##### Researcher

Right. Okay. Wonderful. So as a first kind of question, obviously, I've read a bit about you on the [university website] profile. And so I know roughly a little bit about kind of area you're in and stuff. But in your own words, could you just tell me about yourself in terms of your kind of career and your current job role, please?

##### Participant 19

Yeah. I've been an academic for quite some time. I had a short period in [organisation] in the very early 90s, a couple of years in [city], and then I got a job in 1992 at [previous teaching-focused institution], which is in [city]. So I was there for about four years, then I moved to [previous research-focused institution] down in [city] for a few years. And I've been at [current institution] for about [number] years. Kind of always, kind of always been reasonably research active but never, you know, full on. I'm sure as you've talked to some of the other interviewees, you've had some people who are publication machines, very, you know, you might not call them a publication machine, but they have a real ongoing output that's, you know. I'm kind of, I've had peaks and troughs and dipped in and out and got interested, and then sort of had a few administrative roles, which kind of often can slow you down a little bit. But if you take them at a point where you're happy to be slowed down, then it's perfectly fine. So I've been programme director for [group of programmes], I was the programme director for [another programme] for a number of years. So I've done, I suppose, a lot of teaching, a reasonable amount of research - I mean, I'm in a kind of wave of research at the moment. So I'm kind of out of one of my troughs and in one of my peaks, if it can be called that. And I've always sort of been reasonably active in terms of citizenship within the department. So I've sort of taken on a lot of exam boards at the moment and oversee them. So I've always kind of been quite happy to take on a fair administrative role. The kind of publication machines don't tend to do so much of that, which I think is reasonable. They do more than their fair share for their focus, so, I think it's okay for people like me to do it. But I've been doing a few studies at the moment. I did a lot of interviews over the summer with [group of participants] and a separate study on [stakeholder group], both of which are longitudinal, so, doing quite a lot of interviews, so hoping that will translate into some quite good outputs.

##### Researcher

Okay. Wonderful. And in terms of your current role at the moment, how much of your time do you think you dedicate to the different kind of areas of the job? So obviously teaching, research and any other, like you say, kind of citizenship or admin type things.

##### Participant 19

I mean, with the admin, that tends to come in waves because, so, for example, we've recently finished a lot of postgraduate exam boards because obviously the master's courses are sort of October to September. So there was quite a few exam boards. So at that particular point in the calendar where there is exam boards, you obviously have a sort of peak of activity. Throughout the rest of the year there is peaks. One of the things you deal with is approving extensions for students. So again, that kind of comes in. You kind of know when that comes because assignments aren't due in all the time. So there's period where we wouldn't have to be doing very much on that. And then I know that there's going to be a little bit of a heightened requirement that might last a couple of weeks and then dissipates and so on. It's made more complex because we have online programmes as well, and so they have different, different submission dates. So the gaps between the activities have been lessened over the last few years. Teaching wise, [university] is pretty good in terms of the, you know, [researcher's institution] would be the same as long-established university, research university. So the teaching timetables aren't, you know, overwhelming. I'm fortunate I don't teach any massive classes. I don't have any 200, 300 person classes, I tend to teach, I have a third year undergraduate module, I have an MSc module and I do have a core MBA module. So I teach across the range of programmes, but the biggest is about 60 students. So the marking isn't too overwhelming. It kind of comes at the same time. It can be a little bit overwhelming because it comes at the same time. But certainly there's other colleagues who have first year undergraduate classes, 350 or something. And then research, well, as I kind of said, I always try to do some research and try and, you know. I've had fallow periods and then I've kind of upped my game and managed to get a few things out. Always been put forward into the REF or whatever, the RAE as it used to be. So, yeah, I'm kind of, at the moment, spending quite a bit of - obviously at the moment it's a bit different. We've got to be doing preparation for next term, we've got to do some recorded lectures and all this sort of stuff so that's a bit exceptional. But term one I always have a light teaching term, so I can use it for trying to do some research. So this term I've spent quite, as I said, myself and another person, we interviewed a number of [group of participants], mainly in [sector]. So we interviewed them in situ when they'd been furloughed in June and July mainly, transcribed and coded all these and then we re-interviewed them towards the end of October and early November so we've got longitudinal data. And we're writing up some papers at the moment and we're on target to send a couple off. And we also did, with another group of colleagues, a longitudinal study on [stakeholder group]. So we've got 55 [participants] who agreed to three interviews, October, January and April – so we’ve obviously done the October ones. We've got a little bit of money in a small research grant that's paid for the transcription and a few other things. So, that's my kind of life at the moment.

##### Researcher

Wonderful. So in terms of, obviously it's a very kind of varied career, many different aspects. Would you say there's a particular part that you enjoy the most or is kind of the reason you came into academia in the first place, whether that be the research side or the teaching side?

