



*Society for Research
into Higher Education*

Doing the dirty work of academia? Ancillary staff in higher education

Research report

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Disclaimer: The views expressed in this report are the authors' and do not necessarily reflect those of the Society for Research into Higher Education.

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Executive summary

Little is known about ancillary staff in Higher Education despite the fact that their work is instrumental in enabling academia to operate.

Ancillary staff are defined for the purpose of this pilot study as those working in positions focussed on catering, cleaning and security, although we acknowledge that this terminology has been used more broadly.

This pilot project aims to address this dearth of research. The main objectives of this project are to generate a better understanding of the contribution of ancillary staff to the HE sector and address some of the in/justices they face. In particular, it seeks to answer three main questions:

- Who are ancillary staff and how does their re/productive work enable HE institutions and other categories of staff to operate?
- How are the experiences of UK HE-based ancillary staff characterised by economic, cultural, political and care-related in/justices?
- How are these experiences framed by politics of gender and ethnicity?

The research is informed by the theories of social justice developed by Nancy Fraser and Kathleen Lynch, considering economic, cultural, political and affective in/equalities.

The fieldwork involved a survey of UK Higher Education Institutions with data collected through a mix of online questionnaires and Freedom of Information requests; 20 interviews with ancillary staff; and observations of ancillary staff's work environments.

Findings from the project as a whole highlight considerable difficulties in accessing this group of staff and information about them, with resistance noted at individual, institutional and sector-broad levels.

Findings from the survey show that employers experience challenges related to the recruitment and retention of ancillary staff, particularly so in the case of cleaning and catering staff. The survey also highlights great diversity across the sector in terms of the

use of part-time and full-time contracts, fixed-term and open-ended contracts, and outsourcing.

Findings from the interviews challenge a deficit discourse of this group. Instead, our conversations with ancillary staff highlight the richness and complexities of their experiences as well as their agency. Many actively sought these positions and take pride in their work.

Yet ancillary staff often experience injustices, whether related to economic, cultural, political or affective equality, with considerable diversity among interviewees in terms of how they experience these injustices.

Overall, security staff experienced the highest levels of satisfaction and cleaners the lowest levels. Those employed in-house had higher levels of satisfaction compared with those on outsourced contracts, with the exception of those employed by student unions who had a very different set of circumstances. While, overall, security staff presented higher levels of satisfaction, they often struggled with 'work-life balance' due to the alternance of day and night shifts.

Based on the findings from this project, we make three sets of recommendations.

Recommendation 1: Ancillary work/ers are rendered invisible by administrative and research processes. Systematic data collection and more transparency should be encouraged regarding the employment of ancillary staff across the sector, whether they are employed in-house or outsourced. Their contribution to the sector needs to be further acknowledged in policy debates, at institutional and national levels. This project was a pilot study and further research should also be encouraged.

Recommendation 2: Many ancillary workers experience economic, cultural, political and affective injustices. In economic terms, working conditions and pay should acknowledge and reward staff's experience and skills, including through clear progression paths and access to training. In terms of cultural in/justices, the sector and individual institutions should also consider ways of ensuring that ancillary staff feel valued and that university cultures are fully inclusive of these groups so as to generate a sense of belonging. In terms of political in/justices, the sector and individual HEIs should ensure that ancillary staff are

given a voice in policy-making processes. This may require institutions to work with unions and for unions and other organisations to raise awareness of their activities among ancillary staff. In terms of affective justice, employers should consider how working conditions can lead to poor 'work-life balance'.

Recommendation 3: Ancillary workers' experiences vary considerably. As a result, tackling the social injustices they face require an approach which considers the specific challenges they face. For change to be effective, key stakeholders and individual organisations should consult with ancillary staff to identify more specifically what could improve their working lives. Employers should consider issues of fairness when staff are outsourced as well as the impact for employees, institutions and for the student and staff population.

Introduction

Ancillary staff (defined for the purpose of this study as staff working in catering, cleaning and security roles) are typically involved in 'reproductive work' and, as such, fulfil an important role in society. In the Higher Education (HE) sector, their work helps to maintain the environment in which academics, managers and those in professional roles operate. They help in maintaining campuses which are healthy, safe and inclusive, with benefits felt in terms of improved students' learning, staff and student well-being, and collegial relationships (CMSU, 2007; Lugosi, 2019). These positions often require a range of technical and relational skills and can be physically, emotionally and mentally demanding as well as, at times, risky. The ongoing Covid pandemic has increased health risks for these staff who are often in 'people-facing' roles, while anecdotal evidence suggests that these roles have become more encompassing (see, e.g., Britten, 2021). In HE, the spatio-temporal regimes of ancillary staff can render them invisible to students and other staff members (i.e. when cleaners start working after academics have left the premises), despite the fact that 'elementary occupations' (under which catering, security and cleaning staff fall) representing 12% of HE non-academic (Wolf and Jenkins, 2020). This percentage does not include those on outsourced contracts who, as such, do not always benefit from the same rights as university employees.

Despite the essential role ancillary workers fulfil in maintaining and enhancing the social and physical environment of HE, the scarce evidence available shows that ancillary work tends to attract low pay and low recognition (Magolda, 2016; Sykes et al, 2014). This group is also often poorly represented in decision-making bodies and professional organisations and their working conditions are rarely compatible with the demands of their private lives. Ancillary staff are also often members of unprivileged groups, with these positions disproportionately taken up by women, as well as working class, minority ethnic groups and migrants. As such, they are particularly exposed to injustices, whether of an economic, cultural, political or affective nature (Fraser, 1997; Lynch, 2010).

This project explored the experiences of ancillary staff working in UK universities and their contribution to the Higher Education (HE) sector. In particular, we sought to address the following research questions:

- Who are ancillary staff and how does their re/productive work enable HE institutions and other categories of staff to operate?
- How are the experiences of UK HE-based ancillary staff characterised by economic, cultural, political and care-related in/justices?
- How are these experiences framed by politics of gender and ethnicity?

The later question proved difficult to address as participants did not engage with this line of questioning, although the research simultaneously highlights that their experiences are classed, gendered and racialised. Following the presentation of the theory and methodology underpinning this report, we turn to a presentation of the findings, starting with the survey of employers, before turning to the interviews conducted with ancillary staff. We then conclude with recommendations emerging from the project.

Theoretical and methodological frameworks

This research is broadly underpinned by a theoretical framework drawing on feminist sociological understandings of social in/justices in education and work, with specific reference to Nancy Fraser's (1997) and Kathleen Lynch's (2010) multi-level theories of social justice. Fraser's work provides a heuristic lens to explore how economic (distributive), cultural (recognitional) and political (representational) in/justices are compounded, while Lynch adds a fourth dimension to this model: affective justice (i.e. who gives and who receives care, love and solidarity). This theoretical framework also acknowledges that these dimensions of social justice are simultaneously compounded by the politics of gender, class and race (Acker, 1994; Lynch, 2010). Cleaning jobs in particular have culturally been associated with working-class femininity, security jobs with forms of hyper-masculinity (Paechter, 2006). Research also highlights how minoritized groups tend to concentrate in these positions (IWGB, 2024).

The fieldwork for this project involved four phases: 1) a search of the literature on ancillary staff in HE and other sectors; 2) observations of the working environment of ancillary staff; 3) an online survey of UK HEIs followed by Freedom of Information requests (FoI); and 4) twenty interviews with ancillary staff.

