

Survey of Travel Managers on the Use of Virtual Meetings at Universities and Colleges

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Summary

A survey of travel specialists within universities and colleges was carried out in early 2011. A total of 52 individuals from 44 separate institutions responded to the survey. A total of 80% respondents had a travel-related role with 20% dedicated travel managers. Headline results include:

- Only 31% of respondents said that their institutional travel plan encouraged virtual meetings and teleworking as a very or moderately important element.
- 69% of respondents has information on the costs of all staff work-related travel though only 44% had information on the distances for all staff work-related travel.
- Most respondents (66%) said their institution had no quantified targets to reduce staff business travel. Some universities, eg Glasgow, have specific targets on videoconferencing.
- Most respondents said their institutions either rarely used virtual meetings (41%) or used them a little (31%).
- Most respondents (72%) said there was considerable or very considerable potential at their institution for minimising travel using virtual meetings over the next five years. Examples given of areas of highest potential included business meetings and intra-site travel.
- Respondents were evenly split between maybe being on track (48%) or not being on track (48%) to achieve this potential.
- Most respondents (64%) were not aware of the free virtual meeting services provided by JANET. Of those respondents who were not aware or not sure, the majority (80%) would like more information. Examples given of the kind of information were largely simple practical guides.
- Respondents had used a variety of virtual meeting technologies in 2010 – the most popular being audio-only conference (44%), web conference (41%) and videoconference (41%).
- Respondents listed a large number of barriers to the greater use of virtual meetings, the main ones being lack of knowledge amongst potential users (77%); preference for face to face interaction (64%); lack of trust in technology working (59%) and lack of incentive to use it (59%).
- Respondents felt the 3 best means of encouraging greater uptake of virtual meetings were: senior managers setting an example by using it more (66%); simple technical guides to the various technologies (53%); and demonstration projects in pilot areas e.g. estates, IT (53%).

Background

As part of a JISC-funded project on videoconferencing, HEEPI, through its SusteIT initiative is conducting a number of surveys on the use of virtual meeting technologies within the sector. Virtual meetings are defined as ones where people interact in real time over the telephone network (when three or more locations are involved), the Internet or other electronic channels. Examples include audio, video and web conferencing and Elluminate sessions.

This particular survey was aimed at travel specialists across the sector, whilst others are asking similar questions of staff within specific institutions. It is hoped that the surveys will provide useful evidence for the guidance documents and cases HEEPI are planning to produce, and that these will in turn be helpful to travel managers in their roles.

This survey asked travel specialists within institutions about their travel policies and targets, the potential within the institution for virtual meetings, and their awareness of the various JANET videoconferencing services. It also asked which virtual meeting technologies the respondents have used, what the main barriers are and what guidance would be particularly helpful for them.

Respondents were routed according to their responses so not everyone answered every question. Any responses which could identify individuals have not been included in this report to protect privacy.

Results

Question 1

What is your institution?

Respondents: 52

Bath Spa University

Bournemouth University

Bucks New University

Canterbury Christ Church University

De Montfort University (2)

Durham University

City College Plymouth

Leeds Metropolitan University

Leeds Trinity

Liverpool John Moores University

Loughborough University

London School of Economics (2)

Manchester Metropolitan University

Newcastle University

Oxford Brookes University

Reid Kerr College (2)

Royal Agricultural College (2)

Scottish Agricultural College

Staffordshire University

University of Northampton

Ucycle Nottingham Project - based at both universities in Nottingham

University College London

University for the Creative Arts

University of Aberdeen

University of Birmingham

University of Bradford

University of Bristol

University of Central Lancashire

University of Dundee

University East Anglia

University of Exeter (2)

University of Glasgow

University of Leeds

University of Manchester
University of Oxford
University of Reading (3)
University of Southampton
University of St Andrews (2)

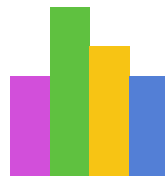
University of Strathclyde
University of Sunderland
University of Worcester
University of York
Wigan & Leigh College

Question 2

What is your role in managing travel issues?

Respondents: 50

- Dedicated travel manager : **10** (20.0%)
- Environmental/sustainability manager with travel responsibility : **17** (34.0%)
- Other travel-related role : **13** (26.0%)
- Don't have any travel responsibilities : **10** (20.0%)

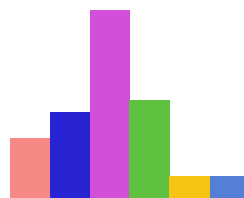


Question 3

Does your institutional travel plan encourage virtual meetings and teleworking as a means of travel avoidance?

