect will be negatively affected due to inability to pursue any additional research (and indeed to do all of my core academic duties to the usual standard) to the same quality/quantity as other colleagues at BU and beyond."

In all faculties, a higher number of respondents reported work-life balance getting worse than improving, except from the Faculty of Science & Technology, FST (Figure 3a), where work-life balance has improved for 50% of respondents and worsened for 36%. Readers/Principal Academics are the group having the largest difference between the proportion of respondents who indicated worsened (69%) and improved work-life balance (23%) (Figure 3b). Professors/Assoc Prof are the only group where work-life balance improved or worsened to equal number of respondents. Professors (N=5) were the only group with more respondents indicating work-life balance improved (60%) than worsened (20%).
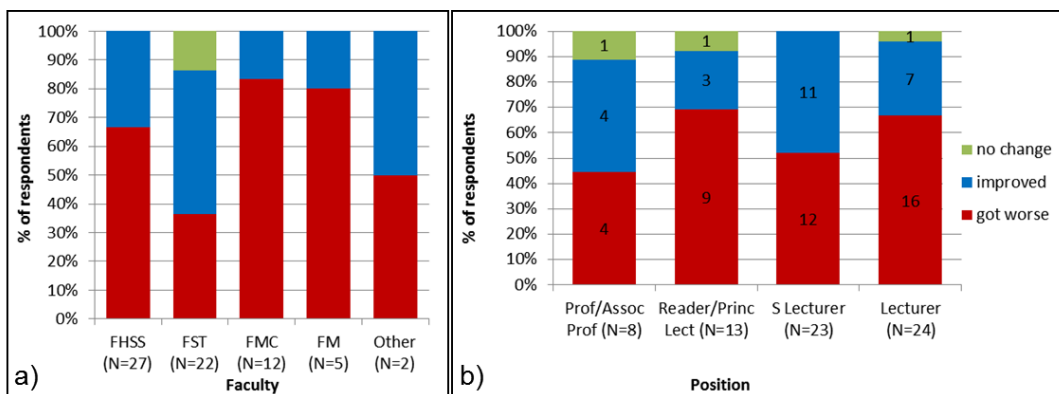

Figure 3. Changes in work-life balance of respondents during Covid-19 lockdown per faculty (a) and position (b). FHSS is the Faculty of Health and Social Sciences; FST is the Faculty of Science & Technology; FMC is the Faculty of Media & Communications; FM is the Faculty of Management; and Other refers to central or support services affiliations.

3. Factors affecting work-life balance during C-19 lockdown

Some factors have impacted on the work-life balance of more than 70% of respondents (switching to online teaching, changes in the number of emails, changes in the number of meetings and not being able to socialise in person)**, while others were considered to have minor/no impact by most respondents (**not being able to access campus facilities, switching to online meetings, lack of suitable work space at home and not having access to suitable IT equipment at home) (Figure 4). Factors that were considered to have a strong effect by at least 30% of respondents include: changes in the number of emails (39%), not being able to engage with preferred leisure activity (34%) and not being able to socialise in person (33%). Some of these factors had a positive effect on the work-life balance of most respondents, while others affected negatively a higher number of staff than positively.
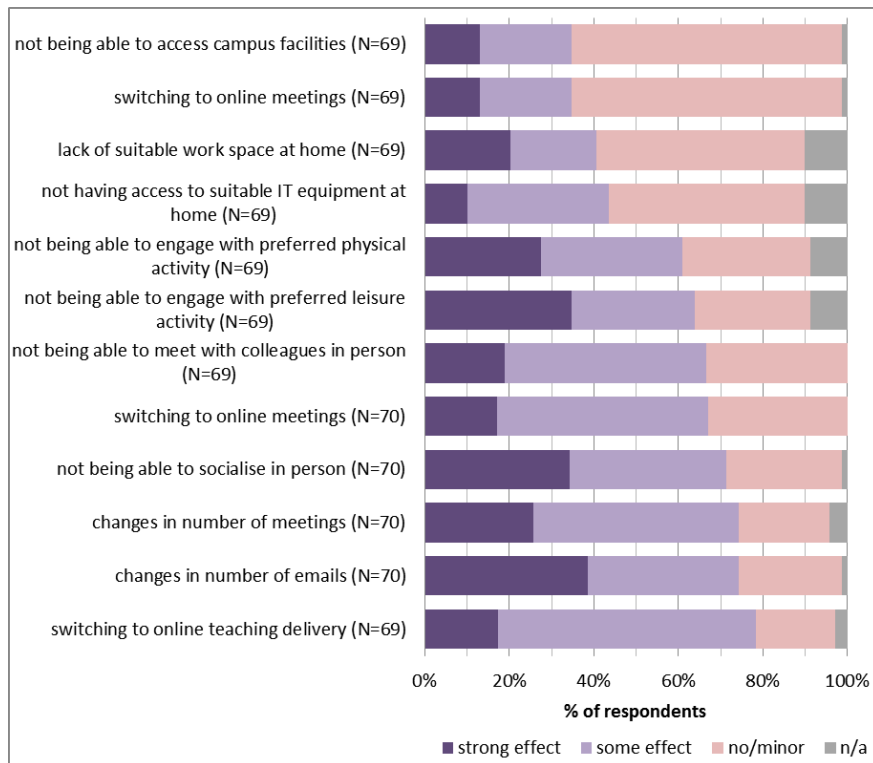
Figure 4. The level of impact of selected factors on the work-life balance of respondents during lockdown.

Switching to online teaching and not being able to meet with colleagues in person, socialise and engage with preferred leisure activity were the factors affecting negatively more than 50% of respondents (Figure 5). When lockdown restrictions are lifted, two of these factors (socialise and engage with preferred leisure activity) will have less effect on academics work-life balance, but more could be done to support colleagues negatively affected by the switch to online teaching and missing the contact with colleagues while working remotely.
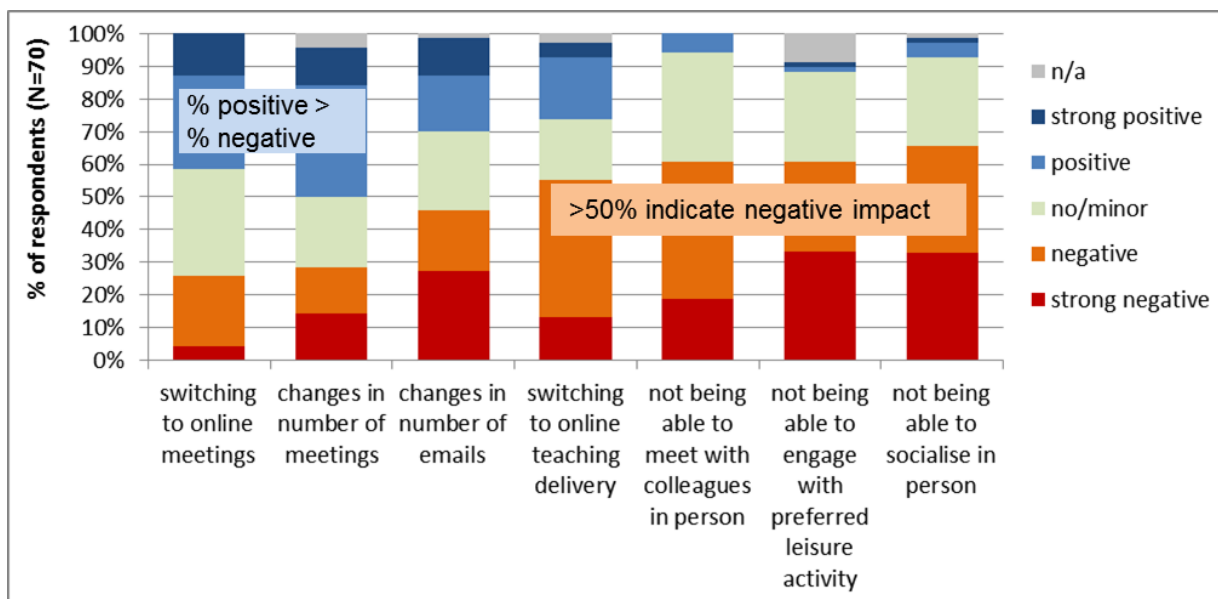

Figure 5. The impact of selected factors on the work-life balance of respondents during lockdown.

