##### Researcher

OK. So obviously I've had a look at your profile and stuff. So I do know a bit about you in that sense. But I guess kind of just in your own words, can you tell me about your sort of background, your career and your current job role, please?

##### Participant 27

Yes. My master's and PhD, that's as far as I'll go back, my master's and PhD were at [another university]. So I spent a good four years there. And that was kind of my induction into academia I suppose. I was in a [research institute] that was always closely attached to the business school there, but it was quite a separate institute where I was doing applied [alternative subject], and that then merged with the business school. And then after my PhD, I was looking at post docs and various things. But I ended up taking - there's a lot of these kind of positions sometimes now - an early career position at [previous institution], so a pretty prestigious institution. And I was a bit nervous starting out there. But I was an early career fellow. So I was on a contract. So that was a little bit less secure, but part of what that allowed me to do is apply for my first proper lecturing job. So I was at [previous institution] for about a year, 18 months, not very long. And then I got a job at [current institution]. And that's where I've been for quite a long time now. I wonder if I should look at moving on at some point, but no strong desire to necessarily. But yeah, I got my first lecturing job about [years] ago at [current institution]. And I've been there since. And a couple of years ago, I was lucky enough to be able to put together a case for promotion and was successfully promoted to [role] in [group] at [current institution]. So that's a whistle stop tour, I guess, from about 10, 12 years ago up to the present day.

##### Researcher

Okay. Wonderful. Thank you for that. That's really interesting. So I've already got loads of questions based on what you've just said. So obviously, [subject] is your kind of background then. Am I right in thinking that if you do that kind of subject it's quite interdisciplinary, you could almost go one of two ways? You could go, I guess in a more [alternative discipline] kind of area, or you could obviously then go into the business school. And you said that in [PhD institution], you were quite closely attached to the business school. I mean, going into [subject], did you always kind of envision that you would you would end up in a business school? Is that what your kind of aim was?

##### Participant 27

No, it's a really good question, it's a pertinent question, because the [research institute] at [PhD institution] was quite a unique little independent institute, and it sat almost literally and figuratively between disciplines, in that the building was kind of between the business school and the [alternative discipline] department. It was actually closer to the [alternative discipline] building, and some of us would go across there socially or even to do research and things sometimes. And, but I think what's, again, I don't have, like, precise evidence to back up what I'm saying, but I think it's fairly safe to say that in the last ten years or so, anyone who's working with applied [alternative discipline] has ended up in a business school. It's all sort of folded in. You will find some, but you won't find many [academics from discipline] or slightly different in [alternative discipline] departments, overwhelmingly those people have moved into business schools. They haven't moved into [alternative discipline] departments. One other thing I wanted... so I didn't envisage that, I don't know what I envisaged, really. I guess that I would end up in either a [alternative discipline] department or maybe a management or business school, but I wasn't really sure. I thought there might be maybe other options as well. I wanted to say one other brief thing, which was that I've lost that [alternative discipline] identity a little bit over time. I still go to [alternative discipline] conferences, and I try to retain it up to a point. But I've left behind some of the strong quantitative research in that community, and I kind of do a lot of qualitative and theoretical and other work and collaborations. And some of my recent papers have been in [another discipline], drawing a lot on [discipline]. So you mentioned interdisciplinary. I mean, I think when you go into a business school, you suddenly find yourself surrounded by, particularly in [discipline] - again, the labels vary - but you have psychologists, sociologists, economists, people drawing on other things, historians in some cases. So I think I've tried to hang on to my [alternative discipline], but it's, you know, pragmatically, I've published other papers and used other methods and gone in other directions as well.

##### Researcher

Okay. Yeah, that's really interesting. Thank you. And also you mentioned that you were an early career fellow at [previous institution]. Was that, on your profile it mentioned that you were a teaching fellow, so is that kind of synonymous? Was it more of a teaching focused role?