Respondents: 39

- Yes - very important element : **5** (12.8%)
- Yes - moderately important element : **7** (17.9%)
- Yes - but only marginal importance : **15** (38.5%)
- No : **8** (20.5%)
- We don't have a travel plan : **2** (5.1%)
- Don't know : **2** (5.1%)



Question 4

If you are able to share the wording of the plan re virtual meetings and teleworking, could you provide us with it, either 1) by cutting and pasting relevant sections below, 2) by providing a link and page reference below, or 3) emailing the document to l.m.hopkinson@bradford.ac.uk?

Respondents: 10

University of Glasgow Strategic Travel Plan 2010-2015

<http://www.gla.ac.uk/services/estates/organisationstructure/estatesadministrationservices/travelplanning/travelplan/>

Targets for business travel and operational transport

- increase use of video conferencing by 10% by 2014, based on 2008 data

University of Oxford Sustainable Travel Plan 2008-2012

<http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/media/global/wwwadminoxacuk/localsites/estatesdirectoratedocuments/travel/stafftravelplan.pdf>

Non travel initiatives

- Investigate systems for monitoring staff business air travel and develop an air travel reduction strategy
- Install new videoconferencing facilities for departmental use
- Provide departments with teleconferencing phone, and / or webcam equipment in order to increase facilities for virtual meetings
- Promote the University Flexible Working Scheme, in particular teleworking and compressed hours (details available at <http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/ps/staff/family/flexible/flexindex.shtml>)

University of St Andrews Travel Plan 2010

<http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/media/Travel%20Plan%202006-2011%20version%20final.pdf>

5.6 Home Working and Flexible Working. The University of St. Andrews has developed a policy for home and other forms of flexible working. This policy will help to reduce the numbers of journeys made by staff.

5.7 Videoconference Facilities. The University of St Andrews has installed videoconference facilities that enable staff to communicate with colleagues and organisations in different parts of the United Kingdom and the world without the need for transport.

University of Exeter Sustainable Travel Plan 2010-2015

http://www.exeter.ac.uk/media/universityofexeter/corporateservices/sustainability/pdf/Sustainable_Travel_Plan_2010-2015.pdf

7.2.2 Video-conferencing and e-learning.

Video-conferencing and e-learning have great potential to save multiple journeys, sometimes of considerable distances. Video-conferencing uses a set of interactive technologies allowing one or more people at separate locations to communicate via a sound and video link.

In 2010 the virtual Exeter Learning Environment (ELE) replaced the virtual learning environment known as WebCt. Staff and students benefit from an enhanced virtual learning environment which has enabled distance learners to benefit from podcasts of lectures and seminars, discussion forums, reading material and other relevant resources. ELE enables staff and students to study remotely and thus reduces the need to travel to the campuses (both from within and outside the UK).

Current initiatives

- All staff can request the use of videoconferencing facilities via the room booking and helpdesk systems
- Video-conferencing links have been introduced between the Streatham Campus, the Cornwall Campus (Tremough) and PCMD
- Video-conferencing workshops are available to enable staff to utilise it with confidence
- Improvement of video-conference facilities, which comprises fixed and mobile facilities with dedicated technical support
- Development of podcast facilities for staff and student.

Actions 2010-2015.

- Increase awareness of videoconferencing facilities and instruction workshops
- Regularly encourage the practical use of video-conferencing to reduce the need to travel
- Continue to improve video-conferencing facilities and e-learning facilities in line with advances in technology.

Bournemouth University Travel Plan 2008-2012

http://www.bournemouth.ac.uk/about/the_global_dimension/save_earth/bournemouth_university_travel_plan_2008.pdf

“We recognise the benefits that can accrue in some circumstances if the need to travel at all can be removed. To this end a new video-conferencing suite has been installed at the Talbot Campus ready for the 2007-08 academic year, and the promotion of it will be considered carefully to maximise awareness and its value to staff by eliminating the need to travel to meetings. The potential for flexible working and home working that reduces the need for staff to travel to the University every day of the week will also be considered in conjunction with Personnel.”

