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The attractions & distractions of an academic career in the UK



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The next 25 minutes...

- Overview of UK academic career structure
- Factors impacting academic careers
- Sources of satisfaction & dissatisfaction
- Attraction of the UK academic sector to non-UK academics
- How to be competitive in the UK academic job market



Overview of UK academic sector (2005/06 data)

- **165K academic staff**; 68% full-time; 42% female; 53% of part-time are female
- **Two main career tracks**: research; research & teaching
- **64% research & teaching**: indefinite contracts; 75% > 40 years old
- **28% research only**: fixed term contract; 33% < 30 years old, 80% < 40 years old



UK academic career structures

- **Research & teaching career track:** Lecturer (36%); Senior Lecturer, Reader (16%); Professor (9%)
- **Research track:** Research Officer; Research Fellow; Senior Research Fellow; Principle Research Fellow; Professorial Research Fellow



National pay scales

- As of 1 August 2007 - something like this!.....
- Lecturer: £27,393 - £39,602 (discretion up to £44,247)
- Senior Lecturer: £36,052 - £46,986 (discretion up to £49,240)
- More increases planned



Factors impacting academic careers (1)

- Growing emphasis on accountability and quality control – research and teaching
- RAE still dominates: next RAE in 2008, results Dec 2009
- Changes in funding arrangements
- Growth in numbers and diversity of students



Factors impacting academic careers (2)

- Greater emphasis and support for career and professional development
- Contract researchers-Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment Regulations from 2006
- New entrants: mentor; probation; teaching qualification



Sources of satisfaction & dissatisfaction- lectureship track

- **Satisfaction:**

Autonomy

Research

Teaching

- **Dissatisfaction:**

Pay

Promotion

Administrative work

Working hours



Sources of satisfaction & dissatisfaction – research track

- **Satisfaction:**

Autonomy

Focus on research and publication

Freedom from teaching & administrative duties

- **Dissatisfaction:**

Security

Pay

Promotion



Postdoctoral Fellowships

- Fixed term but highly desirable
- Lower pay but greater freedom
- Opportunity to publish and develop research record
- Varied terms, conditions and expectations
- Opportunity to fill CV gaps
- Positive addition to CV
- Less stressful job search
- Advertised, and open to all nationalities



Attraction of the UK academic sector to non-UK postdocs

- UK PhD graduates: 56% UK; 12% other EU; 32% rest of the world
- Language
- Work permit regime and attitude
- Entry level positions advertised
- Relatively transparent selection criteria



PhDs In Academia/Research

(2005 UKGRAD)

	ALL	ARTS & HUMANITIES	SOCIAL SCIENCES
RESEARCH	22%	15%	15%
LECTURER	13%	26%	32%
Total	35%	41%	47%



Recruitment

- 3 main job vacancy sources:
www.jobs.ac.uk; www.thes.co.uk;
http://jobs.guardian.co.uk
- Job description & person specification
- Salary range and other benefits are stated
- Year round job postings



Selection criteria

- Research record, research potential
- Publication record, publication potential
- Teaching record, teaching and supervisory potential
- Funding record, funding potential
- Academic network, and potential
- Other, e.g. collaboration, inter-disciplinary



Application process

- CV; letter; application form
- References
- Research Statement
- Teaching Philosophy & Statement
- Sometimes ask for more, e.g. Writing sample, course outline



Selection process

- Long listing (sometimes)
- Short listing – invited for ‘interview’
- Panel interview; presentation; writing sample
- Sometimes: social event; lecture
- Job offer



Competing in the UK academic market

- Research record
- Publications
- Academic references
- Teaching experience (& PgDipHE)
- Ongoing/new research plans
- Conferences (Presentation & Networking skills)
- Prizes, awards, scholarships
- Experience of winning research funding



Areas of difference between UK HEIs

- Pay
- Contract terms
- Work load
- Promotion arrangements
- Provision for sabbaticals
- Balance between research and teaching
- RAE rating
- Support for career and professional development
- Leave



Conclusion

- Open to global talent – competitive but accessible
- Research and publications a priority
- Assessment >
- Working hours >
- Pay?
- Promotion?
- Range of contract terms =