The literature search served two main purposes: ensuring that the research builds on, rather than reiterates, extant research, and informing the analysis of the data generated through the fieldwork phase of this project. We conducted a search of the literature on ancillary staff working in higher education using our institutional library site (with access to databases such as EBSCOhost) as well as Google Scholar. The search focused on texts in the English language only. Due to the small number of texts originally returned, we did not limit the search to a specific time-period. In addition to searching the databases, further studies were identified through talking to colleagues and browsing the reference lists of the texts originally identified. A table was used to categorise the literature to keep track of the results of the search and to provide a clear snapshot of the identified texts. Identifiers such as location, source type, data collection method and which group of ancillary staff the source was focused on (cleaners, catering or security) were all included in the table (see also Moreau and Wheeler, 2023, where similar tools were used).

Findings from our review showed that research with ancillary staff is sparse, with most research in this area focusing on aspects such as the quality and cost of the services provided, with limited consideration for ancillary staff's perspectives on their working lives (Amstutz, 2008, Campbell and Bigger, 2008; Du Toit, 2015; Uleanya, 2020). Two notable exceptions, both in the US context, are Peter Magolda's 2016 ethnography of cleaners on two university campuses, *The Lives of Campus Custodians*, and Verónica Caridad Rabelo and Ramaswami Mahalingam's 2019 article, a mixed-method study of cleaners conducted in a single institution. The invisibility of cleaners, which often goes hand in hand with their misrecognition, is the focus of both texts. Rabelo and Mahalingam, in particular, comment on university cleaners' invisibility *at work* (i.e., not being acknowledged) and *of work* (i.e., feeling that their work is ignored or not valued).

Findings from the literature also highlight how ancillary staff sometimes experience contempt from other staff members and students and often feel that they 'do not belong' in their institutional community. Studies of security staff show that some were told by managers to simply tolerate negative attitudes towards them and that some experienced boredom and isolation due to long shifts and a lack of social interaction (Britten, 2021; Du Toit, 2015). Anecdotal evidence and research about similar groups in other sectors also point to the range of injustices they face, for example in terms of working conditions, recognition and contribution to decision-making. As a result, researching the experiences of ancillary staff is a matter of social justice, even more so as members of this group are often from minoritised backgrounds (IWGB, 2024).

2) A total of four on-site observations (each lasting 40-60 minutes) were conducted, to gain a more in-depth understanding of the working environment of ancillary staff. All observations were taken at different times of the day and on different days of the week to observe a range of situations, characterised by different levels of 'busy-ness'. While some notes were taken, they were not systematically analysed but, instead, supported the interviews as we were able to ask more specific questions based on our understanding of the work environment.

3) An online survey (see Appendices) was designed to draw a broad picture of ancillary staff in UK HE and of their working conditions, as well as capture some of the challenges identified by employers. A link to the JISC platform where the survey was located was circulated through emails to UK HEIs (n=148), asking them about the employment of

ancillary staff (e.g. type of contract, outsourcing, numbers) as well as about recruitment, promotion and retention policies, and any challenges they may experience in relation to this group. The survey link was directed to individual staff members working in roles such as Estates and Facilities Director, Head of Campus Services and similar, who had been identified through a preliminary search of institutional websites.

The original JISC survey generated 24 replies in total. To increase the number of responses, we sent a Freedom of Information (Fol) request to the HEIs which had not responded to the JISC survey. This generated a significant increase in numbers, with 110 HEIs responding to the Fol request. As a result, out of the 148 UK-based universities we contacted, 129 responded to the survey either through JISC or as a result of the Fol request. However, it should be noted that, because of the narrow scope of Fol requests, open text questions were not included in those requests. Instead, we focused on accessing statistical data informing the contractual and working conditions of ancillary workers. With this exception, we used the exact same questionnaire. When the results from the Fols were returned, 86 out of the 120 HEIs contacted responded to all of our questions, while 19 gave partial responses, either only providing data for some of the groups (usually for catering and cleaning, but not for security) or missing out questions completely, referring to Section 31 of the Act- Prevention and Detection of Crime, Section 38 of the Freedom of Information Act, or Section 36(1) of the Freedom of Information Act. Six HEIs stated that the information requested was not held by them as staff were outsourced. Four HEIs refused the Fol request completely and we still have to hear from five HEIs.

The survey results (JISC and Fol) were merged and imported into an Excel database. Some descriptive statistics were computed (consistent in this with our original intention to provide a snapshot of contractual and working conditions in the sector), while open text questions were subjected to a thematic analysis.

4) Participants to the semi-structured interviews were recruited through various routes, including emailing the call to the staff who had completed the institutional survey and circulating it on social media (e.g., X, Facebook, LinkedIn). Further emails were sent to key stakeholders in the sector (such as Association of University Directors of Estates, The HE Estates Forum) and subcontractors (Sodexo, Chartwells, etc.) as well as to university managers with specific responsibility for this group of staff (e.g. head of catering, head porter etc.). The recruitment of volunteers was closely monitored to ensure maximum

diversity, particularly in relation to the UK region, gender and ethnicity, while also being pragmatic due to the significant difficulties encountered in recruiting individual participants (See Appendix 4).

While some institutions and managers agreed to circulate the survey, our queries were often met with some resistance. Likewise, some of the ancillary workers we approached were not willing to be interviewed. Many did not provide an explanation, but some expressed concerns about signing a consent form (which was part of our university's ethical requirements) or about the interview being recorded. Some struggled to find the time. There was also evidence that those being interviewed were sometimes anxious about being overheard or seen talking to us. Recruiting women proved particularly challenging.

Despite the difficulties we faced, we were able to interview 20 participants, including seven in a cleaning role, eight in a security/porter role, and five in a catering role. Sixteen were men, four women. Eleven were White British, four White Other, one from a Mixed ethnic background, one Black African, one Black Caribbean and two from an Asian background (specific details withdrawn to maintain anonymity). A significant number were born abroad and, among these, many had migrated to the UK for education or work purposes. The interviews were conducted either in person or online, depending on the preference of the interviewee. They varied considerably, between c. 15 minutes to over an hour, in order to accommodate participants' busy lives and, at times, limited flexibility in their working times. Some were interviewed while at work, for example after their shift or during break time. Some of the topics we covered included how participants make sense of their work, the potential injustices they face and their views of the policies identified as part of the survey (see Appendix 3). Interviews were recorded and professionally transcribed, then summarised and written up in short summaries to maintain the 'wholeness' of each narrative, with individual summaries subjected to a thematic analysis.

The research project adheres to ARU and BERA ethical guidelines. Ethical approval has been granted from the ARU Ethics Committee (see Appendix 1). Specific attention has been given to confidentiality, anonymity and informed consent throughout the duration of the project.

Survey of UK HE institutions

In this section, we provide a brief overview of the outcome of the survey, completed by representatives of UK HEIs through one of two routes: a JISC survey (see Appendix 2) or a Freedom of Information request (Appendix 5). One questionnaire was completed per institution. The FoI went to the relevant officer in each HEI, whose role is not based in ancillary services. In the case of the responses received through JISC, the profile of the respondents gives us an indication of who are the senior managers in charge of ancillary work at institutional level. Among those who provided this information, the large majority were men (17), White British (18) and half of them were in their 50s.