More respondents have indicated a positive than negative impact from changes in the number of meetings and switching to online meetings (Figure 5). Fewer and more

effective meetings were reported as the positive impacts. In contrast, for some respondents, there are too many online meetings and the (avoidable) prolonged screen time is leading to an effect that has been called Zoom fatigue. For a small number, online meetings and teaching are a cause of social anxiety and stress. Therefore, guidance on how best to use, organise and participate in online meetings and how to manage and reduce screen time/tiredness may be useful.

Some aspects of life in lockdown have affected groups of people differently. For example, **a considerably higher proportion of respondents under 40 years of age report negative effect from switching to online teaching (75%), change in the number of emails (58%) and changes in the number of meetings (50%) in relation to other age groups** (Figure 6). This age group also shows lower proportion of staff indicating positive effect from these three factors.
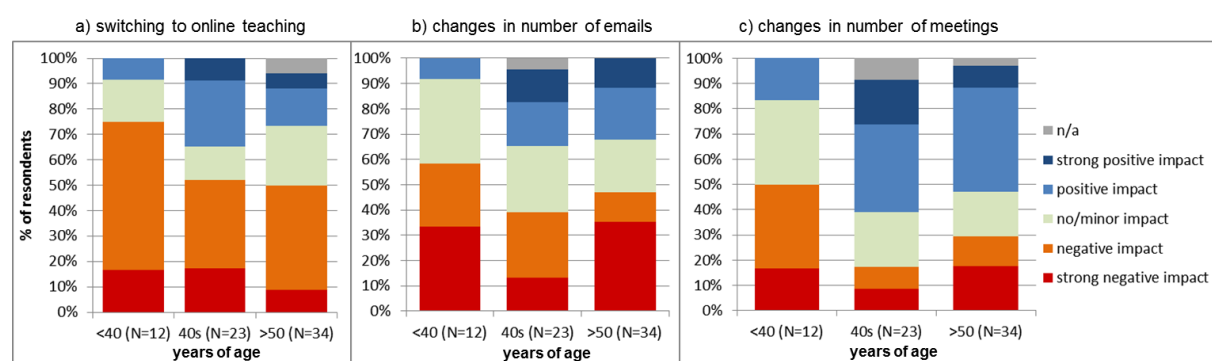

Figure 6. Reported impact per age group from (a) switching to online teaching; (b) changes in number of emails; and (c) changes in number of meetings.

Respondents from all faculties, except FM, have reported a negative impact from switching to online teaching and changes in the number of emails and meetings (Figure 7). **Changes in the number of emails have caused a strong negative impact on a larger number of respondents than the other two aspects.** FHSS has the largest proportion of respondents (35%) indicating strong negative effect due to changes in the number of emails (Figure 7b). Open comments suggest that increased number of emails from students is one of the reasons, particularly affecting FHSS staff supporting students who were asked to work for the NHS. These examples of comments from respondents based at four different faculties illustrate the impact from increased number of emails and student needs:

> *"[students] responding to Covid19 external requirements […] has led to a lot of confusion from students resulting in many emails and many more meetings. All research is on hold, and was part way through a project which is frustrating"*

> *"A massive increase in emails, particularly around the no-detriment policy and the online format for exams. (incomplete) information has trickled down from the University level very slowly and I spend a lot of time trying to reassure students, but not being able to give them the answers they require. Additional admin to cover for staff who are struggling to perform their work duties during to illness, childcare or caring responsibilities."*

> *"Huge increase in negative student emails. Huge increase in administration requirements."*

> *"Much more email traffic, which has been quite stressful, and being at the laptop has been bad for my neck and shoulders - have to use a massage machine every night to help ease the strain. Isolation has been hard - has been easy to slip into negative feelings."*

FMC is the only faculty with more than 50% of respondents reporting negative effect from switching to online teaching (58%) and changes in the number of emails (58%) and meetings (67%). FST and FM are the faculties with 50% of respondents reporting positive

impact from changes in the number of meetings. None of the five respondents from FM indicated a positive impact from switching to online teaching (Figure 7a) or a negative impact from changes in the number of meetings (Figure 7c).
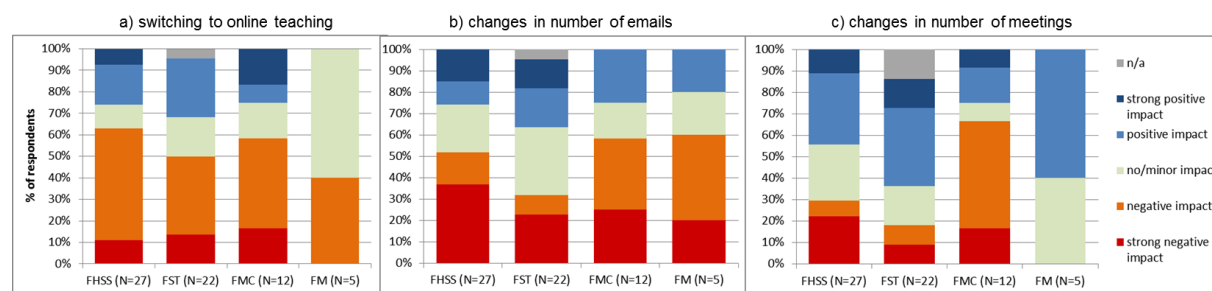

Figure 7. Reported impact per faculty from (a) switching to online teaching; (b) changes in number of emails; and (c) changes in number of meetings.

In open questions, the most cited factors affecting respondents' work-life balance positively (Figure 8a) and negatively (Figure 8b) were less time commuting or travelling for work (46% of respondents) and student support requests (27%), respectively. There was greater similarity in responses concerning positive aspects and more diversity in the factors identified to have a negative impact. The word cloud representations of open comments highlight the most common positive (Figure 8c) and negative (Figure 8d) aspects mentioned by respondents. Other positive aspects identified by respondents (Figure 8a,c) related to: enjoying working from home; more flexibility in working patterns (sometimes expressed as '*freedom*') and better use of time; less meetings; freed time (e.g. from commuting, less managerial demands and meetings) to focus on what is important (both work-related and personal time); work slowed down (referring to a different pace or level of demand rather than less work); and less stress.

Many respondents indicate that working from home brings multiple and substantial benefits that have a compounded positive effect on their work-life balance. This is a summary of the advantages respondents have identified:

- No travelling frees time (extra hours to work), reduces expenses (e.g. food and fuel) and stress (due to traffic, delays, parking issues) and is better for the environment, resulting in an overall improvement to life.
- Working from home improves personal health and wellbeing; staying safe, better protected at home (no need to compromise social distancing, avoiding traffic hazards), with more opportunity to eat better at lower cost and spend more time with family.
- Working from home gives greater flexibility to manage time and priorities.
- More time, more control over time and less exhaustion allow a slower pace to the working day, more time to concentrate (a breathing space), and greater ingenuity.
- Refocusing priorities, stripping back work dross, removing unnecessary bureaucracy leaving more time for academic work and discovering/experimenting new ways of teaching and supporting students remotely.
- Healthier living, improved mental and physical health, more exercise and less stress.

