

# Shifting academic careers: implications for enhancing professionalism in teaching and supporting learning



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# I. Introduction

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The Higher Education Academy's (HEA's) proposed programme of strategic, evidence-informed learning and teaching enhancement for the UK higher education (HE) sector from 2014-15 to 2016-17 will include a work stream relating to 'staff transitions'. Enhancement research and activity will therefore relate to the reward and recognition of teaching as well as the recognition and accreditation of programmes against the UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF). As a precursor, the HEA commissioned this review of the literature to address the changing nature of academic careers in higher education, including a shift in some institutions towards the use of 'teaching-only' contracts. The HEA feels it is important to gain an understanding of this, as well as the emerging professional development needs of teaching staff who may have moved from traditional academic roles and contracts (including research, teaching and knowledge exchange) to so-called 'teaching-only' roles and contracts, and how the HEA could potentially support this (new) group of staff.

In particular, this report aims to:

- 1 provide a brief review of the literature focusing on the changing nature of academic careers in the higher education sector, including any shift towards 'teaching only' contracts; and
- 2 identify the key issues in terms of teaching and learning, continuing professional development and reward and recognition arising from these developments.

Recent research on academic work and careers (e.g. Fitzgerald *et al.* 2012; Gornall and Thomas 2014; Locke and Bennion 2011) has identified a series of increasing challenges to academics and academic work that are being intensified with the expansion of higher education, the reduction in public funding, the transfer (in England) of most of the costs of higher education to students/graduates, and the growing demands of students, employers, politicians and others. Individual academics are under pressure to recruit, teach and graduate an increasingly diverse range of students; to attract research income and generate publications and citations in high status academic journals; and to maximise the commercial and reputational value of both of these core activities. Higher education institutions (HEIs) have had to respond rapidly to these challenges in increasingly flexible ways, for example, by reforming faculties and schools and introducing senior academic management roles that operate horizontally across the institution as well as vertically managing academic staff.

To date, empirical research, such as the *Changing Academic Profession (CAP)* survey (Locke 2011a), seems to suggest these external pressures have a variable effect on different types of institution and academics with different conditions of employment and at different career stages. Research has become the key activity for individuals looking for job security and career progression to the highest professional grades. With the UK Coalition Government's recent higher education reforms has come a renewed emphasis on teaching – or, rather, the 'student learning experience' – together with class sizes, contact hours and the degree to which those who work in higher education are qualified to teach (BIS 2011; Gibbs 2010, 2012). This has coincided with an increase in the numbers of those UK academics on teaching-only contracts and, possibly, an even greater number in teaching-focused roles regardless of their formal contractual status. These shifts are reconfiguring academic work and careers and it is timely to consider their implications for enhancing teaching and supporting learning. In particular, whether they are leading to attempts to 'professionalise' teaching and broader aspects of the academic role from outside or above, rather than encouraging new forms of 'professionalism' that emerge from within the profession itself.

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<sup>1</sup> The phrase 'teaching-only' is used as short-hand throughout this report, even though individuals on such contracts may undertake other activities, such as student recruitment.

This report commences by asking what we can tell from the data collected about academic and other staff in higher education institutions in the UK. It then examines some of the major medium-term trends, followed by an assessment of some more recent, short-term developments. The report then focuses on academics on teaching-only contracts and in teaching-focused roles, the various routes into them, and the possible reasons for these developments. It suggests that these shifts may be storing up problems for the continuing attractiveness of academic work and careers and argues for a reinvigoration of professionalism and professional identity in the sector.

## 2. What we can tell from the data

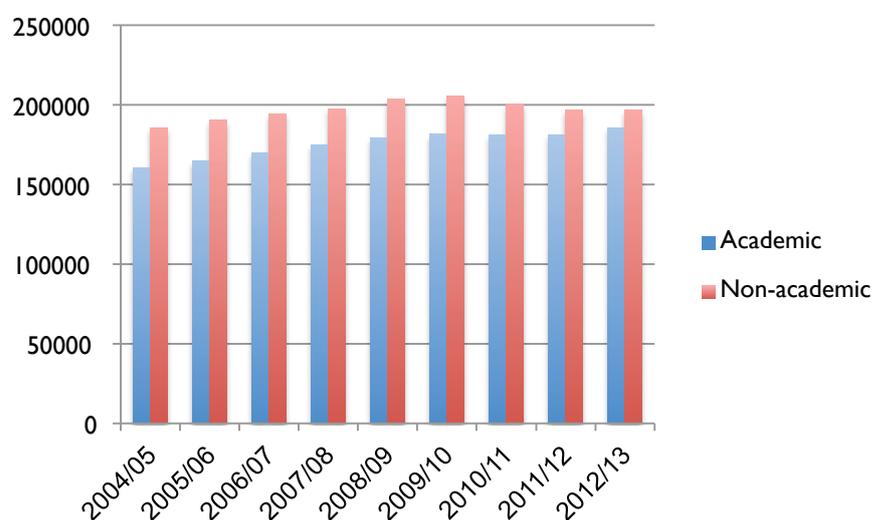
In 2012-13, there were over 185,000 academic staff in all (162) UK higher education institutions, as shown in table one. Academic staff are defined by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) as those responsible for planning, directing and undertaking academic teaching and/or research. They also include vice-chancellors, medical practitioners, dentists, veterinarians and other health care professionals who undertake lecturing or research activities. As shown in table one, 83.8% were in England, 9.3% in Scotland, 5.2% in Wales and 1.8% in Northern Ireland. These were employees with academic roles only, in other words, not combined with professional/support roles. They represented 48.5% of the total of those working in HEIs, the rest comprising staff with a 'professional/support role only', such as managers, administrators and technical assistants.

Table 1: Academic staff (excluding atypical) by location of HEI and mode of employment, 2012-13

Mode	England	Scotland	Wales	Northern Ireland	All UK HEIs
Full-time	100,565	13,385	5,880	2,665	122,500
Part-time	54,920	3,840	3,685	645	63,085
All	155,485	17,225	9,565	3,305	185,585

Source: HESA 2014

Chart 1: Trends in numbers of staff employed in higher education institutions by function 2004-05 to 2012-13



Source: HESA 2014

From 2004, there was a steady rise in both academic and non-academic staff until 2010-11, when the increase in academic staff slowed to 0.1% (but picked up again in 2012-13) and the number of non-academic staff actually decreased by 1.9% (but remained stable in 2012-13), as shown in chart one.

## Grade

The standard academic grades are lecturer, researcher, senior or principal lecturer, reader, and professor, with the last of these making up 9.6% of all academic staff (8.9% of non-clinical full-time academics) in 2011-12. Unfortunately, the HESA data no longer distinguish between these grades, except for the professoriate, and the definitions changed in 2012-13, so even the data for this category are not directly comparable across years.

## Subject

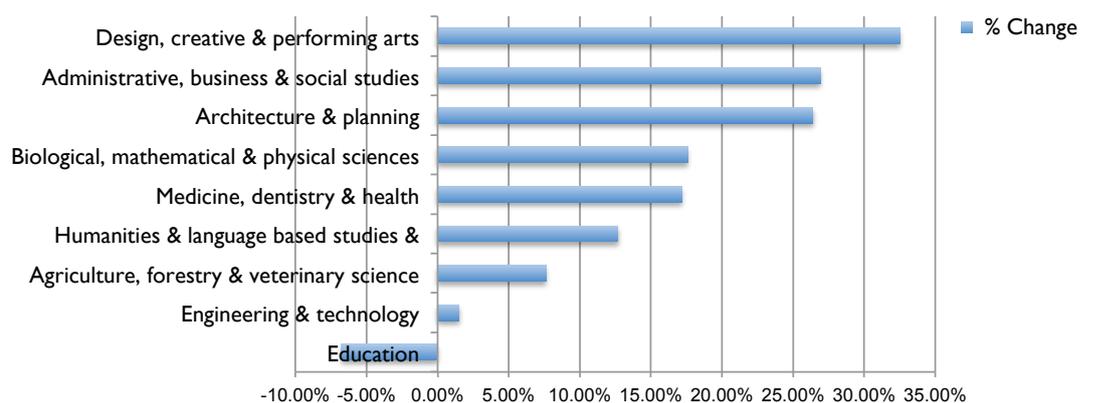
Table two and chart two offer a summary of changes in nine broad subject groupings between 2004-05 and 2012-13.

