##### Researcher

Wonderful. So obviously I've seen your profile and I've read a bit about you, but kind of in your own words, can you tell me about yourself and your kind of career and your job role and your background?

##### Participant 13

Yes, sure. So my name is [participant's name] and I've been at [the business school] - I joined in [the late 2010s], so this is [a few] years that I've been working at the university right now. So I'm in the [department] and my contract for work, here, we call it three-legged, so I'm responsible for teaching, admin and management if there is any available, and also research as well. So the expectations that they have is that we will be assessed in these three different areas. And... yes, what else should I tell you?

##### Researcher

So, in terms of your kind of background, how did you kind of get into your current role? Where did you do your PhD and how did you get into or [university] as an institution?

##### Participant 13

Yeah. So I'm originally from [home country] and I did my bachelor degree in [home country] as well. But then I did my master's in the UK. After that I went back to work for a year in the [industry] in [home country]. And then I found a project that I would like to pursue for my PhD. So I applied to [other institution]. So I did my PhD at [other institution]. And after that I wasn't really sure whether I was going to join academia or not, because after the PhD I had - not anxiety - but I had PhD blues and stuff. So I wasn't really sure. And then I just worked in industry for a month and I knew that academia and research is something that I would like to pursue as a career. So I started looking for business schools that actually match with my research profile, because in [discipline] - I'm not sure what you are in - but in [discipline] there are different kinds of research programmes as well. A lot of the schools in the UK focus the positivist kind of perspective. But my research lies more in the area of being more interpretative and critical and that kind of thing. And I think at that time as well we had a lot of scholars that are quite well known in my area. So that's why I decided to apply, because I think it matches with my research profile. So that's why I joined [university] in [year].

##### Researcher

Okay. Great. And so you mentioned obviously the three different aspects of your job, how much of your time are you supposed to allocate to each of those areas?

##### Participant 13

Yeah. I mean, so I think every school has the workload model, that means there are certain hours or something that we are supposed to know. I do know, but I don't really understand it fully. So, there are certain hours and certain percentages that are allocated to you. So normally we have around, like thirty percent for the research time if you are on a research contract and then maybe like, the rest of the seventy percent depends on how it is allocated to either the admin and management and also teaching. So it means that if you do more of the admin than teaching, you take, for example, like the directors, for example, you get some points out of that. So here we have that kind of points-based system. But this year with the Covid-19 situation, all the research time for all the staff was reduced by 20 percent. So it means that instead of 30-70, we've got 10-90 for teaching and then the research and the rest. So with that as well, the real question is how many hours are we actually doing research? Like, are we reducing our research time? In reality, it's not really like that. So we need to find the time if we can, and if our health and our wellbeing allow it, to fill that gap. It doesn't mean that the former allocations percentage is reducing. But then in actual real life, it means that we are doing maybe 120 percent capacity, including everything that we used to do. I think with that as well, timetables and everything are quite uncertain during this time. So, we just got the numbers for the whole year back, and my workload this year after all of the adjustments, is saying that all the things that I'm doing is only accounted for in 97 percent of the workload model. So I was quite panicked. Not because, like, I feel that, I mean, first reason, I feel that we worked quite hard at the beginning of the term and also during this term as well. But why is it also just 97 percent if everything is counted? And also another thing as well - I know that some of my colleagues that have two-legged contracts - just teaching and admin - they do a lot of teaching, and I want it to be fair. So if everyone's above, like 100, and I'm just the only one on 97 percent, I don't think it's fair. So I sent an email to the person responsible for the workload allocations asking whether this is normal for the whole allocation, if it's not normal, if it's not fair enough, I'm willing to take more work. But if it's already kind of fair or maybe something is underrated, we should make it more reflective as well with that number. And then I think he kind of reflected on the things that I told you, that we got the time reduced in our research time. This means that you need to convert that 97 percent - we should kind of adjust that to the full 120 - so everyone basically is above 100 this year. Yeah.

##### Researcher

Wow. It sounds like you're quite overworked at the moment then.

