

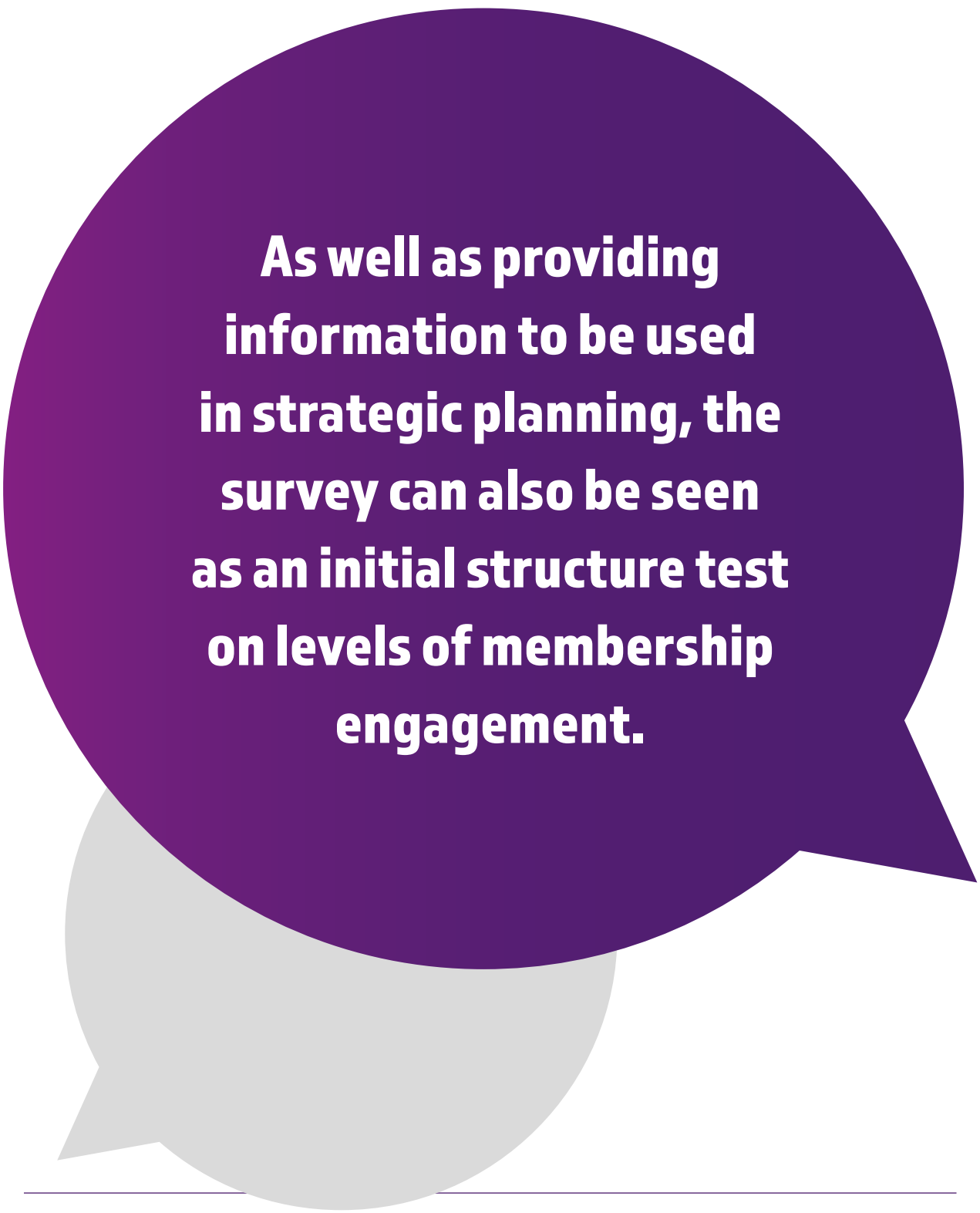


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FELA Further Education
Lecturers' Association

EIS-FELA SURVEY FINDINGS

AUGUST 2025



As well as providing information to be used in strategic planning, the survey can also be seen as an initial structure test on levels of membership engagement.

SUMMARY OF EIS-FELA SURVEY FINDINGS

2025

The EIS-FELA 2025 survey was open between March and May 2025. It was sent to all EIS-FELA members with reminders to complete it online.

The survey generated 730 responses. This is a response rate of around 15% of all lecturers across the sector.

Members were asked a total of 18 questions that ranged from general demographic information to requests for specific information on concerns and issues over a timeframe of the past three years, since the last EIS-FELA survey was conducted.

The survey was conducted via the membership database, allowing for internal communication to be done effectively by email.

As well as providing information to be used in strategic planning, the survey can also be seen as an initial structure test on levels of membership engagement. As with the previous survey, there is a core of around one fifth of the EIS-FELA membership who are actively engaged with union activity.

WORKING HOURS

Two thirds of respondents are full-time and 97% have a permanent contract. 52% have worked in FE for over 15 years whilst only 5% of respondents have worked in FE for less than 3 years. Over 49% said they regularly work additional hours on top of their current contract.