##### Participant 27

Yeah, it's interesting. Again, another good question, because I think there's a lot behind that, like about what exactly you call these positions. I guess it's up for discussion when you actually employ. You can kind of talk it through with your team leader or your head of group. The professor there at the time, I think he might still be there, said to me, "you will be asked to do a fair bit teaching, but we'll also give you time to get on with research as well". So they weren't actively supporting me to do research, but they weren't flooding me with teaching either. But I guess that was the official title, you were a teaching fellow. And if you were told to do lots of teaching to support, you know, full time faculty above you, you would do that. So often I was helping faculty with lots of seminars and things like that, as is fairly typical of these kinds of roles. But, you know, I was teaching solidly for about a day and a half within Monday to Friday, but the rest of the time was definitely my own. I was freed up from admin, and I think [previous institution], I would agree what they said to me, which was that "we've also given you a lot of flexibility if you want to search for other jobs and work on your own research profile". So some people don't like these roles. They're quite critical of them because they lack security and they dump loads of teaching on you. But my experience was it was quite balanced and fair, and I kind of enjoyed the teaching that I was doing. But then I also had two and a half days, three days a week to actually work on research and other stuff fairly independently. And it was just a good experience with low commitment of seeing how a department worked. I wasn't under the pressure that the tenured faculty were. But of course, at the end of every year, mostly, the contracts rolled over, but they did reserve the right to cancel your contract. So I was also looking for more secure jobs. But your question was really only about the label, but I think, you know, sometimes they call them "early career fellows", and I probably said that actually it was called a teaching fellow position.

##### Researcher

And how does what you do now kind of differ from that? So having that kind of teaching title, you mentioned you we're doing a day and a half of teaching a week, and you had a lot of free time... as being a more of I guess, more of a balanced kind of contract academic, how have things change now?

##### Participant 27

It's a lot more intense. I think the short answer is just a lot more responsibility overall. But actually you're not teaching on your feet, or in person, for as many hours, but you have responsibility for designing the courses, collecting feedback. The moment you become a lecturer, the responsibility overall is a bit more full on. But it's more rounded with research and admin and the other categories of activity. Early career fellow or teaching fellow, like, you're usually teaching stuff that other people have had a big hand in developing. I mean, it varies, but you're kind of teaching stuff in quite a low responsibility way. Probably wouldn't have said that in a job interview at the time. But in honesty, you're gradually being inducted into the greater responsibility, shadowing lecturers, watching what they do, and hoping to make that transition pretty soon. I don't think anyone wants to stay in an early fellow position longer than they have to. But it can be useful for a year or two post PhD to kind of get a paper or two and figure out what being a lecturer is like. But in the last ten years, as I've gone from lecturing to [role], maybe not as many hours of teaching on a weekly basis, there might only be a couple of hours, but everything else I'm responsible for. So the admin, the preparation, the leadership, feedback, and you get other roles and other categories of activity added on as well.

##### Researcher

Okay. That's interesting. So following on from that you mentioned then there's lots of, many different aspects to the job of being an academic, teaching, research, admin and everything else. At the moment in your current role, what does your kind of, I would say week look like, but I think every week is probably quite different. But what generally are your kind of responsibilities in those different areas?

##### Participant 27

Well, the biggest responsibility, there's obviously the different categories we talked about, I guess a typical week, which is also not a typical week, but during a semester, during a term - so we have terms, semesters, they're about ten weeks - and in a typical week I'll have only a couple of hours where I'm actually full on giving a lecture. Obviously, we've gone, I don't know how much you're allowing for Covid-19, but as we've gone into a hybrid mode, that has added preparation and other refinements and there may be a few extra hours of uploading videos and things like that, and uploading materials, a lot more digital management. I'd say a couple more hours a week. Some people would say a lot more than that, but a few or more hours a week has been added on as a result of Covid-19. But Covid-19 aside, a lot of the same fixtures, like having a fairly high email load, just dealing with administration within my subject group. My biggest responsibility there, which is sort of the leadership role I took on in part to secure my promotion, was for the last three years I've been an MSc director. So I've been in charge of, I mean, lots of people have responsibility for different parts of it, but nominally, you're in charge of an MSc programme. So I've been a director for the master's degree in [subject]. So working with a team of lecturers to try and deliver a really great master's programme, the students who get admitted onto it, checking that they're all okay throughout the year, meeting with the student reps, dealing with the admin. A lot, a lot of leadership and admin has been, the last three years, given over to that role, and that's coming to an end in July. So yeah, I've enjoyed parts of it, but I'm kind of keen to wrap that up and someone else can have a go for another three years. So, lecturing, admin, emails, directing an MSc programme. In the busiest weeks of the year in term time, so September to December and January to April, for a ten week period, it's pretty full on with a lot of that. And then the rest of the time, obviously, I'm working with PhDs, trying to collect data, publish research.