##### Participant 13

Yeah, that's what everybody feels like. But I mean, we don't, we don't mind if it is actually shown. For example, if it's 110 percent, we know that, okay, we are doing something that is fair for others, fair for the university, fair for what we get paid for. But then with the new adjustment in those kind of numbers, and how numbers can affect you, we feel like we underwork. And that's kind of put more pressure on us as well in terms of you're looking at the numbers, it tells you that you underwork, but the actual work that you do, it seems more. So that's something that I don't think I agree with. With the - I think you have might've heard it from others already - we have, a lot of schools have the workload allocation. It's quite complex and it's like a black box. Okay, we know how things work, but we don't really know how it's accounted for. So with that, I think some people just keep asking questions, like how that works, and this and that. But some people just say they don't have time to actually look at every number in the spreadsheet and ask questions. They just let it go.

##### Researcher

So do you feel like at the moment you're actually getting enough time to do research?

##### Participant 13

Well, I think there's not enough time. There is never ever enough time to do research. Because, I mean, if you're interested in something, you need to engage in that project, and I feel that during this time, I feel that we have no time to actually concentrate on research. Because if you need to do some readings, if you need to think about writing something, it's not just like, "okay, I'll think about writing this, and then in 2 hours I'm going to come up with like 5,000 or 10,000 words". So you need the time to kind of play in your mind and think about things. And with this term I couldn't really, I mean, I have spare time, but then I couldn't really concentrate on writing and reading. So that's why I would say that it's so difficult do research even though you can think "nine to ten, I'm doing this, ten to eleven I'm teaching and then I have spare time". But you cannot really teach and then jump back to writing and reading. So I think it's quite difficult. And the REF cycle influences this as well. Some people must pay more attention than others, because if you have the output for this REF already - in this year for the REF submission, some people might feel that "okay, if I have something already, I can ease down a little bit and focus on my teaching preparations". So I think that has happened to me as well, because for this REF I have some output already and a lot of other things that come from my PhD. So I was in good time with the REF. So with this it was like a kind of cool down year, so I can think about new projects and also I can focus on the teaching as well. And then next year when things get better I can start coming back on the full spate of research again.

##### Researcher

Okay. That's really interesting. And obviously with Covid-19 and everything and the shift to online learning, did you manage to get any sort of break over the summer period, or was it sort of just full of preparing for teaching for this year?

##### Participant 13

Yeah. So I think, I mean, I used quite a lot of time to prepare for the new term to be starting. And the irony is that we have the workload allocation, allocated time for the module, but the workload normally starts around September. But if September is the time that the term starts it means that we need to prepare for that. So the preparation time fits it into our last year, when we would like to attend conferences, do some reading during the summer - so as well that is not really properly taken into account - the preparation time before the term starts. And also I'm doing, I was doing the admissions for this year as well, the BSc admissions, so it's adds kind of more complications and emotions into it as well. Because as you might know, the A level issues, so that added another level of stress. Not really stress, but kind of, uncertainty and things coming up during the summer time.

##### Researcher

Wow. Sounds like it's been a bit of a stressful time then recently.

##### Participant 13

I mean, as well, if you think about, in [university], in our department, we have great colleagues. And a lot of the things that we have been asked to do and stuff, it's more coming from the management and sometimes we hate our managers because they tell us to do this and that. But there are middle managers and they've got something from above, anyway, so I cannot really blame them too much. So I think being in higher education, I think it's kind of, yes, we are serving our students, but I think with this year, because smaller universities got hit by the decreasing number of students, but in [university], especially our degree, we plan to have to have 240 students in the cohort, but actually we ended up with almost 300 because of the A level U-turn. So they increase the amount of students which has an effect on the resource allocations. But I mean, this is my personal view anyway, I think with that as well, it's great socially that we took the hit because if you let down students, we could actually kind of destroy their hopes and their trust in higher education. And then they would think it is a joke and they won't go into higher education. I think that's quite important. So that's why I think even though it's quite stressful, I'm quite lucky that I'm already in the REF cycle and so I have more time to prepare the teaching, and also to, not take care of, but give more attention to my students this year.

##### Researcher

Okay, great. Thank you. So I want to talk about your, I guess, motivation for being an academic. So why, why do you think you kind of decided a career in academia was for you?

