

LUCU response to management's "values survey"

Lancaster University management has released a survey to help them "identify and develop" the values of our University. The Lancaster University & College Union (UCU) agrees that a change in the values orientation of our University is sorely needed, but it cannot endorse this survey. Our concerns include:

The survey is weakly designed, and ignores best practices from fundamental values research¹, including widely used survey instruments². As such, the survey's findings will be of limited use and validity. Moreover, the survey was deployed without consultation with the campus Unions. It represents a "white-washing" exercise that will not be able to promote the constructive and honest conversations our community needs.

Values must be met with actions, and be reflected in the choices that the University makes³. This means meaningfully engaging staff in the design of consultation exercises, including campus Unions and researchers with an expertise in studying values, and a commitment to transparent analysis and presentation of results. Most importantly, it requires a willingness to take meaningful actions in response to value-laden issues that have already been identified, including those related to bullying, inequality, lack of financial transparency and undemocratic decision-making.

Unlike the empty, "feel-good" language promoted by the current survey, we believe that a serious discussion about value at Lancaster will consider issues such as:

- Strengthening democratic decision-making, demonstrating a greater commitment to the principles of transparency, accountability, respect and trust⁴
- Strong sense of collegiality, caring and solidarity that includes a more genuine concern for the overall wellbeing of our staff, students and community⁵
- Commitments to public service and public education⁶
- Commitments to respond to the climate and ecological emergency⁷
- Demonstrated commitment to the principle of equality, including building an anti-racist community⁸;

Critically, many of these values are under attack, and evidence suggests that many of our shared community values are often poorly-aligned with key values and actions promoted by senior management, including those driven by prestige, financial recognition, top-down managerialism and rankings⁹.

¹ Maio, G.R., 2010. Mental representations of social values. In *Advances in experimental social psychology* (Vol. 42, pp. 1-43). Academic Press.

² Bilsky, W., Janik, M. and Schwartz, S.H., 2011. The structural organization of human values-evidence from three rounds of the European Social Survey. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 42(5), pp.759-776.

³ Harland, T. and Pickering, N., 2010. *Values in higher education teaching*. Routledge.

⁴ Fitzgerald, T., Gunter, H. and White, J. 2012. *Hard Labour? Academic Work and the Changing Landscape of Higher Education*. Bingley. Emerald Group.

⁵ Ashwin, P., 2020. *Transforming University Education - a manifesto*. London. Bloomsbury.

⁶ Nixon, J., 2011. *Higher Education and the Public Good*. London. Continuum.

⁷ <https://fundthefuture.org.uk/event/a-green-new-deal-for-colleges-and-universities/>

⁸ Bhopal, K., 2018. *White Privilege: the Myth of a Post-Racial Society*. Bristol. Policy Press.

⁹ E.g., Ferrario, M.A., Winter, E. 2018. Values tensions in academia: An exploration within the HCI community. <http://interactions.acm.org/blog/view/values-tensions-in-academia-an-exploration-within-the-hci-community>; Council for the Defense of British Universities, <http://cdbu.org.uk/>.