##### Researcher

Okay. Right, so obviously I've had a look at your profile, so I know a bit about you from that, but I guess just in your own words, could you tell me about yourself in terms of your background, your career to date and your current job role, please?

##### Participant 59

Yeah, so I'll start with my current role. I'm a [role] in [management sub-discipline] at [current institution] business school, only recently joined, October of last year. So under quite unusual circumstances. I've not met anyone apart from my head of group. Prior to that, I worked at [second previous institution] for about two years, just under two years. And before that I was at [first previous institution] and worked there for quite a while, a good sort of four years or so. Always within the sort of [management sub-disciplines]. If you look at my profile, you'd probably be kind of struck by the fact that a lot of my papers aren't within that discipline, they're kind of within [subject area]. And that's purely a by-product of convenience and having a friend that can get his hands on good data. All my teaching is always in [management sub-disciplines], but the majority of my publications are sort of in [subject area].

##### Researcher

That's really interesting. So in terms of, I guess, doing a PhD and joining academia, what was it that kind of motivated you to enter that kind of career as opposed to starting your own business or joining a corporate company?

##### Participant 59

I'll be honest with you, I always think these interviews are more useful for you if I actually don't just give you a sort of regurgitated answer that you're expecting to hear. So when I was finishing my undergraduate honours degree, I was invited by my dissertation supervisor to apply for a PhD. I'd never thought of it, completely, honestly, I'm not even sure I understood sort of the machinations and the mechanisms for the PhD. He told me he had this project lined up that would be, back in those days, I think it was like £14,000 a year. But he just said that, he said it's £14,000 a year, we've got this project lined up here, and I being completely naïve, a naïve sort of 21 year old when I finished my honours undergraduate, thought that meant I had to pay the £14,000 a year as my fees. So I completely shut off that. Just ignored his emails. And then three or four months later, I realised I still didn't have a job lined up. I'd done nothing, I'd been completely like not proactive in the slightest. And fortunately, I sort of thought back to the PhD offer, spoke to the supervisor, the opportunity had obviously passed. Explained my concerns to them, because at this point, I'm still thinking, I need to get this money together to do this over the next three years. So spoke to him, he looked at me like you're completely thick, that's not how it works. We pay you to do it, we give you a stipend to do it, so then that kind of set the ball rolling for me, kind of thinking maybe this is something that I want to do. Looked at calls, put an an application in for one that sort of vaguely looked interesting, went through the process, similar process to probably what you've done, the interviews, the proposals, those kind of things. So I went straight from undergraduate to the PhD. Now, within about two or three months, I think I realised the sort of scope, the scale of a PhD compared to the sort of half committed undergraduate studies. So what my department did was they also paid for me to do a master's in research, so they kind of supported me through that as well. And then tacked the PhD onto the end of that instead of going straight from undergrad to PhD, which was the initial plan for this sort of call. So it was kind of fortunate that I'd been supported along the way in terms of my naivety at the time. As I said, early 20s. Was, yeah, supported by the folk that make the decisions, essentially. So there was no grand, oh, I've always wanted to do it, I just love research, I just love to study, I love university life - there was nothing like that. But obviously, as we'll get on to, no doubt, as the sort of career has progressed, it's been a good decision.

##### Researcher

Definitely. And could you tell me a little bit about sort of the movement from [first previous institution] to [second previous institution] to where you are now? Kind of the, I guess, decision making process behind those moves?