Increased demand for student support was the most common factor cited (27% of respondents) as having negative impact on work-life balance (Figure 8b). This is affecting staff across faculties, particularly FHSS as some students cohorts were asked to work for the NHS. Missing contact with colleagues and inadequate equipment (mostly IT equipment, internet access/speed, desk/chairs) were mentioned by 21% of respondents. Inadequate workspace is a problem for 13% of respondents.
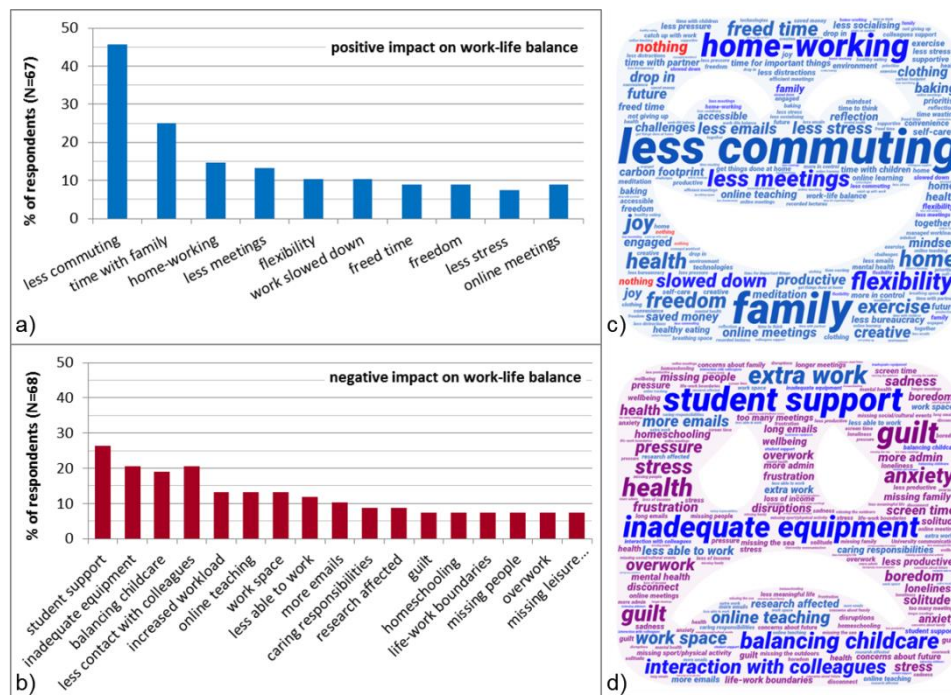
Figure 8. Most cited top two aspects that have affected respondents' work-life balance during C-19 lockdown (a) positively and (b) negatively (showing categorised responses cited at least five times), and (c and d) the respective word clouds representation of the open comments.

Other negative factors concern balancing work and family needs, such as childcare (19% of respondents), home-schooling or caring for other family members. Associated feelings and other issues were mentioned in open comments, which are highlighted in the word cloud representation (Figure 8d). Some indicate a feeling of guilt for thinking about work while taking care of children and vice-versa, as expressed in these comments:

> *"Constantly feeling I am not doing enough work - Knowing I just don't have time to research - Feeling split between feeling I should be paying my young [child] attention but keep having to look at emails and sort admin etc. Dreading marking coming in as I will spend less time with my [child] while her dad works as a [key worker] - Feel like I am doing two jobs badly - bad mother - bad academic."*

> *"I do not have a proper office or even a desk at home which make long periods of work at my laptop challenging. My [child] is at home which makes it challenging to have to choose between [her/him] and work - when [she/he] also needs to be educated and activities developed for [her/him]."*

A heavy sense of guilt and inadequacy among women academics is not a new phenomenon created by lockdown, although it may be exacerbated by it. Instead it is noted to be an invidious and pervasive burden that is connected with gendered inequities and institutional sexism in HE (see gendered research published by BU academics[123]). Managing home-work demands were greatly exacerbated when support from partners/families to share responsibilities was not available, as indicated in these comments:

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[1] Ashencaen Crabtree, S., Hemingway, A., Sudbury, S., Quinney, A. Hutchings, M., Esteves, L.S., Thompson, S., Jacey, H., Diaz, A., Bradley, P., Hall, J., Board, M, Feigenbaum, A. Brown, L., Heaslip, V. and Norton, L. (2020). Donning the 'slow professor": A feminist action research project. *Radical Teacher,116 55-65.*

[2] Ashencaen Crabtree, S. and Shiel, C. (2019). 'Playing mother': channelled careers and the construction of gender in academia. *Sage Open,* https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/2158244019876285

[3] Ashencaen Crabtree, S. and Shiel, C. (2018) Loaded dice: Games playing and the gendered barriers of the academy. *Education and Gender*, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09540253.2018.1447090

> *"My working day has been reduced to approx 3.5 hours as my partner is a key worker […] and so I am now responsible for [child] daycare. I have a home office but as [child] is not allowed outside much [shehe] has been enjoying investigating it which is pretty disruptive!"*

Commensurately, responses appear to be strongly foregrounded by normative, but often overlooked, social constructions pertaining to gendered roles. These are being reinforced, or perhaps more likely, glaringly highlighted, by the material conditions under which lockdown is being enacted. The disproportionate overload of combined home and work responsibilities taken by women will have implications to productivity and, likely affect prospects of career progression. The responses in this study showed that as constant student demands and administrative deadlines take up any time that women with caring responsibilities are able to give to work which means that research activity is the part of the academic role which they are unable to tackle. The impact on the publication output of female academics during this period, compared to that of male colleagues, has already been highlighted in the *Guardian* newspaper[4].

Staff without caring responsibilities also report being unable to do much work due to feeling isolation, anxiety and being unable to concentrate; while others are working long hours finding difficulties creating boundaries between work and personal time. The switch to online teaching and meetings are stressful for some respondents. These aspects are highlighted in the following comments:

> *"Really struggle to focus on just sitting down and getting work done - lot of distractions such as partner being at home (not working). Didn't have laptop/desktop to work from so trying to deliver online lectures and mark dissertations using only a small tablet has been really difficult. Not being able to walk over to a colleague's office and ask a question/ discuss an issue has been harder."*

> *"1. Tendency to lose track of time. 2. Tendency to overwork because of solitude."*

> *"Working from home is not the same as working in a proper office - there is a major drop in productivity, so the same job takes much longer at home (which also causes frustrations). It is difficult to separate working time/space from leisure/relaxation, so I feel the need to work all the time. Another issue is on-line teaching, which is not as interesting and as engaging (interactive) as face-to-face contact with students, so delivering a simple lecture becomes a more difficult task. Not just because there is no actual proper communication with the students, but also because we haven't been trained in online teaching."*

It is apparent that many negative aspects of the lockdown relate to aspects that are likely to subside when restrictions are lifted (e.g. reopening of schools, meeting with family and friends, enjoying leisure activities). Other negative aspects relate to the fast pace in which academic staff had to switch to online activities, sometimes without adequate workspace, equipment, support and/or training, leading to frustration, stress and overwork. There is a need to identify strategies that meet individual needs to support staff most affected by these specific situations, reducing the risk of overburden in the longer run.

