Conclusion

This document reports on the third study on the way Leiden University’s staff members experience their employment. Various themes concerning job satisfaction have been studied, and we have approached the results in a number of different ways. Firstly, the results have been compared to the standards set by Leiden University itself, which aim to ensure that all staff members are moderately to positively satisfied. Furthermore, the results have been compared to two previous studies (carried out in 2010 and 2012). The results were subsequently compared to a number of background characteristics and, finally, Leiden University’s results were compared to those of other universities.

From the results, a general image appears of an internationally-oriented University in which the staff members, though exposed to some work-related stress and a considerable workload, are generally satisfied, involved and full of vigour. Furthermore, they are moderately positive about the content of their work, the labour relations, working conditions and environments. Furthermore, the number of negative opinions in the areas of safety and health (climatological circumstances being an exception) have decreased, while staff members are more satisfied about the support services. These positive results are reflected in the (slightly) improved scores that employment at Leiden University and the University as employer have received.

Most results from this staff monitor are almost completely similar to those of the 2012 survey, and those changes that have occurred are almost all in a positive sense. In particular the appreciation of the management climate at the University has increased. Leiden’s results in most fields are also comparable or superior to those of three other universities. However, there are also a few areas requiring more attention, which will be discussed in more detail below.

The first issue is the amount of gossip within the university. While a tremendous decrease was registered in 2012, it has again increased in the 2015 monitor. The level of gossip in Leiden is also quite high in comparison to that of two other universities. To adequately and accurately deal with this issue, it will first have to be established whether this form of unwanted behaviour manifests itself most strongly under certain groups of staff members, before shifting the focus to different forms, the frequency and the potential solutions to this problem.

Secondly, many staff members have – as was the case during the previous monitors – expressed negative views on the career and education policies of the university. Career policies have also been criticised at other universities. Especially the limited opportunities for promotion and the difficulty involved in switching to a different position at the same level are often mentioned. Because the career and education policies are partially, yet significantly, related to the final scores, more attention to these fields is recommended. Furthermore, many staff members have, in relation to their personal development, said that they would like to have the opportunity to receive further education or guidance with an eye to shaping their careers.

A third field in which the University is performing below the standards set, and therefore in need of attention, is co-participation. In particular the way that co-participation bodies at the University function is singled out as an area that could improve. However, co-participation is not a prime concern, as the results have stayed the same since 2012, while they are not remarkably low when compared to those of other universities either.

Fourthly, the themes of workload and stress experienced outside working hours require attention. 64 percent of staff members have said that actual workloads are greater than desired. Staff members are especially required to work longer than formally agreed, and are required to work very hard to meet
their deadlines. The study shows that the demands asked of them (issues include too many projects, work and/or responsibilities, as well as pressures related to publications and teaching) are responsible for this actual workload. With regard to the pressure to publish (especially WP), the adoption of the new Standard Evaluation Protocol 2015-2021 by the KNAW, the NWO and the VSNU might offer some relief. In this evaluation protocol, the emphasis is placed on social relevance, quality and integrity, while productivity has been removed as a criterion. In part due to high work pressure, many staff members experience stress outside working hours as well. Many are exhausted after a working day, and some are still tired when they wake up in the morning.

The secondary working conditions are a fifth point needing attention, specifically concerning issues surrounding educational leave and sabbaticals, child day care, arrangements for older staff members and the travel expenses made to and from the workplace. Satisfaction with regard to arrangements for older staff members has gone down, while scores for educational leave, sabbaticals and travel expenses have fallen (further) below the standards set. These unsatisfactory results correspond with a trend in unsatisfactory secondary working conditions.

The sixth field requiring attention is found in the area of support/facilities, and specifically that of catering/restaurant facilities. Although satisfaction has increased in comparison to the 2010 and 2012 results, it is still below par.

Finally, there are two important results regarding PhD candidates that need to be addressed. Only 53 percent of PhD candidates have had a ‘go-no-go’ meeting within a year after their appointment, in which the conditions required for successfully completing their PhD programme within a reasonable timeframe are explicitly discussed. Organising these kinds of meetings can prevent stagnation during a later stage of the programme and even avoid a complete termination of the programmes. Furthermore, the PhD monitor revealed that PhD candidates working at Leiden University feel that their supervisors do too little to motivate them to follow courses. It is recommended that the cause(s) underlying this should be identified.