##### Participant 19

I mean, it's one of those that, I kind of, it was accidental, I fell into it to be honest. I was, I was doing a master's degree actually at [second university] and I was staying with a guy. I did my undergraduate at [first university] and then I came down to [second university] and didn't have any anywhere to stay. So I went to, I had a couple of nights in a horrible university halls of residence and then went to accommodation officers and this guy had a couple of rooms in this house that he let. So anyway, he turned out to be a nice guy, he was an FE lecturer. So he worked in, I forget, a local college. So he was a further education lecturer. And I was doing my master's and I think I was in my second term, he said they needed somebody to teach [topic]. So he asked if I would be interested in doing, I forget, ten weeks. It probably wasn't that long, maybe five weeks, five or six weeks, of an evening class. I was doing a module, the master's was on [subject], in which there was some [topic]. So I thought, well, I'll give it a go. And I quite liked it, I quite enjoyed it, enjoyed the teaching and so on. It never came to anything at the time, I finished my master's got a job in [organisation] in central [city]. And then at that period, around the early 90s, you had the breaking down of the old university and polytechnic distinction. And there was quite a, business schools were expanding during that period anyway from the 80s into the 90s, when you think places like [example universities] didn't have business schools in those days. Lots of, lots of universities looked down on business schools. But business schools were expanding following from that early post-Thatcherite period where there had been a, some would see as a kind of war against universities, especially humanities departments and such like. And so there was an expansion in the new universities, the so-called new universities, and an expansion in business schools. And so there were people like me at the time who didn't, at the time I didn't have a PhD, who were able to get jobs in these business schools because we had a little bit of practitioner experience, you know, two years of working in [area] kind of was sufficient practitioner experience. Of course I was just junior in the role I was doing. And I had a master's so at least there was a little bit of postgraduate... and so I was a member of, I don't know if you know the [professional association], so I was a member of that and they wanted membership of that. So I got into [previous teaching-focused institution] and it was a great place. There were some really great academics, a cluster of them that I don't think you would get today because the sort of research universities have tended to hoover up most of these, you know, if there's an outstanding academic in a new university, unless they really want to stay there because they might be a big fish in a small pond, they get hoovered up by, you know, the Russell groups will hoover up the best research academics, if these academics want to move. At [previous teaching-focused institution], we had for a few years [academic], who's a very imminent academic at [university] for many years now. [Academic], central figure in this [theory], [academic] who developed a thesis on [topic]. So there was a bunch of, it was quite a really, really quite inspiring place. And they basically encouraged me to push for a PhD and, after I was there for a couple of years, to get to grips with teaching and so on. You kind of had a heavier teaching load in these institutions than you do in the research universities. So once I'd kind of got to grips with teaching I was able to then think, think about doing some research. And I was able to use my [previous employer] links to get access into one of the [organisations] in the [region]. And eventually did an ethnography within [an organisation] looking at [topic]. But I moved to [previous research-focused institution], so my PhD was from [previous research-focused institution] but my fieldwork was done when I was working in [previous teaching-focused institution]. Within that the thing I was interested in was [topic] and I've been interested in that from an undergraduate because I'd done a paper in my final year, a module, we called them papers in my day not modules. I'd done a module in my last year on [topic] because my first degree was in [discipline]. So I'd done a module on that and I was always fascinated, I was interested in [area]. And I'd just done this paper that was about [topic] and so at the time there was a massive literature that was always suffixed by [assumptions], you know, and that bugged me. And that was actually the thing that kind of inspired me to start doing some research because I wanted to do a proper, what I considered, a proper [topic] study. And that stayed with me, I still do, I've done a few other things in other areas, but [topic] has been the kind of thing that has stayed with me through the past 20 or so years. It's the thing I'm kind of most interested in.

##### Researcher

Okay, wonderful. Thank you. So just on the topic of, you obviously having a bit of a practitioner background before you came into academia, working in [organisation], was there anything about kind of working in practice that you were maybe sort of dissatisfied with that could have sort of pushed you into the sphere of academia?

