

PWPA 2019 action plan AU CS, tenured academic staff members - DRAFT Sept. 6, 2019

Stress etc

The most important set of problems in the WPA for tenured academic staff members at CS is related to stress, available time, work-life balance. The numbers are worse than AU in general. However, at the same time the tenured academic staff members feel motivated and feel that they are a part of the department.

Only 50% agree that they rarely feel stress to a degree where they are unwell. Almost 2/3 of staff members feel that the demand for external funding is a source of insecurity, stress and that they have a fragmented working day.

At the dialog meeting on June 7th, a number of possible undelaying issues were pointed out. Success criteria are unclear and it can be hard to know when to stop. Criteria for promotion to next level may appear unclear even with the ABC criteria being formalized. The staff members feel competent in most of what they do, but often they are not formally trained and often they don't seem to have the necessary time available. It was also pointed out that it can be hard to plan work in a good way when deadlines overlap. E.g. June seems to be a very stressful month

Several external factors seem to be the most prominent sources of stress, and solutions are hard to find locally. However, when unrealistic requirements are not understood as a collective challenge for the department, they are more likely to generate stress.

The resources available at AUHR regarding stress seem to be generalized and individualized. Based on the dialogue meeting, it became clear that we need tools to reduce individualization of work and tools that more specifically address the complexities of research and teaching work.

Actions

We divide the action in two phases. Exploration and Implementation

Exploration (2019–medio 2020): We find a competent person to give a half-day seminar on stress and stress prevention in an academic setting with a focus on collective solutions. In the same period we seek assistance (possibly from the same person), to plan a number of changes to the work practice at the department.

Implementation (medio 2020 to 2022): Introduce and consolidate a small number of new ways of planning, setting expectations etc. based on the activities in the exploration phase.

The Staff Development Dialogue (SDD)

Only 1/3 of the tenured academic staff members believe that the SDD contributes to their development. Thus there is a need for a better framing of the dialogue so that they have a more realistic set of expectations.

Action

The Head of Department consults with the local joint cooperation committee in due time before the next round.

Satisfaction/commitment and work situation

Minor issues: 5 members of the tenured academic staff members will not recommend AU as a workplace. 1/3 do not feel recognized.

Action

The Head of Department consults with relevant resources and discusses possible action plans with the local joint cooperation committee at a meeting in 2020.

Unclear targets and unclear support from management

A set of issues related to the management of research work arise in the sections “your unit” and “your day to day management”. This is paradoxical in the sense that part of the solution to the stress related issues is clearer success criteria and more help from day to day management.

Action

A talk by Søren Barlebo (or similar) on how management works in the area of research and what individual academics can obtain from good management.

Collaboration with the administrative centre

Only 12% think that the collaboration with the administrative centre at Science and Technology is good. The local administration has already taken some actions. E.g. a ST partner office has been established at the department to give the possibility to meet face to face with the administrative partners at ST. It is impossible, however to see from the numbers which parts of the administrative centre people are unsatisfied with.

Action

The department management team works together with the administrative centre to set clearer expectations and improve service. Improvements are communicated continuously. In addition, the tenured academic staff members at CS have a personal responsibility to meet the administrative people when they are in the partner office.

Abusive behaviour

Action

A general mail on what to do in case of abusive behaviour will be sent out to all employees at the department. This will be based on the general personnel policies for AU.

Issues we cannot act on

Less than half of tenured academic staff members believe that employees are free to express criticism at AU. It was unclear if this is based on rumours or actual experience. We hope that something can be done at the faculty or university level.

The APV faculty group
Kristoffer & Olav