##### Participant 59

So when I got my first full time job at [first previous institution], it was teaching only. So I know the terminology changes between universities, but it was called a teaching associate, but you know, a full time sort of member of staff. And it was primarily concerned with delivering a piece of work that was, ERDF, so the European Regional Development Fund, funded work off campus up in [region]. So that was a piece of public sector procurement. We won the contract for that twice. Then we sort of came back with our tail between our legs and the third time the contract came up, because we didn't want it the third time. So, it was fully teaching focused, it was sort of four years of this. It was quite intense, but it was always quite precarious in terms of, if we didn't win that contract then I didn't really know where I was sitting. So obviously that transpired, [first previous institution] offered me, I think it was something like a 60% contract to continue, so that wasn't going to work. They were kind of finding me little bits of teaching here and there and it was stuff that I wasn't necessarily interested in. And then I thought, seen an advert for [second previous institution], it's not necessarily, it wasn't necessarily my first choice because I'm from [city] and that's in [another city]. But I thought, I'm going to go for it, it will free up some time for research. It will give me sort of a degree of permanence. It'll move me to the lectureship pathway, as opposed to being sort of pigeonholed as a teaching associate. That didn't necessarily sort of... it worked out fine, but research wasn't necessarily a focus of the institution. So I do enjoy the research aspect of being an academic, but it wasn't prioritised within [second previous institution] and what I actually found out was I was doing more teaching as a lecturer at [second previous institution] than I was as a teaching associate at [first previous institution]. So, yeah, kind of plugged away at that, quite enjoyed it, to be perfectly honest. Expectations, again, I'm being honest, I know this is anonymous, so it's fine, expectations weren't necessarily sky high. Do a decent job of teaching, get a paper a year, and you were sort of gold standard and things kind of worked like that. But because I've been quite decent when it comes to getting publications out there over the last few years, despite expectations not being very high for research, I did want to push myself a little further in terms of getting recognition for the fact that I've got a decent research profile for an ECR. And a job advertisement came up at [current institution], so a highly-ranked university, difficult to say no to. And I wasn't going to apply for it because I actually didn't think my profile kind of fit in terms of what they were looking for. Within academia in general, within the UK at least, but also within [area in UK], there's sort of [higher ranked universities]. And when you're at the smaller universities like [second previous institution], you think about whether you'll fit in and whether they'll sort of respect the work that you've done previously and think that you could be a good addition to their team. So I actually wasn't going to apply. The head of group who is now currently my boss, he sent emails out to, I think, every [management sub-discipline] scholar in [area in UK], because we were just sort of kicking off the pandemic at the time this all came out, so I think he was looking for someone quick and local. And I gave him a phone off the back of that, just to say, look, here's what I've done previously, blah, blah, blah. Does that kind of fit in with what you're looking for? And surprisingly, yes, apply for it. Went through the interview process and moved to [current institution]. So it's probably a little bit of superfluous detail in there for you, but that's the process I went down. So it was almost teaching focused, but contract was kind of sketchy at [first previous institution], the permanence of the [second previous institution] post was appealing, but it wasn't necessarily a research intensive university. And then hopefully [current institution], I mean I'm, what, 8 months in? Hopefully it has got that balance of focusing on research, but also high quality teaching.

##### Researcher

That's really interesting. So where you are at the moment, then, in [current institution], what is your contract looking like? Are you doing less teaching than you were previously at [second previous institution]? And are you satisfied with the kind of work allocation that you've got now?

##### Participant 59

Yes, it's much better. So I'll give you an example. At [second previous institution] I would teach across eight, nine courses over the course of an academic year. So, I'd be the course organiser, the module lead or whatever you guys call it, module leader for maybe two or three of them, I'd have additional bits of teaching here and there, executive education, that kind of thing. At [current institution] this year I've taught across three courses, course organiser for a much larger course, though, and the plan for next year is that I'll teach across two, but I'll be course organiser for both. So in terms of the workload allocation, it's much, probably more intense, the demands of students are sort of higher, and it's probably a sort of equivalent amount of time in terms of administration and that kind of thing, sort of dealing with those demands. But in terms of spreading yourself, it's probably better, I'm spreading myself less thinly when it comes to subject knowledge at [current institution]. Whereas in comparison to the main courses at [second previous institution], which, yeah, I was learning new things. They had long semesters as well. So 13 week semesters. And you would get told two weeks before the start of term, you're teaching this course. So it was quite intense, the teaching at [second previous institution].

##### Researcher

And in terms of what you're doing at the moment then, in terms of, obviously you said, you know, you're sort of like a module leader or whatever, course coordinator, whatever you want to call it, is that like the sort of bulk of your administrative duties? Or do you have any other kind of admin roles as well that have been given to you or that you've chosen to partake in?