##### Participant 19

I mean, there's daft things like, I hated having to wear a shirt and tie. I know that sounds ludicrous, you know, I'm not saying that was the reason. But there were these little kind of aspects that were a sort of surface manifestation of your sense of yourself. And I'm more than happy to wear a shirt and tie if I go a funeral, if I go to certain weddings, if I go for a job interview - yes, of course, I'll engage in the impression management and all the things that are expected. But I don't really want to have to be sat at a desk, having to wear a shirt and tie for whatever it is I'm doing, you know? And it's just, there was a sense, I mean, I didn't know any different. I mean, all my previous jobs had been student jobs. So it wasn't as though I knew any different. I kind of expected that if you work in an office environment, at that time, certainly, you're going to have to wear a suit as a male, you're going to have to wear a suit or something akin to that. And a shirt and tie. So, it wasn't that it took me by surprise or anything. But I remember when I went to [previous research-focused institution] and it was the first time I was teaching MBA students, and they were, you know, [previous research-focused institution] is a pretty high ranking institution and so on, and its business school was on the up and is now certainly one of the top. And me and a mate, we both taught on the MBA, he taught a [topic] module, and I taught a [topic] module. And when we got to know each other and we kind of clicked with each other quite quickly, and we made a pact that we would never wear a tie when we were teaching full time students. And we shook hands and that and we both, over 20 years on, we still, we've both worn ties if we've had to teach certain things, executive programmes or something, because you know your audience, there's different audiences. And so you kind of, you do have to play to these things. And that's perfectly fine. But full time or part time students, no ties. And none of my colleagues wear ties generally for teaching. And it's not out of disrespect to students. I don't want to be standing there for a couple of hours with my top button tied. Nothing against ties, per se, but it linked into issues of control. And a sense that, you know, you've seen, as a student, seen how academics were, you see them coming in and teaching you and they didn't wear ties. Well, some did. But I remember at [master's university] there was a guy who, he taught the MSc class for research methods, and it was all the MSc students together. So it was quite a big class. I mean, those were the days when MSc classes were quite small. I mean, the one I did it at [master's university], there was only 20 students, but that was a perfectly viable number in those days. And the other ones, the [subject] courses, they might have had a little bit more, but maybe 30 students, not the massive, you know, 200, 300 that you see on [subject] MSc programmes nowadays. You know. And we were all together for the research methodology class on a Thursday afternoon and this guy would come in and do a two hour lecture, and he'd be smoking. And he was standing at the front of the class, it was a raised lecture theatre, and he was down at the front and he was smoking. And it was like, and he let us smoke in the class. And so the smokers, and at the time I was a smoker, and the smokers would go to one part of the lecture theatre, because it was a large lecture theatre, and we'd go to one part and we'd be smoking. And it was like, wow, you know, this is amazing. So yeah, these things just, you know, I've never smoked in a class. I've never smoked in my office in any of the universities I've worked in, you know, that's long gone. But, you know, there's still equivalence of that around. In terms of how you can speak and, you know, talk about controversial things or whatever, and I'm sure you're well aware of being careful about how you talk. But I think that's always been there. I don't think people, I don't think that's a new thing in itself. Some of the subject matter is new. But, you know, the sense of respecting your audience isn't, I don't think. Most of the people I know have always recognised that they don't want to use heavily gendered language or whatever. Like in the late 70s when anti-sexism was kind of learned, not through reading books about gender issues, but through seeing bands with female singers who, you know, rightly sung about misogyny and other things. So yeah, anyway, I'm digressing. So there was that sense of control. And then when I kind of, a few years later got the kind of thing of thing about [topic], and that became my interest.

##### Researcher

Okay. Thank you. So I want to talk a little bit about [current institution] as an institution and the business school. So obviously, regionally and even kind of internationally, [current institution] is obviously quite a high profile university, business school is very high achieving I would imagine. What kind of environment is it, how is it working there? Do you feel under sort of pressure? So in terms of like the research projects you're working on at the moment, are you doing those because you kind of are interested in it and it manifested kind of organically, or did you feel like "I need to do something" kind of pressure?