The JISC survey involved asking respondents about some of the challenges they face in relation to the employment, recruitment and promotion of ancillary staff. Queries related to challenges were not included in the FoI requests as it would have been out of scope. The recruitment of cleaning and catering staff was identified as a key difficulty (72.7% of respondents to the institutional survey felt this way about cleaners, 71.4% about catering staff). In comparison, the recruitment of security staff was perceived as less of a challenge, with 36.8% stating that it was an issue. Challenges related to recruitment were mostly of two types: 'over complicated online recruitment process which puts potential candidates off' (in the words of one respondent) and poor contractual conditions compared with other sectors, something which particularly applied to cleaning. Recruiting in these three roles was also deemed more challenging as a result of Brexit and of the Covid pandemic. 72.7% of respondents thought that the retention of cleaning staff was an issue, compared with 52.4% in the case of catering staff and only 26.3% in the case of security staff.

Contractual conditions deemed uncompetitive compared with other sectors were viewed as causing retention issues, with one participant commenting: 'retention challenges relate to higher paid jobs being offered elsewhere although often requiring longer working hours, absolute salaries can be higher'. Contractors' terms and conditions, deemed 'less favourable', were also perceived as a challenge to recruitment and retention.

As part of the survey element (online JISC survey and FoI), we also asked employers about the use of part-time and full time contracts. Responses show a varied picture, with the most common occurrence being a mix of both part-time and full-time contracts, with part-time contracts predominating. Likewise, we found a varied picture regarding the use of fixed-

term and open-ended contracts, with the most common occurrence being the use of open-ended contracts and 'a mix of both' (fixed-term and open-ended) but mostly fixed term. We found some important variations regarding the use of outsourced and in-house contracts across the three categories of staff included in this project. 20,9% of cleaning staff were employed on outsourced contracts according to the data provided, compared with 22.9% of catering staff and 23,7% of security staff. These overall figures hide a complex picture, with some universities outsourcing some categories of staff but not others (e.g. cleaners but not catering staff) and some universities employing some staff within the same category (e.g. security) in-house, and some through outsourcing. It is also worth reiterating here these figures are likely to under-estimate the numbers of staff who are outsourced - not all HEIs provided numbers and, most importantly, some HEIs stated that they did not hold the information for outsourced staff so gave a return of 'unknown'.

Finally, all respondents to the survey stated that trade unions were recognised by their employer, with UNISON, Unite and GMB being the most commonly cited. However, as we shall see, union membership among our sample appears very low.

Ancillary staff's perspectives and experiences

The invisibility of ancillary work/ers

Prior to considering the interviews with ancillary workers, we reflect on the invisibility of this group in university cultures. It is clear from this study that organisational, administrative and scholarly processes work in ways which render this group invisible. On campus, they are rarely seen or heard, although this also varies based on the nature of their role. Cleaners appear particularly prone to invisibility. Many start their shift once academic and professional staff have left the premises. When ancillary staff have a dedicated working space, it is often hidden from view. They are often absent from staff directories, university websites and policy documents. Likewise, their exact numbers are often unknown as administrative categories do not always capture their distribution across specific positions. This is further complicated by the fact that, among ancillary staff, many are outsourced, as highlighted in the previous section. Finally, this group is strikingly absent from the research literature, with the exception of the two studies mentioned earlier (Magolda, 2016; Rabelo and Mahalingham, 2019), which also comment on the invisibility of cleaners at work.

This relative invisibility created considerable difficulties throughout the project, including when it came to recruiting participants. While the project helped in small ways to lift the invisibility cloak, recruiting 20 participants required some persistence and, in some cases, communication was particularly difficult due to the interviewer and interviewee not speaking the same language.

These difficulties led us to reflect on how our initial research design and approach to recruitment and fieldwork were shaped by our experience of researching academics and professionals and by our own positionality and privileges. For instance, we had wrongly assumed that we would be able to conduct long ('in-depth') interviews, scheduled in advance, in quiet spaces and during our 'core' working hours. In doing so, we had failed to consider, among other things, that this group often has limited control over their working times, does not always have access to a quiet space, and that some interviewees may not speak English.

Economic, cultural, political and affective in/justices

Economic justice

We now go back to considering how ancillary staff experience the economic, cultural, political and affective injustices mentioned earlier (Fraser, 1997; Lynch, 2010). When it

comes to economic or distributive justice, it is clear that cleaning, catering and security roles tend to attract low salaries compared with other employment in the HE sector. Some participants commented on low levels of pay, echoing in this comments from employers who had responded to the institutional survey and had identified pay as one of cause for poor recruitment and retention. Some ancillary staff also noted the lack of opportunities for career development. While some had progressed to a supervisory role, these opportunities were rare and the extra amount of responsibility was not always reflected in an increase in salary. Some also complained of covering for their supervisor without any benefit ('they don't pay me any more when she's on holiday; so I'm just on my normal rate of pay', CL6¹).

Also in relation to economic justice, we found some significant differences across interviewees. Those who were employed in-house and those in catering and security roles, were more likely to be satisfied with pay and broader working conditions. One security staff employed in-house commented positively on the pension, sick pay and increased pay rate for overtime work, concluding: 'The package we get is fantastic' (S2). In comparison one participant commented on how cleaners (who, in this particular institution, were all outsourced) were often eligible for statutory sick pay only, which they described as 'next to nothing' (CL2). Several participants commented that it was common practice to go to work while ill.

Working times were also an issue for some interviewees, with a sense that they had limited control on these. This was maybe best reflected when one participant noted at the end of the interview: 'I've got seven minutes actually to clock in!' (CL2). This, however, varied considerably depending on the role, with cleaners again seemingly having less autonomy in managing their working times. Many however, also commented on the benefits of clear spatio-temporal boundaries between paid work and their personal life, as they were not expected to do any work outside their working times (an exception to this being supervisors who were sometimes called on campus in case of emergency or to cover for other staff).

Also linked to distributive justice, cleaners and catering staff in particular often described their working conditions being straining. Catering staff for example talked of the customer facing part of the role and of the constant noise being 'tiring' (C1), while security staff explained how the alternance of day shift and night shift affected their well-being. One participant (CL3) talked about the contractors asking them to proceed with the 'accommodation cleans' (i.e. cleaning students' rooms when they leave), the state of which they described as 'disgraceful and it's hard work' (CL3). Both catering and cleaning staff complained about the time pressures, with cleaning staff in particular commenting on the

¹ We have replaced the participants' names to ensure anonymity. Throughout the report, 'C' refers to catering staff, 'CL' to cleaning staff and 'S' to security staff. Numbers are used to differentiate between participants within the same category.

discrepancy between the time allocated and the actual time it required to complete a specific task.

Finally, participants often flagged up the gap between their perceived lack of distributive justice (e.g. low pay) and the value of their contribution to the institution. One participant noted how 'it's the lower paid people who make a massive difference to the students' experience' (S5), Another interviewee mentioned being 'the lowest grade person within the organisation, except housekeeping' (S5), yet being 'the first responder having dynamic decisions, do you get the police involved if there's an incident, if somebody's been, if there's an incident, it's down to us whether we make that call. (...) I can't leave site, I'm the only person there, if there's a fire I'm the person who runs to that fire and finds out what it is and then reports back to whoever. If anybody's self-harming, if anybody's got first aid, we are first aid trained, we've all just had mental health awareness training.'