##### Participant 59

Nothing at the minute. I know that's on the agenda. I'm not sure what box I'll be fitted into, but I think given the circumstances of the year, they've been quite, they've taken quite a light touch in terms of extra administrative responsibilities. But, yeah, it's purely course organisation and module leadership. That's the administrative stuff at the minute.

##### Researcher

Okay, that's really interesting. And having been there for, you said, about eight months now, are you currently on a kind of probationary period or, because this is like your third academic post, is that not really the case? I'd be interested to know.

##### Participant 59

You know, it's a good question. I don't think I am. And I know that sounds like slightly stupid that I can't give you a definitive answer there, but things, the way in which the contractual process at [current institution] went was very different to [previous institutions] where it was very clearly, here's the terms of your probation. So in my previous role I only had one term for my probation, because I had a lot of experience within the sector and it was... honestly, I can't even remember what it was. It was something related to publishing or PhD, finishing the PhD, something along those things. At [current institution], I'm almost certain from speaking to the dean that I just need to get through the first year. I just need to get through the first year with nothing being flagged and it would have had to have been flagged at the interim mid-year report, which was back in April, so I'm hoping, touch wood, I've still got a job come October this year. But it's definitely been different because, I'll go back to, I'll kind of flip between experiences, but at [first previous institution] probation was a very big thing in terms of, it's between one and three years, depending on where you were within the ladder. And it was something that was mentioned quite often, we need to do this in order for us to get you off of probation, or we're going to extend your probation for a year because you've not done this, that and the other... so it was quite a powerful tool that they maybe used to get what they want out of you. But at [current institution] it's not been something that's at the forefront at all.

##### Researcher

Okay, that is really interesting. And obviously you come from quite a unique position where, like you said, you've moved from the more teaching focused institution to the more research focused institution. What kind of, I guess, differences in the kind of culture have you observed between your previous institutions and where you are at the moment, and the sort of priorities of the school and the university?

##### Participant 59

The type of research that you're doing is emphasised more at [current institution]. So, this surprised me, actually. It's less of a numbers game than I expected. So obviously you know about the ABS list, the sort of emphasis on three and four star papers when you're in sort of relatively decent universities. And the first couple of meetings I had with my head of group, with the dean, they basically said, we don't really care about quantity so long as you get something that kind of sets us apart, so long as your publications are... yeah, it's quite hard to define. They basically told me to shift my focus away from the sort of three star [subject area] papers, which kind of got me the role, and think more about maybe having two papers over a three year period that were really quite distinct and helped to build the distinctiveness of the group within the university and beyond. Which is nice to hear, but it's still kind of fluid. It's quite a fluid objective for them to give you. So they don't really use the ABS list. They use DORA. There's a lot more freedom. There's more freedom than I thought. You'd think you go to one of these top academic institutions and it's quite sort of heavily mandated towards me to get good quality stuff out as often as possible and sort of maintain that quite intense, high pressure culture. But by the looks of things, from speaking to people, really, it's just sort of one decent paper every 18 months that they're looking for, which is a massive cultural shift from, I'll go back to [first previous institution], even though I was on a teaching contract, I obviously still published back then, but it was more of a numbers game there. Yeah, it'd be fantastic if everyone got the sort of FT50 papers, but so long as you had your sort of two and a half papers for the REF, everything looks fantastic. So at [current institution] it's trying to make it to the top, top, top. At [second previous institution] it was, we don't really care if you publish or not because that's not what we're really known for. A mad scramble at the last minute, in the last six months for the REF submission to see who is where, and no real sort of strategic direction in terms of that. So institutionally it was a teaching institution with some very good researchers within it, and they kind of make up the crux of the research culture within it. So, yeah, I mean within the group at [second previous institution] I think there was two, myself included, who had sort of a decent REF submission of nine academics. Whereas at [current institution] everyone's got a decent submission, but it is maybe those three papers over the five year period that are just sort of really high quality scholarship.

##### Researcher

And how is, I guess, teaching kind of perceived then where you are at the moment? Like you said, it's a research intensive institution and there is that emphasis on those really highly ranked journals. In terms of progression and that sort of thing, how is teaching sort of perceived? How does teaching kind of come into the mix?