##### Participant 19

I mean, I think it's a bit of both. I mean, I think it's difficult, I mean, clearly, there are people who can just turn their hand to any research area within their field and look at doing something on something that is currently evolving or whatever. My kind of gut feeling is that most of us need to do something we're interested in and that drives us more than the sort of "I need to get my name and my publications out". But there's no doubt that universities have changed over the years. You know, the degree of auditing in all kinds of different ways has been heightened. We used to talk about the new public management in the 80s and so on, and within that was a tightening of the auditing systems around efficiency and effectiveness and so on and so forth. Everywhere from the NHS to local government to the BBC to universities. There is no doubt that, you know, research plays a big role in, you know, promotion and so many other things. So, I mean, I always remember reading a paper in, I think it was in [journal], it was probably in the nineties this paper I would think, maybe in the early 2000s. And it was a paper about research assessment. And I always remember, I normally remember quotes from papers, interviewee quotes, but I always remember an interviewee quote in this paper. And he interviewed [stakeholders] about research assessment and how it worked and how it influenced their forms of working and so on. And there was one guy I remember who said something like "I try to get my four papers out as quick as possible and then I'm free to do what I really enjoy". And, you know, so, I don't know who that person was or whatever. I know people who they could be, but it was this thing of yes, the system makes me have to do certain things. So to play the system, I'll get my 4 four stars or whatever journals somebody's capable of hitting. I'll get them out as quick as possible. And then for the next few years, I can just get on with whatever research it is that really interests me. It reminded me of, you know when you get actors who do a Hollywood blockbuster in order to get a large salary so that they can then do a sort of art house film or series of films and then they'll go back to the blockbuster to re-finance these future roles. And I've always had that sort of image in my mind of that academic's comment, and I think there is a bit of that. You kind of, you do recognise that you have to be, for political reasons, working within the system, and trying to get out reasonable pieces of work, or to show that you're trying to or whatever. But [current institution] doesn't expect you to research anything you don't want to research. I mean, that's where it's good. We have a lot of quantitative researcher and the business school has grown so much basically and it's the same size as humanities. And it is the case that, obviously in economics, for example, there are a lot, it is predominantly quantitative and there's a lot of econometricians. But even in our [subject area] department, there's a lot of qualitative research. And nobody is questioning, you know, their papers, as long as they're getting into three or four rated journals. That's the kind of expectation, to get into a three or four rated journal. And then I'm in the [subject area] department, and again, there's plenty of heavy duty quantitative researchers in [area], for example, but there's plenty of qualitative researchers as well. So, yeah, there are certain pressures but in terms of what you research and how you research it, there's no sort of, you know, I certainly can say that nobody's ever tried to say to me "are you sure this stuff is worthwhile?" If I wasn't getting anything published, I think I would realise myself that it wasn't worthwhile. In a sense, the market of ideas would tell you. Of course it might just be because they're crap papers. But even if you wrote what you felt was a good paper, but it wasn't getting anywhere, you might start saying, well, this thing has been flogged to death now, there is no mileage in it. But this stuff I'm doing now on [topic], that was just, that was literally a kind of shower moment. I was literally having a shower and thought, I knew a couple mates who worked in the [sector], and I just thought "hey, I've got some people I'm sure I can get others". I didn't know many, but I thought, well, they might know someone, you know, and I know other people who might know other people and so a kind of snowball sample. That was opportunistic. It wasn't so much having some kind of idea or being driven by a particular concept. It was just, here's this weird situation, [pandemic-related social phenomena]. When does that ever happen? And so that was opportunistic. And within a few, you know, I've been doing it with somebody else who I asked if they wanted to be involved. He said "yeah, that sounds good". And we eventually got about 30 interviewees, and left it a little while so that they had an experience to talk about. So then started interviewing them in [months]. And the [other research project] thing was sort of, well, I'd started discussing that last year with a colleague. We were over in [city] at a conference and his new partner, they'd not been together for that long, but she was a [occupation], and she'd come over to [city] and we were sitting in a bar, the three of us, and you know, her job was just so interesting that we started saying it'd be great to do some research. So we were going to do a small scale study and we were planning it. So that was more planned, we were thinking of ideas and concepts and reading literature around [topic]. But then by the time we were doing things, obviously Covid-19 came into the equation, and we felt we couldn't really approach people at that time because there it just ended up, I don't know, we just didn't feel it was ethical. So we waited, hence during the late summer, early autumn, we started recruiting participants. One of the people involved in the study is the chairperson of the [association]. So it was good getting somebody from - she's an academic as well, but she also occupies this role - and myself and my co-researcher, we were sort of colleagues. We wrote to people cold and said "we're thinking of doing this, would you like to be involved?" We figured let's just take a chance. And everyone we asked said yes. But with that one we had more ideas about what we were going to do. So the questions, the interview questions were much more framed in relation to a few sort of prevailing concepts. So yeah, so [university] loves that we're doing this. They think this is great. The [research I was just talking about] isn't exclusively on Covid-19. Obviously, that's a big part of it because there was such a, it's played such a role, but it's kind of about [group] more generally and certain issues. And then obviously we had a significant number of questions around the Covid-19 thing, the Covid-19 period I should say. And so [university] are really pleased with that. So yeah. So [university] is quite a good place to work. It is pressured, there is no doubt about it. I think there's other departments that would be harder to work in. In terms of the pressure. Because they're at the top of the gig, you know, we're not in the top five of business schools. We're quite high up, and the intent is always to push as much as possible. But you're talking about [exemplary business schools]. These are big, you know, probably the top ones. [Current institution] is maybe in around [rank]. Maybe it can sometimes be a little bit higher than that. On rankings, MBA rankings and teaching rankings it does well. But we have, like, a big hitting [science subject] department and a big hitting [social science subject] department. So they are the research, as departments, they are the big sort of alpha departments in the university. So, yeah.

##### Researcher

Okay. Thank you. Picking up on something you said about three star, four star journals, that that kind of expectation. How kind of prevalent is that expectation in your working life? Is it quite a major thing? Is it something that's kind of always on everyone's mind, the kind of ABS ranking and the type of journal you get into?