CUTS

Nearly two fifths have experienced a cut in course contact or delivery time within the past three years. An overall theme from those respondents is “courses are continuously streamlined and teaching hours cut.” This is often done by “knocking 5 mins off each teaching hour which then mean(s) we had an additional class a week” with one respondent illustrating “timetabled breaks (which we don’t get in reality) removed 30 minutes of contact time per day then global hours on HE and FE courses were reduced to create “underutilisation” which meant an addition 2.30hour class could be added on to lecturers timetables.” One respondent said “40 hrs (been reduced) to 31 hours per credit delivery”; another gave the example of “SVQ level 3 plumbing cut by 100 hours over 3 year’s delivery”; whilst another said “there are regular attempt from management to force 15 credits at HN level to be delivered in the time permitted for 12 credits.”

The overall picture seems to be “less delivery time, more classes” and class sizes have increased”, against the backdrop of course cuts and redundancies.

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CPD AND TQFE

Around one fifth of respondents have a negative experience of trying to access CPD whilst most were neutral or positive.

This is a similar result for those accessing TQFE but that may be because of the demographic of respondents i.e. most are permanent, full-time, have been working in the sector for several years and already have the qualification or equivalent.

Common complaints are that CPD which is offered isn’t industry-standard or subject-specific. Colleges often won’t finance CPD therefore the courses which are free are generic skills courses. One respondent said they were funded to do TQFE and a Masters whilst others say their college won’t even fund the class cover required. As such, there is clearly a massive discrepancy across the sector on access to CPD.

Of those who do have an issue with accessing TQFE it is that the college has a long waiting list and/or funding issues. Some have said they self-funded the qualification.

ONLINE TEACHING

Around one fifth of respondents have experienced a push to teach online in the past 3 years. There are a variety of viewpoints and comments ranging from “this happened during COVID but the onus is definitely now on face-to-face delivery in the classroom” and “I wish this was the case. We need more flexibility in delivery. A better work life balance for staff and

students. Reduce expenses in relation to travelling as this is becoming unaffordable - 48 miles 5 days per week for over two decades. I will be forced to leave lecturing if there is not more flexibility. We need to be more sustainable in terms of our approach to learning and where we learn. We have a responsibility to take notice of the implications for the environment” to “difficulty engaging students and students failing to attend as they think they don’t need to attend college (if there’s online option)” and “this has increased workload in the short term as additional material required to be produced to facilitate online teaching.” Many respondents have always taught online, particularly across UHI, with some teaching 100% online. Others say they cannot teach online, although they may wish to teach online at least sometimes, due to the nature of the subject. Whilst there are a variety of opinions on this, issues raised are around workload, health and safety, and quality of education.

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HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Over 57% said their health and wellbeing has worsened, with only 4% saying it has improved and the rest saying unsure or no impact.

BULLYING, HARASSMENT AND ISSUES RELATED TO PROTECTED CHARACTERISTICS

Nearly 46% have experienced or been aware of bullying, harassment or unfavourable treatment to themselves or other lecturers, whilst 11% said they were 'not sure'.

Most prevalent appears to be incidents or issues related to sexism or misogyny, followed by racism, ableism, homophobia and transphobia. Respondents advise that there has not been enough training in many of these aspects, particularly around sexism and trans-related issues.

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FAIR WORK

Over two fifth of respondents either don't feel fulfilled at work or are unsure. “The cuts to teaching, the attitude of Senior management towards teaching staff and alienation staff feel towards each other — all affected by the way in which senior management create a culture of division and competition makes it very hard to do my job in a way that makes me fulfilled. I am only really happy in the classroom — outside of it, and especially in office areas, I feel demotivated and unhappy.”

Two thirds feel they do not have an effective voice via collective bargaining processes between their employer and trade union or are unsure. “We have a voice but disruptive action seems to be required whenever change is needed. Management support should be more readily given but staff seem to be frequently butting heads with management which is a great shame.”

More than 50% do not feel secure in their employment in terms of contract, hours, threat of redundancy or outsourcing, or are unsure. “I think there is no long-term strategy. Only short term. Last year redundancies in our department, then during the year they recruited for another course and had to hire more staff! Where's the long-term strategy?”

45% do not feel they have opportunities at work via progression routes, access to CPD etc. “Some good generic pedagogic staff dev but I'm being deskilled. I do a lot independently, in my own time and at my own expense to keep up to date. The

brutal merger process led to me losing faith in progression and almost total lack of solidarity from level 2 is a huge issue. They routinely undermine gains but (sic) capitulating, going beyond their contract and digging their own very stressful work holes. Consequently, they expect the staff at lower levels to do the same. The promoted routes as a result look hugely unappealing.”

Around 50% do not feel respected at work in terms of building relationships with colleagues and management or are unsure. “Colleagues - yes. Management - no. There needs to be a cultural change where the quasi-corporate management style (characterised by the branding of Principals as “Chief Executives”) needs to be removed in favour of a collegiate style of management.”

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CONCLUSION

The survey findings will inform the work of the EIS-FELA Executive, National Representatives at the National Joint Negotiating Committee, and branch officials. More work will be undertaken to assess workplaces using a Fair Work toolkit, training will be offered around challenging misogyny and racism, securing funding remains a priority, and bargaining continues around changes to local terms and conditions.

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