Table 2: Academic staff by subject area, 2004-05 and 2012-13

Subject area	2004-05	2012-13	Change	% Change
Education	13,705	12,775	-930	-6.79%
Engineering & technology	21,120	21,440	320	1.52%
Agriculture, forestry & veterinary science	2,100	2,260	160	7.62%
Humanities & language based studies & archaeology	15,110	17,025	1,915	12.67%
Medicine, dentistry & health	38,330	44,905	6,575	17.15%
Biological, mathematical & physical sciences	23,830	28,025	4,195	17.60%
Architecture & planning	2,975	3,760	785	26.39%
Administrative, business & social studies	28,910	36,695	7,785	26.93%
Design, creative & performing arts	11,505	15,245	3,740	32.51%

Source: HESA 2006, 2014

Chart 2: Academic staff by subject area 2004-05 and 2012-13 – percentage change



Source: HESA 2006, 2014

The largest grouping was in Medicine, Dentistry and Health, which saw the second highest absolute increase over this period. The highest absolute increase was in Administrative, Business and Social Studies, with Biological, Mathematical and Physical Sciences also growing significantly. Design, Creative and Performing Arts saw the largest percentage change over this period. The only reduction was in Education, which may have been for a variety of reasons, including less funding for initial teacher training – more of which now flows through schools – less funding for research, and an ageing population that has retired and not been replaced.

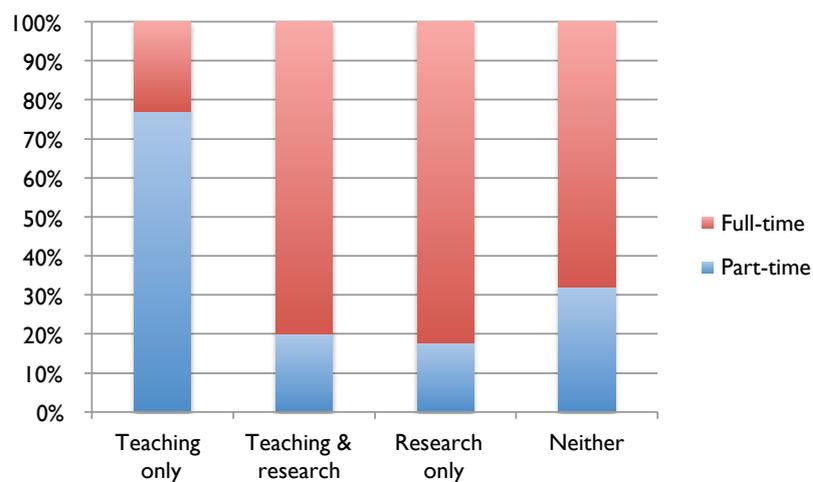
## Mode of employment

Nearly 34% of academics worked part-time and nearly 36% were on fixed-term contracts in 2012-13. Of those academics on full-time contracts, 25% were fixed term. Among part-time academics, this proportion rises to nearly 56%. Turnover of part-time staff was relatively higher than for other staff in higher education institutions (UCEA 2013). In addition to these, 74,075 atypical staff were employed by HEIs on academic contracts. These included staff “whose working arrangements are not permanent, involve complex employment relationships and/or involve work away from the supervision of the normal work provider. These may be characterised by a high degree of flexibility for both the work provider and the working person” (DTI 2003, paragraph 23). It might be fruitful to compare the degree and nature of ‘casualisation’ in the UK with Australia where, it is argued, it has led to a fundamental change in the nature of academic work and the structure of the academic labour market (May *et al.* 2011).

Between 2011 and 2012, the number of open-ended/permanent part-time academics fell by nearly 16%, and over the same period the number of fixed-term part-time academics increased by nearly 19%. This occurred once the Westminster Coalition Government’s policies on HE funding, fees and student numbers in England were known. There may have been a number of factors involved here, but one explanation might be that HEIs in England were preparing for the cuts and uncertainty about student numbers (and therefore tuition fee income) and giving themselves greater flexibility in case their circumstances changed dramatically. The loss of academics on open-ended/permanent contracts may have been through voluntary severance schemes, compulsory or voluntary redundancies, those beyond retirement age leaving, or the conversion of open-ended/permanent contracts to fixed-term contracts. There would also have been some uncertainty in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, as they watched to see how the English reforms played out.

However, the number of full-time open-ended/permanent academics increased by over 4% from 2011-12 to 2012-13, although the overall number of part-time academics has not changed much in the past four years. This increase might have been due to the Research Excellence Framework (REF), with research-intensive universities recruiting research stars and their high quality REF outputs with them. Certainly, English HEIs were anticipating a real-terms increase in staff costs from 2012-13 onwards (HEFCE 2013, see Chart 5 below). If this was due to the REF, this increase is likely to flatten out post 2013-14, as cost controls are reasserted.

Chart 3: Academic employment function by mode of employment, 2012-13



Source: HESA 2014

Just over half of all academic staff were in teaching and research roles in 2012-13, just over 25% were on teaching-only contracts and nearly 23% only undertook research. However, these overall figures hide very different profiles between those on full-time and part-time contracts, as illustrated in chart three. Among those on full-time contracts, over 60% teach and research, just 9% only teach and nearly 30% are research-only. Whereas, among part-time academics, 30% both teach and research, over 57% only teach and 12% only undertake research. In both cases, about 1% neither teach nor research. This shows the predominance of teaching-only contracts among part-time academics and a significant minority of full-time academics on research-only contracts, often fixed-term and directly linked to short-term project funding.

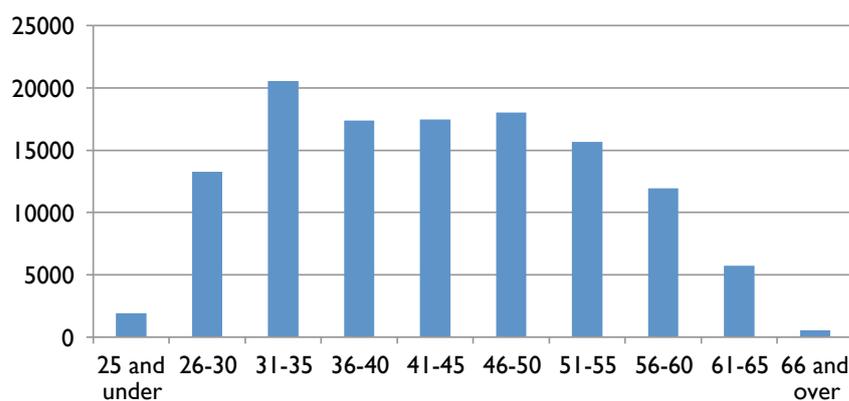
## Nationality

In 2012-13, of those academic staff whose nationality was known, 72% were UK nationals. 14% of academic staff were from the rest of the European Union, and 11% were of non-EU nationality. In general, non-UK academics are more numerous in the STEM subjects.

## Age

Of those full-time academic staff whose age was known in 2012-13, 42.4% were aged over 45 years and 12.8% were aged between 51 and 55. The average age of full-time academic staff was 43.2 years and of part-time staff, 45.8 years, but the largest single category was in the 31-35 bracket. Chart four shows the numbers of academic staff by age group.

Chart 4: Academic staff by age



Source: HESA 2014

In England, the proportions of academic staff aged 60 and over increased from 5% to 9% between 1995-96 and 2010-11. Staff aged over 60 were concentrated at more senior levels, in positions that were less than full-time, and more numerous in the humanities, languages and social, political and economic studies (HEFCE 2012).

## Gender

The overall proportion of academic staff in 2012-13 who were female was 44.5%. However, women made up only 39% of full-time and as many as 54.7% of part-time academics. They also represented only 22% of professors, whether full-time or part-time.

## Ethnicity

Nearly 13% of academics were from ethnic minorities in 2012-13. The make-up of these included over 23% who were of Chinese ethnic origin and over 19% of Indian origin. However, Black Caribbeans made up only 0.4% of all academics compared with 1.1% of the total population in the 2011 Census.

### 3. Differentiation and the unbundling of academic work

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This section addresses two linked trends that have been central to the shifting careers of academics over the last couple of decades or more: the increasing differentiation and diversity of the profession and the gradual unbundling and disaggregation of academic work – not just the link between teaching and research, but of these core academic activities themselves.