##### Researcher

Okay. So what you just described, that kind of way that you are using your time, is that reflective, would you say, of the kind of contractual expectations of you? Obviously, you might have, like some sort of workload allocation model that would dictate how much time you spend in different areas. Is that realistic would you say?

##### Participant 27

It's hard to gauge, I think, for me anyway, I don't keep an eagle eye on it. And maybe I should. I think some of my colleagues calibrate it more precisely than me and they might have specific grievances. I've generally gone with the flow. I think I'm a little bit over my workload allocation currently. But when I step down from this MSc director role, I might go to being under my workload allocation. So I'm about 30 hours over, I think. It's not quite, like, overly concerning, but it's not ideal. My team leader is very good at checking in with me about that and exploring ways to bring it back down a little bit. So mostly I think we have a good system and it works fairly well. And [current institution] being Russell group, there is a commitment to research time. So we're supposed to spend 40% of our time on research. And I would say, you'll hear different things from different individuals, I guess, inevitably, but I would say most people I talk to and know would say that that commitment is upheld, that we're quite, there's, as a department we're quite committed to that and fair in how we recognise that. I think there'll always be fluctuations as people shift about in different roles and you can debate the finer details of workload allocation in terms of how many hours are given for particular things. But personally, I think overall, it's pretty fair. It can fluctuate a little bit. But I think with a good team leader, a good subject group leader and a good dean, they keep a good eye on it as best they can and will try to adjust things fairly.

##### Researcher

Okay. And you mentioned your admin role for programme leadership is coming to an end in July. Are you taking on another admin role to kind of replace that, or will you be fully sort of teaching and research focused?

##### Participant 27

Not immediately. So the honest answer is I don't know yet. I think it's a bit of an organic process, actually, I think I will be nudged and encouraged to maybe try and take something on within the department that is also coming available at some point, maybe in the next six to twelve months. And if I don't do that proactively, I guess, yeah, certain things will be given to me to make up my hours within our team, within the next twelve months following. So it's quite an organic process. If something is available and you go for it, I mean. Obviously don't forget as well if you get funding, then you could buy your time out. That would be another, I'm not doing that at this time, but another, if you got a big load of funding or were awarded a grant, part of that grant might fill your workload allocation back up. So I don't have any immediate plans just yet, but it will probably be a mixture of looking around at those opportunities, in the interim maybe taking on some extra teaching and marking, but that would be discussion within my team and what else is going on.

##### Researcher

Okay, excellent. Thank you. So obviously you chose to kind of enter an academic career. Obviously, I don't know exactly what your motivations were for that, so I'd be interested to know what it was that brought you kind of into academia, what made you decide to do a master's and PhD and go down that kind of route? And is what you're doing now kind of reflective of those kind of motivations? Are you doing what you kind of envisaged you would be doing?