Cultural justice

As well as issues related to distributive justice, participants shared their feeling of mis/recognition. Some did feel valued and recognised, with feelings of recognition often linked to working conditions and economic justice (see above). Porters, for example, reflected on how they enjoyed similar working conditions to other members of the university and were self-aware of the importance of their work in enabling their college or university to operate. They felt valued in ways many cleaning and outsourced staff often did not. One of the outsourced security staff we talked to explained how he felt like 'a number' to the contractor in charge of his placement (S3), arguing that those employed in-house are 'looked after' better. Poorer working conditions compared with in-house staff were often cited by participants to argue that they were not valued. This highlights how distributive and cultural justices are linked with each other on an experiential level, with the former constituting in this case a condition of the latter.

Overall, participants felt respected by other staff and students. However, this was not always the case, particularly among cleaners. One cleaning staff commented that students were often rude to her, for example expecting that she opens a door for them but not thanking her, with some staff occasionally doing the same: 'it's not a nice feeling because you end up with that feeling going throughout the whole day' (CL4). Likewise, another cleaner felt that a minority of staff show contempt for cleaners and think 'they just empty the bins and are mopping the floors'. He commented on how 'they sort of turn their noses up at people like us' and, at times, felt that they 'look at you as if you're a bit of muck on their shoe'. He had felt particularly undervalued when all members of staff received little gifts and some chocolate for Christmas, apart from the cleaning staff: 'I don't know whether that's because they think, "You're not the university," or whether it's they just don't think. That's irks us a bit around Christmas time. I know you shouldn't expect to get

anything but (...) you see other people being praised, “Oh, thank you for all the work you’ve done all through the year,” and we get nothing’ (CL6).

Political justice

In relation to political justice, two main findings were generated by the study. First, union membership was rare and many participants lacked awareness of and/or held negative views of unions. The only union member in our study was also the only one to speak positively about the union (S5). His view had shifted following some difficulties at work and the support he had received from the union at the time. He explained how he had become a union rep so that others would not go through the same challenges as him in terms of what he described as a sharp worsening of his working conditions. Others were either unaware of unions in their workplace (‘I’ve never heard of a union for the cleaning industry’, CL6) or drew on a view of them as an organisation to call upon to if you need help. For many, collegiality in their team meant that joining the union was unnecessary. One participant for example noted: ‘I think they’re good, like when you have a difficult work or something and the boss is a problem but, as I said, my relationship here with my colleagues and my boss is quite good and I don’t think I need to use a union’ (S1). Some showed great hostility towards unions. One participant explained how ‘I would never be a member of a union’, due to having seen them ‘use and abuse’ their power, while also stating, somewhat paradoxically, that they are ‘absolutely useless’ (S2). As well as limited involvement in unions, the interviews showed limited engagement in networks and professional organisations in the field.

Second, also linked to political justice, interviews suggested that ancillary staff have limited input in decision-making at institutional level. Instead, they felt they had to comply with new policy directions. For example, one participant queried how they are paid a low wage but with high responsibility, as also discussed earlier in relation to economic justice. They shared how they were told: ‘You don’t make decisions, you only follow process’ (S5). Another participant explained how ‘Every three months there is a change (C1).’ When asked to elaborate on what was meant by ‘change’, he explained how the catering team were told ‘This is how we’re doing this now; this is how we’re serving now.’ It was clear from his comments that this led to an acute sense of disempowerment, where belonging should have prevailed.

Affective justice

Building on Fraser’s tripartite model of social justice, Lynch and colleagues called for the need to consider affective equality, by which they mean relationship of care, love and

solidarity (Lynch et al., 2009). Without being able to provide a comprehensive account in this brief report, it is worth noting that the research points to several injustices related to care relationships. In particular, the research shows that ancillary work can be, but is not always, compatible with caring responsibilities. For some, the ability to combine paid and care work had been a key factor in choosing their current job. One of the cleaning supervisors we spoke to, for example, explained how his early start enabled him to be back home in time to take his children to school (CL2). For some, their position had been made attractive by predictable working times (for example, C1, who works from 7.30 to 3.30pm and then can spend time with family). While security staff were overall more satisfied with other aspects of their work, this was different when it came to being able to combine paid work with caring responsibilities, with comments that 'Security is not good hours, it's too long' or that 'nights are hard' (S3), and some describing their work-life balance as 'pretty much non-existent' (S5). In some cases, low salary meant that staff did not have any alternative but to do other times, which in turn led to limited work-life balance ('it's work-sleep-work-sleep basically', CL4).

Also related to affective justice, interviews highlighted the importance of collegiality for staff. While collegiality was not always achieved, it was always highly valued. This was often mentioned spontaneously by interviewees and offers a striking contrast with research we have conducted on other categories of staff in the HE sector (Moreau and Robertson, 2019). For example, as we interviewed several cleaners who were part of the same team, it became clear through observations and interviews that they enjoyed each other's company and cared for each other. Likewise, as we interviewed several participants who were part of the same catering team, they all stressed the importance of good relationships with other staff and with their managers, which they thought was an important aspect of their experience (Catering SU).

The highest levels of work-life balance were found among those in catering role employed by the students' union (so outsourced but with very different contractual conditions and at a very different stage of their lives compared with staff outsourced to a private firm). One of them explained he found his current job online and chose this job because it was convenient and within the university he was studying in. It was also close to home and 'lined up very well with my schedule and my sort of working ethos' (C3).

Conclusions and recommendations: Challenging deficit constructions of ancillary staff in HE

Ancillary work/ers are often constructed through a deficit discourse, which frames these jobs through a narrative of deficiency. Peter Magolda's discussions with US-based campus custodians (2016) and our own conversations with a range of UK HE-based ancillary staff highlight how this deficit discourse fails to capture the richness and subtleties of their experiences as well as their agency. Based on the literature and the interviews and observations conducted, it appears that ancillary staff, whether in a catering, cleaning or security role, conduct work which is essential to the operation of universities that goes beyond maintaining clean, safe spaces for others to study or work. Ancillary work requires a range of skills and qualifications. The stories participants told us also often challenged the view of ancillary work as 'fall back' roles. Some staff were well qualified to apply for professional positions, with the level of qualifications varying from no formal qualification to a Master's. Some had been in professional roles or had run their own business. Many took great pride in the services they provided to the university community.

Yet they also experienced a number of injustices, whether related to economic, cultural, political or affective equality (Lynch et al., 2009). We found some considerable diversity among ancillary staff in terms of how they experience these injustices. Overall, security staff seemed to have the highest levels of satisfaction and cleaners the lowest. Likewise, those employed in-house had higher levels of satisfaction compared with those outsourced, with the exception of those employed by student unions who often have a very different set of circumstances.

While we initially intended to discuss in depth the gendered, classed and raced dimensions of ancillary staff's experiences, we were not able to provide significant insights in this report. Participants expressed some discomfort or did not see these questions as relevant. The small number of women who participated in the study also limited our ability to draw some comparison with men's experiences, especially as two out of the four women interviewed were also students employed by the student union - a group whose experience differs strikingly from the experiences of other ancillary staff, as highlighted in the report. In some instances, it felt insensitive to raise issues around identities and inequalities in direct ways, for example when participants shared experiences of misrecognition. This is an aspect which calls for further research, possibly through the use of more participatory methodologies.