##### Participant 13

I think one of the factors is that a lot of members in my family did a PhD. So it is kind of the thing that goes around in the family, okay, you might want to do a PhD and this and that. But with that as well, I think the style of education and the topic and the field that you're in actually reflects on something interesting or current. So I did my degree in [home country] in [discipline] which is something really vocational. But when I had my degree, like my master's degrees here in the UK, it emphasised a lot of social issues that can be linked to [discipline]. And I had a chance as well to visit universities in [another country]. So I went for a summer programme in [foreign university] and I met one of the professors and I asked him why - because he used to be a [company] partner - and I asked him why he stepped out of industry, and he told me that being in academia means you can sell what do you believe in. You are not really forced to sell what you don't believe in. So I think that's kind of true as well. And that is reflected quite strongly when I joined industry after my PhD. So I signed up for a month and then I needed to sell something that I don't even think I'm going to buy. And his voice kind of came back to me again and I thought "okay, well..." I would say the main reasons were emotional and also influence from the cultural perspective as well.

##### Researcher

Wonderful, thank you. So I want to talk a little bit about the business school. So how would you kind of describe the environment of the business school in terms of kind of working practices and the attitude of the business school towards creating impact beyond academia.

##### Participant 13

You mean specially for [university]?

##### Researcher

Yeah.

##### Participant 13

Okay, so I think the word impact has been kind of spread around in the last couple of years. And you have the TEF, the REF, and the KEF as well - the knowledge exchange framework. So that is kind of emphasising impact. And also there are impact case studies, they are going to be embedded in our next REF or our evaluations in the coming years. So I think that they emphasise impact. I think some of us actually understand how to create impact in the more meaningful ways, but I think maybe some people are just like "okay, I know that impact is about getting heard, impact is about people picking up things that we talk about, and also having some engagement with societies beyond the paper that we have published". So there's so many different ways that they can create impact, whether it's going to be the actual impact, or the kind of perceived impact by society. I think in the business school this has been talked about a lot. And also there's some training as well. So if you would like to kind of create the impact or write an impact case there is - they didn't call it champion - but it's like the kind of champion, that one person that is more knowledgeable about how to write an impact case. I think with that as well, like when you teach someone to write something, it's not really, you cannot really see how things go. But I think like being an early career researcher, if I'm involved in a project or actually see how the project is actually working and also how impact was translated from the research to the real-world practices, if you can see it by yourself, then it's easier than just kind of, it is more helpful than just sitting in a workshop and saying, "OK, you need to create impact" and this and that. And I think that is linked to the duration of expectations of how things work as well, because they even expect us to actually publish every three years. So I mean, like I've spent the whole three, four years collecting data, doing something with my PhD, and then I'll spend another two or three years to get things published. So if you need to kind of produce the publications every two, three years, this means that you have only one year, maybe, to do research and then have a year to do some more reading and then try to get things into the publication cycle. So things with that as well, the, what is measured and what, what you're asked to do, they need to come together. And I think in some schools and in [university] as well, what I sense is that they try to create an environment where we can work in a sense, but the underlying system is that we still need papers, we still need to cling on the four star, three star, those kind of things. So there are kind of conflicting expectations there. But I didn't really feel pressure working in the business school. And I try to actually introduce the terms impact here and there.

##### Researcher

So you mentioned about publishing something every three years. Is that kind of like a requirement of your job, or is it kind of more of an expectation?

##### Participant 13

Yeah. Well, I wouldn't say it is a requirement, but it might be the kind of subtle expectation. The REF cycle is seven years, I mean, for the worst of the worst, you can have one paper in one REF cycle and then you can survive and stay employed. But the reason that I said three years is because in [university] we have a three year probationary period, and within the three years in the probation contract we need to set goals to actually say what we are going to do. And I think the expectations are not really high. But in these three years something needs to be turned out. Yeah. I mean, if it isn't a publication it should be like submissions or maybe a revise and resubmit, something like that.

##### Researcher

So, in your role, is there anything that actually is required, kind of like written down? Obviously the publication is kind of, as you said, a subtle expectation. Is there anything that you actually need to produce and this doesn't necessarily have to be research, it could also be kind of teaching as well, like in terms of maybe student evaluations or things like that.