##### Participant 27

Yeah, that's a deep question. Looking back over the last 15 years. I think I got into it quite young. Even so, I never really did anything else. So I'm not one of those people who's come from industry, and obviously sometimes you look at it in that light, you think, well, I've never really left university. I've not done much different time outside universities as some academics have. And so in a way, I followed a path of least resistance. I was, I think I was a very good undergraduate student. I really took to university and [alternative discipline]. And I was one of the best performing students in my undergrad. And I went for some careers advice, not going through it in too much detail, but they said "you should do a master's degree in an area of [alternative discipline], it might help you get a better job". So I wasn't thinking about being an academic then, I was just following my nose, following what was in front of me really. As strange as that may sound in some ways. And then I applied for the master's degree at [PhD institution]. And I suppose instinctively I did, I was looking for ways to carry on studying. Some people might have different feelings about that and say "go and get a job". I was sort of looking around and when I was at [PhD institution] in the [research institute] I could see, occasionally, when I was on the master's programme, there were first year PhD students and I would chat to them. And I'd get talking to them and then, yeah, it's weird. I don't have a perfect memory for exactly how that all happened. But at the end of my master's degree, I did my dissertation project, and it's like a mini kind of PhD. And then you think, well, wow, I could do a PhD, and the head of department was like, you could carry on with me, maybe, we don't know if we have funding yet. And so I applied to a few PhDs. So that's perhaps a bit of a banal answer. But I was just really interested in studying and researching, and I didn't really look too far beyond that. I guess my father was quite encouraging as well, he had a master's degree, he's not an academic, but he had a master's degree. And he said, I always wanted to be in academia. You know, it's quite nice. It's quite flexible in some ways. And you won't have a boss kind of over your shoulder the whole time and you'll have quite rewarding work, you would imagine. And then to go back to your question, was it reflective of that, again, I didn't have firm expectations. I knew I'd be teaching and I kind of went with the flow with the rest of it. I knew I'd be trying to get research published. I knew I'd be delivering courses and lectures, and I was looking forward to that. I think a lot of people do. I was looking forward to getting papers published eventually. I didn't realise how difficult it would be to publish in good journals. I think I was a bit naïve about that first, and I guess it's probably a common answer, but I wasn't prepared for the amount of admin eventually, when it came. I think the responsibilities, the expectations go up and then you do, you have to roll with the pressure a bit more. So I guess everyone, many people probably have a slightly more idyllic view of, you have lots and lots of research time and you're teaching the things you care most about. And I probably did have a bit of that. But mostly I took it as I found it, and I wasn't too surprised that there was a mixture of university responsibilities that I would have to be engaged in.

##### Researcher

Excellent. Excellent. Okay. I guess, I want to talk a little bit more about your kind of your role at the moment. So we've kind of established what your kind of activities are at the moment, the different kind of aspects of the job. What would you say are the kind of expectations of you in your role? So obviously that can relate to research, teaching, admin, leadership, any other kind of area that is relevant. What are the kind of expectations on you? So what are you kind of expected to achieve in those different roles, in terms of, it could be maybe in a given academic year or it could be a longer time frame, and that kind of thing?

##### Participant 27

Yeah, see, there's different answers to this. Somewhere it's quantified and codified. So as I say, there's a commitment to 40% of your time on research. And then I think the rest is something like, and I should know, really. But, you know, it's like 30% admin, 30% leadership or teaching, or, you know, there's a further breakdown. But I always remember the 40% research. Because that's what people focus on, it's important to people. That's the expectations in terms of time. And then we fill out time allocation surveys as well, which are a bit weird. I'm not sure anyone really cares about them that much. You get them every quarter, and people always, well I always make the bad joke that, you know, you need a box for the time you spent filling in the time survey, and silly things like that. But you fill it out and you don't really know who looks at it or how they use the information. But to go further on your point on expectations, I guess that leads us into performance management and performance reviews as well. So the paperwork there on an annual basis, and we've actually introduced, although they're less formal, six month ones as well, but that doesn't even require a meeting. It's just a chance to log how you've been doing over six months. But annually, the annual performance review, you will get a form with separate boxes for these categories of activities we've been talking about. I would say that there are, even there, that there are concrete, specific goals, but it's often couched in general language. Like what international conferences you've been going to, what papers you've been publishing, what courses you've been involved in. There are lots of funny little norms and rules hidden away. Like, you know, your average teaching score on your student feedback, I think, is expected to be above four on a five point scale. And again, you can question these rules. Like what happens if you don't meet them in any given year? Some of them there's maybe different norms attached to them and different processes attached to them. As you probably, probably can tell from some of my answers, I kind of just roll with it, as long as everything's going okay. But I would have the conversation if needed, and draw more attention to maybe where I wasn't meeting expectations. And then beyond that, as I'm sure you know, there's the REF exercise, a schools reputation and strategy. But if your annual reviews are going all right, you won't receive too much pressure of expectation directly on that. And we also upload - there's a lot when I start thinking about it - but we also, we upload everything to a repository, which is a bit of a nuisance as well, because we know we've done it. It's all out there online somewhere. But we need to keep good records on a repository of everything we do. And the attitude is that, the expectation is that everything you do could be useful. I mean, I guess if it's more international and prestigious, the expectation becomes more positive. But beyond that horizon, for the REF, it's all about journal rankings and publishing, you know, journals and papers that fit a certain standard. But often no one can agree on exactly what that standard will be beyond the ranking - beyond some list of rankings. So there's all sorts of different loosely interlocking mechanisms of expectation and appraisal going on, that would be my take on it.