Based on the findings from this project, we make three sets of recommendations.

Recommendation 1: Ancillary work/ers are rendered invisible by administrative and research processes. More transparency should be encouraged at national and institutional

levels regarding the recruitment, promotion and working conditions of ancillary staff, whether employed in-house or outsourced. Their contribution to the sector needs to be further acknowledged in policy debates, at institutional and national level, with data about ancillary staff also collected more systematically and in more detail. This project was a pilot study and further research should be encouraged as part of a broader effort to increase their visibility, including the importance of their contribution to HE institutions. In doing so, specific thought should be given to how issues around resistance to be involved in research could be overcome. We argue that research about the HE workplace tends to be academic-centric, and often makes assumptions regarding the needs of participants. Research tools may need to be adjusted to reflect the needs of ancillary staff. Women and minority ethnic staff were particularly difficult to recruit as part of this project so further research should also consider how methodologies

can be more inclusive of minoritised groups within this broad category.

Recommendation 2: While ancillary workers' experiences vary considerably, many experience economic, cultural, political and affective injustices which need to be tackled. As well as an important social justice endeavour, this would help tackle some of the challenges the HE sector is faced with, including in terms of recruitment, retention, and satisfaction in the workplace. In economic terms, working conditions and pay should acknowledge and reward staff's experience and skills, including through clear progression paths and access to training. In the midst of a 'living crisis', many ancillary staff experience financial difficulties. Evidence from employers suggests that working conditions and pay in HE are not on a par with other sectors when it comes to ancillary staff. In terms of cultural in/justices, the sector and individual institutions should also consider ways of ensuring that ancillary staff feel valued and that university cultures are fully inclusive of these groups so as to generate a sense of belonging. To foster a sense of belonging, individual HEIs should consider an intervention which brings together professional, academic and ancillary staff. For example, this may involve ensuring that ancillary staff are represented on websites, invited to events, and more generally enjoy similar rights to other members of the institution. In terms of political in/justices, the sector and individual HEIs should ensure that ancillary staff are given a voice in policy-making processes. This may also require for institutions to work with the unions and for unions and other organisations to raise awareness of their activities among ancillary staff. In terms of affective justice, employers should consider how working conditions can lead to poor work-life balance.

Recommendation 3: Ancillary workers' experiences vary considerably. As a result, tackling the social injustices they face require an approach which takes into consideration the specific challenges faced by these groups. For example, it is clear that cleaning staff are less likely to be satisfied with their working conditions compared with other groups and while security staff presented overall higher levels of satisfaction, they often struggled with 'work-life balance' due to the alternance of day and night shifts. For change to be effective,

key stakeholders and individual organisations should consult with ancillary staff to identify more specifically what could improve their working life. We also found that practices of outsourcing can lead to feelings of alienation. Outsourced staff's working conditions should be as close as possible to those of in-house staff. Employers should consider issues of fairness when staff are outsourced as well as the benefits for employees, institutions and for the student and staff population.

Through this project, we are hoping to kickstart a conversation about a group given limited consideration in HE research and policy circles. We are also hoping that the project will help to generate a better understanding of the contribution of ancillary staff to the HE sector and address some of the injustices they face.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Participant information sheet: Interviews

Appendix 2: Survey template

Appendix 3: Interview schedule

Appendix 4: Sample description: Interviews

Appendix 5: Freedom of Information request

Appendix 6: Survey results

Appendix 1: Participant information sheet: Interviews



PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET - Interviews

Section A: The Research Project

Ancillary staff in UK Higher Education

Brief summary of the study:

The proposed research aims to explore the experiences of ancillary staff working in UK universities and their contribution to the Higher Education sector. The specific questions this project will explore are:

- Who are ancillary staff and how does their re/productive work enable HE institutions and other categories of staff to operate?
- How are the experiences of UK HE-based ancillary staff characterised by economic, cultural, political and care-related in/justices?
- How are these experiences framed by politics of gender and ethnicity?

The project team is composed of Prof. Marie-Pierre Moreau (Principal Investigator, ARU) and Lucie Wheeler (Research Assistant, ARU). The project is funded by the Society for Research into Higher Education (SRHE). We will treat the information you share with us as confidential and nobody outside the research team will have access to it.

Definition of 'Ancillary' staff:

For the purpose of this study, we define ancillary staff as those whose main role involve cleaning, catering and security, while acknowledging that this group is broader. Narrowing the focus to these three categories of staff enables us to grasp the specific challenges and in/justices experienced by them as their working conditions and socio-demographics are likely to present some contrast, for example in terms of skills and gender composition.

Why have I been asked to participate?

As part of the project we would like to conduct some interviews with ancillary staff in Higher Education to find out about staff characteristics, recruitment, promotion and retention policies, working conditions, and satisfaction at work. We would also like to explore how participants make sense of their work, the potential injustices they face and their views on the policies available to them.

If you are employed in a catering, cleaning or security role we would be happy to speak to you, with your consent, about your experiences.

What are the likely benefits of taking part?

We are hoping that this study will contribute to an enhanced understanding of the ancillary workforce (who they are, their experiences, the potential in/justices they face and any difference based on the position as well as gender, ethnicity and social class) and facilitate the development of guidelines and practices addressing the potential economic, cultural, political and affective injustices encountered by the ancillary workforce.

Can I refuse to take part?

Yes, you can refuse to take part without giving a reason and without any repercussion.

Has the study got ethical approval?

The Study has received ethical approval from the School of Education and Social Care Research Ethics Panel within the Faculty of Health, Education Medicine and Social Care at Anglia Ruskin University.

Source of funding for the research, if applicable.

The project is funded by the Society for Research into Higher Education (SRHE).

What will happen to the results of the study?

The data will be stored on the research team's work computers only and password-protected. Data storage will comply with the relevant legal and ethical requirements.

Findings from the research may be presented at conferences and seminars, and published in the form of articles, book chapters, books, media article or blog posts. When writing or talking about the research, we will ensure that the information included is fully anonymised. This will involve using pseudonyms and withdrawing any specific detail that would allow your identification.

Participants are welcome to provide email contact information to the researchers should they wish to be made aware of how to access the study findings once completed.

Contact for further information

If you have any query, please contact the project's Principal Investigator: marie-pierre.moreau@aru.ac.uk. Thank you.

Section B: Your Participation in the Research Project

What will I be asked to do?

You will be asked to participate in a semi-structured interview to discuss your experiences. The interview will focus on how participants make sense of their work, the potential injustices they face and their views of the policies identified in the survey. The interviews will be conducted online, at a time convenient to you, and the interview will last around 40 minutes. The interviews will be recorded and professionally transcribed, then analysed.