Leeds Metropolitan University, Transport Strategy Progress Report 2006

http://www.leedsmet.ac.uk/metoffice/estateservices/transport/index_transport_strategy.htm

"5.12 TRAVEL REDUCTION STRATEGY. TRADITIONAL WORKING METHODS OF SOME GROUPS OF STAFF WILL BE EVALUATED. Opportunities for more flexible work delivery, teleworking, video conferencing and flexitime will all be evaluated. It is hoped that alternative ways of working will prove possible so as to ease the transport burden and particularly the peak time pressures on the transport network. PROGRESS TO DATE . This is the one area of the transport strategy that has not progressed. However, it has been incorporated into the travel review with the Corporate Travel Partnership."

Anon

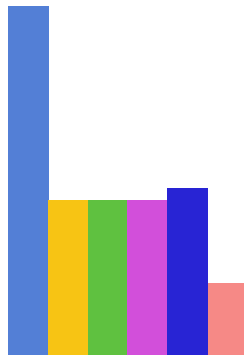
“It is part of the travel hierarchy and includes a link to VC booking services. Is the journey necessary? Can I use email, telephone or video-conferencing instead? Can I postpone the meeting because I’m / a colleague is going there next week?”

Question 5

Which of the following travel-related COST information is easily available to help make the business case for virtual meetings? (Please tick all that apply. Note that responses 2-5 are sub-sets of response 1 - we are interested to know exactly what data is collected)

Respondents: 36

- Costs of all staff work-related travel (i.e. excluding commuting from and to home) : **25** (69.4%)
- Costs of staff travel to non-institutional locations just in the UK : **11** (30.6%)
- Costs of staff travel to non-institutional locations outside the UK : **11** (30.6%)
- Costs of staff travel within the institution i.e. between sites : **11** (30.6%)
- Costs of student travel that are covered by the institution : **12** (33.3%)
- Other travel-related cost categories : **5** (13.9%)



Question 6

Please elaborate on other travel related cost categories that you have data on.

Respondents: 5

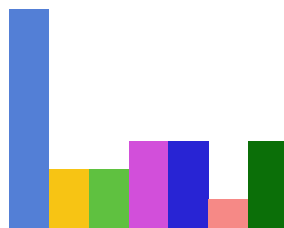
- expenses mileage claims with no breakdown of location. available, but not easily, are: travel within UK (plane, rail etc), travel within EC (plane, rail etc), travel world (plane, rail, etc)

Question 7

Which of the following travel-related MILEAGE information is easily available to help make the environmental case for virtual meetings? (Please tick all that apply. Note that responses 2-5 are sub-sets of response 1)

Respondents: 34

- Distances for all staff work-related travel (i.e. excluding commuting from and to home) : **15** (44.1%)
- Distances of staff travel to non-institutional locations just in the UK : **4** (11.8%)
- Distances of staff travel to non-institutional locations outside in the UK : **4** (11.8%)
- Distances of staff travel within the institution, i.e. between sites : **6** (17.6%)
- Distances of staff commuting travel to and from home : **6** (17.6%)
- Distances of student course-related travel : **2** (5.9%)
- Distances of other kinds of travel not in this list : **6** (17.6%)



Question 8

Please elaborate on other travel areas you have distance data on.

Respondents: 6

- again there is no option to say we don't currently do this
- distances for private car mileage can be calculated from expenses claims (40 p per mile) some data on flight distances is available (UK, EC, World) if University travel agent is used
- Only collect mileage data on travel by car. This is for student mileage that is reimbursed, and for all other staff travel by car. we do not collect any mileage data on travel by plane, train, taxi or hire car.

Question 9

Does your institution have any quantified targets to reduce staff business travel and/or the use of virtual meetings and teleworking?

Respondents: 29

- Yes : 6 (20.7%)
- No : 19 (65.5%)
- Don't know : 4 (13.8%)



Question 10

Could you tell us what your targets are?

Respondents: 6

- reduce the number of business air and car miles by 10% by 2014, based on 2008 data · increase use of video conferencing by 10% by 2014, based on 2008 data
- Reduce tonnes CO₂eq emissions per year per equivalent person from 0.69 in 2008/09 to 0.552 in 2015/16
- The CO₂ contribution goes into our Carbon foot print and we are committed to reduce that foot print in line with Government targets eg 34% by 2020
- There are integral to our carbon management plan and institutional travel plan which also deals with commuter travel. They therefore form part of reducing SOV journeys made by staff by 4% within the next three years. However specific target just for business travel is not quantified in a percentage but is integral to it.