##### Participant 19

I think it probably is, but a lot of people might not admit it is, but I think it probably is. And ABS is probably used by more people than would like to admit it. And I don't mean that in a bad way, but, you know. ABS is a weird thing because the REF panels always say they don't use it. They always say they won't judge your paper by where it is in the ABS list. That's what they say. But it's hard to believe that they don't subconsciously have it in their mind. Nobody's ever said to me personally, you know, there's the ABS list in your area, now try and get into X or Y. It's not as crude as that, but I'm sure there's all kinds of informal, I mean, my daughter's just finished a PhD and the change in her from when she started her PhD to now. She's trying to look for jobs and things like that. And it's almost been an interesting observational study, in my part, to see the way in which she's been socialised into the habitat of 21st century UK academia and the way in which certain things just seem to seep in. Because it's kind of all around and you start off asking what journals you should send this paper to? What do you base it on? How do you know that journal X is better than journal Y? Students, in an early part of their student career, might say to me "you said to make sure you use top-rated journals, which ones are they? How do I know that this one is better than that one?" It's a difficult judgement for undergraduates to make, you know, the [journal] is better than than, you know, whatever. How do you know? But I think when you see PhD students, you see that inculturation almost happening the front of your eyes. Especially those who would like to remain in academia. And some might in their third year be trying to get a paper out, half way into the third year or something. They might have a paper that they can write and they'll be thinking carefully about where to send it, because if they had luck with it, it can be quite a, you know, big thing on their CV. So yeah, I think it is there. And it's there in all the other departments. Business schools often think they are the only ones that have all this, but it's the same in the philosophy department. They have theirs. They might not have an ABS list per se, because they don't need one, because they don't have all these different subject areas, you know. Okay, they've got branches of philosophy, but they know that, you know, the Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society journal is better than Philosophy Now or something. You know, they know that in order to get in Mind, is better than to get in whatever. The geographers are the same. So I think there is that, I think it does play, certainly. The nefarious part of it is, in a sense, when you asked about "does [current institution] kind of push you vis-à-vis research and so on?" And I said they'll let you do whatever you want and all that as long as you do reasonable research. The thing with ABS and these type of things is they might push you towards trying to get into a certain layer of journals. And then in turn you're pushed into writing your paper for that journal. And so, you know, the structure and so on of the paper gets very much built into: how does journal X do this? What are papers in journal X like? Do we have to provide loads of our coding? Oh, it does - so I'll have to do all this coding stuff and tables and so on of my coding for that journal. Or journal Y, oh, they don't need tables of coding, it just wants a narrative on it. So you write a narrative on your coding. They do have quite a profound influence I think on the way people craft their work.

##### Researcher

Wonderful. Thank you. So thinking back to when you previously worked at [previous teaching-focused institution], what would you say kind of are the main differences between working there and working somewhere like [current institution]?

##### Participant 19

I mean, I think, I mean, to be fair, it's a long time ago, during the 90s. So that's a long time ago. Having said that I did act as an external examiner on of their degrees more recently, about ten years ago. So I did, I did see how it had, it had changed at least a little bit. I mean, I think with, with, I think the difference between, if you took the Russell group universities, I think you, I think you could first of all lump the Russell Group universities together in a sense, with certain similarities and so on. You know, they're all research intensive, they have high qualified students, the tariff points are pretty high. With [previous teaching-focused institution] the thing I remember was the students coming in, they weren't on paper as well qualified as a student at a Russell group. That's hardly surprising really. That's not a finding, that's, everybody kind of knows that. At the time when I worked there students were also more from the locality, there was much more from that region of England. There was more diversity. I mean [current institution], for example, and [previous research-focused institution], were both very white universities, especially in the undergraduate population. It changes a bit with with MSc programmes and even PhD programmes where there's much more diversity of, I mean, obviously there's a lot of Chinese students as well in many British universities. So some courses aren't actually that diverse because they're dominated by students from South and East Asia for example. Which is a good thing, I certainly have no problem with that. But I would have said that it was useful being a new teacher, teaching in a context where there was quite a lot of diversity. It was predominantly British students, but they came from different ethnic backgrounds in [the city], whereas [current institution], it's predominantly British students who are undergraduates. The diversity in terms of ethnicity is much less. So that was quite a big, quite a big difference. The numbers of working class versus non working class students is also a big difference between the likes of [previous teaching-focused institution] and [current institution] and that's the case with all of the Russell group universities. [Example teaching-focused university] had more black students in it than all of the Russell groups universities together, a few years ago, at undergraduate level. And then at the time certainly [previous teaching-focused institution] was just putting it's toes into the pond of the Research Assessment Exercise, you know. I've mentioned a few names who were there and they were the research stars, you know, there wasn't a push of other members of staff to have to do research. They had these few people who were publishing in whatever the top journals were at the time, and that was great for them. And, you know, that got them lower teaching timetables and such like, you know, it got them certain privileges, one might say. But I don't think anyone resented it because it wasn't as though they were doing nothing. They were doing something. So I think people were, it wasn't underhand or anything. It was kind of, if you could do that, you would get the same privileges as well. So it was kind of okay. But, you know, they've moved on, there are people I know who still work there. Certainly they have the discourse of research. If you were to apply for a job, you would see all the same terminology as you'd see in a Russell group. But does it translate in the same way in practice? Probably not. They don't have the same research infrastructure or resources. I think that's a big difference. The resources that can be put into research supporting it and so on.

##### Researcher

Wonderful. Thank you. So focusing back on on the business school, what is the general kind of attitude towards impact beyond academia? Is that kind of held as highly in regard as kind of research and publications? Sort of reaching those external stakeholders?

