##### Researcher

Okay. Wonderful. So obviously I've had a look at your profile and stuff, so I've read a little bit about you, but kind of just in your own words, can you tell me about yourself in terms of your kind of current career and role and your background?

##### Participant 14

Okay. So I'm probably a mid career academic, in a UK business school, working as a [position] in [discipline]. My background is [subject area] from my first degree onwards. And this is the second, I'm on my second business school as a place to work. And that's my background.

##### Researcher

Okay. Where was your first business school that you worked at?

##### Participant 14

[Previous institution].

##### Researcher

Okay. Right. So in terms of your current role, what kind of time do you dedicate to different aspects? So obviously research, teaching, admin, that kind of thing.

##### Participant 14

Well, I've recently taken on a leadership or admin role, which is programme director of the undergraduate [subject] degrees. So that's kind of a new thing. So at the moment that's taken up quite a lot of time. I'm doing no research at the moment. So everything at the moment is either teaching or admin probably. Gosh, admin at the moment's probably, probably three days a week. Teaching maybe two days a week, or maybe even more admin. I suppose I'm doing some research. I'm still reviewing journal articles and supervising a couple of PhD students. So I maybe spend like half a day on... it's not even research, but like reviewing and supervising, but the vast majority now, 80, 90 percent, is teaching and admin.

##### Researcher

Okay. And is that since obviously Covid-19 and the switch to online learning?

##### Participant 14

Yeah. It's destroyed any possibility of doing any research for me. And the university has institutionally officially reduced research time from 40 percent of my what we call the WAM which is a workload allocation model, which is the same name they called it at [previous institution], so it's gone from 40 percent to 20 percent, which is not satisfactory, but that's the situation. So, I mean, it was 40 percent anyway, it was probably 20 percent when it was 40 percent, and now it's 20 percent it's zero.

##### Researcher

Right. Okay.

##### Participant 14

That's my current situation.

##### Researcher

So would you say that the workload allocation model doesn't sort of accurately usually reflect the kind of work you actually do? Day to day?

##### Participant 14

Not at all. No, it doesn't reflect it. Admin roles notoriously always take more than what they're allocated for. So, you know, for a few weeks it's been, my admin role was 90 percent, it's only recently come down because the students have settled in. But I mean, everybody knows they take more. They probably take double. So that's not counted for. And, you know, the teaching allocations are ridiculous as well. The expectations have gone up to the point where they don't take account of what you need to do, and sometimes they just make you do more, like with the tutorial system. We now have to have weekly group meetings, which is what I'm doing today. And I'm not aware that the WAM has gone up for that. So they just randomly give you more stuff to do. But particularly this year as well with the bimodal teaching, it's just been insane. The stuff that we have to do - checklist - I haven't done it, but we're supposed to do a checklist. Have we got it all set up, have we got this, have we made a video? We've got asynchronous material, online lecture, in person lecture, online seminars, in person seminars. So this year it's a crisis situation really. But even generally the workload models are never accurate. And they get worse every year. We keep reforming them. But every university I've worked they they say "we're developing a new WAM", and everybody knows you're going to be doing more work, which has proved to be the case. More work and less time for research, which repeatedly has proven to be the case.

##### Researcher

And in terms of the different aspects of an academic career, what was it that you came into academia for? Was it the research side or was it teaching, or what was it that interested you?

##### Participant 14

Funnily enough, just the autonomy of kind of being able to do what I wanted to do in terms of reading and writing what I was interested in. The teaching, actually, I have been a school teacher very briefly for one term, when a local school really needed somebody. So I'm not like, I haven't got a problem with teaching. I quite enjoy it. So to me it was kind of a nice package to do some teaching, meet people and also do research. I've never had a problem with teaching. Still don't. Admin, I don't really like. But if it was accounted for it would be okay. But I mean, the main thing, not the status, but kind of like, just the position that you're in. Like, you can, apart from contact time, you can manage your own time and you can read and write what you want, which generally has proved to be the case. I mean, until it comes to the point when you can't read or write anything, which is the situation you're in now.