In relation to this specific research project, we need to make you aware of the following:

<input type="checkbox"/>	We do not need your personal data at any stage of this research project		
We are responsible for the personal data you give to us as a:			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Data Controller (We are in sole control over the research)	Who are we?:	Anglia University Ruskin
<input type="checkbox"/>	Joint Controller (Where ARU and another organisation are working together on research)	with:	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Data Processor (Where the data will belong to another organisation and ARU is being engaged under contract/agreement to conduct the research and provide an outcome but has no rights over the personal data)	on behalf of:	

I will be asking you for the following information:

Personal Data				Sensitive Personal data	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Name/ Contact details	<input type="checkbox"/>	Image (Photo or video)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Racial/ Ethnicity data
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Age	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Experiences	<input type="checkbox"/>	Political/ Religious beliefs
<input type="checkbox"/>	Address/ location data	<input type="checkbox"/>	Opinions	<input type="checkbox"/>	Trade Union

					membershi p
v	Employment & Earnings	<input type="checkbox"/>	[Other]	<input type="checkbox"/>	Genetic/ Biometric data
<input type="checkbox"/>	ID Numbers (e.g. NHS)	<input type="checkbox"/>	[Other]	<input type="checkbox"/>	Health
<input type="checkbox"/>	Online identifier	<input type="checkbox"/>	[Other]	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sex life/ orientation data

What will happen to your data?

We will follow the requirements laid down by Anglia Ruskin University in order to ensure the security of data, as detailed below. The data management plan will also be compliant with GDPR. All data will be anonymised, with the use of a pseudonym and the withdrawal of details allowing your identification. We will adhere to this principle throughout the research, including in publications from this project. We do not plan to take the research data outside the EEA (the EEA includes EU member states and also Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway).

Storing hard copy project information: Hard-copies of data or documents such as consent forms will be stored in locked filing cabinets with access restricted to the research team. Consent forms will be stored separately from interview files in order to protect participants' confidentiality. We will ensure that documents containing personal information are not left unattended for any significant time on desks. At the end of the project all data and relevant research documents will be provided to administrators for storage. All categories of data will be logged and recorded when they are stored. All data will be retained for a minimum period of 10 years.

Electronic information and digital files: Access to electronically held information relating to project participants will be limited to those who need it through the use of passwords and permissions. Portable storage devices containing transcripts or digital files will be kept in locked cabinets. Digital recordings, interview transcripts, and data analysis files will be kept on a shared network drive in a secure folder with access restricted to the research team. As well as being secure, this will enable ongoing back-up.

Information in transit: We will use a secure, password-protected means of transmitting audio files and transcripts. Recordings will be uploaded to a secure shared folder. Transcripts will be password-protected so that their content can only be accessed by the transcriber and members of the research team. Passwords will be established at an early stage of the project and used consistently thereafter.

Will I receive any payment to take part in the research?

Participants will not receive any payment for taking part in the research.

Are there any possible disadvantages or risks to taking part?

We have conducted a risk assessment for this project. One potential risk to the participant is that the interview questions lead to emotional distress. However, this is unlikely to happen as the research team are all experienced with interviewing and do not anticipate asking any sensitive questions. Please, note that, in any case, you will be able to take regular breaks and withdraw from the research project up to two weeks after the interview without having to justify your decision. Agreement to participate in the study does not affect your legal rights.

Can I withdraw at any time, and how do I do this?

You will be able to withdraw from the study up to two weeks after the interview and without giving a reason. This can be done through email. Should you decide to withdraw from the study after the interview, we will only be able to remove the data collected up to the point of anonymisation.

Please note that throughout the interview, you will not have to answer any questions you do not wish to answer.

What will happen to my data?

Our general privacy notice explaining our use of your personal data for research purposes is available here:

<https://www.anglia.ac.uk/privacy-and-cookies/research-participants>

Please visit this link for information about how long we keep your data, how we keep your data secure, how you can exercise your rights over your data, and make a complaint over our use of your data.

Can I withdraw my data from the study?

I can only remove your data if you ask me before I anonymise it. After this, I won't know which is your data so will not be able to do this.

Whether there are any special precautions you must take before, during or after taking part in the study

No, you do not need to take any specific precautions.

Will I pass onto anyone else what you have told me?

We will adhere to the principles of confidentiality throughout the research. However, there are exceptions, for example if we feel that you are at risk or if you reveal anything illegal.

Summary of research findings

Once the project has been completed, we can email you a summary of the research findings (December 2023) should an email address be supplied. This request can be actioned via email to the research team.

Contact details for complaints

If you have any complaints about the study, you are encouraged to speak to the research lead (marie-pierre.moreau@aru.ac.uk) in the first instance to try and reach an informal resolution. Should you wish to submit a complaint to the University, please use the following contact details.

Email address: complaints@aru.ac.uk

Postal address: Office of the Secretary and Clerk, Anglia Ruskin University, Bishop Hall Lane, Chelmsford, Essex, CM1 1SQ.

Version control

Date 01/02/2023

V2

Appendix 2: Survey template

Ancillary staff in UK Higher Education

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Page 1: Participant Information Sheet

Survey Participant Information Sheet

Thank you for your interest in our survey. Please find below some information about the study for you to read prior to completing the survey. Should you require a more in-depth outline of the participant information sheet, please use the contact details below.

What is the purpose of this study?

The proposed research aims to explore the experiences of ancillary staff working in UK universities and their contribution to the Higher Education sector. The specific questions this project will explore are:

- Who are ancillary staff and how does their reproductive work enable HE institutions and other categories of staff to operate?
- How are the experiences of UK HE-based ancillary staff characterised by economic, cultural, political and care-related injustices?
- How are these experiences framed by politics of gender and ethnicity?

Who are the researchers?

The project team is composed of Prof. Marie-Pierre Moreau (Principal Investigator, ARU) and Lucie Wheeler (Research Assistant, ARU).

Who are we asking to participate?

Who are we asking to participate?

Staff working as Director/Head of Estates / Facilities / HR in UK Higher Education Institutions who can share information about ancillary staff characteristics, recruitment, promotion and retention policies, working conditions, and satisfaction at work.

Definition of 'Ancillary' staff:

For the purpose of this study, we define ancillary staff as those whose main role involve cleaning, catering and security, while acknowledging that this group is broader. Narrowing the focus to these three categories of staff enables us to grasp the specific challenges experienced by them as their working conditions and socio-demographics are likely to present some contrast, for example in terms of skills and gender composition.

Do I have to take part and what will it involve?

You do not have to take part and can refuse to do so without giving a reason and without repercussion.

If you choose to participate, you will be asked to complete a short survey (completion time under 10 minutes) to help draw a broad picture of policies and challenges linked to ancillary staff in HE. You will be asked about staff characteristics, recruitment, promotion and retention policies, working conditions, and satisfaction at work.

Has the study got ethical approval?

The study has received ethical approval from the School of Education and Social Care Research Ethics Panel within the Faculty of Health, Education, Medicine and Social Care at ARU.

What will happen to the results of the study?

The data will be stored on the research team's work computers and password-protected. We will follow the relevant legal and ethical requirements for data storage.

Findings from the research may be presented at events and published in various forms such as journal articles, book chapters etc. Any information used for this purpose will be anonymised.

Participants do not have to disclose their identities or affiliations if they do not wish to.

Participants do not have to disclose their identities or affiliations if they do not wish to.

What are the likely benefits and risks of taking part?

We are hoping that this study will contribute to an enhanced understanding of the ancillary workforce (who they are, their experiences, the potential injustices they face and any difference based on the position as well as gender, ethnicity and social class) and facilitate the development of guidelines.

We have conducted a risk assessment for this project and do not envisage any risks with completing the survey. Please, note that, in any case, you will be able to withdraw from the research project without having to justify your decision. Agreement to participate in the study does not affect your legal rights.

