

Welfare Report 2020

OCTOBER 6

James Gurd
TAFF Welfare Rep
welfare@tabsareforflying.co.uk



Aims

The Welfare Rep is a position that TAFF has not recently had on its committee. To inform the aims of this role, and of the TAFF committee in general, we sent out a questionnaire in early May. This report summarises the findings of that survey, to ensure transparency and accountability.

The Questionnaire

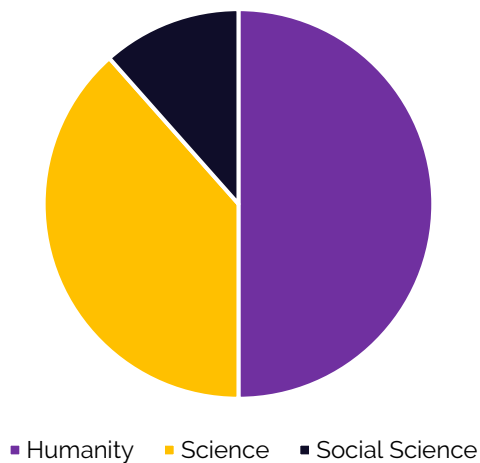
Questions 1, 2 & 3 (Demographics)

Responses:

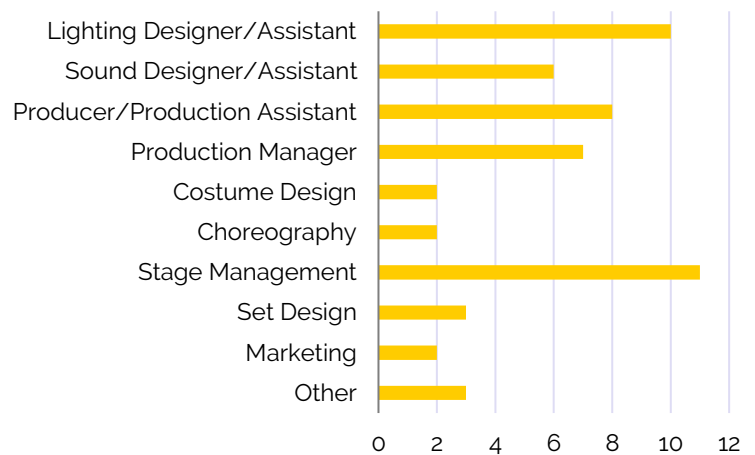
The questionnaire received 26 responses. Exactly half of respondents were humanities students, and half science students. Half of all respondents were 2nd year undergraduates, although other years and postgraduates were represented in the group.

The most common roles taken by TAFF members are lighting designer/assistant and roles in stage management, followed by acting as producer or production assistant.