##### Participant 13

Yes, student evaluation scores, we call it MEQ, the module evaluation questionnaire. And with that as well, because when we join, we need to write a probation document, and there are three areas of goal setting. And with that as well, when you set a goal, it should be quite specific, but not really be too hard or too harsh to actually tie yourself down. And with the publication, so we can say that one of the things we can do is actually just submit one paper, submit two papers, so can focus on submissions. It's not really tied down to the published work. But for the teaching evaluations, so I think at first I wrote like, "I am teaching this module and the student satisfaction from the MEQ should meet the university's requirements". This is what we put together with our managers initially. But then it's returned back to us and we then need to specify the number, not just saying "aligned with the university requirements", but we need to set, like for example, 3.7 out of 5. That's quite specific. So I think that's one thing that's quite specific and written in a contract. And 3.7 is not that high. But I think at the end of my first year I spoke about the MEQ with the current head of education in the school, he's in my department and he's my academic mentor as well. I talked to him about the MEQ. I'm not really concerned about the MEQ or being evaluated by students, but I think the fact that he mentioned it, because he said from the research perspective, the research in this area, he said that the young female ethnic minority scholars may received biased reviews by students in the MEQ. And I read some papers on that and they said it's true. But then I asked him, if there's something that I think is good for students at this stage - because I'm teaching first year a lot as well - and they're going to hate me and they're not going to like it, and if that translated into the module evaluation questionnaire as well, what should I do? Should I please the students? At that time the score wasn't out yet but I just asked the questions in my like one-to-one sessions. And he said he actually supports me to do everything that I think is good for students. So if it means that my MEQ scores are going to be, like, quite low, but if it's something I think it's good for students, I can do that. And he shows a strong support for me. He took me to the head of department's office at that time and asked the same question to the head of department, asked about my concern, "what do you think? Do you support that we should do everything that we think is good for our students, even though it's going to mean low MEQ score?" And the head of department said yes. So I think this ensures that we can actually do something that is good for students. MEQ is one thing. But then the quality is another. But then I think my MEQs so far have been very good so I don't need to worry much about it.

##### Researcher

Okay. Wonderful. And in terms of the kind of expectations and kind of pressures in the environment. So you briefly mentioned the publishing side. Is there any kind of pressure in terms of the type of journals that you must publish in? Like, obviously we know about the ABS list, and the whole two, three, four star kind of thing. Is that, do you feel pressure to kind of publish in those top tier journals?

##### Participant 13

Yeah. I mean, I feel pressure and I feel sorry and I don't know how I feel, actually, maybe I feel sad as well? But I think it's a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy, that when they talk about ABS, and then they also talk about what you publish mattering more than where you publish. I agree with that. We should value that statement. But I don't think it's true because I mean, when we talk about publications like, okay, I publish a paper. No one's actually asked the questions, what are you publishing, what area did you publish in - because we might be working in three, four different areas - which bit of your work got published? No, the first question they're going to ask is "which journal?" Why? Why are you not asking about what I publish? Surely it matters more than where I publish? But I think, I mean, the stars is a good thing in terms of the rigour of the review process. And that is actually true in my area as well. Like, three, four star in [discipline], it can take five years to get things published. So on that side it's good. But then on the other side as well, we encourage our research communities to be more creative in how we communicate research and stuff. But if you want to be creative, you want to produce something new, you may need to look for other journals, because for very reputable journals in certain areas, you need to write in a certain style. You need to theorise in a certain style. It's quite bounded to the norms that have been established. But one of the professors that I really admire, and I mean, she joined [university] a few years ago as well, a little bit after I joined, she's working in a multidisciplinary team. So the areas and the journals that she publishes in are kind of beyond the business-related literature. But it doesn't really cling on to the ABS list. It's kind of in a wider community. But I think, I mean, when you talk about the ABS list and some other lists, it's the first thing that you can use to judge... I don't want to say how good, but then, how well people perform. Because it's the only thing that is observable.

##### Researcher

And do you feel in the business school the kind of ABS list is sort of given more priority than impact activities?

##### Participant 13

I think on this current REF, maybe. But then on the impact... how can I put it... I think that impact is more emphasised. But the question is that if you are a junior researcher or an early career researcher, can you afford to ignore the ABS and focus on impact? But if you're a professor, I'm sure that you can afford to do that, because, I know that professor is not the end game for everyone, and if so you don't need to do everything, but then I think they want to get heard more. And also if they don't publish, but then they do some other projects, they might have more flexibility than us. So while in the early career stage, you need to kind of play the publishing game as well, and also try to balance and to understand impact. So I think with that we would like to do impact, but then we still need to make progress on publishing and collecting ABS stars and that sort of thing as well. There is one project of my research which was funded by one of the [home country] government agencies, and with that as well, it can be written in an impact case, but it takes time. And I'm not really sure how to turn, I mean, because if you're going to write an impact case, if you're talking about REF, not just any impact, you need to have one publication that is at least two star quality as assessed by the REF. So the star quality is not linked to the ABS, but a two star quality paper. So with that as well there are some requirements in case that comes into place. But in general, if you talk about like you're doing research, not really getting things published, but then you write a blog, you talk to people and you get the, have a real conversation going. If that is regarded as impact, it can be counted towards promotions and getting recognition. So I think that's good as well, beyond the formal impact that is measured.