##### Researcher

Yeah. So coming from an [alternative disciplinary] background, how did you end up in a business school?

##### Participant 14

By accident. Because I didn't know business schools existed in this country. I thought they were just an American thing. I'd never heard of a business school in this country. And, you know, I was living in [previous city], I didn't know we had like, one of the biggest, if not the biggest business school in the country in [previous city]. So the reason I discovered it, I was looking for a full time job after finishing my PhD, and I think I looked on the academic jobs website, or maybe I actually looked at [previous institution's] website. Then there was one for a research associate in [area] and I was like, okay, that's kind of like [discipline]. And it was in [previous institution's] business school. And I applied for that, went for the interview and the interview went well, and the other people who were, the people who were interviewing me, were kind of from, basically, not, not quite as [disciplinary] background as me, but they kind of moved into it. They moved into it from like, working in the [public sector organisation], one of them had moved into from studying a [related subject] and one of them had always done management, but from quite a [discipline] perspective. But, none of them had done a [discipline] degree I don't think. But they were related to [discipline]. So I fitted in with that. And then I discovered, actually, basically all, apart from, I can only name one, one [academic in specific sub-discipline] who isn't in a business school. So then I discovered that all the stuff I was wanting to do and what my PhD was about, that was going to be in business schools. It didn't exist, I was just getting laughed out of interviews, almost literally, in [discipline] departments. So obviously I wanted a job, and fortunately, business schools, that was where it was happening. So by accident - and I had to quickly learn what the new environment was all about.

##### Researcher

The politics of it all?

##### Participant 14

A bit, yeah. It took me ages to learn about all that [discipline-specific theories] and I'd done a degree in [discipline], PhD in [topic], some of this stuff was just debates between people, who I was then meeting, you know, I was meeting these people who set these whole things up. Which was interesting. But yeah, everywhere has got politics. But yeah, it was new things to learn.

##### Researcher

So what are the kind of main differences then between being in like a [alternative department] and being in a business school, would you say?

##### Participant 14

Well, it's weird because the people I've always worked with, and in [previous institutions] there are quite big groups, or divisions, or whatever you want to call it - well a group is the small unit, and then the bigger one was the division - but they were social scientists anyway. So you know, there's loads people in a similar area to me. So it's still was social science. But then, of course, there's these other big units of people who are just like, "yeah, I do consultancy for [company] and I teach executives" and they're not social science, they're just kind of, I don't know what they are. And obviously there's accountants and all these other people. But even up until now I've been in groups of people that are reasonably big and they are social scientists, but increasingly, and the younger generation probably wouldn't use the word [discipline]. So actually, it still is, still is a social science environment, whether that varies by business school, I wouldn't know. But anywhere that's got a [subject] group, that's social science to me.

##### Researcher

Okay. So I want to talk a little bit about the business school. What kind of attitude does the business school have towards impact? So sort of like impact beyond academia, to external stakeholders?

##### Participant 14

Well, I'm aware that they want us to do it and to have it. For my kind of position and the research I do, I don't legitimately think that we have to aim to have an impact. Universities have been around for nearly 1000 years. So they're part of society. So if we want to write about stuff that we think is relevant, that has the impact it has. So, I'm not really comfortable with it, but I'm aware that universities want us to do it. But my stuff is, you know, my topics, who's going to say, who's going to do an impact case study on it - nobody. So I just haven't got time now, and the stage I'm at in my career, I need to just, I can't do it, so I kind of brush it aside, but they want us to do it.

##### Researcher

So there's kind of more emphasis on publishing and that kind of thing?

##### Participant 14

I mean, for me personally, but I mean, a lot of the people they do it. You know, the impact would be like literally an impact case for the REF. So, you know, you know what the REF is?

##### Researcher

Yeah.