4. Main concerns and how they have changed through time

We asked respondents to identify the three main concerns they had at the start of the outbreak, at the start of the lockdown and at present (i.e. the time they answered the survey) from a list of 15 options. **Although respondents' main concerns have changed through time, the health of a family member or close friend has always remained within the top three** (Figure 9). The respondents own health and coping with changes at work were within the top three main concerns at the start of both the outbreak and the lockdown but subsided in priority afterwards. As lockdown progressed, main concerns shifted to broader issues

such as the duration and/or gravity of the pandemic and longer-term impacts in the country or the world in general. It is important to note that work-life balance and the consequences to own work in the longer-term became a major concern to a considerably larger proportion of respondents from the start of the outbreak to the time they responded to the survey (end of April/early May). In open comments, respondents identified other aspects that are of major concern, which can be grouped as worries about own or others health and managing circumstances at home or at work (Table 1).
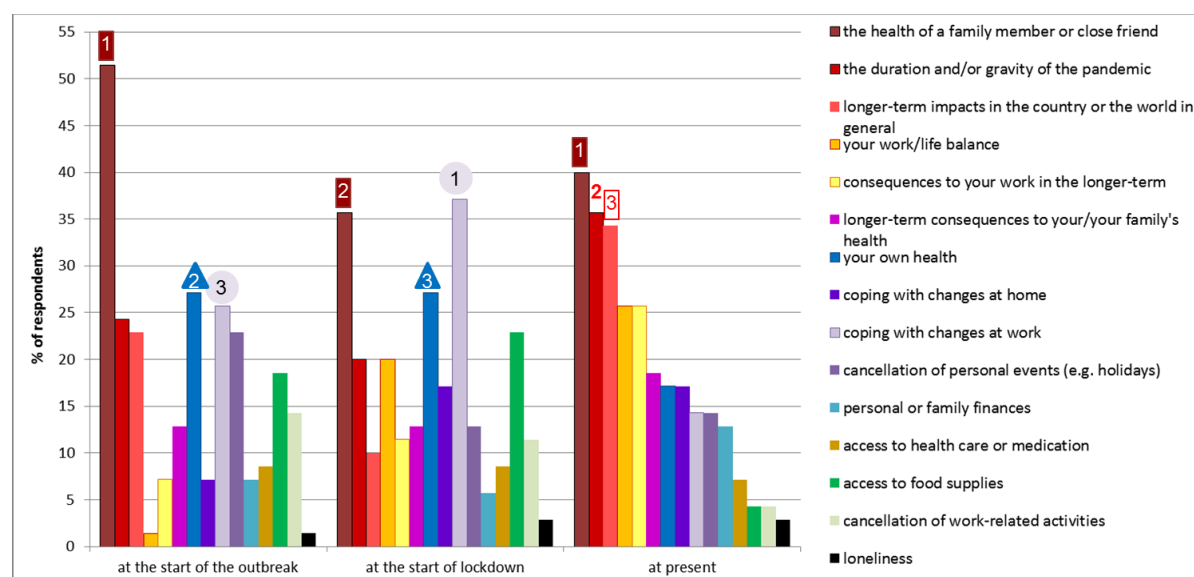

Figure 9. Respondents' main concerns at the start of the outbreak, at the start of the lockdown and at present.

Table 1. Other major concerns expressed by respondents

Type of concern	Specific concern
Own or others health	Key worker partners and dangers of no PPE
	Having ongoing health needs that are being unmet
	Not being able to find support for medical conditions
	Care-giving work in the home
	Less fear for self, more for other family members
	No time for self, prioritising needs of others
	Increased feeling of loneliness (respondents' who live alone)
Managing circumstances at home	Worries about managing co-parenting duties
	Care-giving work in the home
	Domestic inequalities where women more likely to carry domestic responsibilities
	Feeling isolated and unsupported as a lone parent
	Lack of contact with family living elsewhere
Managing circumstances at work	Fear of returning to unmanageable workloads
	Having to get to grips with different IT tools/expectations
	Fear of being evaluated as failing owing to domestic demands
	Anxiety about job security (dominant concern)
Wider issues	Growing realisation of the scale of the impact on society
	Perceived poor political decisions
	Aftermath economic impact on academia and employment insecurity
	Worries about the curtailment of civil liberties
	Wishing to volunteer for practice work but managing BU work

Finding or maintaining work-life balance when lockdown ends was identified as a major challenge by 51% of respondents (Figure 10). Returning to 'normal' work is also a major concern to 42% of respondents, with very few saying they look forward to it. Many are worried about their own and family's health due to risk of contamination through contact with students/on campus. Other concerns were also raised, as indicated by these comments:

"Hope that recognition of responsibilities outside of work will still be recognised"

"I worry that people will: 1) expect things to go back to 'normal' 2) not learn from this experience 3) judge others and will lack sympathy as some might find it easier than others to get back to work […] several of my colleagues with children assume that they need more flexibility and time vs those who do not have children. I know […] children require a lot of time and effort specially now with home schooling so I do understand that more time is needed, but everyone is dealing with different circumstances […] expecting others to pick up work simply because they don't have children is slightly unfair. I have no issue […] with supporting anybody who needs help but assuming that I don't have other things to worry or deal with is slightly ignorant."

"I don't want to go back to the 'normal'. The normal was making me unhappy - I hope we don't return to the way things were before."

"Contact with students will cause me anxiety as I will worry that it could lead to me infecting my family/extended family."

"Trying to fit in annual leave and planned holidays that had to be cancelled and not knowing how the next academic year will pan out. We have brought forward many modules to accommodate some of our students going into practice and some choosing to opt into academic studies only (Level 5). Our Level 4 students will not be going into practice therefore we have had to bring forward some Level 5 modules to keep them in study."

"How much we will be listened to in future about work/life balance concerns voiced so frequently in the past but often ignored. […] happy to work to the Fusion vision but this does present challenges […] It has also been very demotivating when I have worked really hard to achieve everything and more expected of me to not even be approved for pay progression. A big blow that was, for a period of time, completely demotivating"

"Impact on partner agencies etc. that we work with, impact on health and social care practitioners and those that we work with as co-researchers."

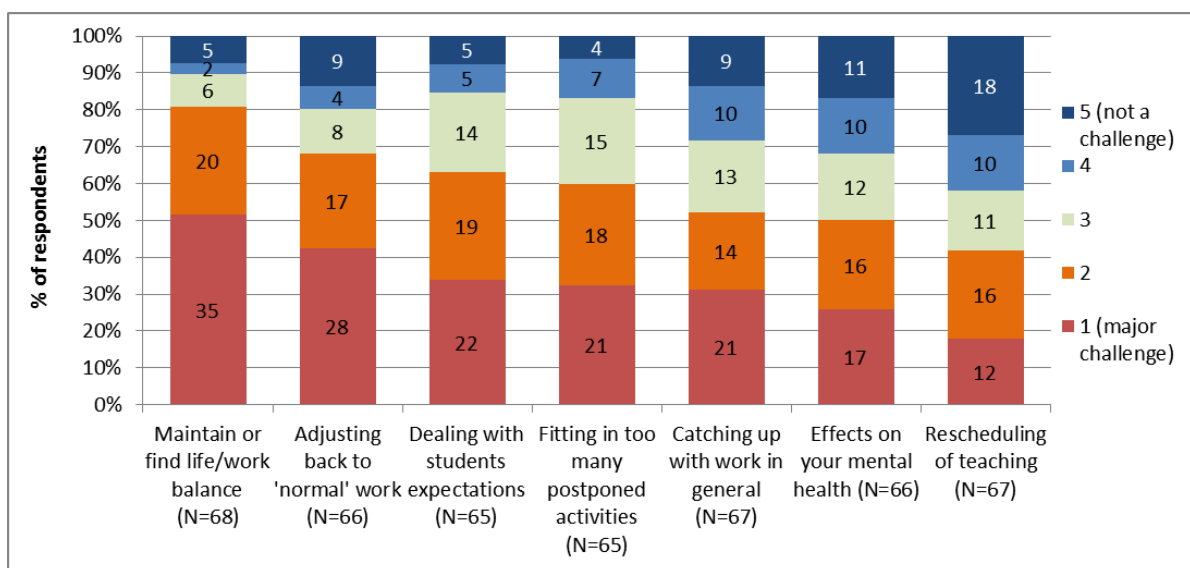*"managing finances and coming off of government support"*

Figure 10. Major challenges identified regarding work at the end of lockdown.