##### Participant 19

I think it is, in the sense that, it's certainly not an expectation that everyone will or can be involved in impact studies, but those who are involved in them, they are really important, you know. And there is, I mean, it used to be really important because - I think they changed the rules - but it used to be that, say, for the REF, you could only submit, there was a ratio of the number of academics who could be submitted on the number of impact cases that the department or the school was putting forward. So it might have been, you know, I mean, you could look it up, I probably don't have the right figures. But it was something like for every single impact case you put forward, you could submit eight academics. Not eight academics involved with that case, but eight academics. Now, if you're a big school, if you have 200 members of staff, you needed a lot of impact cases to be able to have a high staff submission. And if you were a big research-oriented school, you could have a lot of really top-notch research faculty. So you needed to have a high number of impact cases to be able to put forward all these three, four rated academics. They've dropped that now I think. Because clearly it was a difficult balancing act, as a ratio. But certainly in [current institution], I mean, there is one guy who's got two of the main impact cases that are going forward for the upcoming REF submission, and he gets a lot of pressure to do what's needed with this impact case. Because he's obviously got to produce publications that go along with the impact case as well. But he has a significant amount of support, but he's self-generated a lot of grants through one of the bodies that he's doing the impact case with. And so he's been able to buy out teaching for himself and spend time on the impact case and so on. And then when the REF finishes at the end of this year it all goes back to year zero. And then all the power that an individual might have, all the labour market power they might have had during the current window, it kind of goes, and they have to start again. So you, you'll have seen people holding back, I mean, those people who are regularly publish a lot, they would've held back papers over the last few months and are waiting until now to submit them. So, they would not have wanted them coming out before the end of the cycle because they already have all they need. So there's no point in wasting a good publication that wasn't needed, but get it to come out next year and that's given you a good base for the next REF. So, there are all these tactics and so on.

##### Researcher

Playing the game?

##### Participant 19

Yeah, definitively. Why wouldn't you? If the organisation, you know, universities can be quite brutal. There's no doubt about it. And this thing of "you're only as good as your last REF submission", it does have a, it does echo. And building up a history is a harder thing now. We saw cases in [previous research-focused institution] where there was a suicide a few years ago in one of the [subject] departments. I forget, I forget which area. And this is a [high-ranked academic] at [previous research-focused institution]. You don't become a [high-ranked academic] at [previous research-focused institution] unless you're pretty damn good, you know. And he was put under pressure for, I forget the details. You know, you can see that this guy reached the top of the tree, a [high-ranked academic] at [previous research-focused institution]. But yet, that didn't really count for anything if he wasn't doing what was expected of him now. Yeah.

##### Researcher

Okay. Thank you. So obviously impact in terms of the REF and the impact case studies, am I right in thinking that the research assessment exercise didn't have that same kind of impact focus, that kind of impact segment, that was kind of induced with the REF?

##### Participant 19

Yeah, I forget which one, but it's probably, it certainly was there at the last one. I can't honestly remember if it was in the previous one. I don't think it's more than two. So the current one is either the second or the third that has impact. So certainly the first number of research audits, let's call them, it didn't have impact as a specific category. It was mainly publications and things like research climate and grants and so on. Impact either came in the last one or the one before, I forget which.

##### Researcher

And have you kind of observed any changes or differences since that kind of was introduced? Do you think there are kind of different expectations now that is in place?

##### Participant 19

I think there probably is. I mean, I've not been involved in an impact case so I don't see it quite so much. There's a possibility that with this [stakeholder group] study we may look at whether that has some of that, let's say. But, I've not specifically been involved in any. I certainly know that we have, within our research apparatus or infrastructure, whatever, there is support there for different strands of research. So, for example, if you've written a paper that you think has a chance of hitting one of the very top journals, maybe talking the four star ones rather than just the four, and if you look at the ABS list you'll see [sub-discipline] and there may be three or four that are four star, and then there's a bunch that are fours, and threes, and so on. In my area there's maybe five four star, then there's a bunch of fours, et cetera. If you're able to convince somebody that you've got, for example, if you sent a paper into one of these four stars, and it was like, you're likely to get significant, say you get significant revisions, you've got to revise and resubmit but there are major revisions to be done, and in the business school, if you can show that there's a reasonable possibility that you've been able to meet this, there is a support infrastructure to try and help you do that. So getting time off, getting whatever it is that might be needed in order to translate this into a four star acceptance. There is support there. And that's the same with the impact situation. If you can show that whatever it is you're doing, that it has some public policy angle to it, that could be of merit or whatever the particular angle of the thing is, it could be an innovative product development or something. So if you can show that for sure there's a realistic possibility, then again, there's a support infrastructure there that can be put in place. So both of them are, it's difficult to say which is, on the balance, on the scales, which is the one that... I suppose the impacting needs more ongoing work because it could take a long time for these to translate into impact. So they need that ongoing work. Publications, it's a shorter term thing. And you know, most people are able to do something in the area of publications, not everybody is able to do the impact thing because it requires, you know, certain kinds of access, certain kinds of focus. So, you know, that's in a sense harder to do.