##### Researcher

Okay. That's really interesting. So in terms of, kind of, I guess, the topic of impact and doing research for the purpose of publishing. Do you feel like they are two activities that are easy to do together? Or do you feel like it's difficult to aim to publish in those really top tier journals and also create impact? Like, can you do those two things at once, or is it something that you have to do in kind of stages?

##### Participant 13

I think that if we can do them together, it will make things easier. But I think because now we treat these two - I mean, from my perspective - I think because now we treat these two things as separate activities, that's why it's made both more difficult. Because if you, if you're talking about publications, we talk about speed, we talk about the numbers, how many papers we get published in the top tier journals, and we get assessed on that. So that's why it is more competitive. And with that competition, you need to talk about the speed. So the speed jeopardises everything. And the impact as well... it doesn't mean that shorter projects cannot really make impact. It can. Especially with the Covid-19 stuff. We need to be fast. But in social science, like, if you want to understand, like, a problem properly, it takes time - you're going to the field, you talk to people. But right now we talk about how many papers you get published, and we need to create impact at the same time. So it seems to be the same thing. But then I think it's measured differently and we allow the time, flexibilities, in different ways for impact and publishing. So it's more like a short term, like we might all be talking about how many papers like when you're publishing, but when you are going to talk about an impact it's more long term. It's more about creating change, and publishing a paper might not really help create change because people that you would like to engage with might not read academic journals. And as well, there is the pay barrier as well, if they want to read a paper, they can't really read the paper.

##### Researcher

Okay. Wonderful. So in terms of kind of the environment, so you kind of mentioned, that it is kind of difficult, especially kind of as an early career researcher, it's difficult to kind of focus on that impact. You kind of have to focus on the REF and the research outputs, and then maybe later in the career, you can start to be a bit more free. So would you say that, if you had to say that you kind of have a strategy for dealing with these kind of different priorities, your strategy would kind of be that prioritisation of the publications, or would you say that maybe you have a kind of different strategy or a different way of coping with that environment?

##### Participant 13

Well, I mean, trying to publish is one thing, but I'm not really trying to push papers out if it's not really aligned with my research interests or something that I would like to do. I'm not really a believer in this kind of like, "okay, I need to survive, okay, take my name and just attach my name to a paper". I mean, some people do that, I don't agree with it. But if they're doing it for keeping their job and survival, it's not good, but I mean, but I think a lot of our senior researchers and professors always say - and this is a thing that I admire as well - that if you start a research project, don't think about the paper first, think about the problems that you would like to solve, think about problems or the questions that you would like to find the answer to, and good research projects always bring good papers, and if it is not enough for four, three stars, or even into a one star or even no star journal, if it matters, if it's important, and you gave your energy and attention to it, at least it's going to bring something good to you. So I think with that as well, it's kind of not really pushing us to produce just any paper you need to get into the publication process. But it's the flexibility and room for failure as well. And I think that it's really important, because if you would like to be creative, if you like to kind of do some very edgy research and stuff, there needs to be room to accept failure. Because if we don't try to do some risky things and we play in the safe zone, we might have a lot of papers coming out, but the change that is coming with the papers or the projects might not be very meaningful. So that's what I perceive anyway. I mean, it might be because I got into the business school at the right time as well. I mean, two, three years before the REF deadlines, because if I joined a little bit later, I would've been pressured to turn out a paper. So I was quite lucky in that. And also I got something out of my PhD. I got a very good supervisory team that helped me to learn the publication process. So I think, for me, I think it's the timing as well. I might feel luckier than others.

##### Researcher

Okay. Wonderful. Thank you. So I think that is pretty much all of my questions. I've asked you a lot and you've given me lots of great answers, so I won't ask any more of you now. So I'll just get the recording stopped.