Question 11

Which of the following statements best describes your institution with regard to virtual meetings?

Respondents: 29

- Virtual meetings are used a lot : 2 (6.9%)
- Virtual meetings are used a little : 9 (31.0%)
- Virtual meetings are rarely used : 12 (41.4%)
- Don't know : 6 (20.7%)

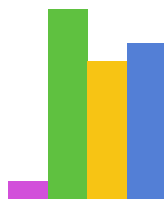


Question 12

Which of the following statements best describes your institution with regard to teleworking?

Respondents: 29

- Teleworking is practiced a lot : **1** (3.4%)
- Teleworking is practiced a little : **11** (37.9%)
- Teleworking is rarely practiced : **8** (27.6%)
- Don't know : **9** (31.0%)

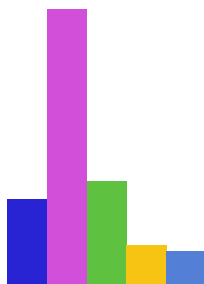


Question 13

How much potential do you think your institution has for minimising travel using virtual meetings over the next five years?

Respondents: 29

- Very considerable : **5** (17.2%)
- Considerable : **16** (55.2%)
- Limited : **6** (20.7%)
- Minimal : **0** (0.0%)
- Don't know : **2** (6.9%)



Question 14

Could you elaborate on which are the areas of highest potential?

Respondents: 21

- Academic collaboration
- Inter-campus travel for internal meetings. Inter-institutional meetings.
- Inter-office meetings and meetings with external stakeholders.
- More video-conferencing

- Most meeting I attend could take place remotely and I guess that applies to my colleagues. It also applies the EAUC Board where I was a member. There was no progress there either on this matter
- Mostly business type meetings, University already does remote lectures.
- Not sure; I don't have much involvement in this area.
- reducing intra site travel to meetings, reducing travel to external meetings
- skype contact instead of travelling between campus
- Staff meetings (internal and external) Virtual learning environments Improving HR flexible working (home working, flexi-working) policies
- Travelling between sites for meetings
- use of videoconference, tele-conference,
- Use of WebEx virtual meetings, teleconference & flexible home working
- We operate over five geographically dispersed sites. Recording staff mileage via expenses will be essential to promote video-conferencing etc. Current equipment is well used but there is limited availability

Question 15

Do you feel that things are on track to achieve this potential?

Respondents: 21

- Definitely : **1** (4.8%)
- Maybe : **10** (47.6%)
- No : **10** (47.6%)

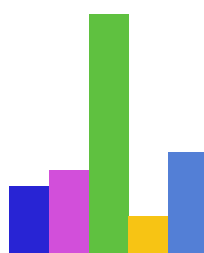


Question 16

How much potential do you think your institution has for minimising travel using teleworking over the next five years?

Respondents: 29

- Very considerable : **4** (13.8%)
- Considerable : **5** (17.2%)
- Limited : **14** (48.3%)
- Minimal : **0** (0.0%)
- Don't know : **6** (20.7%)



Question 17

Could you elaborate on which are the areas of highest potential?

Respondents: 10

- a reduction in intersite travel would be a tangible and quick win to reduce travel emissions and expenditure
- Reducing conference physical attendance and web-casting lecturers.
- Working from home

Question 18

Do you feel that things are on track to achieve this potential?

Respondents: 9

- Definitely : 2 (22.2%)
- Maybe : 6 (66.7%)
- No : 1 (11.1%)



Question 19

We would like to do some case studies on travel avoidance through remote and virtual working. Are there any good examples from your institution that we could follow up on? If so, please describe them briefly and indicate how we could get more information on them.

Respondents: 29

Comments not included here.

Question 20

Are you aware of the free virtual meeting services provided by JANET (and ultimately financed by the UK higher and further education funding bodies)? Examples include the ability to book and receive technical support for videoconferences using university and college suites, and a downloadable programme - JVCS Desktop - which allows conferencing from your personal computer.

Respondents: 39

- Yes : 9 (23.1%)
- No : 25 (64.1%)
- Not sure : 5 (12.8%)



Question 21

Would you like more information on JANET conferencing services?