What will happen to my data?

Our general privacy policy explaining our use of your personal data for research purposes is available here: <https://www.anglia.ac.uk/privacy-and-cookies/research-participants>

Can I withdraw my data from the study?

You will have the option to withdraw from the study at any time and without reason. As the survey is anonymised, we will not be able to remove the data already collected up until the point of withdrawal.

Contact for further information and complaints.

Please contact the lead researcher in the first instance: marie-pierre.moreau@aru.ac.uk.

If your issue is unable to be resolved, please contact: complaints@aru.ac.uk.

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Ancillary staff in UK Higher Education

14% complete

Page 2: Participant Consent

PARTICIPANT CONSENT

Title of the project: **Doing the dirty work of academia? Ancillary staff in UK Higher Education**

Main investigator and contact details: Professor Marie-Pierre Moreau (marie-pierre.moreau@aru.ac.uk) Other members of the research team: Lucie Wheeler.

- I agree to take part in the above research. I have read the Participant Information Sheet for the study.
- I understand what my role will be in this research, and all my questions have been answered to my satisfaction.
- I understand that I am free to withdraw from the research at any time, without giving a reason.
- I am free to ask any questions at any time before and during the study.
- I understand what information will be collected from me for the study.
- For the purposes of the Data Protection Act (2018), if this project requires me to produce personal data, I have read and understood how Anglia Ruskin University will process it.
- I understand what will happen to the data collected from me for the research.
- I understand that quotes from me may be used in the dissemination of the research and that these will be anonymised.
- I have been informed how my data will be processed, how long it will be kept and when it will be destroyed.
- I have been provided with a copy of this form and the Participant Information Sheet.

I WISH TO WITHDRAW FROM THIS STUDY.

Ancillary staff in UK Higher Education

28% complete

Page 3: Definition of ancillary staff

Definition of 'Ancillary' staff:

In this study, we define ancillary staff as those whose main role involve cleaning, catering and security, while acknowledging that these categories do not cover all ancillary staff.

Please answer the following questions only in relation to the ancillary staff in your institution.

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- I understand that I am free to withdraw from the research at any time, without giving a reason.
- I am free to ask any questions at any time before and during the study.
- I understand what information will be collected from me for the study.
- For the purposes of the Data Protection Act (2018), if this project requires me to produce personal data, I have read and understood how Anglia Ruskin University will process it.
- I understand what will happen to the data collected from me for the research.
- I understand that quotes from me may be used in the dissemination of the research and that these will be anonymised.
- I have been informed how my data will be processed, how long it will be kept and when it will be destroyed.
- I have been provided with a copy of this form and the Participant Information Sheet.

I WISH TO WITHDRAW FROM THIS STUDY.

If you wish to withdraw from the research, please speak to the researcher or email them at marie-pierre.moreau@aru.ac.uk stating the title of the research or send them this withdrawal slip.

You do not have to give a reason for why you would like to withdraw.

Please let the researcher know whether or not you are happy for data that has been collected up to this point to still be used. You are completely free to ask for any data to also be removed should you wish it to be, as long as the data is not anonymised. When data is anonymised, it means personal data relating to it has been permanently removed, so the researcher will not know which belongs to you.

1 I consent to the above

Yes

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Page 4: Demographics / staff characteristics

2. What is the name of your institution? (Please note that we will not share this information nor any details enabling the identification of you or your institution outside the research team. This is only collected to avoid duplicating data for each institution, to describe the sample and explore potential variations across the sector)

3. Please indicate where your institution is based?

- South East
- London
- North West
- East of England
- West Midlands
- South West
- Yorkshire and the Humber
- East Midlands
- North East
- Scotland
- Wales
- Northern Ireland

4. How would you describe your institution?

- Post-1992
- Pre-1992 and Russell Group
- Pre-1992 but not Russell Group

This part of the survey uses a table of questions. [View as separate questions instead?](#)

a. Please indicate whether the following categories of staff are employed by your institution or through a contractor. (Please tick more than one box in each row if needed)

Please don't select more than 2 answer(s) per row

Please don't select more than 3 answer(s) in any single column.

	Institution	Contractor
Cleaners	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Security staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Catering staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

This part of the survey uses a table of questions. [View as separate questions instead?](#)

f. How many people are employed in each role? If you are unsure, please give an estimate where possible

	How many?
Cleaners (outsourced)	<input type="text"/>
Cleaners (in house)	<input type="text"/>
Security staff (outsourced)	<input type="text"/>
Security staff (in house)	<input type="text"/>

Catering staff(outsourced)

Catering staff (in house)

This part of the survey uses a table of questions. [View as separate questions instead?](#)

b. Are you aware of any challenges for your institution in relation to the employment of the following groups:

	Recruitment		Retention		Terms of Employment		Other (please specify in the box below)	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Cleaners	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Security staff	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Catering staff	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

f. If you selected 'yes' in any of the columns, please provide more details:

This part of the survey uses a table of questions. [View as separate questions instead?](#)

c. Are you aware of any challenges experienced by ancillary staff working in your institution? eg, salary, hours, precarious contracts, career opportunities, terms of employment etc.:

	Yes	No
Cleaners	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

f. If you selected 'yes' in any of the columns, please provide more details:

This part of the survey uses a table of questions. [View as separate questions instead?](#)

c. Are you aware of any challenges experienced by ancillary staff working in your institution? eg, salary, hours, precarious contracts, career opportunities, terms of employment etc.:

	Yes	No
Cleaners	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Security staff	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Catering staff	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

f. If you selected 'yes', please provide more details:

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Ancillary staff in UK Higher Education

57% complete

Page 5: Promotion and retention policies

5. Do you have any policies in place that provide specific support to ancillary staff, and/or any policies that embed this support?

6. What career development opportunities does your institution offer to the ancillary staff?

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Ancillary staff in UK Higher Education

71% complete

Page 6: Working Conditions

This part of the survey uses a table of questions. [View as separate questions instead?](#)

7. What type of contract are ancillary staff employed on?

	Contract type
Cleaners	<input type="text" value="Please select"/>
Security staff	<input type="text" value="Please select"/>
Catering staff	<input type="text" value="Please select"/>

This part of the survey uses a table of questions. [View as separate questions instead?](#)

8. In your institution, are ancillary workers typically on part time or full time contracts?

More info

	Hours
Cleaners	<input type="text" value="Please select"/>
Security staff	<input type="text" value="Please select"/>
Catering staff	<input type="text" value="Please select"/>

9. Do you have procedures in place for ancillary staff to communicate any concerns or queries at your institution?

- Yes
- No

a. If you selected 'yes', please provide some brief information about procedures:

10. Are the trade unions representing ancillary staff recognised in your institution?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

a. Please explain your answer:

11. Do you monitor ancillary staff's satisfaction?

11. Do you monitor ancillary staff's satisfaction?

- Yes
- No

a. If you selected 'yes', please provide more details:

12. Do you monitor ancillary staff's well-being?

- Yes
- No

a. If you selected 'yes', please provide more details:

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Page 7: Sociodemographic Information

Sociodemographic information – please note that this information is only used to describe the overall sample of participants and institutions they represent – names and details allowing identification will not be communicated outside of the research team.