#### Differentiation and diversity of the academic profession

It is clear from research, such as the international study of the *Changing Academic Profession* (CAP), that the profession in the UK consists of a diverse range of academic staff both in their demographic profile and in the roles they undertake. Indeed, many have argued that the profession is becoming increasingly differentiated, even stratified (Brennan *et al.* 2007; Fitzgerald 2012; Gappa and Austin 2010; Locke 2008; Nyhagen and Baschung 2013).

The main “fault lines” (Locke 2012) are between:

- academics in different types of institution, particularly between those that are in research-intensive universities or departments and others;
- those working full-time and part-time;
- those on permanent and fixed-term contracts;
- those on traditional teaching–research–service contracts and those who are required only to teach or only to research;
- senior academics (in other words, professors, senior lecturers and senior researchers) and those on more junior grades;
- those in different academic disciplines and fields and, particularly, between science, technology, engineering and mathematics on the one hand, and other subjects on the other;
- and between academics and ‘para-academics’, that is, those performing academic related work or an aspect of the academic role, who are not formally on academic contracts.

Clearly, there are other divisions – of gender, ethnicity, age, and so on – which map on to many of the differences listed here.

However, the literature generally regards the profession as a homogeneous entity in which individual academics perform largely similar roles. They are also assumed to operate on the basis of a core of common – if increasingly challenged – academic and collegial values (Locke and Bennion 2011). These values include adherence to the distinctiveness of HE and HEIs (compared with other phases of education); the importance of the public purposes of HE; individual academic freedom; the interdependence of research and teaching; the primacy of research over teaching; the primacy of the doctoral route into an academic career; and the distinction between academic and non-academic roles within HEIs (Walker and Locke, forthcoming).

From the data, it is clear that those academics whose employment contracts require them to teach and research represent only just over half of all academics. An increasing proportion of teaching is undertaken in universities and colleges that do not have research degree awarding powers and do not receive significant amounts of research funding. Nevertheless, a clear hierarchy exists, with research widely seen as more important – for institutional reputation and career recognition – than teaching. Current circumstances often pit research and teaching (and knowledge exchange and consultancy) against each other in tangible ways, for example, in competition for academics’ time: productivity and effectiveness in one area are often achieved at the expense of the other (Bexley *et al.* 2011).

Locke and Bennion (2009) have argued that academics are likely to vary in the way they respond to these demands and pressures, and that this can take the form of active support, compliance, resistance or subversion. They explain this partly by differences in status within academic and institutional hierarchies, subject characteristics and generational differences. Their analysis indicated particular differences between academic staff at different stages of their career and with different career trajectories. With the expansion of higher education, there has been an increase in the numbers of staff entering the academy at a later stage in their working lives having already pursued a career in another profession, as well as in the number of young people entering the profession via the traditional route. The variations in academics' responses may arise from differences of expectation, focus and aspiration, and in levels of understanding of the demands of an academic career (Henkel 2000). Younger academics, recent mature recruits and established staff may be attracted by different aspects of the profession, and they certainly experience different levels of job security. For example, young academics generally appeared to be the most satisfied group and older, established academics who were not professors seemed to be the least satisfied (Locke and Bennion 2013).

The 2004 framework for modernising pay and conditions for higher education staff, introduced a common pay scale and greater transparency through local job evaluation and role analysis. It also gave impetus to the use of premiums for recruitment and retention where labour market conditions warranted these, and pay increases for individuals as part of performance management mechanisms. Locke and Botas (2009) also found evidence of the development of several markets for different categories of academic staff, reflecting the areas of most intensive competition between higher education institutions for resources and reputation. These included researchers, academics in professional disciplines, entrepreneurs, fund raisers, those with overall responsibility for overseas student recruitment, academic managers and institutional leaders. They argued there were dangers that these developments could further fracture the academic profession between those areas where there is scope for entrepreneurship and commercialisation and those where there is not.

### The unbundling and disaggregation of academic work

Linked to this differentiation between academics is the gradual but seemingly inexorable unbundling or disaggregation of academic work. The starting point for this in the UK has been the increasing partitioning of teaching and research as these activities have been separately funded, managed, assessed and rewarded over a period of 30 years or so (Locke 2004, 2012). This has resulted from policy and operational decisions made at department and school level, as well as at institution and system levels. So, the division of responsibilities for teaching and research at senior level – between different pro-vice chancellors for example – is often mirrored at lower levels, and the support and development functions for each activity are artificially separated (Akerlind and McAlpine 2010).

In parallel with this, each of these two core activities have, themselves, splintered. Teaching itself has fragmented into a multitude of activities to facilitate learning (Locke 2012) such as: curriculum design, the development of educational (including online) resources and virtual learning environments, 'delivery', moderation, assessment and feedback, and evaluation. So much so that, despite the preoccupation with "contact hours" at national policy level, the centrality of "classroom-based instruction" in higher education pedagogy is now in question (Gibbs 2010). The nature of education at this level is being fundamentally changed by the variety of forms, modes and locations of learning, the different needs of learners and the diverse requirements of graduates entering a range of employment and further training. Each aspect of 'facilitating learning' becomes the responsibility of a specialist member of a multi-skilled team. Linked with this has been a growth in the numbers of staff in 'non-academic' roles (i.e. not formally teaching and/or researching) in HEIs. These now represent more than 50% of full-time and part-time employees, including a substantial proportion of professionals (e.g. experts in quality assurance, finance, fund-raising, marketing) and 'para-academics' who perform what had been core academic tasks, such as student admissions and assessment, educational development and (online) learning support.

Some of those studying these developments have been critical of the challenge they represent to academics' traditional role and their academic autonomy (Macfarlane 2011), while others have been more positive about the opportunities they create for 'new' and 'third space' professionals (some of them former academics), and the ways they can alleviate the increasing pressures on academics trying to sustain a full remit of teaching, research and service (Gornall 2014; Whitchurch 2012). Most agree that these positions may not always be comfortable for the occupants, calling into question the boundaries – and associated identities – of existing, competing professional "tribes" (Mears and Harrison 2014). However, the ability of some of the "new professionals" to generate income and prestige for their universities might ultimately make them *more* rather than less secure. Their backgrounds and experiences may also make them more resilient in turbulent times, while enjoying far less autonomy than academics and having to be highly target-orientated and subject to more intrusive performance management. There is anecdotal evidence that such positions may be occupied disproportionately by women, but the published HESA data are not sufficiently disaggregated to confirm this. The HESA data indicates there are more women than men in professional and associate professional occupations in general, although the differences are mostly accounted for by part-time females in these categories.

In a similar fashion, there has been a broadening of the spectrum of research undertaken as the range of government, corporate and social bodies interested in its outputs has extended. This spectrum includes applied, collaborative and inter-disciplinary research generated in a variety of social and economic contexts in response to specific problems and to meet a range of users' needs, as well as original 'blue skies' research. The research role itself is fragmenting into different specialisms, such as basic research, field work, data analysis, dissemination and project management. In most institutions, the research proposal process has been 'professionalised', resulting in separate institution-wide or faculty-wide units dedicated to gathering intelligence about sources of funding and ways of maximising proposal success rates. This makes it difficult to refer to a single base category, 'research', when this can include large scale, high cost, collective 'knowledge production' as well as individual academics researching in their own time with little or no institutional (let alone external) funding support. We have yet to investigate and fully understand the impact of these changes on research activity and the activities of researchers.

A recent report by the American Council on Education (ACE 2014) has sought to stimulate a wide-ranging conversation in the US about the unbundling and disaggregation of the 'faculty' role. While recognising that such roles have been unbundled and re-bundled at different times in history, the Council notes that this has rarely been an intentional process, but has come about as a patchwork of unco-ordinated responses to the expansion of higher education, reduced public funding, the multiplying demands on faculty and institutions and the professionalisation of aspects of academic work, such as the provision of student services and the use of educational technologies. The report identifies several institutional models of allocating academic functions, although it also concludes that none of these would be easily transferred to other institutions or scaleable to larger parts of the HE system. It notes the lack of research into unbundling and the reorganisation of academic work and how far this has focused on student learning and/or the fulfilment of institutional missions.