5. Support available and coping strategies

Figure 11 highlights the type of support (received from the university, family and friends or government) that was considered to be helpful to respondents. The information provided allows identifying the types of support that could be improved to benefit a larger number of staff.
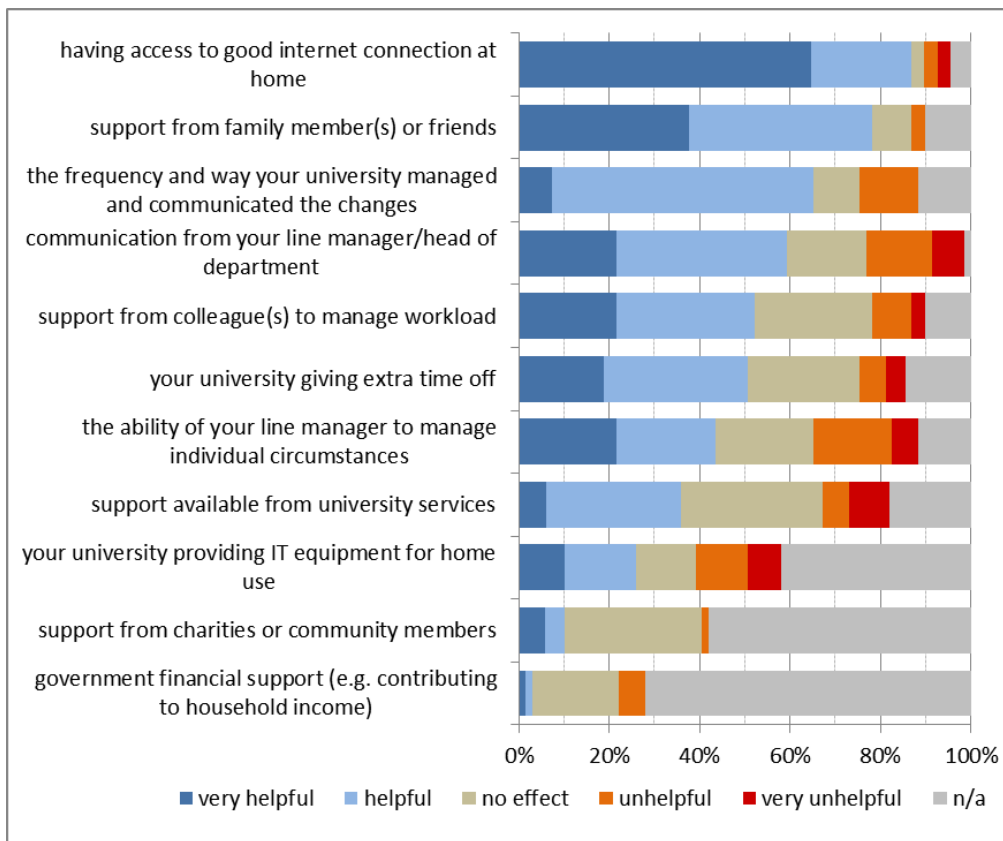

Figure 11. Respondents indication of how helpful were these particular types of support available to them.

Unsurprisingly, '*having access to good internet connection at home'* was the support found very helpful/helpful for the largest proportion (87%) of respondents, followed by '*support from family and friends'* (78%) (Figure 11). The majority found '*the frequency and way the university managed and communicated changes'* helpful or very helpful (70%); however, 19% of respondents found this to be very unhelpful/very unhelpful. Similarly, the majority found that the '*communication from line manager/head of department'* was helpful or very helpful (59%); while 22% of respondents found this to be very unhelpful/very unhelpful. Of the 15 types of support listed, the '*ability of line manager to manage individual circumstances' received the largest proportion of unhelpful/very unhelpful votes* (23%); and less than the majority (43%) considered this to be helpful/very helpful. '*Support available from university services*' received the largest proportion of *very unhelpful* votes (9%) and only 26% of respondents found this to be *helpful/very helpful*.

In open comments related to support received by respondents, the extra days of leave were the ones provided by the university most often mentioned. Respondents indicate that it is a 'gesture of goodwill' but are concerned that they might not be able to take these days in the near future due to work pressures. It was also mentioned that these extra days do not cover for the costs of working from home, e.g. internet charges, electricity and telephone usage. The support offered by learning technologists and other colleagues to enable the quick

turnaround to online teaching was considered invaluable. Based on responses, four aspects were identified in which support from the university could be more effective:

- **Availability of equipment and workspace adequate for job** – this included computer/laptop, desk/chair and internet. Respondents suggest that they wish they could claim back some of their expenses, including internet charges, phone bills and the costs of work-related furniture (e.g. chairs, screens) or be able to access the ones from their offices. Around 19% of respondents have indicated that provision of IT equipment for home use was unhelpful/very unhelpful (Figure 11). BU is currently addressing this issue, which should reduce the number of staff affected. However, the lack of quiet/suitable space at home was also mentioned and more difficult to resolve; which suggests that there is a small proportion of staff who would benefit the most by having access to office space as soon as possible and should be prioritised when this is possible.

- **Better communication and more timely guidance from the university (and to/from line managers) to help staff deal with student queries** – issues of concern included the cascading of communication, with staff sometimes learning information from students and poor/insufficient information and support to staff, particularly affecting programme leaders, the first port of call to student cohorts.

- **Need for management to plan ahead more efficiently and line managers to be better guided and supported so they can deal with individual circumstances from staff more effectively.**

- **Support and guidance to staff undertaking PhDs,** who are being affected by increased workload and/or unsuitable working conditions at home and have had a great impact on their ability to continue their research.

These are some of the comments that highlight the aspects for improvement:

"I work on my personal computer which means I do not always get software and cannot get the same IT support as if I had a BU computer. I do all my work on my personal computer (and use it for little else) but I think the university does not sufficiently provide staff with laptops to work with. Otherwise they have been very good I think and even though I have too much work to take time off, at least them giving us the messages of taking time off and taking time for ourselves sends a positive message. I think in that sense the university response was very good."

"Communication to staff about what was being communicated to students was only sorted in week 3... this was a nightmare in terms of student support. Student wellbeing services needed a flowchart of what academics should do... this was unclear and really problematic."

"My line manager has emailed me once during this time. I have not received any online meeting, or offer of support or check in. I think this is not great considering they know I have a young family. A colleague has been supportive but they are not my line manager and I think it should be them as well."

"There has been no explicit instructions on what additional IT support is available. It's been left to individual unit leaders to resolve or meet the demands of the delivery model planned for 27th April onwards."