Respondents by Degree Class



Role Demographics

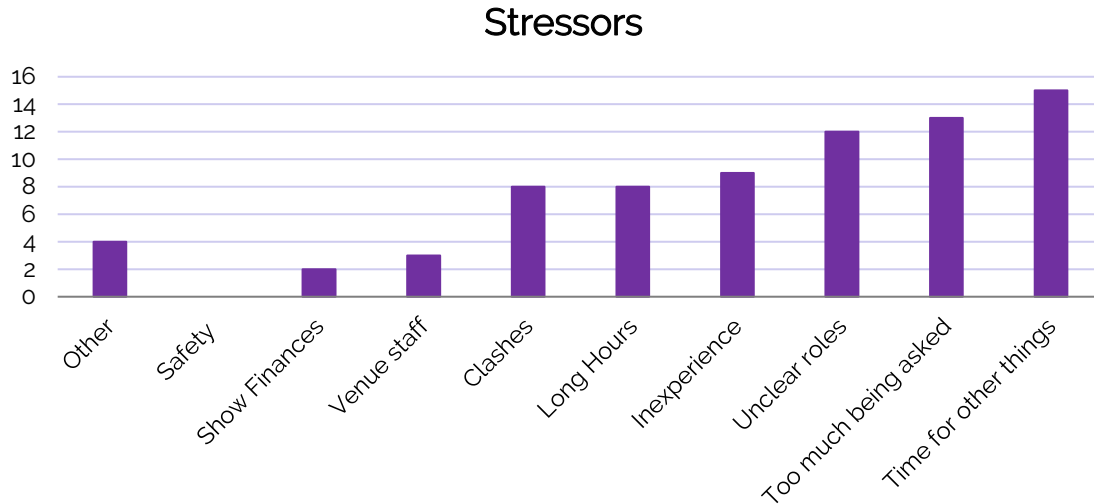


Question 4 (Stressors)

Responses:

The questionnaire asked TAFF members to select what they had experienced to be top three most stressful aspects of backstage drama. The responses (shown below) showed that the most common causes of stress in TAFF are not having enough time for other activities and, perhaps concomitantly, too much being asked of people. This in turn

is closely related to the next two most common stressors: lack of clarity in roles and inexperience. Happily, no members of TAFF felt safety concerns to be pressing. Feedback that fell into the 'Other' category in this question is reported with other comments under Question 7.



The following table shows the causes of stress broken down by role. It is helpful to keep in mind the number of responses for each role when reading the chart. Producers and production managers experience the greatest effect of the time commitment, alongside set designers and stage managers. The feeling that too much is being asked is common across almost all roles, and the lack of role clarity is similarly pervasive, affecting more than half of TAFF members in most roles.

Secondly, the table shows the causes of stress broken down by degree type. Again, it is helpful to bear in mind the relative frequencies. The data suggest that social scientists most consistently face problems with overworking, while those doing science degrees also lack time for other things, but do not think that too much is being asked of them. They are unsurprisingly the most vulnerable to clashes with contact hours. Humanities students show the greatest variability in their stressors.

		Stressors									
		No time for other things	Too much being asked	Lack of clear responsibilities	Inexperience	Clashes	Long Hours	Venue staff	Show Finances	Safety	Other
Roles	Lighting Designer/Assistant	30%	40%	50%	30%	40%	40%	10%	10%	0%	30%
	Sound Designer/Assistant	29%	29%	43%	29%	14%	29%	14%	0%	0%	29%
	Producer/Production Assistant	63%	75%	50%	25%	0%	38%	13%	25%	0%	0%
	Production Manager	71%	71%	57%	14%	14%	43%	0%	14%	0%	0%
	Costume Design	100%	100%	50%	0%	50%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	Choreography	50%	100%	50%	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	Stage Management	64%	64%	55%	18%	27%	36%	9%	18%	0%	0%
	Set Design	67%	100%	33%	0%	33%	67%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	Marketing	50%	50%	100%	50%	0%	50%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	Other	67%	67%	33%	67%	0%	67%	0%	0%	0%	0%

		Stressors									
		No time for other things	Too much being asked	Lack of clear responsibilities	Inexperience	Clashes	Long Hours	Venue staff	Show Finances	Safety	Other
Degree	Humanities	46%	54%	38%	38%	31%	46%	8%	15%	0%	15%
	Science	60%	30%	60%	20%	40%	20%	20%	0%	0%	20%
	Social Science	100%	100%	33%	67%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Action:

- Time:
 - While it is difficult to advise on how much time anyone should be spending on theatre, the new welfare guidelines will describe ways to plan time more effectively, and encouraging assistants could potentially reduce workload.
 - Producers and production managers especially should consider taking on assistants, or co-producing to reduce the time commitment they are making
- Roles:
 - TAFF role advisors are reviewing the TAFF role guidelines, which we hope to better advertise in the coming year, especially to freshers.
 - The new welfare guidelines will encourage production teams to fully inform TAFF members of their specific role requirements, especially those above what is generally expected from the role
- Inexperience:
 - TAFF has made some headway in the past year in encouraging role assistants. Our new guidelines will encourage teams to seek out more assistants, and those who want to learn more to seek out opportunities in ongoing performances

Question 5 (Welfare Contact)

Responses:

Most TAFF members (73%) said that they *sometimes* knew who to go to with welfare concerns during a production. 7 respondents answered that they *never* knew who to contact about welfare concerns, and no one reported *usually* knowing.