##### Researcher

That's really interesting. Thank you.

##### Participant 27

I guess there's more informal ones as well. So, if you like, peer pressure or the pressure from collaborators and colleagues or comparisons that you draw with other institutions or other people. But beyond that, I can't think of much more, actually.

##### Researcher

Yeah. Okay. That's really interesting. So in terms of, kind of, so you mentioned about publishing, you mentioned different journal rankings. So based off of that, obviously, there is that kind of expectation of you to publish in these journals, is there a certain kind of emphasis, would you say, on which journals you should publish in and how this might affect, you know, your chances of career progression?

##### Participant 27

Yeah. Well, the short answer is, the official line, I guess, according to the ABS list and the REF exercise, which has to be a ABS three or above, that's the kind of basic starting point. But even then you will get, you will observe radically different strategies going on around you from different academics. You know, you'll spot that there's a professor and he's editor of a journal that's an ABS one. And you think what does that mean? Would he himself publish in there? Or you spot occasionally your colleagues publishing in ABS two - occasionally I've published in an ABS two, or even lower. And so there's a lot of mixed signals. But it does keep coming back to this ABS three or above. And then if you talk to certain people in any business school environment, I think some people will be more hard nosed than others, that you really need to be at the top of the ABS list, particularly in a Russell group university and department, business school. You know, you want to be in these North American journals. I think that's where people differ and their views differ and their expectations differ. And some people have very strong expectations that those are the only places worth publishing in. But then a fair amount, probably more other people, are a bit more flexible and understanding and say, well, an ABS three is okay if you maybe can't get in your top journal choice every time, that's very normal. And then a lot of people would say, but if you're dropping below an ABS three, it's not your finest hour. It's not been your best piece of work. And maybe that's going to be a difficult thing to sell in those things I was mentioning in my previous answer, in your performance appraisals. Add to that the REF politics that things can get downgraded when they - you might have heard other people talk about this - so, panels will review articles submitted to the REF. And it may be in an ABS four star journal, but the panel decides, who knows how - this is where it gets controversial - the panel decides that it's not an ABS four star piece of work and it needs to be downgraded. And people think that things are often, more often downgraded, than they are upgraded, so that becomes intensely political. But broad strokes, I think most Russell group business schools are looking at the top of the ABS list, and that's where the general pressure lies. But you'll get a lot of other views that, you know, you sometimes submit in a variety of other journals for a variety of other reasons as well.

##### Researcher

Okay. That's really interesting. Thank you. So, this importance placed on these lists and these rankings, do you think that is solely because of the REF, or do you think there are other factors at play?

##### Participant 27

It's a good question. I don't think it's solely because of the REF, but I certainly think it's got a lot to do with it. I think there's a close overlap and like a symbiotic relationship maybe between the two. I think they feed off of each other, certainly in the UK market, and I know they have equivalent ones in Australia and other places, it can actually vary quite a lot in how the list looks. But I don't think it's solely, I mean, I think if you took the REF away, people would just make another list based on impact factors or other metrics, you know? And it would just be replaced by something else. There's a feeling of inevitability to it, although you will, I guess there are academics who wish we could do away with it completely, but I just think it would inevitably get replaced by something else. So the question for me is, well, what other kinds of metrics might we use? I'm not sure there's an easy answer, but I think people would fall back on impact factors and other demonstrations of impact. So I think the REF has a lot to do with it, but it sort of formalises what's already going on anyway.

##### Researcher

Okay, that's very interesting. Thank you. And you mentioned impact a few times there, which is actually the next thing I kind of wanted to talk about, impact. I know impact can take on a lot of different meanings, impact can mean a lot of different things in the sphere of academia. What is your kind of personal view of impact? What do you think impact is? There might be multiple kind of definitions, I guess, of what you think it is, but what is your kind of take on impact?