##### Participant 14

So, they want you to do it, they'd be really happy and they'd love it and you'd probably get promoted faster if you could do like a really good impact case for the REF, right. But like, general impact, I mean, there could be maybe media coverage or, I don't know, to me I've got some impact because people read the articles, I've written text books, so there's like teaching impact. But I can't, I mean, I might put that on my CV but, you know, I think when they say impact, they really want, I think, they must really want impact cases. That's what they mean. Because some people have really big impact in the media and they never get promoted. There were people in [previous institution], they were always in the media, and they just couldn't get promoted. Anyway. But, there's too many other things to worry about for me to pursue it, really.

##### Researcher

Yeah. So you mentioned sort of impact through teaching based on making course materials and textbooks and stuff. Do you feel like impact through education has been given the same kind of weighting as impact through research?

##### Participant 14

In a way, yes, I do to be honest. And perhaps surprisingly so. And I think it varies by university. So [previous institution], couldn't care less about teaching really. And the senior managers, I mean, the very senior managers, were problematic, let's say. Anyway, but, they didn't, you know, you were never going to get promoted if you were on a teaching contract.

##### Researcher

Right.

##### Participant 14

So they call it teaching and scholarship, or whatever they come up with. But we call it a teaching only lecturer. Which is fine. But at [previous institution] their career was just dead, apart from maybe like, very, very, very few. However, at [current institution] most, probably most of the sort of, leadership roles, and some of them are quite senior leadership roles, they're teaching and scholarship. So they're what I call teaching only, or we used to call teaching only. So actually, it's totally viable now - well, I can only base this on two places - but it is quite viable to be honest, to do that. At [current institution], I think your chances are equal of being a professor either way. Depends on the place. If they value... [current institution] are obsessed with admin. Like, admin, admin, admin. They love it. To get promoted you've got to do it. They don't even seem to care about publishing that much, to be honest. So, it does vary by institution. I don't know if that answers your question.

##### Researcher

Yeah, no definitely, definitely very interesting. And are you aware of if the business school has any kind of, like, professional accreditations such as EQUIS and that kind of thing?

##### Participant 14

Yeah, they, what do they call it? Like, triple whatever. I mean, I'm pretty sure it does and, you know, I don't care. That's not going to affect me, I don't think, particularly. But yeah, I guess it's at least, it's all part of it being prestigious or part of the Russell group. But yeah, they tell us about all that. We get the emails about that. I couldn't care less. Because at the same time they're sending you you piles of other stuff, particularly now. You're catching me at a bad time, just because this bimodal thing has just been a catastrophe.

##### Researcher

Yeah. So I want to talk about kind of the requirements of your job. So when I say requirements, I mean kind of like formal requirements. So things that you perhaps are expected to deliver or achieve, maybe like, within a given academic year or a given a couple of years or something. Is there anything like that in your role? For example, you must publish in X amount of journals in this time frame, or is it more of like a normative kind of thing?

##### Participant 14

Right, I'm not aware of any. And if there are, I wouldn't care anyway because I'm at such a point now where I'm giving the maximum I can do, so. And having been through what I went through at [previous institution], which was basically being driven out of the organisation, along with all the other people in my field, I'm beyond caring about what they want me to do. And if they're up in my business about "you've got to do this, you've got to do that", then they can sack me. I'll get a job somewhere else. I think we're supposed to be in the REF. I think that's an expectation. You know, you should be in the REF. But then again, there must be loads, you know, confidentially, obviously, there must be loads of people at [current institution] and they're not going to really be in the REF. They don't seem to care. [Previous institution] you we're in trouble - if you weren't in the REF, you were knackered. Probationers have all that, like, if you're on probation, which you can be for like three years, they give you things that you have to do for publications. And I think some places they are ridiculous, like, they've all got to be three or four stars or something ridiculous. But I suspect they were targeting that at [previous institution] at people knowing that it was impossible. So they could get rid of these people. That's what I suspect. But for me personally, now, as a [position], I'm not worried about anything, but then I'm fine for the REF. So if I wasn't, maybe they'd be getting at me. But I don't know of any, other than be in the REF, I don't know of anything.

##### Researcher

And you mentioned three star, four star journals. Is that sort of weighted quite heavily in the expectations of the academics in the business school?

