##### Researcher

Right, there we go. OK, so obviously I've had a look at your profile, so I know a bit about you and your area of work. But just in your own words, can you tell me about yourself, your background and your current job role?

##### Participant 8

Yeah, sure. Background is a bit varied for an academic. I left university with a degree in [subject] and a masters in [subject]. I then went into [sector] for three or four years. I was working in [job role]. I then went to [sector] for about eight or nine years. I was a consultant for [company]. I was working in [various areas], all sorts of things. Then I left that and then I spent a couple of years working for the [organisation] as a researcher, then got a PhD in [subject]. And then because I was also teaching, as well as in [subject], also in the business school, I got a postdoc, a funded postdoc in the business school within [discipline]. And then after two or three years that turned into a lectureship in [discipline]. So I got my lectureship in [discipline] in about [year]. So I've just been plodding along since then, pretty much as a junior lecturer within [discipline]. I'm on the research track, which means I need to publish outputs for the REF in three or four star journals. I'm also expected to do some impact work, although we'll talk more about that in the future. And as well as that I'm supposed to be teaching as well. So I kind of do all sorts really.

##### Researcher

OK, that's really interesting. So you're very kind of like, interdisciplinary, almost, coming from a [discipline] background and then coming into [subject] and that kind of area, it's a very varied background.

##### Participant 8

Yeah, it's unusual in academia, I think. What usually happens in academia is what happens in any profession, people leave university, the get a PhD, and then they kind of specialise in one discipline, and they kind of continue in that discipline. But I've always kind of jumped around an awful lot. I mean, I publish within [various areas], but I don't see that as a major problem. And the nice thing about the business school environment is they're very output-focused. So where, if I was working in say, the [alternative] department, and I was publishing stuff in a, in business school type journals, they'd be like "well, what are you doing? Why are you doing that? Publishing in different disciplines?" But within a business school they're more laid back. As long as you hit that their core targets, which are around the REF, they don't really mind. So it's all good to me.

##### Researcher

Yeah, OK, excellent. So you mentioned you're on the research track, but you do a little bit of teaching as well?

##### Participant 8

Yeah. I teach a lot of postgraduate students, especially from China. And my teaching load is less than some. There's two types of contract in the business school. There is teaching and scholarship, and they're expected to do teaching all of the time. And they're not really expected to carry out research or impact work for the REF. And then there's teaching and research, and I'm expected to do both of them at the same time.

##### Researcher

OK. And how much of your time, then, would you say, if you had to, like, split it between 100 percent? How much of your time would you say you dedicate to research, teaching and then maybe administration?

##### Participant 8

Yeah, that's a really tricky question. I mean, I suppose the honest answer is most of my time is on research, really. In terms of percentage split, I mean, it depends on the size of your cohort. If you're teaching, I teach three modules and one of them has got 30 students, another one 150 students. So the time you spend kind of varies hugely. But if I had to make a very rough estimate, I would say, and this is different to everyone else I would've thought, I'd say maybe 10 percent on the administration, 20 to 30 percent on teaching and the rest on research, in terms of the amount of time I spend.

##### Researcher

OK, that's interesting. So obviously you have a bit of a varied background and did a lot of stuff before you were in academia. So what actually brought you into an academic role. Why did you move into academia?

##### Participant 8

Well, I've always been a kind of frustrated academic, really. I enjoyed university very much. I didn't get a first, I got a 2:1. I think if I'd have got a first, I'd have gone straight to do a PhD and got funding and then tried to get into academia, but I'd always had in the back of my mind that I wanted to be an academic. I wanted to get a PhD. And then an opportunity arose if I can put it like that, during the recession, where my employer at the time said, "you know, your job is moving to [city], so either you move to [city] or you leave". So I left. And that really was one of the spurs which helped me to kind of head towards a PhD.

##### Researcher

Interesting. And following on from that, obviously a bit of a, you might have to think about this one a little bit, but if you had to kind of summarise academia, what would you say the purpose of academia actually is?