Please provide the following information:

13. Job title:

14. Gender:

15. Ethnicity:

16. Age:

Appendix 3: Interview schedule



Research ethics application number: ETH2223-3330

Project Title: Doing the dirty work of academia? Ancillary staff in UK Higher Education

Reminder about ethical approval.

Ask to record the interview.

Demographic data:

Start with some introductions (prompts: age, no. of years in role, ethnicity, gender, care responsibilities?)

Recruitment:

What made you choose to work in the role you have chosen? (prompts: choice/necessity? How much does salary, work environment, responsibilities play in deciding to take a job?)

How easy was it to find a position? (prompts: where did you look for job listings, what challenges did you come across, how did you overcome these?)

Experiences:

Can you tell us a little about your job role and what your primary responsibilities are?

(prompts: Work pattern? FT/PT/Flexible, employed directly or outsourced, the kinds of tasks completed, times of shifts)

Can you tell us about any challenges you have met and how you overcame these challenges? (prompts: carrying out the role, stereotyping or discrimination? Role specific challenges such as long shifts, early/late shifts, low staff ratios etc)

Has the pandemic affected the way you work? If so, in what way?

Has your own health been affected in any way by your work responsibilities? (prompts: Physical/mental?)

Opportunities for career development and future aspirations

Policies and support:

Are you aware of any policies that relate to you?

Are you a member of a union?

What support do you feel you receive at work/from your employer / colleagues? (prompts: job progression / prospects, communication with management/colleagues)

Appendix 4: Sample description: Interviews

Pseudonym	Category	In house / outsourced	Gender	Ethnicity	Institution (pre- or post-1992)
S5	Porter	In house	Male	White British	Pre-1992 (Russell group)
C2	Catering (supervisor)	In house	Male	White Other	Post-1992
C4	Catering	Outsourced (SU)	Female	White British	Post-1992
C3	Catering	Outsourced (SU)	Male	White Other	Post-1992
C1	Catering	In house	Male	White British	Post-1992
CL3	Cleaner	Outsourced	Male	Mixed Ethnicity	Post-1992
CL4	Cleaner	Outsourced	Female	White British	Post-1992
CL7	Cleaner (supervisor)	Outsourced	Female	White British	Post-1992
CL5	Cleaner	Outsourced	Male	Black African	Post-1992

CL6	Cleaner (supervisor)	Outsourced	Male	White British	Post-1992
CL2	Cleaner (supervisor)	Outsourced	Male	Black Caribbean	Post-1992
CL1	Cleaner	Outsourced	Male	Asian	Post-1992
S2	Security	In house	Male	White British	Post-1992
S4	Security	In house	Male	White British	Post-1992
S1	Security	In house	Male	White Other	Post-1992
S3	Security	Outsourced	Male	White British	Post-1992
S6	Security	In house	Male	Asian	Post-1992
S8	Porter (head)	In house	Male	White British	Pre-1992 (Russell group)
S7	Porter (deputy)	In house	Male	White British	Pre-1992 (Russell group)
C5	Catering	Outsourced (SU)	Female	White Other	Post-1992

Appendix 5: Freedom of information request

FOI Request: Ancillary staff in higher education institutions in the UK

To whom it may concern,

My colleague and I are conducting a study looking at ancillary staff in higher education institutions in the UK. In this study, we define ancillary staff as those whose main role involve cleaning, catering and security, while acknowledging that these categories do not cover all ancillary staff.

Please could you provide the following information:

Please indicate whether the following categories of staff are employed by your institution or through a contractor:

Cleaners

Security staff

Catering staff.

How many people are employed in each role?

Cleaners (outsourced)

Cleaners (in house)

Security (outsourced)

Security (in house)

Catering staff (outsourced)

Catering staff (in house)

Do you have any policies in place that provide specific support to ancillary staff, and/or any policies that embed this support?

What type of contract are ancillary staff employed on?

Fixed Term

Open ended

A mix of both but mostly open ended

A mix of both but mostly fixed term

A mix of both in similar proportions.

In your institution, are ancillary workers typically on part time or full time contracts?

Full time

Part time

A mix of both but mostly full time

A mix of both but mostly part time

A mix of both in similar proportions.

Are the trade unions representing ancillary staff recognised in your institution? Yes/no

Thank you for your time.

Kind regards,

Lucie Wheeler, Anglia Ruskin University

Appendix 6: Survey results

Table 1. Use of part-time and full-time contracts

	JISC survey	Fol	Total
Full Time	21	6	27
Part Time	8	2	10
A mix of both but mostly Full Time	14	34	48
A mix of both but mostly Part Time	13	50	63
A mix of both in similar proportions	5	23	28
No answer given / I don't know	2	10	12

Table 2. Use of fixed-term and open-ended contracts

	JISC Survey	Fol	Total
Fixed Term	6	32	38
Open Ended	40	15	55
A mix of both but mostly Open Ended	9	46	55
A mix of both but mostly Fixed Term	4	6	10
A mix of both in similar proportions	0	9	9
No answer given / I don't know	1	10	11

Table 3. Institutions experiencing challenges when recruiting ancillary staff

	Yes	No
Cleaning Staff	16	6
Catering Staff	15	6
Security Staff	7	12

Table 4. Institutions experiencing retention when recruiting ancillary staff

	Yes	No
Cleaning Staff	6	16
Catering Staff	11	10
Security Staff	5	14

Table 5. Use of in-house and outsourced contracts

	JISC survey	Fol	Total
In house – Cleaning Staff	2982	9564	12546
Outsourced - Cleaning Staff	798	2514	3312
In house – Catering Staff	1643	4591	6234
Outsourced - Catering Staff	385	1464	1849
In house – Security Staff	778	2584	3362
Outsourced - Security Staff	270	775	1045

Table 6. Data provided by institution (via JISC survey or FoI requests)

	FoI	JISC Survey
Full complete responses	86	24
Partial responses	19	
Refused to respond	4	
Information not held	6	
	Total: 129	

Appendix 7: Research outputs

Research report

Moreau, M.P. & Wheeler, L. (2024) Doing the dirty work of academia? Ancillary staff in higher education. London: SRHE.

Journal article

Moreau, M.P. & Wheeler, L. (in preparation) A journal article exploring the experiences of ancillary staff through the lens of Nancy Fraser's work.

Book chapter

Moreau, M.P. and Wheeler, L. (2025) Ancillary staff in higher education: in/visibility, access and mis/recognition. In Pilgrim-Brown, J., Crew, J. and Attridge, E. (Eds) Underrepresented group in higher education (in preparation, abstract accepted by the volume editors).

Conference presentations

1. Moreau, M.P. and Wheeler, L. Doing the dirty work of academia? Ancillary staff in UK Higher Education, SRHE Conference, Aston University, Birmingham, 7 December 2023.

2. Wheeler, L. and Moreau, M.P. Making connections between research and ancillary staff experiences in higher education: a literature review, SRHE Conference, Aston University, Birmingham, 7 December 2023.

Articles and blog posts in non-peer reviewed journals, websites and in the media

Moreau, M.P. and Wheeler, L. (2024) Ancillary workers: an ignored but indispensable part of HE, University World News, 2 March, <https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=2024022810435789>

Moreau, M.P. and Wheeler, L. (in preparation) Blog post for the SRHE website.

Press release

In preparation.