##### Researcher

Great. OK, so are you happy to just get started?

##### Participant 4

Yeah, absolutely.

##### Researcher

Excellent. OK, so would you be able to just tell me a bit about yourself in terms of your career and your background, please?

##### Participant 4

Sure. I did a PhD in [subject] in [home country], and so I finished that in [year]. I came to the UK in [year] and I was a postdoctoral researcher in the [subject] department at the [university]. That was for three years. After that I got a permanent lecturer position and I stayed in the [subject] department at the [university] for another three years. So then in [year], I moved back to [home country], again to a [subject] department, and I worked there as an [academic] for six years. And then [time point], I came back to the [university], but I'm in a business school now, so that's my first time in a business school.

##### Researcher

OK, so what brought you to the business school? Was it just like an opportunity or was this something you kind of were looking to do?

##### Participant 4

I've always been open to, you know, I, I am a [specialist in different discipline], but I've always been open to working in a business school. But my primary reason for coming back now was that my partner is based here in [location]. So we had a long distance relationship for a while and we were getting a bit tired of that. So then there was an opportunity to join the management department.

##### Researcher

OK, great. So, in terms of your sort of job role at the moment, are you, are you kind of a balanced academic or are you more research focused?

##### Participant 4

There is a little bit of variability here at the university, so in other words, there's the, you know, the E&R academics and then E&S academics who are teaching focused. But in the E&R, among E&R academics, there's also a little bit of variability. So in terms of how many, you can have extra hours added to your workload for research. And I have some extra hours added to my workload for research. And I can't actually remember what it takes me to. But so I guess I do teach and research. I've got flexible research time.

##### Researcher

OK, great. So more kind of research than maybe normal academics?

##### Participant 4

Yeah, maybe, maybe in this institution. But, you know, I feel it is a fairly balanced portfolio that I have. So I teach two courses and I have a reasonably large administrative role.

##### Researcher

OK. Excellent. So why did you become an academic?

##### Participant 4

It was slightly accidental in part. So I finished my PhD, I was very keen to travel and work overseas. I was enjoying research at that, at that time. And so I was just kind of like, why not? And yeah, so I applied for, I think I applied for one other postdoc before and then I applied for the one that I got. So that took me to the UK and sort of, I was always a little bit, you know, kind of like, "well, I'll try academia and then I can go into industry". Part of it was also the thinking that, you know, you can go that way, you can do academia first and then industry. It's harder to go the other way round. So, you know, I gave it a go. But then of course, you get sucked in over time. So you end sticking with it.

##### Researcher

Yeah, no, I feel like that sometimes just because I did my undergrad and master's and now PhD at [researcher’s institution]. And we just joke that, like, I’m going to be stuck in [researcher’s institution] forever because you just sort get of sucked in.

##### Participant 4

Haha, yeah.

##### Researcher

OK. So that's really interesting. So what would you say from your perspective the purpose of academia is?

##### Participant 4

I think it can have a range of different purposes. I mean, I think one of the key functions is education. And then of course, you know, doing primary research, not all that is, is practical or will be practical, but some of it will be. And I think, you know, across that there's sort of a broader function of just keeping bodies of knowledge alive. So, you know, even if individual academics, researchers, may not be ground-breaking or possibly may not be that impactful, nonetheless, if you don't have people actively working in that area, then that knowledge is not going to be alive anymore. So I think that's a major function.

##### Researcher

Excellent. OK, so I want to talk a bit more about your kind of specific role within the business school. So could you, are you able to kind of summarise the formal requirements of you in your job? So like, for example, would there be a specific number of research outputs you would be expected to produce in a given amount of time kind of thing? So can you think of any kind of specific requirements?

##### Participant 4

No, not so much. I mean, I think there's always informal expectations. But in terms of formal expectations, not really. But there are consequences for not performing at a high level. I mean, you obviously have to, you know, I have to fulfil my role obligations, which is delivering teaching to a satisfactory standard and delivering on my administrative role and in terms of research, there is no particular formal requirements, no.

##### Researcher

What about with teaching? What are the kind of formal requirements for that is, is it based on student evaluations, or?

##### Participant 4

It's still not, I mean, it's, again, it's not like a, you know, it's like, "well, he did incredibly, but he didn't turn up", you know, you'd lose your job probably. Do you know what I mean? It's kind of like, there's a lot of unspoken things, it is just that you're required to execute it to a professional level. But it's not contracted. I mean, it's just that I think you would be seen as being negligent, if you didn't do what everyone, you know, normative expectations about what is a reasonable level of performance. And you could potentially lose your job for that. But again, it's not that you have to get a score of X and you have to publish four papers a year and they have to be in certain kinds of journals. It's not that as a kind of like an obligation. That's more of an aspirational expectation and certainly an academic context where that's valued, you know, everyone tries to do that anyway, but it's not a formal part of the evaluation.