##### Participant 8

Well, yeah, I mean, I'm sure everybody is giving you completely different views. What's my view of academia? My view of academia is, I suppose it's to advance knowledge in a broad sense, but it's also to communicate knowledge primarily to students. That's what I would be able to say. It's a teaching profession obviously, it should be a teaching profession.

##### Researcher

Yeah. Excellent, OK, thanks for that. So I want to move on now to talk more about the specifics of your job. So obviously, you've kind of mentioned the kind of expectation to publish in certain journals and there's a bit of impact work as well, and the REF. Would you be able to tell me the formal requirements of your role? So by that I mean things that you are required to deliver or achieve, for example, in a given academic year. So, for example, that would be like a certain number of publications or maybe like a certain, I don't know, score on student evaluation surveys. And if possible, could you tell me where these requirements come from? So if they're business school level or university wide level, or something else.

##### Participant 8

We don't really have set annual targets. It's more a case of general expectations. In terms of teaching, first of all, we use the workload allocation model and that allocates a certain amount of teaching every year. And of course, we have to do that. In terms of student scores, I'm not aware of any expectation, that may be because to be honest, I tend to do quite well in student assessments. I've never been in a situation where I've been called in an office and told off. So I'm not aware of any threshold you have to reach to avoid being told off or warned. In terms of publications, again, we don't have formal year on year targets. It's more a case of you are expected to be publishing in three and four star journals. And the only thing I can say about that is, again, I haven't been in any trouble with that because my publication record is quite good. But if I were to say, not publish in a three or four star journal over a two year period, I'd be in a spot of bother with my manager. And the more I didn't publish in those journals, the more trouble I'd be in. I know that a couple of years ago, the business school management was really cracking down on people who weren't publishing and people were being threatened, disciplinary actions and all sorts of other things. So there's always a kind of shadow hanging over you. You always know that if you want to continue in employment, you need to be moving towards publishing in three and four star journals. And like I say, there's no set rule about how much you should publish, but it's very much got to be in those three and four star journals. Now I publish in other journals as well. I had a monograph out a couple of years ago and blah blah blah. None of that matters. It simply doesn't matter. I can publish in the best [alternative discipline] journal in the world and my managers wouldn't really care. And you think, "well, why should they?" Because it's not their discipline. But as long as you're publishing in three and four star journals, they're fine. And another point about this is, although I'm employed to do [subject], if I publish in alternative journals, which happen to be three star, like [journal], for example, [journal], they're happy with that as well. Why? Because they can submit those to the REF. So it's all about getting together a REF, really. That's what they really want you to do.

##### Researcher

And is anything to do with the REF written into your contract in a way that you're expected to contribute for the REF in that way, is it like a requirement for you to do that?

##### Participant 8

I don't, I'm trying to think. I don't think it's set in stone in my contract. But it's very much an expectation.

##### Researcher

OK.

##### Participant 8

I mean, if I didn't publish in three and four star journals and it came to the next REF and I had nothing I'd be in very serious trouble. I'd lose my job, essentially, if I did that. And that's an expectation within the business school, you know, it's publish or publish. You have to publish.

##### Researcher

Yeah. So you would say these things are more maybe normative expectations than actual regulations, but they're very serious?

##### Participant 8

Yeah. I know, I know some business schools will kind of order their people to publish X and Y in X and Y journals by date X, otherwise you're toast. Ours is a little bit more laid back than that. But the expectation is this is still there. It's very certainly still there. I mean, I know people who, I mean, we come in on a three year probation. This is one thing. You come into the business school on probation and you have to publish during the probation period. And if you don't publish in a three star, four star journal within that probation period, they won't renew your probation, so you're out. So I knew somebody a few years ago who either wouldn't or couldn't publish on their probation period. And that was it. You know, she left. So, had a contract not renewed after three years. So it's mostly unspoken, but there's a little bit of, kind of, written, kind of, not a threat, but written expectation in there as well.