##### Participant 14

Not at [current institution] particularly. I mean, nothing's weighted heavily to do with publications, and currently now it's completely off the agenda. Not literally that nobody cares, but I mean, even before. I think it's a skewed answer that I'm giving because I think I was brought in because I had good publications already. So they were having to buy it in to be quite honest, because, what I think, what they were doing is they'd push their own academics so hard with teaching and admin, and they continue to do that - they couldn't publish. Not through any fault of their own. But you can't do a four star publication and all the rubbish and all the bureaucracy that we have to do. And an admin role which everyone has to have, to even be a [position]. You just can't do it. So, they brought me in, and I'm okay. Next REF, I don't know. Three or fours, I mean, I just personally for my career, would prefer it to be a three or a four, but I'm not that bothered. I've published in [journal], I think that was a two. [Previous institution], you were insane if you published beneath a four, you were just considered a lunatic. So at [previous institution] it was like, just do not bother. Three was scoffed at. And the senior managers as well, the very senior people, they would openly ask you in a promotion interview or whatever, "why have you published here? That's not a four". But [current institution], I've never heard anything about where you should publish and in the interview they actually said "we read everything, we don't base it on the ABS list". And I thought that was good. A lot of this is good. I think the way [current institution] do it is better. We know what we're supposed to do, and when we've got time to do it, we'll do it. We don't need people telling us "publish here, don't publish there". Which [previous institution] did. [Current institution] don't. That's the short answer.

##### Researcher

Right. And obviously coming from an [alternative discipline] background, is there any kind of equivalent thing in [alternative discipline] in terms of, like, ABS and that kind of, that kind of pressure?

##### Participant 14

I honestly don't know, because I left, I had to leave immediately after getting a PhD to have a career. So, unfortunately, I'm quite bitter about it, really, because I wanted to stay in [alternative discipline]. But they were literally laughing me, literally - well I can't literally can I - almost laughing me out of interviews when they were like, "what're you doing, [specialism]?" I had zero, zero future in [alternative discipline]. So, I don't know, is the answer. Because I've never worked in that department. But I doubt they're that bothered about this kind of stuff, but that's just perception. I don't honestly know.

##### Researcher

OK, wonderful. So I also wanted to ask, we talked about kind of publications and stuff, in terms of teaching, has there ever been any kind of expectation or requirement to achieve, for example, certain levels of student evaluation in modules and that kind of thing?

##### Participant 14

Yeah. So if you're going for promotion, you're expected to have, I think, so out of five I don't think it is supposed to be below four or something like that. Maybe it was three, but I think it was four. So you have to try and pick, like, your two, the two of your modules where you are getting over four out of five. But beyond that, I mean, if you're on probation there is, yeah. If you're on probation, they would say you can't pass probation unless you've got, like, over the course of two years, you have to have two modules where you've got four point something. But for me now, again, it's positive, like, I'm not getting any hassle about it from [university]. Although I am, obviously, confidentially just about to go for promotion. So maybe I expect that I'll have to put stuff in there. So yeah, it does, it is on CVs. But, no one has said to me, "if you're falling below that, you're in the trouble". But, you know, if they want to get rid of you like they did it at places like [previous institution], they'll use stuff like that to get rid of you. But if they're not, they don't care. Otherwise they'd have to get rid of all the old professors wouldn't they? All the top professors, there's no way they're getting four point anything for teaching. Just to generalise.

##### Researcher

Yeah. So obviously based on everything we've spoken about so far, we've spoken about the publication side, a bit about the REF, impact - that's not necessarily a huge expectation of you in your kind of area - and also kind of the teaching side. So there's lots and lots of different things going on in the job of an academic in a business school. Do you feel like what is expected of you is clear?

##### Participant 14

Haha, what is the expectation?

##### Researcher

Haha. Yeah, what is the expectation?

