

Staff Numbers and Cost 2023-24

The QUB 2023-24 accounts contain data on average staff numbers by major category, and I have added vacancy levels and financial data.

Year	2017/8	2018/9	2019/20	2020/1	2021/2	2022/3	2023/4
Academic	1,100	1,196	1,256	1,250	1,270	1,292	1,329
Research	642	669	694	696	678	654	667
Acad. Related	795	833	901	907	915	999	1,104
Technical & Clerical	960	1,008	1025	997	978	991	1,057
Other	452	481	499	509	503	550	571
Total Staff	3,949	4,187	4,375	4,359	4,344	4,486	4,738
Staff Costs £M	189.2	208.6	226.0	228.4	240.6	252.0	273.5
Staff Cost per Staff Member £K	47.911	49.821	51.657	52.397	55.386	56.175	57.725
Staff Vacancies %	9.0?	8.0	5.7	8.8	4.1%	9%	7%
Estimated Saving £M	18.7	18.1	13.7	22.1	10.3	24.9	20.6
Operating Surplus £M	18.8	8.8	4.9	24.3	15.3	(6.1)	(12.7)

Staff Costs do not include any adjustment in respect of the USS Pension Scheme. Total staff costs are 60% of income and include the annual pay award, the cost of incremental Real Living Wage update in April 24, the cost of incremental progression, academic promotions and the cost of the Apprenticeship Levy. Staff costs in 2022/23 included £2.3M for the cost of living interventions, and about £1.9M in relation to the early implementation of the 2023-24 pay award from 1 February 2023. Staff costs in 2023/4 included £3.8M for the one-off non-consolidated award in July 2024 as part of the new three-year pay deal.

Staff Costs in my table exclude the cost of teaching assistants, temporary lecturers and other temporary staff who were not employed under contract by the University and therefore not included in staff numbers.

Staff Vacancies % is proportion of posts unfilled averaged over all staff, and the average vacancy rate for the year was 7%, although this position was differed across Faculties and Professional Services. Usually Academic vacancies are higher than this average. When Staff Vacancies reached 9.4%, lay members of Senate questioned whether any organisation could operate effectively at this level, and target level of 5% was set. The reduction of the vacancy level has been a high priority of management for several years. So far they have only briefly achieved the target. **This level of vacancies throws crippling extra work on the remaining staff and causes stress and low morale. It also denies students the level of personal contact that they desire.**

I have calculated Estimated Savings by scaling up Staff Costs to what they would be if all posts were fully filled. **You can see that leaving posts unfilled is a major factor in achieving QUB's Operating surplus. The question is whether QUB management really serious about reducing the Vacancy Rate, or is it a way of quietly saving money despite the cost to staff morale and student satisfaction?** QUB management deny this and respond that in some subjects and areas there are few suitable applicants.

Virtually all the Research posts are fixed-term so that **the number of staff in insecure employment remains high. Even more insecure are the teaching assistants, temporary lecturers and other temporary staff.** The variation in their number is indicated by the yearly expenditure on them: 2017-18, £4,716K; then £5,222K; £4,669K; £4,435K; £7,360K; and in 2023-24, £8230K.

During the year the University made total payments in respect of compensation for loss of office of £834K (2023: £819K) relating to 149 (2023:133) staff members. These payments were mainly in respect of staff on fixed terms contracts. All severance payments, including compensation for loss of office, in respect to higher paid staff within its remit, are approved by the Remuneration Committee. Amounts for compensation for loss of office and redundancy for all other staff are approved by the University's management in accordance with delegated authority.

Paul Hudson