##### Researcher

OK, and can you think of any kind of requirements or regulations in your role related to creating impact beyond academia? So with non-academic stakeholders, is that a requirement? Or again, is that maybe something that's more expected, more of a norm than a requirement?

##### Participant 8

It's kind of subsumed into the REF. Because, of course, you know, you can have REF impact case studies. And nobody expects you to do a REF impact - well, how can I put this - it's, writing a REF impact case, study, I think it's considered as being worth, I forget now, two or three four stars. It's a very good thing to do, so they do like you do REF impact case studies. But there's no expectation on individuals to participate. It's voluntary. I was involved in a piece of work a few years ago, we did a consultancy assignment, me and my colleagues, we did a consultancy assignment with the [organisation] on regulating wages. And we thought, "oh, this is great, this'll make a nice REF case study". So we put it forward within the school processes to try and get it accepted for a case study. And it was rejected in favour of somebody else. But that didn't make any difference. It was just something you, it's something we thought, "well, it's worth a go, let's give it a bash". Again, it's a bit like writing two articles. If you write two articles, great. But if you can't. Well, yeah.

##### Researcher

Yeah. OK, great. And in general, so I had a look at [university] and I know that they place a fair bit of emphasis on impact. It's actually part of, part of the strategy. Does that sort of come in to your day to day work, are you reminded of that quite often or is that, do you feel like it might be like maybe a bit of an afterthought?

##### Participant 8

Yeah, I mean, the business school takes impact very seriously, but nobody really knows what it is. I wrote a chapter on it a couple of years ago and I still haven't got the faintest idea what it actually is. It's one of these things, I mean, I think we're expected to kind of keep it in mind, we're expected to kind of think about the idea of value when we're carrying out our work. But because it's very difficult for us to define what value actually is, it is hard to do that. I mean, the idea of impact really started after the mid 1990s when we were all going to kind of convert to a sort of democratic, liberal democratic paradise, where everyone would kind of share similar views and everything would be wonderful - of course, society hasn't quite worked out like that. It's become very polarised and fragmented. So nobody really knows what impact actually means apart from the very vague idea of doing good things. Well, how would you define what good is? It is very hard to tell. So I think impact doesn't really impact on our day to day activities very much, although of course, I know that the management are very keen on it.

##### Researcher

Excellent. OK, thank you. So obviously we've talked about different requirements, but obviously there seems to be a fair amount of more kind of pressures and expectations.

##### Participant 8

Yeah.

##### Researcher

Do you think the pressures and expectations placed upon you for publishing and the whole publish or perish thing, do you think that kind of aligns with what you want to get out of an academic career?

##### Participant 8

I'm laid back about it. I know that an awful lot of people really don't like it, but from my perspective, you know, I'm very well paid. You know, I earn, in [university], about [salary], which is more than most people earn in [university]. The average salary in [university] full time is about twenty four, twenty five thousand. So I'm, you know, I feel quite well off. I'm in a job which gives me a huge amount of autonomy. I've never had a job like this before. I'm not even sure who my line manager is. And in most environments, you know who your line manager is because it's somebody that's hassling you all the time. Here, I'm pretty much left alone. So I feel fairly relaxed about the publish or perish thing. But having said that, the reason I feel relaxed about it is until recently I've had a very good run of publications and very few rejections. More rejections have started to come through now, so I'm starting to feel a little bit more, a little bit more nervous. I'm pleased I've got six years - I think - until the next REF deadline is in. So is this what I want from my academic career? I would say, broadly speaking, yes it is. You know, everything's relative. And like I say, I get a huge amount of autonomy. I like teaching. I like writing. You know, I enjoy my subject. And I can choose what I want to write about, which is remarkable, because if you think, most jobs you have, you know, I've been a researcher in various other environments, I had no choice. And order from up high would descend on my desk saying "you will write a report on the subject X by next Tuesday". And you'd just go off and do it. But here in academia, within reason, it's pretty much up to me. So, I'm, you know, I'm quite satisfied, quite content, to be honest, especially in current circumstances where you've got 2.8 million unemployed or whatever it currently is. I'm kind of sat here, counting my blessings, to be honest.