Respondents: 30

Yes : 24 (80.0%)

No : 6 (20.0%)



Question 22

Please indicate below what kind of information you would like, and leave your email address

Respondents: 24

- General info
- How it works - How to use it from my PC
- a simple guide about what help is on offer and how I could get colleagues to use this.
- all previously mentioned in last question.
- any info on JANET virtual support
- Anything that has a practical use.
- All information would be useful.
- General contact information that I can easily fwd to colleagues.
- General information about conferencing via JANET and JCVS please.
- General information at the moment as this would need to be tied up in conjunction with our IT department. We are currently trying to benchmark what we have at present.
- how can it work for me?
- How does it work
- How it works!
- How to access it, how secure it is, I am not sure our IT department here know much about it.

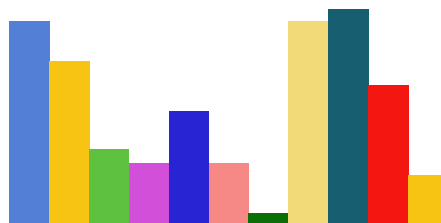
- I would be grateful for information on how the Janet conferencing system works, together with details on how to get connected etc.
- I would like to know what services it can provide and how I would book/secure these services.
- Initial documentation.
- More about Janet what it does and how it can be implemented.
- Set up, practicalities, available grants, etc.
- Use of video conferencing on desk top computers

Question 23

Which of the following virtual meeting technologies have you made use of in 2010? Please tick all that apply. (The first response obviously overlaps with those below it but it is helpful if you could tick both where appropriate).

Respondents: 39

- At least one kind of videoconference : **16** (41.0%)
- Videoconferencing room/suite within your institution : **13** (33.3%)
- Videoconferencing room/suite within another institution : **6** (15.4%)
- Elluminate : **5** (12.8%)
- Desktop video (e.g. JVC Desktop, Skype) with 1 other person : **9** (23.1%)
- Desktop video (e.g. JVC Desktop, Skype) with 2 or more other people : **5** (12.8%)
- Access grid node : **1** (2.6%)
- Web conference (audio + viewing documents etc. on screen) : **16** (41.0%)
- Audio only conference (e.g. telephone based using BT Meet Me) : **17** (43.6%)
- Instant messaging (e.g. MSN, Skype) with 2 or more other people : **11** (28.2%)
- Other : **4** (10.3%)



Question 24

Could you give details of the other kind of virtual meeting technology that you used?

Respondents: 4

I've done none of these you didn't give the option. We are still in the stone age on this matter.

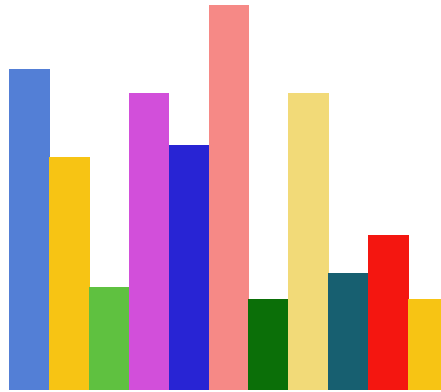
Question 25

What do you feel are the main barriers to the greater use of virtual meetings within your institution? (Please tick all that apply).

Respondents: 39

- Preference for face-to-face interaction/dislike of electronic interaction : **25** (64.1%)
- Too few videoconferencing enabled suites/meeting rooms : **18** (46.2%)
- Inconvenient location of videoconferencing facilities : **8** (20.5%)
- Lack of trust in technology working/lack of user confidence : **23** (59.0%)
- Difficulty in setting up/needs too much IT support : **19** (48.7%)
- Lack of knowledge amongst potential users : **30** (76.9%)

- Unhelpful IT department : **7** (17.9%)
- Lack of incentive to use it : **23** (59.0%)
- Potential users see transport as beneficial or a perk : **9** (23.1%)
- Limited awareness of environmental impacts of travel : **12** (30.8%)
- Other barriers : **7** (17.9%)



Question 26

What other barriers would you identify?