##### Participant 59

Teaching is surprisingly sort of emphasised as well. And again, that's something that I didn't necessarily expect. I said I was naïve all those years ago, but I'm probably still naïve now. I thought I'll go to [current institution], I'll pump out papers, they'll love me, my workload will be so much less. Yeah, but, teaching is a big priority. You've got a lot of freedom to do what you want within your modules. But, yeah, I don't know how to say it any other way than it's still really prioritised within the university. And obviously this year, the year we've just experienced, it's been sort of very different. And you probably hear that from everyone when you ask these questions, but I would say that's probably led to even more of an emphasis on teaching, where you're given a bit more allowance for course design or course redesign in order to make it fit into the current parameters that we're facing at the minute. There's been a lot more sort of IT and IS support, that kind of thing. So, yeah, teaching is a priority. We've obviously taken on a lot more first year students, and I teach first year courses, with the exams fiasco last year. So our student numbers are sort of massive in comparison to previous years. So, yeah, all of these things, maybe it's just because of when I came in, but it seems to me like teaching is a priority. It may just be a confluence of all these sort of contextual factors that, yeah, teaching this year has been sort of big. And I'm glad it's over with.

##### Researcher

And in terms of the kind of, I guess, mission of the business school, the different missions and objectives, obviously teaching and research, like you said, are very emphasised. I wonder what kind of attitude the business school takes towards the kind of more impact side of things. Sort of like impact with non academic stakeholders for example, and kind of engaging with policy and practitioners and that kind of thing. Is that something that you feel is part of the culture and is kind of spoken about and enforced or, how do you kind of perceive that in this environment?

##### Participant 59

So, impact is always a tricky one. And it was funny, when I was reading your information sheet, participant information sheet, kind of laughing because I never really know how to answer questions on impact. It's always where I sort of fall short when people ask me about it. But in terms of the sort of wider community around [current institution], there are various stakeholders that the business school interacts with. There does seem to be somewhat of an emphasis on sort of knowledge dissemination more than anything else. There's quite a lot of, if you look at the university social media accounts, website, that kind of thing, quite a lot of the events are geared towards highlighting particular academics, maybe a recent piece of research or a project that they're working on, and then creating, this year, an online event around it and trying to disseminate knowledge that way. So I think impact is definitely on the agenda. There's also, the university, it's quite a weird one, so we are within the [subject group] but we also have something called the [interdisciplinary institute] which kind of deals with the more practical side of [management sub-disciplines]. So it has these mechanisms in place. There is clearly a priority for impact but I don't necessarily feel that it's filtered down to us at the lecturer level yet. Which, I don't know how you find... who your interviews have been with, are they suggesting that is the case at other universities? Or... if that's normal or something that's unusual?

##### Researcher

That has kind of been a bit of a theme throughout my interviews, that perhaps those that are in more senior positions might be more inclined to kind of feel that pressure to do that kind of impact at a later stage of their career. Whereas earlier on you really have to kind of focus on getting your research profile just kind of out there to begin with in the academic sense and obviously focusing on all the other bits like admin and teaching that come with the job. I don't know if that would be, I guess, kind of fair reflection of how you feel it is for you, you know, kind of that's the main focus, the teaching and the research?

##### Participant 59

Yeah, I think that's pretty fair. But I think just listening to you say that, it probably does suggest that maybe it's not as much of a priority as maybe I was led to believe, that if they're quite happy with early career staff, early career researchers focusing on sort of getting their profile right in terms of teaching, administration, learning, that kind of thing, that maybe impact isn't necessarily a priority. Because no one's emailing me every couple of weeks saying that, oh, you need to make sure that you sort of increase your impact. Whereas when I was teaching that was always there in terms of the course evaluation surveys, those kind of things. And your research kind of speaks for itself based on whatever ranking system that the university uses. But for impact, it still does remain this sort of fluid, dynamic concept that, I do find it difficult to measure. I do. I mean I had a paper recently, it was used by [foreign ministry]. So to me, yeah, that's impact. But what do I do with that? Who do I report that to? How do I add that to my CV? I don't. Or, well, I could, but you know what I mean. It's difficult to sort of really get to the bottom of what institutions are looking for when they say impact. Because we're in this sort of, like I said, [subject group], and quite often for us, in my previous roles, impact would be, for instance, one of our master's students setting up a new company, it would be one of our MBA teams coming up with an idea that's sort of patentable or whatever. So these kind of things would be impact but it kind of differs discipline to discipline, I think.