##### Researcher

Yeah. Thank you. And I want to ask about your, we talked about how there's sort of, the impact stuff, but then there's also, like you said publish or perish.

##### Participant 8

Yeah.

##### Researcher

Do you think those two things are complementary or do you think they kind of clash?

##### Participant 8

I suppose they clash in a way. Because when you write an article for a three or four star journal, you're not thinking about public value, or the greater good, or any of these other things. You're thinking about what do I have to do to get this article in this journal? What it means in reality is you've got to take a very narrow theoretical approach and you've got to get your data, and you've got to kind of work into a certain kind of a framework, a certain type of approach, and it can become, frankly, very abstract, you know. I always think, you know, my articles can be read by other people, but the reality is that nobody outside of academia will read what I write. And very few people inside academia will read what I write. So, academic publishing is a very kind of narrow, very abstract business. And that's very different from the idea of public value, which is all about engagement and the greater good and helping society and all the rest of it. So I don't think they really overlap at all. I don't think they really complement each other at all.

##### Researcher

So you almost, would you say you almost treat them as two separate activities?

##### Participant 8

Oh, yeah, pretty much, pretty much. I mean, if I'm writing, I mean, I'm writing an article at the moment on one particular aspect of organisation in [countries]. And really the overlap between that and impact is effectively nil. There is no value, there is no overlap between those two things. Impact, because it's hard to define, it's kind of hard to operationalise. It looks great on the website, but how would you actually define what impact actually is? And if you can't define what it actually is, you can't operationalise it. You can't implement it. And so it staying in the background, you know, I think it's a good thing. I think it's a good thing that the business school think about impact on the broader community, on broader society. But having said that, I don't really see much overlap at all between the idea of public value and the research work I do.

##### Researcher

OK, excellent. Thank you. The last thing I wanted to talk about is workload. So do you ever feel like the your workload is too much and there's kind of not enough hours in the day for what you're expected to do?

##### Participant 8

No.

##### Researcher

No?

##### Participant 8

And I appreciate that is an unusual answer. Workload is an emotive issue in academia, as I'm sure you're finding out when you interview people. I mean, there was a terrible case in [university] a while ago where a guy committed suicide. And he left a note behind him saying his workload was too great. But, having said that, I can only speak to my own situation. And, you know, I've worked in environments where people ignore working hours, start at half eight or half nine and finish at eight o'clock in the evening, you know. I've managed teams of people where I come in, in the morning, at eight o'clock, nine o'clock, and people have been working until two or three o'clock in the morning. And I know they're a little bit extreme, but I think academics, even on a full time permanent contract in academia, if you can avoid some of the managerial responsibilities, you really are doing quite nicely for yourself. And the reason I can get away with writing in different disciplines is I've got the time to do that. And I think that's very unusual. So, you know, on the one hand, I can fully appreciate that some people do have too much work to do. Their workload is too great. But on the other hand, I think people who are in my situation, junior lectureship, no managerial responsibilities, no financial responsibilities, we're doing quite nicely compared to many people in many other situations.

##### Researcher

OK, excellent. I think you kind of covered everything I wanted to talk about, I don't have any more actual questions. Yeah, I think we've covered everything, so unless there's anything else off the top of your head that you want to add to anything that might be useful or important, I think that's my questions done.

##### Participant 8

Yeah, you know, the thing about business schools, there's a huge amount of variety. I mean, there's some business schools, frankly, that seem to be an awful environment in which to work. There's two I know of which I'd better not name, and they went down the road of being very aggressive in terms of setting targets and expectations and all the rest of it. I mean, where I am, they are a little bit more laid back, you know. There are expectations about REF, but it's really pretty much up to you how you get there, and that might not suit some people, but it certainly suits me. And even within the disciplines, there's an awful lot of variety as well. I mean, economics has one way of doing things and management has another way of doing things. So, again, there's a huge amount of variety. Business schools normally tend to be quite laissez-faire in their approach to all of this. But of course, that only works if you are actually meeting the expectations and meeting the REF. I mean, I can't really stress highly enough the importance of meeting the REF expectations. As long as you meet those expectations, they're kind of quite laid back about it in my experience.