"The university has provided all members of staff with an extra 5 days leave which is a gesture of goodwill. However it does not compensate for […] using our internet and so on which probably adds up to more than 5 days leave. […] I have to share my 'office' with my son who is studying an [online] degree and it has been difficult for both of us to manage specifically whilst I have been undertaking tutorials with students and almost daily team meetings. […] at times I have had to relocate to my bedroom for privacy. IT were swift in installing software that was needed for online meetings."

"It's easy to think of this in retrospect but obviously everyone needed to be more prepared: whether knowing how to move classes online, having access to internet and to necessary hardware and software, having access well-being support. I also feel that members of staff who are also working on their PhD have been forgotten about until recently...there's a lot of pressure on us as it is and now due to COVID-19 it feels like we have to fight our own corner and might not feel as comfortable working out best way forward or even approaching this with the supervisors - UG and PG students had a blanket (one-size-fits-all) support from BU but that's not the case for PhD students...sadly."

Responses to open questions also identified other means of support they received not listed in Figure 11. These other means of support are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2. Examples of other types of support and coping strategies respondents found useful during lockdown.

Supported offered by	Provider/Tool	Type of support
Yourself	meditation and mindfulness music exercising / walking Being kind to self Volunteering/community work Learning new skills	Wellbeing Mental health Entertainment
Family	Sharing routine jobs / better co-parenting Creating new structures to the day at home Keep contact online	Wellbeing Entertainment
Community and/or friends	WhatsApp groups Online meetings	Wellbeing Essential shopping
Colleagues	Online meetings (work and social)	Wellbeing / support
Line manager/Head of Dept.	clear and effective communication	Work-related
Businesses	Local shops	Essential shopping Medicine
Public/private healthcare	Speaking to a psychologist	Mental health
Charities	Samaritans	Mental health
Broadcast/media	listening to the radio	Information Entertainment
Influencers, businesses	Free online sessions or live streaming	Wellbeing / Fitness Education and training

These are examples of coping mechanisms respondents have adopted:

1. Adjustment to working hours (less rigorous routine to the day) to better fit family needs (e.g. giving more time with the children during middle of the day, rather than evenings/mornings; agreeing working 'hours' with partner so both can have regular times to work)
2. Adopting a manageable work routine (taking more breaks, more flexibility on working hours, accepting that less things will be done)
3. Keeping a routine (e.g. getting dressed as if it was to go to work) and don't overwork
4. Setting daily (achievable) tasks and being satisfied when completing them
5. Being realistic about what you can do and take care of your priorities
6. Keeping boundaries between work and personal time
7. Not letting constant emails from work dictate life
8. Taking more breaks and having a proper lunch break
9. Taking annual leave (and not look at emails/work for the duration)

10. Limit screen time whenever possible (stop scrolling endlessly through social media, reading away from the screen)
11. Calling colleagues on the phone (rather than Zoom) to share experience
12. Avoiding the news
13. Daily workout, walking, cycling (more physical activity)
14. Online exercise classes (e.g. yoga)
15. Gardening
16. Crafting
17. Learning new skills and attending research webinars
18. Indulging in small pleasures (e.g. cooking, eating, drinking, leisure time, reading)
19. More fun things in the home to de-stress and relax (e.g. movies, puzzles and games)
20. Volunteering (e.g. helping vulnerable people)
21. Virtual catch up with family and friends (zoom quizzes, facetime)
22. Virtual catch up / coffee break with colleagues (WhatsApp groups, Zoom)
23. Meditation
24. Cognitive reappraisal
25. Being kind to self
26. Reassessing life and priorities (thinking of career change)
27. Accepting the current situation is not 'normal' and it's okay to feel scared, emotional and less productive (allowing space and time to process what's going on) – having in mind this will pass

6. Changes that respondents wish to retain after lockdown

Many respondents (47% of the 55 who provided open comments) across age groups and faculties would welcome the option to work from home more often (e.g. while not teaching) due to the many benefits already mentioned (e.g. freed time, less costs, improved health and wellbeing). Wider advantages include the reduction of carbon emissions (due to less travel) and the positive effects on the environmental. These are some examples of comments in favour of working from home:

> *"1) it would help to be able to work from home more often (having a more flexible and less bureaucratic system of getting this approved would help). 2) numerous organisations around the world have adapted a 4 day week - this supports work/life balance and greatly assist in maintaining mental well-being."*

> *"Working from home could be an option (when childcare is again available)"*

> *"Yes - working from home as much as is sensible without having to ask. Saves time, money, environmental stress and I feel happier having that option."*

> *"Working from home, more flexibly or reduced hours, would be a great help to my work/life balance and my mental health"*

> *"streamlining meetings and committees taking meetings online   remote working to manage pace of work and help the environment"*

An area of discovery for staff during lockdown was the opportunity to focus on what respondents describe as 'the main duties of an academic' (i.e. teaching/supporting students and doing research). This contrasts with 'normal work', when time is subsumed by endless administrative demands and meetings with no clear benefits. Less bureaucracy and administrative demands and more streamlined meetings (preferably online) are the wishes of 18% of the 55 respondents who provided open comments. A larger number of respondents

have expressed that they would like to continue with online teaching and exploring new ways of delivering it than the ones who would rather not continue with online teaching.

"I wouldn't mind exploring online teaching more - I'd need some training, but I'd be up for it! I won't be doing any more 'busy' work... what's important is our teaching, our students, and then research/professional practice. The Fusion model to me now is actually just a way to make us work harder for less.... less time, less money, less of a social life, less family life.... I won't do that anymore... I know what's important to me now."

"The pace of work has slowed down with many admin/ bureaucratic processes being streamlined and minimised - surely we don't need to go back to so many meetings and admin processes? Pace of change from the top slowed - this will start to cascade again - some thought as to pace of change and staff welling needs to be considered."

7. Long-lasting changes to personal attitudes

The vast majority (80% or more) of respondents think the C-19 outbreak has brought long-lasting changes in their attitude to '*priorities and needs*' and '*work*', considerably for 40% and 28% of respondents, respectively (Figure 12). Most comments indicate that changes relate to valuing own health and wellbeing, allowing space for improved work-life balance (less working all hours, more time for family, friends and self) and refocusing priorities at work (giving more time for the enjoyable parts of the job). Some are considering retiring or leaving the university if workload continues to be too demanding or returns to be too demanding.

"Work life balance. Bringing joy back into the job."

"I will no longer work 'above and beyond'. Work is work... my life is more important to me. I will not be trying to research/professional practice alongside teaching. I will be limiting the projects/committees I take on to ones that I want to do, not so that it 'looks good for promotion'. I will spend more time with my friends in coffee shops and not let myself get so tired at work that I eliminate my social life until the months of July and August... I will spend more time exercising and being out in nature. I will spend more time doing activities that I enjoy."