I shall return to this topic, the policy implications and the need for further research later in this report. For the purpose of this section, however, the key message is that the term 'academic', or even 'lecturer', can cover a multitude of tasks, functions and activities, pedagogic practices and forms of knowledge production and exchange, depending on the location, career stage/pathway/trajectory and contractual conditions of the individual occupying the role (Rothwell and Rothwell 2014). For some in the profession – for example, international staff from different pedagogic cultures – there may be a lack of understanding of what academic work actually entails (Gornall and Thomas 2014). For others, academic work is a messy reality (Malcolm and Zukas 2009). This loss of meaning in what individuals do and what is important can lead to a growing sense of insecurity (UCU 2013b). Clearly, we need to appreciate the lived experience of academics to really understand the shifts in academic careers and work (Clegg 2008).

As Gale has written:

... given this increasing difference in function, the idea that all academics in higher education might experience the fragmentation of their role in the same way, producing a single sectoral model of academic identity, must be debatable. (Gale 2011, p. 216)

The implications of this differentiation and varying degrees of unbundling are significant for those seeking to support the enhancement of teaching and learning at all levels of UK HE.

## 4. Recent developments and their impact on academic careers and work

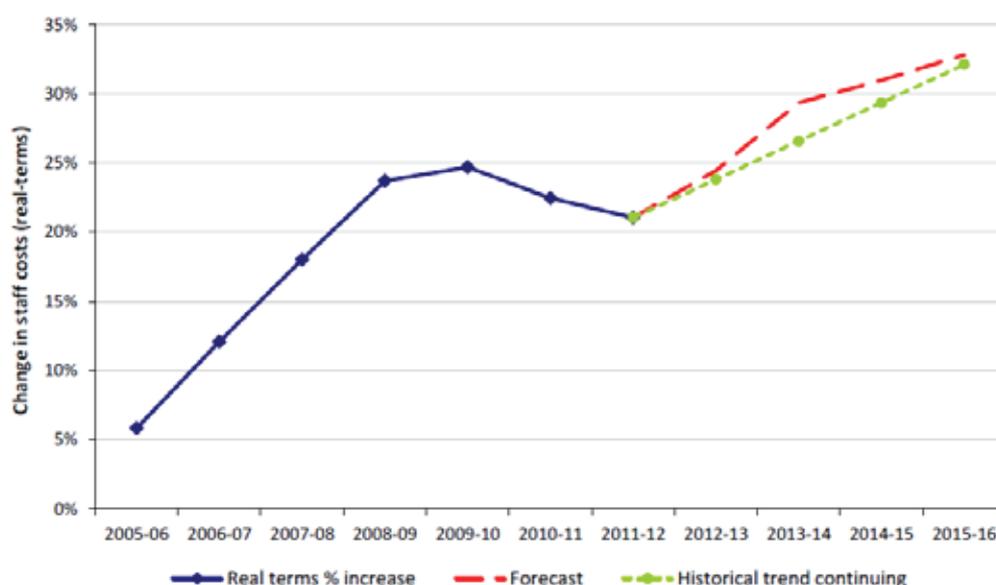
The recent period has seen an acceleration of many of these trends, together with new developments arising from austerity in public expenditure and the reform of funding for higher education, the impact of the Research Excellence Framework (REF), and the intensification of competition together with the increasing influence of rankings in higher education. This section looks at each of these in turn, focusing on their impact on academic careers and work. There are other trends that might also have been included here – such as changes in the leadership, governance and management of academic work, and the growing internationalisation of higher education – but space limitations mean I must focus on a selection.

### Impact of austerity and changing funding regimes

Reduced public funding for higher education in the UK – and, in England, the substitution of the majority of the funding for undergraduate teaching by tuition fees – has had a significant impact on higher education institutions and those working in them. As well as a decline in the funding per student, this has led to reduced funding available for expenditure on facilities, infrastructure, buildings and operating budgets. As we have seen from the HESA data, there has been a slow-down in academic recruitment and an actual decrease in the numbers of professional and support staff. There have been both compulsory and voluntary redundancies and voluntary severances, and changes to reward packages and terms and conditions in order to increase flexibility and manage expenditure on staff, including salary sacrifice schemes, reviews of senior staff pay arrangements, reforms of contribution and merit-based pay systems, and changes to overtime arrangements.

In parallel with this, staff costs are increasing relative to other operating costs. Chart five shows the actual expenditure on staff in England in real terms, as reported to Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), until 2011-12 and the projected spend from 2012-13 to 2015-16.

Chart 5: Real-terms increases in staff costs in HEIs funded by HEFCE



Source: HEFCE 2013

Many HEIs have become highly sensitised to the proportion of their income they spend on staff. This tends to have a negative effect particularly on teaching vis-à-vis research, with reductions or restrictions, for example, on administrative support, staff recruitment, travel to conferences and meetings and library budgets. Even where funding or income for teaching is stable or increases, it can be diluted by growth in numbers of students and by inflation. Reduced staffing can lead to an increasing workload for the remaining staff, larger class sizes and rising student-staff ratios (EUA 2012). There is also increased 'churn' in some HEIs as a result of voluntary or compulsory redundancy schemes, leading to lecturers being expected to teach at the margins of their own discipline, or in disciplines other than the one they trained in. This can threaten standards and, especially, efforts to sustain the teaching-research nexus, where many teachers no longer research the subjects they are teaching (Walker and Locke, forthcoming).

In the face of these financial challenges, HEIs are surprisingly resilient; but often they tend to rely on coping tactics and concerns have been expressed about a widespread lack of strategic forward-thinking (EUA 2012), frequently blamed on uncertainty about what policy-makers will do next. Linked with this, Kelly and Boden (2014) have claimed there is a danger of a 'technology of accounting' taking over and beginning to shape the working lives of academics. In their thesis, new methods of calculating course costs and surpluses are introduced, altering the terms on which activities and people are valued within institutions. Within this climate it becomes harder to justify and argue for the cross-subsidy of activities that do not make a 'surplus' in the short-term – let alone those that make a 'loss' – on the educational grounds that they contribute to the fulfillment of the institutional mission, or create non-monetary value (e.g. enhanced reputation, improved public profile) that might benefit the institution in the longer run. This kind of management accounting, they argue, takes the form of small-scale decisions arising from newly-issued technical guidelines that few understand, let alone appreciate the significance of. Over time, the cumulative effect of such decisions can adversely affect individuals' morale, careers and passion for creating and sharing useful knowledge (Kelly and Boden 2014).

Some have argued that higher fees and the growing perception of students as consumers have repositioned academics in their most basic learner–teacher relationships (Gornall and Thomas 2014). Together with educational technologies introduced specifically with a view to reducing the costs of expensive human resources, Gornall and Thomas argue this creates 'self-service learners' with high expectations of flexible, individualised open learning packages accessible on the latest mobile devices, and consumed largely independently with the limited direct involvement of individual teachers, who are simply there to support learners. They go on to indicate the impact of this on academic occupational conditions, including an increase in 'flexibilised' employment contracts.

## Research Excellence Framework (REF)

The periodic assessment of research and the increasingly selective QR (quality research) funding that flows from this is a key element of the academic landscape in the UK. With the decline in public expenditure per student on teaching, research (and particularly the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE)/REF) has represented one of the few means for HEIs to increase income, even if this is insufficient to cover the full costs of the activity. It has been argued that research assessment has helped to increase productivity. However, it also led to the majority of respondents to the CAP survey in 2007 expressing concern that raised expectations about the quantity of research outputs had placed quality at risk. The procedures and mechanisms for assessing research and allocating funding have also been designed to increase selectivity in research income between institutions. This has often been converted *within* institutions into selectivity between departments and between individuals within departments, so that institutional managers have had to make tactical decisions about the proportion of academics to submit to the periodic assessment exercise and, ultimately, about which individuals (and departments) could remain 'research active' and which should focus mainly on teaching and income-generating alternatives to research (Locke 2012).