##### Researcher

Yeah, that's really interesting. And based off of that in terms of, I guess progression criteria and kind of looking forward to the future and thinking about how to progress, is there any kind of pressure on you to have any kind of evidence of engaging with stakeholders or is it very much kind of, like you said, a more fluid, dynamic thing where it is kind of difficult to prove? Is it something that you would say is kind of like written down as something that you need to really think about in order to progress further?

##### Participant 59

Not necessarily. I'm just trying to think how to word this diplomatically. Off the record - to me, not between us - I've been told that at [current institution] you basically need to be good at three of five things. So, and the other two don't matter and it can be whatever you want. So you're good at teaching, you're good at research, you're good at sort of funding applications, grant applications, you're good at administration or you're good at impact. Those five criteria. And as long as you sort of excel in three of the five. So I'm certain that there'll be people within the business school that are fantastic in terms of getting their research out there and demonstrating its impact. But that maybe means that they're not so good at teaching for example. So I don't necessarily think it's something where not having impactful work would hold me back in terms of progression. But it certainly wouldn't help. It's a sort of other string to an academic bow within the business school.

##### Researcher

So I want to ask a little bit about your workload. So obviously, you said you're course coordinator for a number of modules, you teach on a number of modules, you obviously are working on publications and research in conjunction with that. Do you generally find that your workload is manageable? Is it quite intense? And also I'd be interested to know how I guess it kind of compares to your previous experiences of those more kind of teaching focused institutions as well.

##### Participant 59

Yeah, so it is manageable. There are quite clear protected allocations of research time, which is good. I think we're quite high. In terms of workload allocation, everything's very clear and it's very fair, but that's me coming from places where it wasn't necessarily where we didn't have as much protected time for research. So at [second previous institution] I had to fight for a small percentage of time for research. The vast majority of the rest of that was for teaching or the components that feed into teaching. And then at [first previous institution] obviously it was, 100% of my workload was for teaching time, but in my four years there, I'd never once seen my work allocation model. So I have no idea what that looked like. So it was a little bit less clear in terms of whether I was being overworked or whether it was all above board, that kind of thing, but it was still probably manageable. It was just about manageable. At [second previous institution], yeah, there was a lot of teaching, so... I say this to people quite often, like I'll say to my wife, and she'll be like, that's nothing. But I would do like 14 hours face to face delivery a week for 26 weeks of the year. And again, I know it doesn't sound like an awful lot but in an academic environment that's quite a lot. Whereas at [current institution] over the last year it was something like four. So, yeah, it's more manageable. But the pressures are slightly different. So in my previous role I could, over the summer, I had pretty much, all my free time was dedicated to research, or dissertation students, that kind of thing, whereas, it's the same at [current institution], I do have all this time for research, but I feel the pressure is maybe a bit more on me in terms of getting these higher quality publications as opposed to pumping out a couple of three star papers over the summer. Yeah, the sort of stakes are raised ever so slightly. The expectations need to be met in a different way.

##### Researcher

So those kind of three star versus four star papers... you've said you've published [subject area] focused papers that aren't four star or whatever. For your kind of discipline, your kind of area, what is, I guess, the kind of gold standard journal for you to try and be publishing in? And would that kind of ambition to publish in those certain journals change your kind of research focus? Perhaps moving away from what you've previously been researching and trying to fit in with kind of different themes of research to try and get those four star publications?