##### Participant 14

Deal with the workload without cracking up. I'm fairly serious, I do find it funny, but I'm not being completely facetious with that. I think that effectively now that is the expectation, honestly. And certainly where I am now at [current institution], you know, they're alright. I get on, the managers are alright. Head of business school is actually an old colleague from [previous institution]. There just isn't the same horror that there was at [previous institution]. That's a whole other interview. The expectation, so, where I am now, I think the expectation is deliver the best you can to the students, do the best you can with publishing and be professional. Don't fall below, don't fall below a certain standard, which is kind of good, really. That's what, that's fine, they are treating us broadly as professionals. But like I say, it is, it comes with a lot of bureaucracy, you have to cope with the admin, cope with teaching and moving around on new modules and basically just handle it, is the expectation. But my expectation of myself is progress, publish and progress. So I don't really, in some ways I don't care what the expectation is of the business school. Unless they're going to sack me. I guess they've got expectations of promotion, right? And they're what I'm interested in, they're what I want, you know, what is the criteria for promotion to [position], that's what I'm aiming for. But if I wasn't going for promotion, it would just be - cope. And that's only, I mean, that's not just to do with the pandemic anyway. That was creeping in before. So, that's my answer to that, I think.

##### Researcher

Right. And you said publish and progress is kind of like your, I guess, priority. So is that, I was going to ask, how do you navigate this environment? Would you say that you prioritise the things that are going to benefit your career?

##### Participant 14

No. No, because you you can't. Because what would benefit my career is publishing. But I can't do it, and meet the expectations that are set for you, which is handle the workload. So, to keep publishing at the rate I was previously doing, I would have, well, the programme would collapse. So a whole degree programme would collapse because they're needing academics like me to hold it together because the admin cannot cope because they're overwhelmed. So that programme would collapse. Student satisfaction would collapse, that probably would come back to me eventually. I couldn't deliver decent teaching, I couldn't put together what I need to do, so standards would fall and it would get picked up, possibly. Possibly. So then I wouldn't get promoted on that. So I'm trapped at the moment. And the only hope is that the university sort of go, "oh well actually we are [university], we know that you can't really publish, but we'll promote this guy, he did do some stuff". So, I can't do it. So my only option is leave and go somewhere where where I can publish, if they won't promote me. Because you know, if they're saying they're basing promotions on publication, well, you've removed that possibility. So, what? That then isn't a possibility. But everything being normal, it will be a balance. Like at [previous institution], I was publishing. I was hitting good scores on the teaching, getting good scores on the publishing, but they still wouldn't promote me because they wanted to get rid of all the people I was working with, and me. So I guess, I guess that's the answer. I can't balance it. I hope to balance it in future, but frankly, I think it's possible that I'll have to move to ever do proper publishing again. Confidentially!

##### Researcher

Yes, of course. The kind of last thing I wanted to ask, do you kind of feel generally that you have a good level of career satisfaction?

##### Participant 14

No, no, not really. Because every year the demands go up and the bureaucracy goes up and we have to do loads of new things that are a load of rubbish like computer systems, you know, or whatever bloody portal, you know, for the tutor group. Click on this. Click on that. Click on that. Send out the Zoom link. That doesn't work. So all that just escalates where your career that you thought was going to be teaching and research is now just being a computer programmer for all these stupid systems. That's your career now. And stopping a programme collapsing because the admin people aren't properly resourced. That's not an academic career. That's, I don't even know what it is. So no, I don't really have it, and I will move to get it if I see an opportunity. But whether it will be any better there, I don't know. I think the whole, the whole sector, particularly business schools, is structurally broken. And that's someone else's phrase which I've stolen. It's structurally broken. So it's in a permanent state of crisis, and I'm just going to keep hopping between place to place just to try and find somewhere where I can actually cling on to being a real academic. That's the position, I think.

##### Researcher

Yeah. Okay. Well, I think that was my last sort of question.

##### Participant 14

Alright, well I hope that was useful. I wouldn't want to put anyone off. But yeah, you're certainly, certainly getting an eye opener. Good luck with whatever you decide to do.

##### Researcher

Thank you.