Cashmore *et al.* (2013) maintain that the RAE has further weakened the status of teaching and teaching enhancement in higher education. For Brown (Brown 2014, forthcoming), the REF is sharpening the differences between research-intensive and teaching-orientated institutions. One of the ways it does this, he argues, is by excluding teaching (within the researcher's own institution) as evidence of impact, thus diminishing the status of teaching in establishing a strong research profile. Yet, he points out, teaching is clearly one of the key means by which research comes to have impact beyond the university (see also Copeland 2014). The research-teaching relationship is also undermined by an increasing dependence on temporary and part-time staff and teaching assistants. Moreover, rewards for research within institutions include time for research, thus creating further differentiation between active researchers and others within, as well as between, institutions. Brown notes the profound impact of 'REFability' on academic careers and trajectories:

Hard-edged decisions are made about the renewal of contracts of young researchers, new forms of (teaching only) contracts are created, anxieties are kindled around the consequences, voiced and unvoiced, of not being entered into the REF, and calculations are made about our own value within this particular system. (Brown 2014, p. 56, forthcoming)

## Competition and rankings

As higher education becomes increasingly subject to marketisation, and HEIs compete with each other more intensely, reputation becomes critical because it is regarded by the best qualified and most mobile students, employers, research funders, government and universities themselves as ultimately as important, if not more important, than quality. A major barometer of reputation is the league tables or rankings of universities that have gained influence over the last decade, in particular. There has been much written about rankings and their influence at a national and international level, but there have been few studies of the influence of rankings on HEIs and academics in particular (although see Sauder and Espeland 2009; Hazelkorn 2011; Morphew and Swanson 2011).

Locke (2011b) identified a number of ways in which institutions and their staff internalise and, ultimately, institutionalise the logic at the heart of rankings, based on a survey and case studies. For the purposes of this report, some of the ways these processes impacted on academic careers and work included the following examples:

**Using rankings results as a lever for institutional change:** senior managers admitted to using lower than expected results to put pressure on middle managers – or empower them – to introduce improvements. Deans and heads of departments and administrative units had been 'hauled in' by senior management to account for a poor showing. Peer pressure from other middle managers had 'shamed' their colleagues into making amends or best practice had been disseminated from highly placed departments to those ranked lower. However, disappointment with ranking positions had also encouraged reviews and self-assessments, and benchmarking with other departments within the institution and with similar departments in other HEIs.

**The impact on the affective domain:** there was persuasive evidence in the case studies of the effect of rankings on the 'collective psyche' of an institution and the strong emotional responses they can provoke, despite a common skepticism about the purposes of the publishers and the methods of the compilers. For example, in one post-1992 university, academics' professional qualifications and experiences as practitioners were thought to be devalued by a particular ranking system that gave greater value to academic research degrees. Staff felt aggrieved at times, particularly on behalf of the students, and especially when many of these were from disadvantaged families.

**Redefining activities and altering perceptions:** two areas of activity subject to redefinition were common to several of the case study institutions and directly related to elements of the methodologies for compiling league tables: 'the student experience' and 'graduate employability'. The weight given in many of the domestic league tables to the National Student Survey (NSS) tended to focus more attention on those areas covered by the 22 items in the questionnaire at the expense of other aspects of students' learning and experience of teaching and assessment. Likewise, the reliance of the rankings on the Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) survey of graduates six months after graduation had skewed careers education and employability strategies towards immediate job placement rather than graduates' longer-term career management strategies (see also Temple *et al.* 2014).

**Recruitment and selection of staff:** senior management reported referring to the league tables before undertaking 'headhunting exercises' to recruit senior academics. The implication was that candidates would only be approached if their current employer were a university ranked similarly to (or even higher than) the recruiting institution.

The influence of rankings on academics, individually and collectively, is likely to have intensified in the years since this study was undertaken, especially with the development of the Key Information Set (KIS), the redesign of the *Unistats* website and the increasing use by students and HEIs of social media for communicating about the experience of HE study (Locke 2014). The ways in which these impact on academic work and careers are clearly important areas for further research.

## 5. Teaching-only contracts and roles

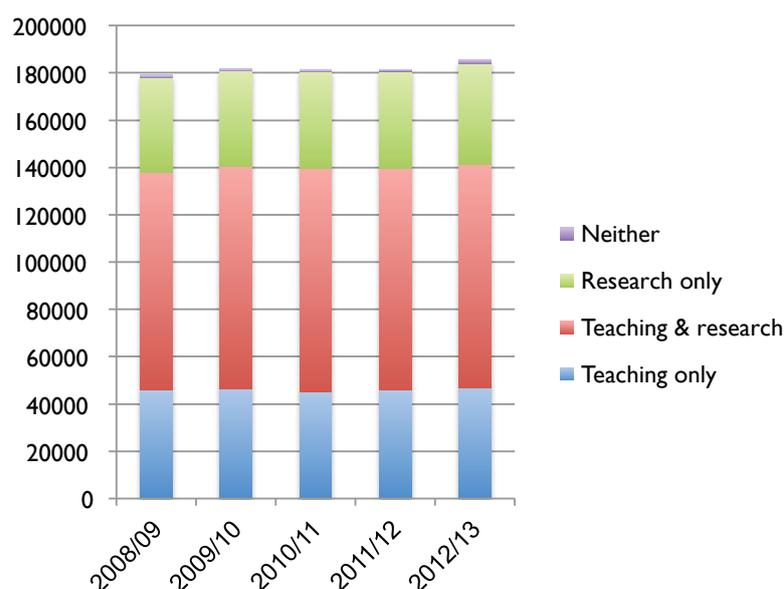
Claims are made of an increase in teaching-only positions within HEIs and, particularly, in research-intensive universities. Returning to the HESA data, there have actually been fluctuations in the numbers of academics on teaching-only contracts in the last five years, as shown in table three and chart six.

Table 3: Academic staff by employment function, 2008-09 to 2012-13

	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Teaching and research	92,135	93,885	94,760	93,960	94,600
Teaching only	45,825	46,475	45,005	45,825	46,795
Research only	39,915	40,470	40,740	40,845	42,350
Neither	1,170	770	685	755	1,840

Source: HESA 2010-14

Chart 6: Academic staff by employment function, 2008-09 to 2012-13



Source: HESA 2010-2014

The number of academics on teaching-only contracts dropped significantly between 2009-10 and 2010-11, but has then risen again since, growing faster than the overall numbers of academics. During the last five years, the number of those on teaching and research contracts has fluctuated. Analysing teaching-only and atypical staff by broad institution type, as shown in table four, reveals some interesting patterns which echo recent findings on recognising and rewarding teaching performance in promotions (Cashmore *et al.* 2013), and should assist the HEA in targeting its support and enhancement activities. Table four categorises institutions by whether they are a member of the Russell Group (i.e. larger research-intensive HEIs), other pre-1992 universities (many former members of the, now defunct, 1994 Group) and all other HEIs (including former polytechnics, post-2004 universities, HE colleges and others).

Table 4: Teaching-only and atypical academic staff by institution type, 2012-13

Institution type (number of HEIs)	All academics (%)	All teachers (i.e. teaching-only & teaching & research) (%)	Teaching-only contracts (%)	Teaching-only as a proportion of all teachers in this type of HEI	Atypical academic staff (%)
<b>Russell Group universities (24)</b>	71,865 (39%)	40,425 (29%)	10,325 (22%)	26%	38,955 (53%)
<b>Other pre-1992 universities (50)</b>	49,740 (27%)	41,210 (29%)	20,705 (44%)	50%	14,070 (19%)
<b>All other HEIs (88)</b>	63,980 (34%)	59,760 (42%)	15,765 (34%)	26%	21,050 (28%)
<b>Total (162)</b>	185,585 (100%)	141,395	46,795	33%	74,075 (100%)

Source: HESA 2014

In 2012-13, across the sector, of those who taught (i.e. those on teaching-only and teaching and research contracts), 33% were on teaching-only contracts. However, 50% of these were to be found in pre-1992 universities that were not members of the Russell Group. Institutions in the former group accounted for only 27% of all academics (49,740, excluding atypical), and yet 20,705 of these were on teaching-only contracts. These research-orientated HEIs were home to twice as many such academics as their much larger research-intensive cousins. Even discounting the Open University's 5,775 tutors, this seems disproportionate.

It is also important to note that there are large concentrations of those on teaching-only contracts in certain 'other pre-1992 universities', and small numbers, or none, in others. Leaving aside the conservatoires, there are ten multi-faculty universities and one specialist institution with more than 50% of teachers on teaching-only contracts. 28 institutions in all from this category had higher proportions than the national average (i.e. more than 33%) of those who taught on these contracts. This compares with only five of the (24) Russell Group institutions that had greater proportions than the national average, and only one of these had just above 50%. On the other end of the scale, ten of the 'other pre-1992 universities' had less than 10%, including eight of which that had none. Among the Russell Group, most had at least 20%, and only one had fewer than 10%. However, this group also accounted for more than half of those on 'atypical' (often sessional) academic contracts, although the data do not reveal what proportion of these are only recruited to teach.