##### Researcher

Okay. Wonderful. Thank you. So the last thing I wanted to ask about is kind of related to Covid-19. So you mentioned obviously doing recorded lectures and things has been a bit different to what you're used to, and working in the kind of area of online programmes and stuff. Would you say that's you've kind of had to dedicate a lot of time to adapting to a digital learning approach?

##### Participant 19

I mean, yes and no, because I only had half a module this term, I've got two modules next term, which at the moment are likely to be - so I've been doing face to face teaching this term. What I had to adapt to was, so tomorrow morning nine till one I'll be teaching an MBA class and there'll be a third of the class in person, social distanced, masked and in the lecture room. And then the other two thirds are online. So it's synchronous and live and so on, and they're able to contribute and they can talk. They can answer questions. When I'm doing any group activities they can go to a chat room and do their stuff, and the face to face group will do their stuff. So there the adaptation was just to, the sort of slightly discombobulating thing of two audiences at the same time. It's easy not to forget the people in front of you, but it's easy to forget this group hovering in the ether somewhere, you know. And so there was that sort of challenge. With term two it is, as you say, it's about, at the moment, what's being expected as is common in a lot of places, we're doing this - if you've got 1 hour or 2 hour lecture, you do a series of recordings, 10 minute, 15 minutes recordings. Not not a whole two hour or one hour recording, but you do, you put it into chunks and have something that follows each of these chunks. And so on. In a sense, students, it's interesting that they're arguing about fees. I'm all in favour of the argument students are making about their accommodation costs, but in terms of their fees, there's an argument to be made that they're getting more for their fees this year than they did last year. In my third year undergraduate class last year, the attendance was abysmal. It was Monday at 09:00. It was abysmal. [University] has been recording lectures for the last two years anyway, so students can just listen to the recording if they wanted to anyway. So it's been there for them. And other people's attendance was abysmal, it wasn't just my module. I mean, there's a lot of cost that goes into doing these online things. So I'm hoping that with my modules, yes, there will be the videos, then I'm hoping that there will be face to face seminars which is the plan at the moment. Though there'll be some online seminars because students can opt out of face to face if they want to. If they want it exclusively online then they can opt for that. So you know, you will have to do some seminars on Teams or whatever platform. But hopefully most of the seminars will be face to face. The business school, compared with some of my friends who work in other departments, the business school in some sense has had it easier, because we've got a much longer tradition of online programmes anyway. I've been teaching online programmes for most of the time I've been at [current institution]. Initially, that was material produced by the academics on the module and so it was all written and so on, because we didn't have all this technology to be interactive. And then it moved into lectures that were recorded in front of a green screen and then things put onto it, with supplementary activities. So the interactivity wasn't high, but there was lectures that the students could listen to and then there was activities. And then it kind of evolved to get a bit more intellective as things have gone on. So we did have this online MBA programme that, for those of us who thought on that, the transition to doing the online stuff this year wasn't such a problem. Probably the biggest thing has been just grappling with the technology, actually getting to grips with that. If you're talking about colleagues in, one of my close friends is in the [alternative discipline] department, and this was completely all new to them. They didn't, they'd never done anything like this before. So they've had to look at it from, foundationally, their mindset with teaching has always been to walk into a classroom and so on. Whereas at least quite a few of us in the business school, we had a bit of an online mindset as well, predominantly classroom teaching, but we did at least have some teaching that was online. So, yeah.

##### Researcher

So obviously, maybe not as much of a direct kind of impact on you having taught online programmes for quite a long time, but in general with the business school, do you think they kind of had to shift their focus a bit this year?

##### Participant 19

Oh, absolutely. When I go into the building tomorrow it will be like the Mary Celeste or whatever, you know, it is, I go in, and there's one or two people at the reception desk, Perspex screens in front of them all, blah, blah, blah. When you go in, you have to use your phone on the QR code, login, say that you're here, that you're in the building, hand sanitiser everywhere, arrows about direction to walk in, you walk past, we've got some lecture theatres in the business school, you walk past and there's nobody in them. You go to your office for a bit, get your stuff, you go to the classroom, empty corridors. You sometimes go into the corridor and the lights are off. We have the sensor lighting and it's gone off. So nobody's been down the corridor for long enough for the light to stay on, you know. Yeah. I mean, in that respect, it's like, universities are public spaces, you know. I mean, most of the buildings are open to, nobody's asked, you know, apart from, say, the library or a few other places, most people can come and go into buildings freely. You've no idea if they're students or staff or members of the public, or, who are they? At the moment, it couldn't be further away from that. As I say I have these twelve or so students in the class, I don't know who they are because they wear masks all the time. So if I pass them on the street, they might recognise me because I don't have to wear a mask because I'm behind a Perspex screen. I'm allowed not to wear a mask, I wear one coming into the classroom and I can take it off when I'm behind the Perspex screen. So they might walk past me in [city] and they might recognise me and they might say hello, and I'll be thinking "who is that?" Because all I see is students with masks.