##### Participant 27

Well, obviously, we can talk about this all day, there are books that have been written about impact. I have a lot of different views on impact. I'm fairly open minded about what constitutes impact, but I think, I can see there's probably a sliding scale. So there's probably some things that are, most people I think would agree, it's difficult to demonstrate impact in a lot of the research that goes on in business schools. It's not impossible, but it's just quite difficult in many cases to build up a strong impact story. But I think there's a kind of sliding scale, you know? So a lot of people would say - and I'm open to listen to people's views about this - people would say, you know, publishing a journal article, that's not impact, or, you know, going and doing at talk, that's not impact. You actually have to show something that's more and more concrete and more and more tangible. So it's that sort of sliding scale. So I'm open to moving up that sliding scale. But I think it's difficult, and I think a lot of my projects that I work on, I would have to think hard and work hard to kind of move up that scale and develop a stronger impact narrative, if you like. So I think it's always relative. There will be people who say "that's not really in my definition of impact". And other people will say "I think you need to go a bit further and then it will be impact". It's quite subjective. And I think other people will... so a good rule of thumb for me is, going back to the REF again, you have impact case studies, right? So they're a big part of the REF. Certain projects get picked as strong impact examples. And so I look at those and I think those are probably reflective of what our shared understanding of impact is. And often they have, like, strong stakeholder relationships, strong financial and policy and environmental outcomes, that can be demonstrated and communicated to diverse audiences. Often there's a trendy video made of how the research is really changing the world. So yeah, I don't, I don't have a strong, I think it can be many things, but it's quite difficult to demonstrate. And I think some researchers have projects that are maybe stronger candidates for impact case studies. And I think the rest of us are kind of trying to work up the scale a bit when we're going for a funding bid. And when I collaborate with different people, I learn a lot about why they want to do a project. And sometimes there's an implicit impact narrative that we can explore. You know, like why are we actually doing this research? What do we hope will come out of it? But then I do think there's a lot of research, and some of it is stuff I like doing, that is a little bit embarrassing to say, in some context, but it's a bit more blue sky, you know? It really just doesn't have any impact. It's kind of just interesting or thought provoking. And I think that's not really impact. So I think there's a difficult residual question about, is there a place for research somewhere, some of the time, that has no impact? Or more or less, no impact? But still has other value in some other way.

##### Researcher

That's really interesting. Thank you. So you mentioned, obviously, impact case studies being, I guess, quite a prominent thing on the impact agenda. In general, I guess in the business school, I would like to know what the kind of general attitude is towards impact? Is it given as much kind of importance, I guess, as publishing? And I know publishing can be impact in a way, but I guess I'm kind of referring to the kind of impact to external stakeholders beyond academia - not other academics citing papers. Is it something that is really kind of given importance, do you think? And is that because of impact case studies?

##### Participant 27

I think with successive REFs, it has embedded itself a bit more. But I would argue, I'm not sure if this is a very decisive answer either, but I would argue we're in transition. It's very mixed. I think probably in any given business school, it's almost half and half. I mean, people are kind of aware of it. They will build it in when they can. If you, if you're in a particular leadership role, you will be more aware of it across the university or across your department. And you may use the language more. But some individual academics will still be very focused on publishing, and they'll worry about impact as it arises. But then I do think you also have quite a lot of people who, maybe the people who are more often trying to go for big grants, big funding grants, and there's quite a lot of variability in that. They will be more having to think harder about it, because when you go for funding, you'll need to talk a lot more about impact than you would in a journal article. So I think it depends on individuals and the role that they're in and the kind of, if they're working with funding bodies and things like that, or how plugged in they are to the impact narrative. I think if you're a lecturer or a senior lecturer, it's like a nice to have, it might be something you're trying to develop, but I think, I suspect for most of us, it still get the papers. There will be an impact narrative you can figure out later. And that's quite contentious, I think. So, we probably hope for the best, some of us, that we can figure out the impact narrative as we go along, but we've certainly got to get those papers.

##### Researcher

Okay. And so based off of that, what you've just said, obviously, the papers are really important and, at lecturer or senior lecturer level it might not be something that's really at the forefront of your mind when you're designing research projects and writing papers and that kind of thing. Why do you think that is kind of the case? Why do you think that publications are so absolutely crucial for kind of progression and, you know, sort of moving up the ranks in an academic career? And why, perhaps, impact, as you say, may not be given as much of a focus beyond kind of impact case studies?