These findings reverberate with a previous HEA study of promotion policies (HEA 2009; Cashmore and Ramsden 2009), which suggested that the former 1994 Group institutions were less likely than others to have promotion policies that explicitly recognise and reward teaching performance. This grouping of HEIs, it appeared, were placing more emphasis on research in order to reaffirm their status as research-intensive institutions, despite not being members of the Russell Group. Follow-up research (Cashmore *et al.* 2013) found that all members of the 1994 Group subsequently made significant mention of teaching and learning in their promotions criteria. However, in most HEIs, including former 1994 Group members, there remained a significant gap between policy and implementation and few identifiable promotions to senior positions solely on the basis of teaching excellence.

It was reported earlier that the vast majority (77%) of those on teaching-only contracts in 2012-13 worked part-time (HESA 2014). The University and College Union also estimates that the number of zero-hour ('on call') teaching contracts in universities equated to 47% of the total number of 'teaching only' posts that institutions reported annually to HESA (UCU 2013a; Copeland 2014, p. 11). These features would seem to confirm HEA-commissioned research which suggested that teaching-focused roles are perceived as second class options occupied by those who have been deemed to have failed at research (Cashmore *et al.* 2013). There is clearly a gender dimension to this (Burke 2008), as 53% of those on part-time teaching-only contracts were female, compared with 47% of full-time academics on teaching-only contracts (and 44.5% of all academics). Females also made up 51% of those in fixed-term positions who only taught. Conversely, female academics accounted for only 36% of those who held open-ended/permanent, full-time posts where they were expected to both teach and research – what some might regard as the 'gold standard'. The demographic characteristics of those on teaching-only and atypical contracts and teaching-related roles needs further investigation, including analysis of HESA data that are not available to subscribers. Comparisons with similar analyses in Australia (e.g. Probert 2013 on teaching-focused appointments) might also be enlightening.

However, these data only include those academics whose contracts specifically state they are only employed to teach. There is some evidence to suggest that those on teaching and research contracts are also being directed to conduct less or no research (or are receiving less or no funding or time allocation for research), and so effectively undertaking teaching-only *roles*, despite their contractual status. A recent survey by the University and College Union (UCU) of its members found that significant numbers were engaged either exclusively or mostly in teaching-related activities irrespective of contract type (Copeland 2014).

Table 5: UCU survey – typical workload

<b>Irrespective of your formal role which of the following best describes your typical workload</b>		
<b>Answer options</b>	<b>Response percent</b>	<b>Response count</b>
Exclusively teaching	14.0%	763
Mostly teaching	44.1%	2399
Balance between research and teaching	34.3%	1866
Mostly research	7.2%	390
Exclusively research	0.4%	22
<b>Answered question</b>		<b>5440</b>
<b>Skipped question</b>		<b>551</b>

Source: Copeland 2014, p. 10

It is possible to speculate about the reasons for these developments, which were given impetus by the 2004 HE Framework Agreement and the establishment of a new family of teaching and scholarship role profiles (Parker 2008). For example, they may be linked to the increasing competition for evermore targeted research funding, and the tendency to pre-select those academics who are 'research-active' for the (then) forthcoming REF, and thereby render others 'research-inactive'. Some fixed-term teaching fellowships may also be introduced in order to free up research time for established staff (Mills 2010). Other 'teaching focused' roles may be in response to demands for increased student-centred learning, including greater contact with lecturers, prompted by higher tuition fees and increased competition for the best qualified applicants. However, further research is necessary to investigate the strategies of HEIs with large proportions of teaching-only contracts in categorising and recruiting academic staff in these ways.

We also need to know more about the routes that individuals take to arrive in these roles, and the impact they have on their further careers. The literature features some generalizations drawn from case studies. For example, some aspiring academics in the early stages of their career may take short-term casual teaching appointments, thinking that this will increase their chances of an academic career; “to find out only later that these positions did not offer the opportunities for research and publication that were essential for traditional advancement” (Akerlind and McAlpine 2010, p. 158).

Yet as long as teaching is undervalued in institutions, such posts remain marginalized and low status. With good teaching evaluations, a good teacher can end up having such a post renewed for a number of years. While any job is appealing for those whose doctoral grants have long since run out, one has a steadily decreasing chance of gaining a permanent lectureship, and no guarantee that teaching appointments will be made more secure. (Mills 2010, p. 87)

Those in the middle of their careers who have transferred to higher education from another profession to teach vocational subjects may deliberately want to focus on teaching and not research, writing and publication. Nevertheless, their prospects for advancement also appear to be slim (Gale 2011). Writing about recipients of teaching award holders, Cheng notes that “few distinguished academic careers appear to have emerged to date solely through the ‘teaching’ route . . . or at least ones that have been widely celebrated and valorized in the sector” (Cheng 2014, p.167). If they should find themselves in a research-orientated university that was desperate to improve its research ranking, they might even be encouraged to take voluntary severance or to opt to improve their research record by taking up a PhD (Cunningham 2014, forthcoming).

## 6. Enhancing professionalism and attracting the next generation of academics

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Most of the developments described so far have emerged not as a result of a particular policy or plan, but largely unintentionally, piecemeal and gradually, in reaction to a range of drivers, incentives and influences. This has prompted a largely dystopian view among most commentators (Halsey 1992; Bryson 2000; Harley *et al.* 2004; Macfarlane 2006) which argues that academics have been proletarianised; their work industrialised; their autonomy eroded; and that academics, themselves have been de-skilled. As a result, they argue, the profession is demoralised, disaffected and disengaged, collegiality has been “hollowed out” and academic and professional identity – and even the moral authority of higher education itself – has been challenged. However, the evidence does not appear to entirely match these perceptions and the evidence may support a much more nuanced view (Locke and Bennion 2011). Academics have always been active agents, dynamic, restless, transforming and, sometimes, even subversive, continuously negotiating and renegotiating their professional mandate (Scott 2014, forthcoming).

Nevertheless, there are some serious and significant issues to address:

... global trends indicate that the path to an academic career is becoming more difficult and less attractive. This pattern will not help the improvement of universities worldwide. (Altbach and Musselin 2008, p. 3)

As the activities and outcomes of higher education become more and more important to societies and national economies, there is a need to reverse some of these trends and ensure the attractiveness of the academic profession to a new generation of scholars:

If academic life is to be an attractive future career choice for clever and dedicated people, then it is necessary to be able to show them a realistic description of what becoming an academic means, coupled with a career structure that meets the reality and expectations of an increasingly diversifying workforce. (Coates and Goedegebuure 2012, p. 877)

One of the core attractions of academic work is academic autonomy, and yet this has traditionally been associated with research, increasingly so with senior management roles and decreasingly with teaching. The more teaching in higher education is controlled and constrained and its status undermined, the less attractive it will become as a career for creative, intelligent people, even as part of a broader role, let alone as the sole focus of their professional activity. This section explores three aspects of the changes needed to reinvigorate the academic profession:

- rethinking academic work and career pathways to introduce greater flexibility and freedom of individuals to choose, and vary, their profiles of activities;
- rewarding and recognising academic work, including teaching, and supporting professional learning;
- enhancing professionalism which emerges collectively from academics themselves rather than being imposed from the outside or above.

### Rethinking academic work and career pathways

Whitchurch and Gordon's recent report for the Leadership Foundation (Whitchurch and Gordon 2013) describes how institutional staffing models are changing in response to increasing competition, cost pressures and the need to renegotiate agreements with staff and unions. Inevitably, they found a variety of approaches at different stages of development, with practices strongly influenced by local conditions and traditions. In particular, for the purposes of this report, they noted pressure on the concept of the 'generic academic' and a need for solutions that are fair and equitable but allow for variation, including separate pathways for those combining teaching, research, administration and knowledge exchange roles.

Recently, an increasing number of HEIs in the UK have sought to identify different tracks within academic career pathways for promotion purposes, adding a 'teaching track' – and even a 'research track' – to the traditional 'academic' or 'teaching and research track' (Cashmore *et al.* 2013). These developments usually result in more explicit criteria for the recognition and reward of teaching performance and the identification of what counts as evidence of good teaching, but they can also signal, by means of distinct job titles (such as 'Teaching Fellow') and different employment conditions, the differential status of the tracks. Transfer between them can also be restricted and, even when theoretically possible – for example between the 'teaching track' and the 'academic track' – are unlikely in practice, given the lack of time and funding to develop a research profile when faced with a heavy teaching load. So, while some degree of parity may be achieved at more junior ranks (Parker 2008), it is clear that to progress to the most senior positions, a research record is usually needed, and that pedagogical research is not valued as highly as other disciplinary research.