##### Participant 59

Yeah, so a few of the papers that I have published previously within [subject area] are in ABS four journals. So I think that's why, when I applied to [current institution], basically they could see that I could write papers for ABS four journals, but I just needed a sort of slight shift in the discipline that was I targeting to our subject specific journals. Your question on where I'm aiming for, I would always still look at the top of the ABS list in terms of [highly ranked journals], that kind of thing. But specific to my subject area, things are a bit different in terms of whether I would fit into those journals. So my [management sub-discipline] research is on [topics]. So, we've been looking, a couple of co-authors and I, we've got a paper in a journal called [journal], it's highly ranked, but it's a Harvard Business School publication, it's quite prestigious, that kind of thing. So we're really trying to find little sort of niches elsewhere that don't fit the "this is an [management sub-discipline] journal and you can only write on [management sub-discipline] within this". And [current institution] is being quite supportive of that. They don't necessarily treat the ABS list as the be all and end all, so long as the quality of what you're writing and the publication it is in are of a high standard. So we are targeting, I think there's... we've got another paper that we're hoping to get out for review by the end of the summer and that is looking like it's going to [journal], which is an ABS three, but because it's of a decent quality, [current institution] will still recognise that as really good work. We've also got journals like [journal], things like that, they kind of fit more within what I can write about, what I've got data on, but they're not necessarily what you would expect if you kind of scroll down the ABS list and you look for [management sub-disciplines] journals. So, yeah, there's a bit of flexibility then in terms of what we look for. But even though the university doesn't, I would still kind of focus on that ABS list. It's just the easiest way of doing it, and just see where the story fits, more than having pressure that says you need to publish within this journal within the next five years. So far it doesn't seem to look like it's going to work like that. Which is good.

##### Researcher

That's really interesting. So I've kind of got one kind of final question really and that's sort of, I guess, based around your plans for the future. So I'd be interested to know what your kind of ambitions are in terms of your kind of academic career, whether you are looking to kind of stay I guess, where you are, what you're thinking for the future, if you're focused on rising up the ranks? And also based off of the different aspects of your job, teaching, research and all of that, do you have any kind of specific strategy or plan for how you kind of think about getting there? Do you feel like you need to prioritise certain elements of your job? Do you feel like you need to seek different opportunities? I'd be interested to know how you kind of conceptualise the future in that sense.

##### Participant 59

Yeah. So, ambition is obviously promotion within the next three, four years, I would say. Ideally, that's at [current institution]. If it got to the sort of five, six year stage, I would obviously be looking elsewhere. The sort of five pronged criteria for progression that I said to you earlier, I think I've pretty much got two of them covered, teaching and research. So more strategically, I think I'd be looking to either spend the next few years focusing on research income, grant income, or look for leadership opportunities within the business school and cover the administrative aspect of that. We've already started kind of doing that, strategically, we're looking at how we can get our group across the university and I'm not going to go into specifics for it because it'll bore you, but there are some balls rolling essentially when it comes to the administrative side of things. But it's probably not my preferred route because it's not my favourite thing in the world. Leadership, it's not, I just like to sort of enjoy my job and not have to really necessarily sort of rely on other people. So, yeah, no sort of definitive strategy that I can give you just now. Something that I probably should be thinking about, to be honest. That's something that will no doubt come up in my annual review in two weeks time. But yes, I think the focus really primarily is on giving myself options and administration and putting in a couple of funding bids. We've got a couple under way just now, that kind of thing, but that's a lottery, so always have that backup of sort of taking on leadership roles as and when they're required.

##### Researcher

That's really interesting actually and that was a really good answer. I don't have any other sort of direct questions or anything else I wanted to ask specifically. So unless there's anything you can think off of the top of your head that you think might be relevant that I haven't asked, or you haven't had a chance to talk about, that you think is relevant to this area, then obviously feel free to say... it's okay if not, but if there's anything you can think of, final thoughts or anything?

##### Participant 59

No, that was good. I found that quite useful actually, in terms of the reflecting. And maybe some sort of areas that I need to think a lot more about in terms of what I need to do. But, best of luck.

##### Researcher

Thank you. Thank you very much for your time, I do appreciate it and best of luck with everything with you as well.

##### Participant 59

You've got my email address so if you need anything in the future just give me a shout.

##### Researcher

Wonderful. Thank you very much, it was great to meet you and enjoy the rest of your week.

##### Participant 59

Cheers.

##### Researcher

Bye.