##### Participant 27

Yeah, good question. I think there's probably a list of factors, but it goes back to some things we've possibly touched on a little bit already. But I think it's, journal articles are tangible. They are, there's a lot of weight of tradition. I think journals have been around a long time, and there's a lot of cumulative, you know, they've been around longer than the impact narrative, I would guess, anyway. And so people cling to them. There's a tradition, it's tangible. You can do it. And as I've said, a lot of professors would tell me, not a lot, but, well, a few professors I've maybe talked to about it over the years would say impact is just really hard to demonstrate. It's even harder than getting a paper. So you might as well just get a paper and then figure out the impact around the paper post hoc or as you go along, as I was saying. So I think there's a host of biases towards, you know, journal articles are just at the heart of what we do. I think there's maybe what an economist would call an endowment effect as well. Like, when you get a paper, nobody can take that away from you. It's going to be in the journal for all time. You've done it. You've got it. It just feels like you've achieved something, however false or deluded that may be. And I just think impact, people probably, some people anyway, probably associate it with bureaucracy, or they don't really know quite how to build it into day to day work on a project and the sense of achievement. You know, I think there was a lot in, you know, maybe the last REF or early days, where people started to talk more and more about it. Can we really agree on what it is? You know, there was a lot of sighing and sort of, well, "if that's not impact then it's just too difficult to demonstrate". I think people felt that a lot of what they were already doing wasn't impact and then, well, where do you go from there? So just all those sorts of difficulties in defining it and demonstrating it and then off to the side you have this nice metric of like getting into journals - just do that. It's just been having them alongside each other, I think people still default to the journal outputs. If you're an early career person and you're in a meeting and you see professors and they can't agree on what impact is or how to demonstrate it, you just think, well, if the professors can't agree how on earth am I going to do it? You know? So we look at these impact case studies, I guess, and that probably gets some people thinking more than others. Like, maybe I could do more impactful research, maybe I should do more impactful research. And I guess you'll start to see, well have started to see, boxes appearing on some of these other expectation mechanisms as well. Like in the annual review, there might be a box on impact and stuff. I don't think anyone is scrutinising it outside the REF particularly closely. But as I say, when you go for a funding bid, you'll then become acutely aware of it in a different way all over again. So I think again, people probably fluctuate. I've been for some small funding bids and been successful, and I've had to write a lot more about impact for those than I ever would for a journal.

##### Researcher

Okay. That's really interesting. So I want to talk, I guess, a bit more about you kind of personally, as an academic and your kind of career. So, bearing everything in mind that we've spoken about, so there's research, teaching, this third kind of aspect, the impact element, and obviously admin as well. I am quite interested to know what your kind of personal strategy or, I guess, way, way of working has been for you to get to where you are at the moment. So obviously, you said recently applied for promotion, and obviously you've already kind of let me know that part of the strategy for that was taking up the admin role to get to that stage. And I'm kind of wondering if there's any other elements to, I guess, a strategy that you could talk about? I would be interested to hear what your kind of personal reflection is?

##### Participant 27

It's an ultimate question and I think everyone wrestles with it on an ongoing basis. But in terms of that promotion, that was where it all came to... not fruition, but I had to really gather it all together and take a serious look at what I'd been doing. Whereas, as you say, like, probably before that, my strategy was quite vestigial. It was quite nascent. It was just like, get a few good papers and then see what else comes your way kind of thing. Because there's always stuff that needs doing and you have to weigh it up a little bit. You can't say yes to everything. But I don't think I always had an explicit strategy. I didn't even plan to direct that MSc programme. It's just, it came around, and I thought if I don't do it now, I'll have to wait another three years, I might not get it, or might have to do something else that I don't know much about. But my strategy, one of my strategies, in brief, has just been to look at colleagues who are at the same level or one stage ahead. Just look at what they've done, pick their brains about it. We also have a director of faculty who is really, really great as an individual. And personally working with her, she read my promotion, she didn't really have to spend as much time on it as she did, I think. She read my promotion application very carefully, and met with me on a couple of occasions to really go through it and help me. And she reassured me in a way that I was doing a lot more than I realised, and I just had to emphasise it in relation to some of the competencies and categories more. So another part of it is developing your strategy about how you present yourself on paper and how you present yourself verbally as well, I guess. But I have always been a bit of an all rounder or tried to do things as they've come up whilst also looking at people around me as well. And not doing exactly what they're doing, but trying to do something equivalent that maybe I have the opportunity to do. And so borrowing from other people, collaborating with other people as well, I mean, that's another strategy, you know, someone who's at the same level as you, you discuss what your shared goals are and again, usually it's getting a good paper. And sometimes you can work together, get a good paper together. So a mixture of strategies with my colleagues. And then I guess personally, you just keep taking it one year at a time with your annual review, going, going to similar conferences, trying to hit some of the targets there that you... so I take it from one year to the next. I definitely use the year as a unit of analysis, I suppose. Every twelve months. And sometimes I'll say, oh, you know, that was a good year, I really got a lot done. And other years, you think, okay, well, I've got to maybe do something else there or I'm in a bit of a transition period. And so that's how you kind of weigh it up a bit as you go along and try and take advantage of things as they come up, I guess. It seems to be a little bit different for everyone, but you can usually learn from some parallel experiences of your colleagues around you.