"The fact that I can do the same job with less pressure but wont be allowed to may mean I leave."
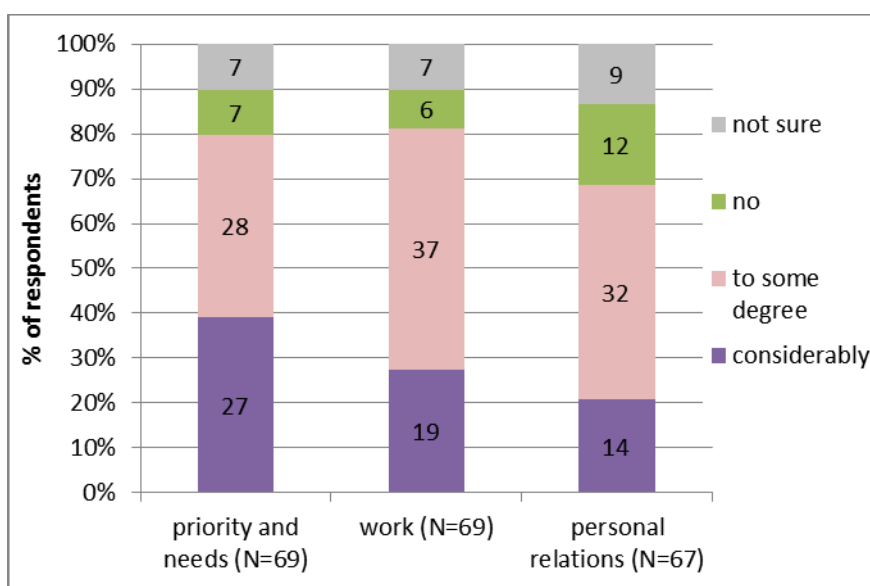

Figure 12. Perception of long-lasting changes brought by the C-19 outbreak.

A valuable discovery made by some participants was connected with being able to effectively 'see the wood for the trees'. Stripping back layers of additional bureaucracy and institutional demands to prized core elements related to teaching/supporting students and research was described as revelatory and liberating. Academia under lockdown had revealed core academic tasks essential to the functioning of the institution, as well as integral to the academic role and identity.

> *'The change in the lack of meeting and bureaucracy has been a real eye opener. As a programme leader I always knew that too much time was spent in meetings/doing pointless admin, but I really did not realise the full extent. To actually have time to do the important things = prep[4]aring teaching, supporting students and undertaking research has been a joy.'*

Additionally, this enforced paring back of unnecessary demands permitted some to gain a much greater sense of control over the otherwise highly accelerated rushed pace and tempo that is viewed as a characteristic of corporate academia [7].

> *"I have realised that I juggled too many tasks at once. The temporary suspension of several of my ongoing international research and educational projects gave me unexpected breathing space; time for overdue intellectual reflection and personal recollection."*

However, it was not just for some a rediscovery of what academia could/should be but also the realisation of the price people had paid previously in terms of job satisfaction, mental and physical health. Being able to identify previous 'normal work' as emotionally harmful and unsustainable, encouraged individuals to determine new approaches for the future.

> *"I don't think I can go back to the way I worked before. I realise now that I was working WAY too much, so much so that I was ill all the time, feeling depressed, down on myself etc. Yes, it is challenging now, but it's challenging because of the lockdown. I think I almost prefer teaching online and fitting work in around my life, rather than fitting my life around work. This has also clarified for me how much crap I was actually doing at work - it's crystalised what the priorities are, and to be honest, all the extra stuff seems to have disappeared and the world hasn't stopped turning; [...] the incessant administration has just shown how much of our lives was taken up with busy work, and to be honest, I just don't think I can go back to doing it again. I'll be saying NO a lot more!"*

Some participants felt that the 'reset' caused by the pandemic lockdown situation provided the ideal opportunity to rethink how 'business' could be done in shaping new, better, healthier and more productive academic futures that better serves the wider Fusion agenda.

> *'In my ideal world my [child] would go back to school and I would continue to work from home. I have found the break from the 'drama' of others worlds, and the lack of distraction of an office environment I have been FAR more productive when working from home in the short time I can devote to it and feel if I were to continue to work from home I would achieve a far better work life balance, by being able to eat well and exercise, whilst being able to focus on my work and be productive. The office environment is not a productive one for me and I really hope BU accepts and judges us [by] output rather than hours in the office as input!'*

8. Who are the respondents?

The results presented here summarise the 70 responses we were able to identify as being from BU academics who consented to take part in the study. This is a summary of the respondents' profile:

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[4] Seeber B.K. & Berg M. (2016) Slow Professor Challenging the culture of speed in the academy. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

- 90% are female respondents (63 out of 70), 9% are male and 1% preferred not to say (Figure 13a).
- Responses were obtained from staff from all four faculties and career levels. The majority of respondents (72%) are from the Faculty of Health & Social Science (FHSS) or the Faculty of Science & Technology (FST) (Figure 13b). Senior lecturers and lecturers are form 66% of respondents (Figure 13c).
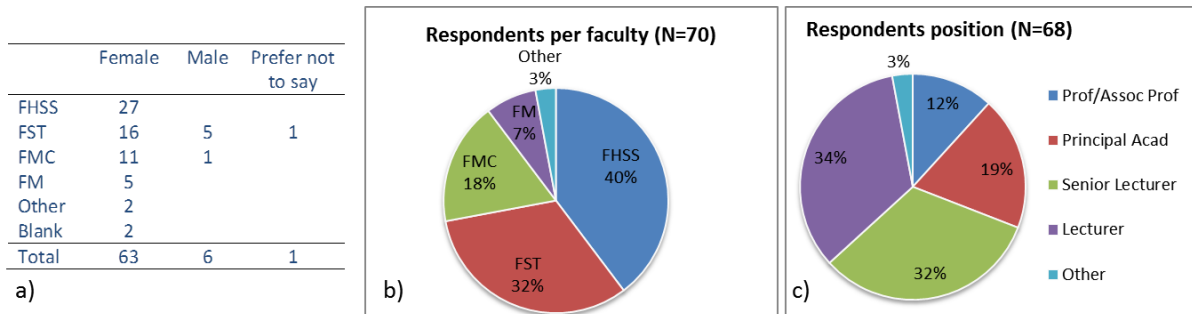
	Female	Male	Prefer not to say
FHSS	27		
FST	16	5	1
FMC	11	1	
FM	5		
Other	2		
Blank	2		
Total	63	6	1

a)

Respondents per faculty (N=70)
- Other 3%
- FM 7%
- FMC 18%
- FHSS 40%
- FST 32%

b)

Respondents position (N=68)
- 3%
- 12% Prof/Assoc Prof
- 19% Principal Acad
- 34% / 32% Senior Lecturer
- Lecturer
- Other

c)

Figure 13. Number of respondent per gender and faculty (a) and distribution per faculty (b) and position (c).

- 68% of respondents (47 out of 69) are 40-59 years of age (Figure 14).
- the average household size is 2.84 people; 87% of respondents (60 out of 69) live in a household of 2 to 4 people, 7% live alone, 6% live in a household of 5 people (Figure 15)
- 54% respondents live in a households of adults only, 27% live with children aged 5-12 and 19% with teenagers, less than 10% live with younger children, infants and older adults (Figure 16).
- 94% of respondents (65 out of 69) have a permanent contract at BU (72% full-time and 22% part-time). All four respondents in temporary contracts are female.
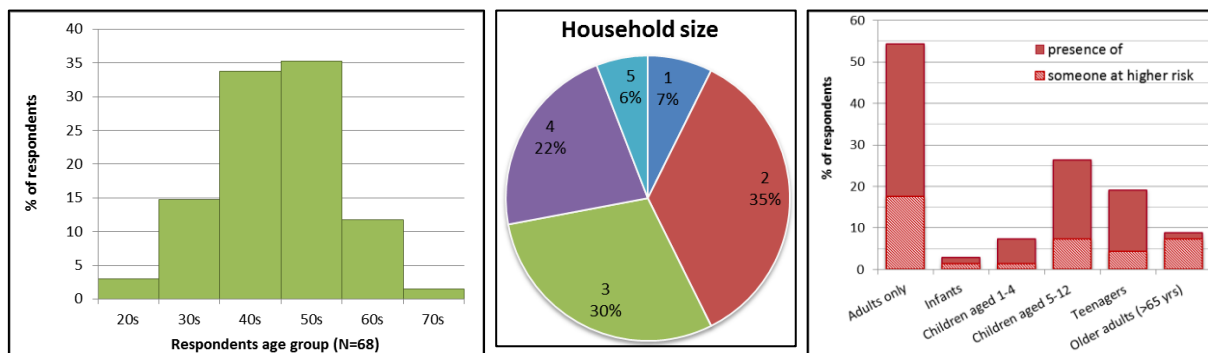
Figure 14. Distribution of respondents per age group.