##### Researcher

So are they not allowed to take them off at all then?

##### Participant 19

No, they have to keep them on. In [current institution] if the students are face to face they have to wear masks. The teacher can take a mask off, but they have to keep them on because we've got this... I did have a test on Saturday because the university have started testing. And I had a negative test so I was quite pleased with that.

##### Researcher

Oh, that's good.

##### Participant 19

So, yeah, it is quite different. The teaching I've been doing, what it does, it slows things down. You want to try and have the online students engaged, and so you'll, you know, I know it doesn't sound a difficult thing to do, but keeping your eye on the chat box, keeping your eye on students putting their hands up - those that are online. It isn't obviously a difficult thing to do, but remembering to do it for the first couple of times you're teaching, you know, it's just, it's not what you're used to and you're working on a particular set of behaviours and then you've got to do this other set. And it quickly, when I was teaching last week, that was my fourth week, I felt that was the best I'd done in terms of facilitating the thing, having a much better sense of, you know, such and such has her hand up, you know, person X has their hand up. And I felt I was finally sort of getting used to the system and properly seeing the chats that people were writing and having their hands up to say something. I think the previous weeks, the first week I was like, ah, crap. The second week I was like, argh, I know I've got to do this. The third week I was sort of starting to get a bit better. And I think last week I was a bit more natural in terms of the interplay between the two audiences. And tomorrow is my last, so it's like, then I'll forget, I'll forget how it was all done and when we have to do it again, I'll probably be back at square one. Yeah, but some of my colleagues have done the same as me, but done it entirely online. And I opted, I didn't have to do it face to face, so I opted to do it because I just felt I didn't fancy the thought of a four hour session with the students where it's all online, where all the students are online. I just, I felt I would be able to be more animated and so on, if there was at least some of the students in the classroom so I could take on my classroom behaviours. But then, of course, what I did find was I was a bit clunky with dealing with the online bit, but eventually got a bit better at that.

##### Researcher

Okay, wonderful. Thank you. So in terms of my questions, I think I've kind of covered everything I wanted to ask. So unless there's anything off the top of your head that you think would be important to mention in this context.

##### Participant 19

I mean, I think, universities with Covid-19 in particular, you know, our universities have struggled and there's been, we've heard the stories of certain universities that seem to be having difficulties. [Example university] is the one that springs to mind in terms of how they've interacted with students. And some of the absurd mistakes they've made, just absurd. It beggars belief that somebody actually thought up some of the things they've done. I don't know how students in [current institution] feel about how [current institution] has been. Personally, I feel they seem to have tried to be reasonable. We had a spike of numbers as we were expecting. [Other university] started first in the [region], two weeks later there was a spike, [another university] started next, two weeks later there was a spike. Well it's likely [current institution] started a week after that, there was likely to be a spike two weeks later, which there was. And then the numbers quickly came down two or three weeks later. The students, from what I think, have behaved really amazingly well. I don't blame those who've had parties. I mean, the 200-person one in [another university] this week was maybe a bit silly. When I was 18, what would I have done? I would not have stayed in my room the entire time and been a model Covid-19 student. No way. So I'm not going to criticise the current lot. I think the students have been really good. And the university seems to have been okay. I mean, it's testing stuff has been well arranged in advance. Students knew there would be a two week period of testing which is in three locations, they can also get it through the mail, it's self-administered, they've put on training programmes on the university website about how to do it. You know, they're facilitating hopefully as many students as possible getting a negative test result, feeling safe that they can go back home over the Christmas period, et cetera. You know, so I think in that respect, but it probably doesn't make up for the poor students stuck in a college room not having what you would normally have at university. Especially the first years. Yeah, I mean, I wouldn't really want to be a first year student at the moment if I had my time again. The only thing is what else would you do? You couldn't go travelling, you'd struggle to get a job. You know, it's a difficult one. I think I would have deferred, but you would have been at home all the time, you would have been. Hopefully it'll get a bit better next term, I don't know. Some loosening. The vaccination will hopefully translate into loosening. But then of course students will be down the list of people getting it because they're young and they're predominantly healthy. I was [age] a few weeks ago, so I suddenly apparently went up a level of closer to the top. Because [age] to [age] is a category, so I jumped into that category two or three weeks ago. Yeah, that's quite good. But no, I feel, I really do feel sorry for students. But I think to be fair to lecturers and academic staff, they are aware of it and they are trying their best to, the ones I know at least, I'm sure there are some lazy so-and-sos who don't give a toss. But they don't give a toss about students in the good times or the bad times. But I think the majority of academics do care about their students and so they will be trying their best to give them a reasonable learning experience and trying to advise them and so on. Maybe I'm a bit overly optimistic there, I don't know.

##### Researcher

Okay. Wonderful. Thank you. So I think that's probably the end then of the interview. I'll stop the recording.