

Conclusions From the Questionnaire Survey and Focus Group in the HR-AWARD Project at the New Technologies - Research Centre (NTC)

1) Questionnaire Survey

- Electronic form, 120 respondents approached, return rate 62.5 % (75 respondents)
- 19 women, 53 men, 3 persons indicated an alternative gender identity
- 6 persons stated age under 30, 52 persons stated age 31 to 50, 17 persons stated age over 51
- 14 persons worked at administrative positions; 4 persons stated they were doctoral students; 5 persons stated they had postdoctoral status; 52 persons worked as researchers; 10 persons were academic staff; 7 persons indicated they had “other” positions
- Most of the respondents (63), indicated they had a fixed-term contract; 12 stated they had a permanent contract

Do you feel that your research activity at UWB allows sufficient freedom?					
	Yes	Rather yes	Not really	No	No answer
%	45,33	30,67	2,67	4	17,33

Do you think the ethical standards of research and related ethical codes are beneficial for your work? For example: with regard to plagiarism, publications in predatory journals, adding coauthors, citation cartels, etc.?					
	Yes	Rather yes	Not really	No	No answer
%	33,33	41,33	18,67	4,0	2,67

Do you think that there is a problem related to the ethics of research and publication of results at your Faculty? For example: plagiarism, publications in predatory journals, adding co-authors, citation cartels, etc.?				
	Yes	No	No answer	
%	8	73,33	18,67	-

Do you think that NTC develops enough activity in the area of application of scientific results in practice, whether social or commercial?					
	Yes	Rather yes	Not really	No	No answer
%	8	53,33	18,67	2,67	17,33

Do you think the results of your research are sufficiently presented to the public?					
	Yes	Rather yes	Not really	No	No answer
%	14,67	52	13,33	1,33	18,67

Have you ever witnessed or experienced any kind of discrimination in the workplace?				
	Yes	No	No answer	
%	14,67	85,33	1,46	-

Do you feel that the work performance evaluation is sufficiently transparent and clear at your workplace?					
	Yes	Rather yes	Not really	No	No answer
%	28	42,67	17,33	9,33	2,67

Do you think that the requirements listed within the UWB selection procedure that you passed as a candidate over the previous two years were sufficiently clear and fair?					
	Yes	Rather yes	Not really	No	No answer
%	6,67	5,33	1,33	0	17,33
69,33 % respondents have not attended any selection procedure at UWB during the past two years.					

Do you think that the process of the UWB selection procedure that you passed as a candidate over the previous two years was sufficiently fair? For example: were the questions focused on your skills, experience, contributions, ideas you could offer, etc., and there was not any discrimination and you did not feel ridiculed, etc.?					
	Yes	Rather yes	Not really	No	No answer
%	12	8	0	0	0
80 % respondents have not attended any selection procedure at UWB during the past two years.					

Do you think that the requirements for the post-doctoral position at the University of West Bohemia for which you applied were adequately and fairly determined?					
	Yes	Rather yes	Not really	No	No answer
%	44,44	44,44	0	11,11	0
Note. 9 respondents					

Do you consider the working conditions adequate for the performance of your work? For example: the working environment, facilities and equipment, the possibilities for further education?					
	Yes	Rather yes	Not really	No	No answer
%	38,67	53,33	6,67	1,33	0

In your opinion, do the working conditions enable you to balance work and family life? For example: with regard to the care of children or family members, and the development of your scientific career?

	Yes	Rather yes	Not really	No	No answer
%	48	42,67	6,67	1,33	1,33

How do you see the fact that you have a fixed-term contract?

	I do not mind	It bothers me	I do not care	No answer	Note 63 respondents
%	30,63	38,10	39,68	1,59	

Do you feel that your workplace adequately supports mobility to foreign institutions?

	Yes	Rather yes	Not really	No	No answer
%	36	32	10,67	1,33	20

Do you feel that while ensuring student education you have sufficient opportunities (in terms of time, finance and capacity), to perform research activities as well?

	Yes	Rather yes	Not really	No	No answer
%	20	38,67	12,00	6,67	22,67

Should you experience or witness any unfair behaviour at your workplace, do you think you have enough opportunities to complain about such behaviour?

	Yes	Rather yes	Not really	No	No answer
%	40	37,33	16	5,33	1,33

Do you feel that you have enough opportunities to influence events at your workplace and in a wider institutional context, e.g. using various advisory and decision-making bodies for such purposes?

	Yes	Rather yes	Not really	No	No answer
%	14,67	44	26,67	8	6,67

List any employee benefits you know of:

The respondents most frequently indicated the meals allowance (the possibility of having a lower price at the University canteen and obtain meal vouchers). The second most mentioned were various courses and activities for the employees and their family members (such as language courses, tickets to culture and sports events, sports activities, fitness, etc.). The third most frequently mentioned item was the length of holidays, which is longer than required by law. The following benefit was the Flexi Pass, which is an annual contribution to various culture and other events, and flexible working hours. All other benefits were mentioned rather marginally.

Which of these benefits are you using?

In contrast to possessing knowledge of various benefits, fewer respondents claimed to be using them; certain benefits (such as the university kindergarten) were not used at all. Three respondents declared they were not using any benefits whatsoever.

What kind of employee benefits do you think are missing at UWB?