Cashmore *et al.* conclude:

This problem, in which the flexibility of academic careers is reduced, reflects the core difficulty faced when separating promotion structures into separate tracks. Individuals may find themselves locked into a career with one focus without the opportunity to shift trajectory. (Cashmore *et al.* 2013, p. 27)

This practice of 'bolting on' tracks to the traditional career seems unlikely to change the dominant academic culture that can be found in most HEIs. Rothwell and Rothwell (2014) offer a stark contrast between devising 'new career models' or allowing traditional academic careers to become "increasingly challenged by managerially-driven agendas, declining tenure for non-professorial staff, the 'professionalization' of academic management and a global labour market for talented individuals" (Rothwell and Rothwell 2014, p. 131). They clearly opt for the former, more radical, path:

We suggest that university employers need to engage much more in providing a range of flexible opportunities. It is in the universities' own interests to have academic faculty who are professionally competent, pedagogically skilled, adaptive and possess the career resilience to help sustain their institutions in challenging times. (Rothwell and Rothwell 2014, p. 136)

They are not alone in proposing this (see also Gappa *et al.* 2007; Coates and Goedegebuure 2010, 2012; Bexley *et al.* 2011; ACE 2014). The American Council on Education (ACE), for example, has called for a national "dialogue and exchange" about the design of "faculty" roles, as mentioned earlier (ACE 2014). The Council argues for proper analysis to support this, including studies of the impact of such reforms on students, shared governance, academic freedom and knowledge development, but ACE also acknowledges there have been few studies attempting this. It notes the importance of campus cultures, institutional types, reward structures and policies in tackling these issues, and emphasises that any redesign should start from educational principles and institutional goals.

Coates and Goedegebuure (2010, 2012), two of the Australian researchers in the CAP study, offer perhaps the most developed reconceptualisation of academic work and career structure yet published (see also Strike 2010 for an empirical study that hints at alternatives). Drawing on Boyer's (1990) typology of scholarship (of discovery, teaching, integration and application), they add a fifth function (management and leadership) and argue that:

... allowing the core functions to move freely together or apart, as situations and roles befit, would appear to be a more valid and effective means of conceptualising the academic profession and academic work. (Coates and Goedegebuure 2012, p. 878)

They set out eight strategies for "recasting the academic workforce", including reconfiguring academic work:

... we foresee the need for greater definition of capability and competence that will help understand and promote diversity. This needs to move beyond crude differentiation of academics as 'research active' and 'non-active' to more nuanced conceptualisations referenced to the true complexity of an academic's role. (Coates and Goedegebuure 2012, p. 880)

Their second strategy is to construct academic career profiles that reflect the actual diversity of individual academics' work at different stages in their careers. Empirical evidence of these trajectories suggests that individuals make horizontal as well as vertical (including downward) moves during their careers, and any new career framework ought to take these into account. So, their third strategy is to design attractive customised work experiences that better reflect an individual's motivations and strengths. These individually negotiated employment arrangements would mirror the "talent management agreements" emerging in other knowledge-based sectors of employment. They could be annual or medium-term agreements to avoid the constraints of 'career tracks'. Other strategies proposed include building an improved evidence base that highlights the diversity of work (and thereby enhances its attractiveness), engaging 'sessional' academics and refreshing the research degree.

... it is critically important that future academic work is seen to be attractive. As with much professional work, but perhaps more so than most, academic work relies on individuals' intrinsic engagement and for this a high-quality experience is essential. Finding ways to inspire and safeguard academic autonomy, broadly conceived, is essential. All work carries challenges, but any reconceptualisation of academic work that threatens peoples' attraction to the profession or desire to fully engage is likely to do more harm than good. (Coates and Goedegebuure 2012, p. 883)

## Rewarding, recognising and supporting academic work

Since the 1990s in the UK, there has been a series of attempts to raise the status of teaching in order to ensure sufficient reward and recognition for the activity and to achieve parity with research (Locke 2012). Initiatives such as the Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education, the Learning and Teaching Subject Network, and their successor, the Higher Education Academy, have sought to embed a vision partly inspired by Ernest Boyer. Elements of this informed the UK funding bodies' enhancement efforts, including HEFCE's Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund, the Rewarding and Developing Staff initiative and the Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL). Some of these initiatives employed concepts of 'excellence' as a way of establishing equivalence with notions of research excellence and restoring the central place of teaching in a 'world class' university. However, such concepts have rarely been defined, are often contested and largely focus on 'excellent' teaching rather than transformational learning (Little and Locke 2011).

To some degree, the ways in which we recognise and reward teaching and supporting learning (including definitions of 'good practice') may be having serious negative and long-term side-effects: such as, the separation of teaching and research and, related to this, the subordination of teaching to research; the individualisation of academic endeavour and the encouragement of compliance. None of these side effects is inevitable, but it is the policy environment and the dominant academic culture into which they have been introduced that may have distorted their original intentions. Ultimately, the lack of parity in earning capacity, promotion prospects, job security (Young 2006; Cashmore *et al.* 2013; Copeland. 2014) and, most importantly I would argue, professional autonomy, may limit the effectiveness of many of these initiatives.

Scanning the literature provides some evidence of this. The, now ubiquitous, Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (PGCert) is likely to be more attractive to (or required of) younger academics (Copeland 2014) and others new to the profession (Gale 2011) than older, established colleagues. Nevertheless, some continuing professional development (CPD) schemes incorporate the PGCert. The transfer of learning from these programmes to an individual's own

teaching may also be inhibited by the departmental environment within which she or he operates (Ginns *et al.* 2010). Fellowship of the HEA is growing, but further growth should be – individually and collectively – motivated by professional and pedagogical reasons, and not in order to maximise institutional performance indicators (Copeland 2014). Any linear progression framework of minimum threshold professional standards, will always struggle to recognise the diversity of roles and career trajectories of those with a part to play in learning and teaching in higher education. Teaching awards could act as a strong incentive to improve academic practice, but again may be more appreciated by early-career academics than those with established research credentials (Cheng 2014). They are increasingly used by institutions for public relations purposes, but do they really signal a rebalancing of priorities?

... although the award would encourage wider interest in 'good teaching' in the institution, it had not necessarily increased the *status* of teaching *per se* within the university. *Research* was still being prioritized in 'status' terms. (Cheng 2014, p. 168)

What are academics themselves looking for to develop and support them in their work? The evidence is limited, but a US study suggested that technical updating, workloads and inter-disciplinarity were the key CPD issues for faculty (Gappa and Austin 2010). Rothwell and Rothwell (2014) suggested academics face two competing sets of challenges: updating their academic knowledge and incorporating new pedagogical practices demanded by institutional managers and increasingly digitally sophisticated students. Other priorities were applied research and preparation for management roles. Their preferences *for* modes of CPD included reading, attending conferences, network groups, browsing web sites and spontaneous learning arising from everyday activity, but there was a dislike of managerially-driven or institutionally-driven staff development activity.

Rothwell and Rothwell argue that 'employability' – normally a concept associated with students and graduates – is increasingly important for academics if they wish to sustain their academic careers. This will vary by discipline, as subject areas wax and wane in popularity and differ in their vocational significance, but includes a "knowledge base" for teaching, common values (see also Cheng 2014) and emotional intelligence. They offer a model of academic employability, which is defined as underpinning "the ability to change role" (Rothwell and Rothwell 2014, pp. 131–2), thus chiming with the notions of more flexible work profiles discussed earlier.

## Enhancing professionalism

The literature is clear on the need for culture change if the many well-intentioned innovations, policy initiatives, incentives, etc., are to have the desired effect and not generate the unintended consequences that are revealed by many of the studies referred to here. However, culture change can rarely be managed, although it may be prompted, provoked and persuaded – not least through revealing previously unquestioned assumptions, pre-judgements and engrained practices. The term 'professionalisation' has been employed to indicate the kinds of changes needed in higher education teaching and, perhaps, broader aspects of the academic role. Yet, 'professionalisation' has connotations of imposition from outside or above, for example, by means of the introduction of prescriptive and inflexible standards, enforced accreditation, sanctions and disincentives, performance measures and certain performance management techniques.