Action:

- The new welfare guidelines will include guidance on the role of a welfare contact within teams.
- OUDS also stipulate that teams should have a designated welfare representative; we will ask that OUDS interviews make sure this rep knows about the resources and support available through TAFF.
- The TAFF welfare rep is now available to contact via welfare@tabsareforflying.co.uk, or anonymously through the TAFF website.

Question 6 (Welfare Resources)

Responses:

We asked TAFF members which of the following resources they would find useful if implemented by the committee: Guidelines for good backstage welfare, links to mental health resources, anonymous contact with a welfare rep(s), and welfare drop-in sessions. The responses showed that all of the resources would be valued by TAFF members, but

overwhelmingly the most useful would be the guidelines and the opportunity for anonymous contact, with each being supported by over 80% of responders.

Action:

- Guidelines for good practice in backstage welfare will be published in response to this questionnaire, synthesising suggestions from respondents, the TAFF committee and other welfare guidance available online. This will be available on the TAFF website.
- Links to mental health resources will also be posted on the TAFF website, and regularly updated with the suggestions of TAFF members
- A portal to anonymously contact the welfare rep will be a feature of the new welfare tab on the TAFF website.
- When social-distancing measures are relaxed, the opportunity for more casual drop-ins with the welfare rep will be put in place.

Question 7 (Other Comments)

The common responses to this item are separated by category below:

Planning & Breaks

Responses:

Several TAFF members reported feeling that their time was being wasted and undervalued by unnecessary meetings and poor planning, especially in show week. There was an all-round feeling that other time commitments need to be better accommodated for by production teams, and that generally not enough breaks are provided for overworked team members.

Action:

- The welfare guidelines will include a section on effective planning, and encourage all teams to plan breaks and ensure they're carried out.

Assistants & Assistance

Responses:

TAFF members reported feeling as though productions do not give them enough support, with designers having to source their own assistants/assistance. This is especially an issue for those roles in which there are few experienced TAFF members, so designers are stretched and forced to take on more work than they signed on for.

Action:

- TAFF has made some headway in the past year in encouraging role assistants. Our new guidelines will encourage teams to seek out more assistants, and those who

want to learn more to seek out opportunities in ongoing performances. Hopefully, this in turn will lead to more designers and technicians across Oxford.

Role Guidelines

Responses:

Comments on the survey suggested that TAFF members would like greater clarity on the responsibilities associated with each role in backstage theatre, both across productions and show-by-show. It was suggested that a forum could be created to share role advice. TAFF members also reported that the time they were committing was often not understood by other team members.

Action:

- TAFF role advisors are reviewing the TAFF role guidelines, which we hope to better advertise in the coming year, especially to freshers.
- TAFF role advisors can be contacted by email at any time with suggestions that might be added onto our role guidelines
- We will encourage production team members to be more aware of the time commitment that's part of other roles

Welfare & Further Guidelines

Responses:

The questionnaire showed that designers and technicians would like to know that there is someone they can go to with welfare concerns on their team, and to have centralised resources available through TAFF. One area specifically needing guidance is money-handling, to ensure that not too much is expected of TAFF members financially.

Action:

- Now that TAFF has a welfare rep, there is a central point of contact for welfare concerns, and over time, our bank of welfare resources will build up. The welfare rep can be contacted at any time, and of course the OUDS welfare officer is also available to help out.
- The welfare guidelines we will produce will have a section written by the TAFF treasurer, describing good practice in money handling.

If you would like any **more information**,
or a **more accessible version** of this document, feel free to contact
welfare@tabsareforflying.co.uk