##### Researcher

So it's much more like professional norms and unwritten rules as opposed to being sort of told you have to achieve a certain amount of X, Y, Z?

##### Participant 4

Yeah.

##### Researcher

OK, that's interesting.

##### Participant 4

I'm just trying to think, am I forgetting something? No, no, it really isn't. It's not like you have to get to two papers a year. I mean, you know, I guess that there's obviously a sense of, you know, a certain level if you want to keep your job and if you want to get promotion, and if you want get a job elsewhere. We all know what we have to do, right? So there's, in the UK, obviously the REF is such an overarching, overriding factor that if you want to be seen to be doing well in your institution and be employable by other institutions, you should be trying to get four star REF papers.

##### Researcher

And in terms of the REF is there an, there is no sort of strict requirement, it's again, like, trying to achieve something that's expected, but not like told "you have to submit an impact case study" or anything like that?

##### Participant 4

No, no, that's right. I mean, look, I think if you produce nothing, then you're going to find your life is pretty difficult or you might, your contract might change. But again, it's not as though there's a, you know, you have to do X per year, or at the end of a REF cycle you have to have done Y, but certainly your life is going to be much easier if you do well according to those metrics.

##### Researcher

So when, when you talk about the administrative part of your role, so is that like being a head of programme or something?

##### Participant 4

Yeah, so I'm the director of the [programme] in the business school.

##### Researcher

Oh, lovely. And does that take up a lot of time?

##### Participant 4

Yeah, it takes up a whole lot of time.

##### Researcher

More so, more so than you would like it to?

##### Participant 4

Yeah, it has been. I mean, I think it's been a, it's been a period of flux. It's also me moving to a new institution and new international setting, the way in which programmes are run and funded in the UK, it is completely different from [home country], it is worlds apart. And so, it's, you know, it's both having to socialise into an institution, and a particular academic system. But, so, that always makes things much harder. But then there's been an enormous amount of change in how, you know, the sort of centralisation of functions, the [department], you may have similar things at [researcher’s institution]. And with that there's been a huge amount of change in terms of the actual processes around the [programme] and so that's been going on for a few years. But I kind of stepped, and there was still an enormous amount going on. And then, of course, Covid-19 has introduced a hold up. So it's just, you know, it's definitely, it's not a steady state in that particular space. And so there's been a huge amount of work. I think, you know, once it settles down and I know the system, it should be less work, but it's been incredibly time consuming.

##### Researcher

OK. I want to ask on a personal level of sort of job satisfaction, what is your, what are your personal priorities? So if you could choose exactly what you need to work on day to day, what would it be?

##### Participant 4

Well it would be research, haha. I mean, you know, that's not, that's not, yeah. I mean, you know, I think research is something I find most rewarding. It's not that I don't enjoy the other things, but yeah, I would certainly say research is a priority. I, you know, I wouldn't necessarily choose year in, year out to be doing nothing other than research, that also gets a little bit boring. But yeah, research.

##### Researcher

OK, and how have things changed for you in terms of your priorities since coronavirus became a pandemic, not in terms of maybe your personal preferences, but in terms of what you're expected to do? Has there been like a shift?

##### Participant 4

Well, I mean, I think yeah, there's sort of evolving expectations. These expectations, we know that the expectations are going to be a particular form, it's the concrete details that are still working out. So, probably like [researcher’s institution] the plan at [university] from next academic year is to have blended teaching. So, we're going to have to put stuff online, but also have some capacity to potentially do stuff face to face as well. But that's all a little bit still up in the air and, but nonetheless, you know, all, so my courses are in first term, and so both of those are going to have to be put in an online form. Actually, I don't even know. One of them is a [topic] master's module, very small seminar style. And, you know, there is still a little bit of uncertainty about what exactly it's going to be. You know, are all these things going to be taught next year or will some of the smaller ones, optional modules, and so on be pushed to the side? In which case... anyway. So what this means for me and everyone else teaching is that teaching is going to take up an enormous amount of time next year. And so, for me, the summer is really about just trying to get as much, make as much progress for my research as I can because next year is going to be a bit tough.

##### Researcher

OK. But in a, in a perfect world, you would be focusing more on research, would you say?

##### Participant 4

This summer?

##### Researcher

Yeah.

##### Participant 4

I am focusing more on research. So I'm, at the moment, I'm doing what I, what I probably would anyway. But it feels more urgent than usual because I feel like next academic year it's going to be pretty tough.