Given the importance of intrinsic motivations to academic work, it would seem more constructive to speak of a 'professionalism' that emerges from within and which could provide the necessary space for collective self-determination that involves a creative and more collaborative and inclusive rethinking of core values, such as academic autonomy. This should not hark back to traditional forms of teacher professionalism from a previous 'golden age', which in any case may have been gilded only for the privileged few. It would need to be a renewed and revised professionalism that takes account of where we are now, the changes that have occurred and the new environment that is being shaped by current forces, drivers, policies and uncertainties,

some of which have been outlined in this report. Indeed, it could be argued, ironically, that the managerialist challenge to traditional modes of professionalism has opened up new possibilities for more collaborative and democratic forms of professionalism (Sachs 2001; Whitty 2008; UCU 2013b) that, for example, take account of students' 'voices', co-operate closely with other professionals and engage actively with communities and stakeholders beyond higher education, including those who have historically been excluded.

New, more democratic, forms of HE professionalism would need to support emerging – and generate new – professional identities that are meaningful for those recently entering and newly attracted to working in HE. They would also need forms of professional development that are more equitable, less individualistic and more communitarian, where professionals co-operate to improve each other's efforts, effectiveness, and financial rewards, and non-financial sanctions are not necessary to sustain the process (Pollitt 1987). Institutions would need to support this through appropriate human resources management processes, including performance management mechanisms based on stewardship rather than agency (Franco-Santos 2014).

Surprisingly, the voices in support of new and enhanced forms of professionalism in higher education are few (NATFHE 2006; UCU 2013b), inhibited perhaps by what has happened recently in further education with the Institute for Learning (IfL), in schools with the General Teaching Council (GTC), and longer ago in higher education with the Institute for Learning and Teaching (ILT). Yet, a new, enhanced, professionalism would require some organisational and structural underpinning to succeed (ACE 2014). Reflecting on his own committee's aim to raise the standing of teaching (NCIHE 1997) and the short-lived ILT ten years later, Lord Dearing commented:

I am disappointed that academics themselves did not seize on the idea of a professional institute, run and owned by them, awarding associate and full fellowship memberships in recognition of their own profession and their achievement within it. I used to say that academe was the only profession I knew that does not collectively recognise, cherish and promote its own professional standards. (Dearing 2007, p. 178)

As it tackles its own funding crisis due to the withdrawal of the majority of state sponsorship, the Higher Education Academy may like to reflect on this notion of a professional body for those with responsibilities for teaching and learning in higher education and the research and scholarship that underpins this. If it were to give this serious consideration, the HEA would need to broaden its remit to cover all aspects of academic work and become an individual membership body, in a way that the ILT never achieved. Lessons would need to be learned from the more recent experiences of the IfL and GTC. Such a professional body would also need to find ways of collaborating with, and complementing the work of, other professional bodies, learned societies and subject associations, in recognition of the need for dual professionalism among discipline-focused academics and those who are vocationally-orientated.

## 7. Conclusions

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It is a truism to emphasise the importance of staff in higher education, and especially those involved in the key functions (whatever their contractual status), to achieving future success. Yet, it is also true that the wellbeing and professionalism of these staff have largely been obscured by the recent narrow focus on the 'student experience', financial issues and the economic benefits of HE. However, as the sector expands towards 'universal' higher education, it will require more teachers and scholars and we will need to ensure the attractiveness of careers in academia, not just on entry but throughout their working lives (Coates and Goedegebuure 2012).

Successful universities and academic systems require career structures for the academic profession that permit a stable academic career, encourage the 'best and brightest' to join the profession, reward the most productive for their work, and weed out those who are unsuited for academic work. We have been struck by the dysfunctional nature of career structures in many countries – with disturbing negative trends ... Without a career structure that attracts quality, rewards productivity, and permits stability, universities will fail in their mission of high-quality teaching, innovative research, and building a 'world-class' reputation. (Altbach and Musselin 2008, p. 2)

This, then, is a key imperative for considering the shifts in academic work and careers and the implications of these for enhancing professionalism in teaching and supporting learning. The very future of higher education, and the institutions that exist to realise it, will depend on how we conceive, build and sustain the careers and work of those who make it possible.

So, to summarise, the key issues for teaching and learning, continuing professional development and reward and recognition arising from the developments and literature reviewed in this report are as follows:

- how to reflect the significant and increasing differentiation between those who teach and support learning in the activities of the HEA – their different needs, motivations and aspirations;
- in particular, how to support early career academics (including those entering from other professions) during this critical stage;
- how to describe accurately (based on current empirical evidence) the variety of roles of those involved in teaching and supporting learning, taking account of the unbundling or disaggregation of academic work; how to evaluate the changing relationships between learners and teachers (as a result of wider policy and funding changes) and their implications; and how to assess when, where and how this might negatively impact on the coherence of educational experiences for students (and staff);
- how to address the shift to teaching-only contracts and roles, especially where this reduces status and prospects, and restricts the capacity of those who wish to pursue broader academic roles (particularly research); what implications should this have for policies and practices in recruitment, professional preparation and development, reward and recognition, and promotion?
- how to achieve greater flexibility in work allocation from year to year that keeps future options for staff open, including variations in emphasis (e.g. on teaching, research, knowledge exchange and engagement, management) at different stages of an individual's career;
- how to manage academic staff and processes in ways that help them achieve their full potential, and build on best practices in other knowledge-based employment sectors; how to encourage new leaders of teaching to take up such roles and support them in adopting, adapting and developing these; how to support these leaders of teaching in navigating the challenges and uncertainties of competition, marketisation, rankings and the predominance of financial value over educational values;
- how best to support groups and individuals in the maintenance of their scholarship, expertise and skills through continuing professional development;
- how to reconceptualise, promote and enhance professionalism in teaching and learning in higher education and the research and scholarship that underpins this.

## 8. Recommendations

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The following recommendations flow from the last of the issues identified above and then suggest further research that would inform new approaches to academic work and careers that support the diverse roles in teaching and learning and the professional preparation and development needs of those undertaking these.

- 8.1** The HEA, in collaboration with the UCU and, possibly, Universities and Colleges Employers Association (UCEA) and other relevant and supportive bodies, to promote a national discussion about professionalism in higher education and how it can best be enhanced. This discussion should be forward-looking while taking account of the significant changes that are occurring, and just emerging, in higher education. It should address issues of academic and professional roles, identities and careers and appropriate modes of professional development.

Further research in the following areas would help in addressing the above issues in more grounded and empirically-informed ways:

- 8.2** The extent and nature of teaching-only contracts *and* roles, and teaching-related roles, in:
- teaching-orientated HEIs, research-intensive universities, and HEIs where there is a balance between teaching and research;
  - the demographic characteristics of those on teaching-only contracts, including analysis of HESA data that are not available to subscribers;
  - the nature of the employment contracts of teaching-only and teaching-focused academics (including those who were originally – and may still be – on ‘full’ academic contracts) and teaching-related staff not on academic contracts;
  - the routes that took individuals into these contracts/roles and their motivations and aspirations for future career development.

Such an investigation of this trend towards academics restricted to teaching and non-academics in teaching-related roles would require additional data gathering (e.g. surveys, institutional case studies, career biographies). Among other outcomes, the research should aim to ascertain:

- effective strategies for maintaining morale and motivation among those only contracted to teach in different types of institution and a range of organisational cultures;
- the degree to which institutions offer support to those relatively new to HE teaching (and related activities) in these roles, time for scholarship, and opportunities to discuss good teaching with colleagues.

Comparisons with Australia (e.g. Probert 2013) and the US (e.g. AFT 2010; CAW 2012) would also be enlightening.

- 8.3** Evaluative case studies of how different universities and colleges have reconsidered academic and professional roles and reconfigured (unbundled and re-bundled) these in flexible ways that ensure equity (i.e. equal benefit for equivalent contribution), for example, in pay and conditions, promotion prospects and professional career development, and for different roles and career trajectories. These may need to include international examples in order to extend the range of approaches included. It could address the extent of ‘performative links’ between the approaches adopted and organisational success.
- 8.4** A study of how academics currently navigate their careers, and the variation in academic identities at different stages of a career. This could feature comparisons with those in academic-related roles, including those on professional contracts as well as staff who have moved from an academic role. This would help HEIs to improve their understanding of the working lives and career patterns of academics and other professionals involved in academic work, so as to provide evidence for discussions with individuals and groups around work and career planning, and for promoting the attractiveness of an academic career to potential and new entrants to the profession.

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