The benefits the respondents missed the most were financial benefits and contribution to additional pension. Financial benefits included various allowances and compensations (13th and 14th salary). Another frequent component was higher subsidy for meals, especially in terms of the nominal value of the vouchers where respondents thought 60 CZK was too little an amount, a possibility of having a company mobile phone, and the possibility of using a company car (e.g. one vehicle per department). Another most missed benefit was the possibility of work from home.

Would you like to have some additional training at UWB beyond your work assignment and position, (e.g. training for starting your own spin-off company, training on ethics of research and publishing, career development, etc.)? Please write down what you would be interested in, and, if appropriate, write about the idea in detail.

Highest in demand were courses on the topic of career development, project management, intellectual property, and commercialisation of results.

2) Focus Group

In continuation of the online survey for the HR AWARD Project, individual interviews were carried out in May 2018 by Mgr. Jiří Mertl, a professional sociologist, aiming to detail the outcomes of the on-line survey in the areas mentioned below.

Research Ethics and Publication Ethics

- Co-authorship was indicated to be a complex issue which depends on communication and agreement made by the persons participating on the outcome.
- The existence of “quotation cartels” was mentioned: while they are a necessary component of the Czech academia metric, some constituent parts consider them unethical.
- No major experience existed with predatory journals; some individuals were unaware of which journals are predatory – a central database of trustworthy journals could be established at UWB.
- The responses did mention the existence of an assessment system for science and research.

Activities in Application of Outcomes in Practice

- Technology transfer and popularisation of outcomes is typically addressed by individual constituent parts; these activities are not really coordinated by the part or the University.
- Together with technology transfer, it is necessary to build networks and institutionalise cooperation: this falls into the activities of the University. An important component is the building of trust, a key aspect in such cooperation.
- Experience with the Technology Transfer Department (OTT), has been mixed: in general, a large number of processes on technology transfer by OTT are running very slowly.
- OTT processes were very non-transparent to the informants as they did not know what was happening with their requests.
- The informants would appreciate the existence of a central department at the part or University which would engage in the bureaucracy (legal, administrative and logistics), services related to technology transfer.
- The Project Centre (PC), received mixed responses; positive responses were given especially to support to investigators for submission of projects.
- PC should provide services also during the project realisation stage.
- Cooperation should improve also with the legal department which currently has the role of a verification institution, not one which offers legal counsel and support.
- At NTC, administration of publications was identified as ineffective.

Discrimination and Possible Solutions

- Only a minimum number of persons had experienced straightforward discrimination; some discrepancies and feelings of injustice were based on inadequate, not quite open communication. This resulted in a need for improvement of the communication culture to communicate more, verbalise satisfaction and dissatisfaction more frequently, and improve communication skills in as many employees as possible.
- Some pointed out problems in addressing persons on parental leave: a higher degree of empathy is required here.
- Problems also exist in solving potential conflicts; it is not clear who should be contacted in such situations. In this aspect, the supervising employees hold a crucial part. The informants commented positively on the establishment of the institute of an “ombudsman” who would settle conflicts; this should be an institute on the University level so it is sufficiently “above” its parts.

Transparent Assessment of Performance

- UWB’s motivation system was commented on positively.
- In some cases, communication from supervising employees could be problematic when not communicating on salary conditions or not providing reasons for the amount of compensation/bonus.
- Some cases could be remedied through Career Regulations or amendment of the Salary Directive, to provide more details on bonuses and pay raises.
- Problems were recognised in contract research where administration support from NTC was considered poor .

Influence on Activities at the Unit and Part

- Some cases voiced doubt whether some requests/suggestions were recognised and acted upon by the management of the part or NTC. In this aspect, communication culture needs improvement e.g. in terms of consistency and transparency.
- An issue was raised on the relationship between the departments and the Centre where some departments were unclear about the specifics of their relationship with the Centre.
- Communication and (failure to hold) regular meetings at the constituent part were often regarded as some of the major gaps which could potentially cause problems and render any initiative cumbersome .
- Another aspect mentioned was inadequate cooperation between the fields which are not currently working in the intended manner; furthermore, communication at NTC is ineffective on who is doing what, reducing cooperation possibilities.
- In the topic of improvement to the communication culture, recognition was awarded to the idea of supervising employees participating in training and workshops on improvement of people and communication skills in general. Frequent comments

highlighted that supervising employees should receive more attention as they are often unaware of all the aspects their positions entail. They need to undergo some training and formation, especially in the early stages of their tenure.

Fixed-Term Contracts

- The biggest problem and uncertainty lay in the fact that contract extensions would sometimes be made at the last moment, which might motivate employee leave (especially to the commercial sphere). At times, the burden was with the supervising employees who failed to communicate contract extensions with the persons concerned in sufficient advance. In general, this aspect highlights the insufficient communication by NTC management and sometimes by the department head with the employees.
- Another voiced topic was a principle stipulated by the Work Code that after three fixed-term contracts, the employee automatically obtains a permanent contract.

Miscellaneous

- Non-transparency of entering results into OBD was mentioned, as authors do not have full information about what is happening with their publications.
- A suggestion was raised about each department having a credit card to expedite the provision of necessary items. The credit card is an adequately transparent instrument, where all purchased items can be reviewed in the account statements.
- Generally speaking, communication was mentioned as one of the principal points for improvement in terms of style, frequency, relevance, and content.

This document reports on the results of the questionnaire survey and the focus group and was prepared by: Mgr. Petr Kavalíř, Ph.D. MBA

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