##### Researcher

OK. Yeah, cool. So, in terms of, so you kind of talked about what you want, why you became an academic and stuff, and what is expected of you. Do you feel like they align quite well in terms of what you're expected to do in your current role and what you want to do in your career? Or do you feel like there might be a bit of a mismatch?

##### Participant 4

No, I think, I think in the current role, I'm you, know, I'm pretty happy. I mean, you know, so, many academics who do research would like to spend more time doing research. That's kind of the way it goes. But, you know, I think, and I think I certainly wouldn't mind it if some of the workload associated with admin and so on was reduced, that would be great. But really, the position I'm in now is about what positions look like, if you know what I mean. I think you can get, it would be hard to get a much better one. And I've worked in a number of different institutions and seen different places. But it would be easy to get a much worse one, if you know what I mean. So I, yeah, I'm pretty happy with it. And the business school as a whole is, I'm enjoying, my colleagues are great. And so there's a lot of stuff that's been good. It could all get worse. But at the moment it's fun.

##### Researcher

Good. Thank you for that. So I want to move on and talk about impact, so impact is obviously like a huge thing. What is the business school's attitude towards impact, would you say?

##### Participant 4

I mean, I think the business school, you know, I don't think there is anything special about [university] approach to these things. I think it really does map onto the REF performance. And that is the university as a whole. So being in the business school I don't think there is anything is particularly different from being in another department in the university. And yeah, absolutely, if you can, if you can do impactful work in a way that brings in money and that can be used for case studies, I think absolutely, that's, that's a good thing. You know, I sort of think it's, you're not, not everyone is expected to do that. And it's also not seen to be more important than doing research which publishes well. So a little bit of space for specialisation. So you're either doing case studies or doing good research. If you can do both, well, wonderful. But that's challenging.

##### Researcher

And do you, when you're doing your research, do you think about impact or are you more focused on kind of publishing and that kind of area? Like are you, do you focus on sort dissemination in terms of other academics, or do you think about beyond that?

##### Participant 4

Yeah, I've always had a, like I've done some research, which is just much more basic. And then I do some work, which is much more applied and impactful. And I mean, anyway, I found it very hard to do both at the same time. So, you know, I always had stuff going on with organisations, and for the most part, that's interesting. I find it interesting to get into organisations, can be having, it can have impact. The most useful thing is it just brings in money that I can use for doing my basic research. But I have not really had an experience where all the time that goes into working with an organisation produces a paper that is commensurate with that time. So I find, you know, this is not necessarily the case, but it's very difficult to get data from organisations through a collaboration with them that can produce top quality publications. My experience has been, you know, you do that for other reasons. And if you want to do publications, you get data in a different kind of way. Other people have had different experiences, but maybe it's kind of like, yeah. I just try to be clear about which goal I'm trying to achieve with something.

##### Researcher

OK. And have you had any kind of involvement with the REF in terms of having to submit impact case studies?

##### Participant 4

No.

##### Researcher

OK. So we talked about the requirements and so we kind of brushed on kind of the more normative aspects. So you're kind of expected to do things, but it's not sort of like written down in your contract or anything. So, you talked about publications. Would you say there is like an unwritten kind of rule in terms of that, like, in like a departmental level, so like the other academics that you work with, do you feel like you all kind of need to produce a certain number of papers per year? And would you be able to kind of put a number on that?

##### Participant 4

No, I mean, it's about quality, right? And so academic departments, and, you know, we're not alone in this and maybe not all of them, but certainly many of them are, particularly where they're in research institutions, there's a strong status hierarchy and that maps very strongly onto your research productivity. Now, what I mean by that is not just producing lots of papers. It's not just quantity, but really quality matters enormously. So, you know, I think you get status or you kind of have esteem from your peers and you feel like you're doing relatively well if you're producing, publishing in top journals. And you know, if you're publishing in top journals, then the more you publish the better. But, you know, I think it's kind of like if you produce, you know, if you're publishing a lot, but they're all in lower tier journals, then you're not going to be so highly esteemed. So I'd say the quality comes first, quantity, you know, if you can get the quality, try and do more. But, so, part of it is, you know, it's just, there's very high levels of interpersonal comparison in research in general, because it's so transparent and you can see what everyone does in terms of research. And in an institution where that is important, then there's a lot of kind of, you know, just comparison. No one wants to feel like they're much weaker than their colleagues. It's always more comfortable if you feel like you're, you know, above average.

##### Researcher

So there's more of an expectation to publish in four star journals than there is to produce a certain number of outputs?