##### Researcher

Yeah. Okay. That's really interesting. Thank you. So I'm happy to kind of leave it there in terms of questions, because we have covered all the kind of topics and stuff that I would want to ask about. And you've given me lots of great information, I've got two pages of notes, which is a really good sign of a good interview. I'm happy to leave it there. Unless you have anything off the top of your head, you can think of that you might want to add that you think could be relevant or important for this kind of topic of the academic environment of business schools, anything notable you can think of to perhaps mention at all?

##### Participant 27

Well, I think there's probably one more thing, which is, a lot of academics are on social media. I know that might not be something that you're looking at directly, but, well, that's one point. And then another point is that there's been a lot of strikes and industrial action in the sector in the last few years. So I think... and Covid-19 has intensified things as well. So I think there is going to be change ahead, and nobody knows quite what it's going to look like. I'm not even sure everyone knows what's happening with the current REF period. It's quite an interesting time to be an academic, and it's quite a challenging time. And I think the people I look at sometimes, PhD students as well, and I think, what are they, do they actually want to be academics? What are they getting into? And yeah, one of my colleagues once said we're in the business of content production. You know, we're not in the business of doing research. And I thought that, he was almost saying it cynically as well, but that stayed with me because I think a lot of us are on social media and we are all grinding away on papers trying to get papers done. We're not necessarily all doing huge impact work at the same time, either. But the environment is changing and it's quite turbulent and diverse and politicised. And that would just be a closing observation, I guess, is that I think there's probably further disruptions ahead, but I don't, I wouldn't quite want to make predictions about what they would be. But I do see a lot of grievances on social media. I see a lot of academics saying "I wouldn't tell my children to go into academia" or being critical of the vice chancellors and the leadership in various ways. And so I think there's a lot of dissatisfaction and dipping of morale due to various reasons. And I just wonder personally where that's all headed. And it doesn't always seem good. I mean, there's a lot of positives as well. But you see a lot of turbulence. And I primarily, particularly since Covid-19, see that through social media and the new media environment. And I've probably used social media to my credit, you know? I've used it to sort of track things that I've done. Maybe again, it doesn't, it could be defined as impact, I think some would say "no, social media is not impact", but I've certainly used it to achieve things. I've used it as a tool, and that's why I always go back to what my colleague said, there's an element of cynicism, but I think we are in the broader business - as well as getting papers in the old fashioned sense - we're in the broader business of content production, of producing content in different media and being involved in the media. And I think that's, my father's generation sees as a not so good side of academia, that you're kind of selling out by being on the media all the time and not actually doing any proper work. So I think we're in a bit of a transition with all the new media environment and everything that's going on there. On Twitter, in particular, as a platform, there's a very strong academic network, whether people are following each other directly or not. And so a lot of the things you've asked me about, people are talking about them quite intensely online. So that would just be a closing observation of something we didn't quite touch on. And again, you know, that's where I might make new connections, get advice, draw comparisons, I might even keep in touch with people who could act as referees for me or offer me a job opportunity one day. If I tweet something or share a bit of news, and I see a couple of deans from good universities follow it, I think, great, I've never met them, but maybe, just maybe, they know who I am, you know? So that new media environment is something I often reflect on as a piece of the puzzle. But that's the only thing I was kind of drawn to there, I think.

##### Researcher

Yeah, that's really good. That's definitely something very important to think about. The kind of digital, I guess, new kind of way of working. So, on that note, I'll stop the recording now.