##### Researcher

Mm hmm. Yeah, it's interesting. Some people do mention the REF, some people don't. It must depend, I guess, on the role, especially those that kind of are on a balanced contract, that have to dedicate so much time to teaching. You get such different responses. But yeah, the REF is definitely an important aspect to look at.

##### Participant 8

Yeah. I mean, if you're talking to a Russell group business school academic on a research contract, then it's all going to be about the REF. If you're talking to a Russell group teaching and scholarship academic, then the REF doesn't apply to them and then once you go out into other universities, sometimes the REF will be important, sometimes it won't be important. It all depends on your individual, I mean, my personal viewpoint is that perhaps where I am they talk too much about the REF, but they've got no choice but to do that because of the environment they're in. It's just horses for courses really.

##### Researcher

Yeah, yeah. I do find the REF interesting because it's like one element of it is proving that you're kind of getting all these research outputs in these highly ranked journals. But then at the same time, it's also asking to submit impact case studies. And I don't think the two necessarily always go hand in hand.

##### Participant 8

Oh, not at all.

##### Researcher

So it's like a balancing act almost to meet those expectations.

##### Participant 8

It is.

##### Researcher

Yeah.

##### Participant 8

Oh, I mean, I mean, I think I mentioned earlier how I was involved in one impact case study that didn't go anywhere. And I was only involved in that by a fluke situation, because myself and the people I work with, what we were asked to do a bit of consultancy work. And if we hadn't had that consultancy work, then we never would have been able to put forward an impact case study. And even if we did put forward a case study... it didn't get anywhere. I mean, all my other research, no chance of any impact case study emerging from it at all. So they can be very different things. Back to your point earlier about public value versus publications, you know, they are very different things and they don't really overlap. And really, as an academic, I mean, nobody manages me. Really, I don't know who my line manager is. Well, I know who my line manager is, I've met him once I think, formally, in the last two years maybe. So I'm left alone to manage myself. But I would say that that might be because I kind of hit the targets for the past few years. If I didn't hit the targets, I might be identified as a kind of problem who needed support. And then my perception of work would be different. So I always see being an academic almost like being self-employed. You know, you've got to maintain your own workload, planning your own workload, structuring your own workload. And if you can, if you can do that and succeed, then things are fine normally. There's far worse jobs out there than being an academic, I think.

##### Researcher

Yeah, yeah. There's a lot of kind of like autonomy and flexibility, I think, in an academic career, which is kind of what draws me to it anyway.

##### Participant 8

Yeah. I mean, the autonomy is remarkable, remarkable. You know, I've worked in [other sectors]. I've never seen anything remotely like this in terms of autonomy. Nobody effectively line manages me. Nobody gives me, normally, nobody gives me tasks, really. Nobody gives me objectives, really. I mean, I have objectives every year, but they're kind of high level and very vague. You know, in a normal job, you will have a line manager. The line manager will give you instructions, you will carry out those instructions, and then he or she will assess whether the instructions have been carried out or not. You don't get any of that in academia. You're given freedom. Which is something - because I've been on the other end of things, because I've been micromanaged, I've been in all sorts of kind of bizarre, awkward situations in work - I appreciate the autonomy and the freedom that you get. So to me, it's a remarkable thing. It's a very good thing.

##### Researcher

Yeah, absolutely. Yeah, I completely agree. Even as a PhD student, you kind of get a taste of that flexibility and freedom to kind of do your own thing within obviously certain limits. But there is so much freedom. I do like that a lot. I think being micromanaged would be awful.

##### Participant 8

Oh yeah. The freedoms, I mean, you just have to learn to use it properly. You know, you have to just work your hours and plan your outputs and all the rest. But if you can do that, it's great.

##### Researcher

OK, excellent. Well, thank you for, thank you for all of your help. I'm going to just stop the recording.