##### Participant 4

Yeah, absolutely. This also maps onto the REF rewards. So, you know, the money that you get from a four star publication is much more than any of the others, it is a huge push to focus on that.

##### Researcher

OK. So in terms of, you've got quite a varied role, we talked about how you have research and teaching and administration responsibilities. Do you have a specific method of navigating those different requirements in your job, or different aspects, or do you feel like you just kind of get on with it and do it and don't really think about it in that way?

##### Participant 4

I don't think have a good method, haha, I haven't. It's not the most effective one. Look, you know, the way to get ahead with research is you do research first and you fit everything else around the edges. And certainly people who can do that are much more productive research-wise. I find it very difficult to do that because I feel the demands of the other things and I like to kind of clear some space to do research. But, you know, that doesn't really work because then you never have the space to do the research. So I always feel like it's a struggle to make time and prioritise research. I mean, you know, I make some time, but. Yeah. I'm not as kind of, yeah, I didn't prioritise research as clearly as some of us do. And while that may be good for my performance in the administrative role or some teaching things, you know, it is a bit of a problem for getting research done.

##### Researcher

OK. So kind of, well, moving on to kind of the last stage of this then, it's been a very efficient interview.

##### Participant 4

Haha.

##### Researcher

So I kind of want to ask where do you see yourself in five years time? What is your, what do you think is the next stage of your career and your, kind of, goals?

##### Participant 4

Well, having been here, in academia, for a while, it's very difficult to think of doing anything else, you know, so I guess in five years I would like to be, you know, I could see that I would be in academia still, but hopefully just doing better, particularly on the research side of things. My partner and I would like to go back to [home country]. It's very competitive and difficult, and given Covid-19, who knows what opportunities there are going to be. If the coming five years went really well, we would be going back to [home country]. But in academia, and still having to do a, you know, have a role that's kind of balanced in the way in which my current role is.

##### Researcher

And just out of interest, what is the difference between the sort of academic landscape in the UK and [home country]? Or is it fairly similar?

##### Participant 4

In what way?

##### Researcher

In terms of, so, I mean, from my perception, just as a PhD student, obviously I don't have loads of research experience or anything, but it is very much like you said, kind of the pressure to publish in very high ranked journals and the whole kind of publish or perish phenomenon. And I just wonder is, is that the same everywhere?

##### Participant 4

It is. Yeah. Yeah, absolutely. Again, this is not to say that that is the way it should be, but it definitely is the case that research is the higher status activity. And, you know, this is, this creates all kinds of problematic dynamics if, for instance, you want to go down the teaching pathway. So you tend to have more work, it is less valued, and all kinds of things that are problematic. But, it is the way, it's the way it is in many institutions. Certainly research-focused institutions. And teaching focused institutions, well, teaching is the lifeblood of the organisation. So, research is going to obviously matter less. So, [home country] is very much like the UK. There's sort of the [group of universities] they call it, I guess you could think about it is like the Russell Group, of research-intensive universities and they're incredibly competitive. There are some institutional differences, but generally very high performance environments, which can be fantastic, but also very stressful. And then, of course, you get the teaching-focused institutions in [home country]. So that is quite a clear, you know, in the most part, it's quite a clear divide between the research-focused and the teaching-focused. Then there are some institutions that sort of try and straddle across that and they'll now have, within their staff, they'll have different kinds of roles, which are focused more research, like "these are the researchers and these are the teachers" and, you know, they try and sort of do both by having people either focused one way or the other way. But I think it's pretty similar. Yeah.

##### Researcher

OK. And if you were to be able to sort of move back in five years time and secure a role would that, would you want that to be at a research intensive institution again? Kind of to match with your sort of interest?

##### Participant 4

Yeah, absolutely. I think, yeah, if teaching were, it's not like I hate teaching. Students are fine. And it depends on the kind of the way you're teaching them. Classes or seminars or graduate seminars are great. But if you're just teaching hundreds of undergraduates it's not the most fun. But, yeah, I mean, if I have to, if teaching was all I could do, I think I would probably look at going into industry, not that that would be straightforward. But nonetheless, I think I would be acting then. But yes, it would have to be a role with research. I mean, I'm not thinking, you know, I'm not thinking of taking an administrative route. Certainly not in the next five years.

##### Researcher

Excellent. OK. Well, I think that's everything I really wanted to talk about.

##### Participant 4

Haha, that was very efficient.

##### Researcher

That's good, I like it, very to the point, very efficient. So, yeah. So, unless there's anything else from the top of your head that you can think to add, I don't think I have anything else I want to ask.

##### Participant 4

That's brilliant.