Household size
- 1 7%
- 2 35%
- 3 30%
- 4 22%
- 5 6%

Figure 15. Number of people in the household of respondents.

Figure 16. Composition of households and presence of someone at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19.

Exposure to Covid-19

- 7% of respondents (5 out of 68) had severe symptoms of Covid-19 or tested positive or live with someone who did. All are female respondents in their 20s, 30s and 50s. Two of these households had someone at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19.
- 22% of respondents (15 out of 68) had close family members, friends or colleagues who had severe symptoms of Covid-19 or tested positive. All are female respondents in their 30s, 40s and 50s (the majority, 9 respondents).
- 41% of respondents (28 out of 68) live in a household where there is at least one person at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19.

9. Lessons Learned

Based on the analysis of the 70 responses from BU staff, we were able to identify 10 lessons learned, listed here. We have not yet compared and contrasted these lessons with other emerging information and relevant literature. However, there is increasing evidence that some of our findings reflect experiences and perceptions shared by the wider academic community.

Lesson learned 1. The complementarity of the quantitative and qualitative data.

The quantitative data helped to identify the factors that have affected the largest number of respondents and where there are contrasting views or experiences between groups of respondents. The qualitative data provided insights into how various factors have affected the respondents and why, particularly on specific personal circumstances and other aspects not included in the closed-ended questions. This research would be deficient without one or the other.

Lesson learned 2. Working from home is bringing compound benefits to the majority of respondents who wish this to remain as an option in the longer term.

Academics are not alone in wishing for a continuation of flexibility in working remotely after lockdown[5]. Some employers have already surveyed their employees preferences to inform the planning for reshaping their office spaces[6] and ways of working.

Lesson learned 3. Some negative aspects of working from home will subside when lockdown restrictions are reduced but others will persist.

These are some non-exhaustive examples:

- Less pressure from balancing family and work needs[7] when schools re-open; home-care support can resume, when social distancing measures allow some more interaction with family and friends (even if only in small numbers).
- Inadequate workspace at home may persist due to space, social and/or financial difficulties in making adjustments to transform home shared spaces into quiet, organised workspaces.

Lesson learned 4. Online teaching is seen as positive by some and negative by others.

Part of the negative perception was due to the increased workload resulting from the fast pace in which adjustments needed to be made, sometimes under duress of lack of experience/training and support (including how to use software/tools) and/or inadequate equipment. Considerations of how to provide training and sharing of good practices are likely to be beneficial to some staff, whilst being aware of time poverty issues owing to work pressures.

Lesson learned 5. The increased inequities that are arising from the rapid changes in the academic environment.

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[5]Coronavirus: 'Millions' in Britain want permanent flexible working after lockdown, survey suggests, https://www.independent.co.uk/independentpremium/uk-news/coronavirus-lockdown-flexible-working-uk-remote-wfh-home-office-a9524921.html.
Flexible working will be norm after lockdown, say Barclays and WPP bosses, https://www.theguardian.com/business/2020/apr/29/flexible-working-will-be-norm-after-covid-19-lockdown-say-barclays-and-wpp-bosses.
[6]Goodbye to open office spaces? How experts are rethinking the workplace. https://www.nationalgeographic.co.uk/science-and-technology/2020/05/goodbye-open-office-spaces-how-experts-are-rethinking-workplace.
[7]Tips on working from home with children, https://www.timeshighereducation.com/blog/tips-working-home-children

Conditions are wide ranging when the workspace becomes part of an individuals home. Some are perfectly suited or can be well adjusted, others were never meant to be used in this way. Identifying and supporting the staff who need to work from an office outside their home due to their individual home circumstances becomes crucial and urgent. Other long-standing inequities have been aggravated during lockdown, including but not limited to gender bias, with strong consequences to research[8] activity overall.

Lesson learned 6. A fresh management approach is needed to address these emerging inequities.

Providing the specific support that is needed by staff who have been the most negatively affected should be prioritised to reduce inequities. The resulting short and long-term impacts of lockdown on staff productivity, health and wellbeing need to be taken into consideration in appraisals and career progression decisions. Examples of fresh approaches for businesses to 'come back stronger'[9] include principles based on proactive planning, investing heavily in user-friendly technology and creating a culture of trust, which embraces individual initiative and is forgiving of failure. This means decisively moving away from punitive 'cultures of blame' that work to stifle innovation and punish initiative and risk taking.

Lesson learned 7. Most academics are greatly concerned about workloads and work-life balance when lockdown ends.

In addition to addressing emerging inequities, there is considerable concern and opposition to a possible 'return to normal work' (the 'business as usual' fall-back position), which has been expressed by respondents (and the academic community at large), as working arrangements and demands that affect academic productivity as well as the health and wellbeing of staff.

Lesson learned 8. There is a need to improve communication and guidance from managers to staff dealing with students' requests and concerns, such as programme leaders.

Managing students' expectations is a major concern for a large proportion of respondents, more so for specific cohorts or programmes. Remote teaching and learning requires extra support to students (and the staff supporting them), particularly the less privileged[10] in terms of time and space at home. Our findings would suggest that program leaders are particularly spending a disproportionate amount of their time on dealing with individual students anxieties and queries often related to issues outside of their control. We can anticipate that a more corporate standardised approach to these queries from BU including direct administrative support is required moving forward in order to prevent students dissatisfaction and staff stress.

Lesson learned 9. Many staff are missing the interaction and support from colleagues.

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[8]Women's research plummets during lockdown - but articles from men increase, https://www.theguardian.com/education/2020/may/12/womens-research-plummets-during-lockdown-but-articles-from-men-increase.
[9]COVID-19 Is Reshaping Business: 6 Tips For Coming Back Even Stronger, https://www.forbes.com/sites/rcarson/2020/05/11/covid-19-is-reshaping-business-6-tips-for-coming-back-even-stronger/
Leadership intelligence: how to manage in uncharted territory, https://www.timeshighereducation.com/career/leadership-intelligence-how-manage-uncharted-territory
On the way forward, we must move with care, https://www.timeshighereducation.com/opinion/way-forward-we-must-move-care.
[10]If universities shift online, we risk more poorer students dropping out, https://www.theguardian.com/education/2020/may/04/if-universities-shift-online-we-risk-more-poorer-students-dropping-out.

Identifying ways to promote spontaneous interactions 1-2-1 or in small groups is likely to benefit staff. This means acknowledging time/space/work pressures inhibiting grassroots initiatives (see Lesson 6). Also this finding would suggest that if we are moving to more online teaching and research delivery in the future we need to consider building in specific social opportunities for staff in a more focused way than previously.

Lesson learned 10. Staff wish that their experiences be used to inform decisions and help shape the 'new normal' working environment.

A working group with university management, UCU and representatives from staff could be formed to co-create and shape the 'new normal' and the strategies that can be implemented to reduce emerging and long-standing inequities. This needs to be informed by grassroots driven, cutting across career levels and strongly affirmative of recognising differences (gendered or other) in individual needs, as illuminated by these emerging research findings.