Respondents: 7

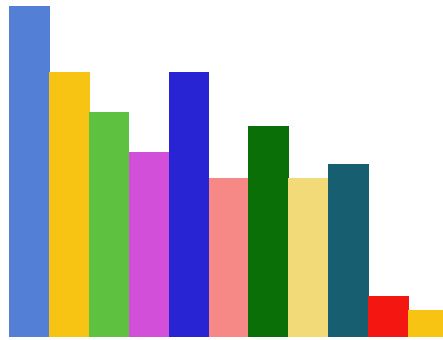
- Although we have good facilities I think not all staff are aware of them. I think people are also not used to using video and until they have a go, they are a bit scared.
- I am a part time lecturer who lives a long way from my institute. For me it is far easier to use telephone meetings etc. But most of my other colleagues live nearby so find it easier to just attend a meeting in person. I can have children at home whilst doing a meeting on the phone so don't have to pay childcare, but people do not appreciate the costs of childcare and travel.
- Our IT network infrastructure and systems have compatibility problems with trials software.
- Scientific recognition comes from papers presented and conferences attended. No academic recognition for virtual participation. Limited networking.
- Unreliability of systems (feedback in particular)

Question 27

What do you feel would be the best means of encouraging greater uptake of virtual meetings? (Please tick the 3-5 that you feel are the most important)

Respondents: 38

- Senior managers setting an example by using it more : **25** (65.8%)
- Demonstration projects in pilot areas, e.g. Estates, IT : **20** (52.6%)
- Better knowledge/awareness of the financial costs of travel : **17** (44.7%)
- Better/knowledge awareness of the environmental costs of travel : **14** (36.8%)
- Simple technical guides to the various technologies : **20** (52.6%)
- More examples of good practice : **12** (31.6%)
- Awareness raising events that demonstrate the technology : **16** (42.1%)
- Financial incentives to make greater use of it (paid for from travel savings) : **12** (31.6%)
- More investment in conferencing technology within institutions : **13** (34.2%)
- Other means : **3** (7.9%)
- Do not know : **2** (5.3%)



Question 28

Please can you elaborate on other means of encouraging greater uptake of virtual meetings?

Respondents: 3

- limit on travel budget if staff cannot prove that there was no alternative to travel (such as use of VC technology) guides for completely new users - how to book, what they can expect, advantages of VC use
- Monitoring and publicising usage of VC, and turning this into a positive success story. i.e. by using VC kg CO2e saved.
- Skype is so simple and easy that as long as staff know that they can use it, and the organisation supports the purchase of web cams/mics it could quickly take off. The only caveat is the use in shared offices.

Question 29

We would like to produce some simple guides to the different virtual meeting technologies mentioned in the survey, and inform these by user comments. Would you be willing to help by participating in some trial uses, e.g. with internal colleagues, or travel managers at other institutions, and reporting back on the outcomes?

Respondents: 38

- Yes : **27** (71.1%)
- No : **11** (28.9%)



Question 30

Please could you provide your name, email address, and details of the technologies you'd be interested in trialling?

Respondents: 27

- Would like to trial informal vc systems (like skype or similar) to encourage less intersite travel
- Any tools that reduce the need to travel and that can be used at my University
- Video Conferencing Desk top VC
- As per previous question, we are already using many of these technologies, however I'd be happy to collaborate in developing guides / review how we may extract further benefits from what we already have.
- Would be happy to trial any technology.
- Any technologies
- Video conferencing
- desktop Small meeting room 8-12 people Large lecture theatre
- I know so little I can't give examples...you assume too much knowledge on this subject
- We could trial any technology that would work with our system. I have limited knowledge of how these things work but am willing to help where I can.
- I would like to know more before agreeing to undertake a trial as we have very limited facilities here at the moment.
- We have a videoconferencing room but I have only used it once, with IT help. Would like to make better use
- I would need to consult with colleagues before committing to anything but am interested in learning more about all the technologies mentioned.
- desktop based meetings
- we completed this together using Skype sharing the screen. happy to help in any way
- anything to do with training.
- JVCS desktop

Question 31

Are there any other comments you'd like to make about virtual meetings or teleworking in your institution, or about how our project could assist your work?

Respondents: 37

Some comments not included here for privacy reasons.

- Currently there are too many types of vc. Many higher quality (than desktop systems) are too prone to problems, it should just work like using a phone but rarely does.
- I would like to be able to measure the uptake of VC but other than looking at booking forms (which isn't always reliable) this hasn't been possible. Also smart ways of booking the facilities. Our Education Division block book VC facilities at the start of term. They don't always update the booking system if they aren't planning to use the room.
- Just get people to understand it is dated to spend hours travelling, money and effort in this way when phone/internet meeting can be far more effective.
- The whole survey is premised on the assumption that teleconferencing and telemeetings are a good thing. I don't think they are. The most productive meetings are in an alternate environment to your usual one. Telemeetings just become another aspect of work.
- We are assessing work related travel and it is a considerable expense / source of carbon.