



The University of Edinburgh  
**Careers Service**

# Planning an academic career

## What you need to succeed

**Sharon Maguire**



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# Objectives

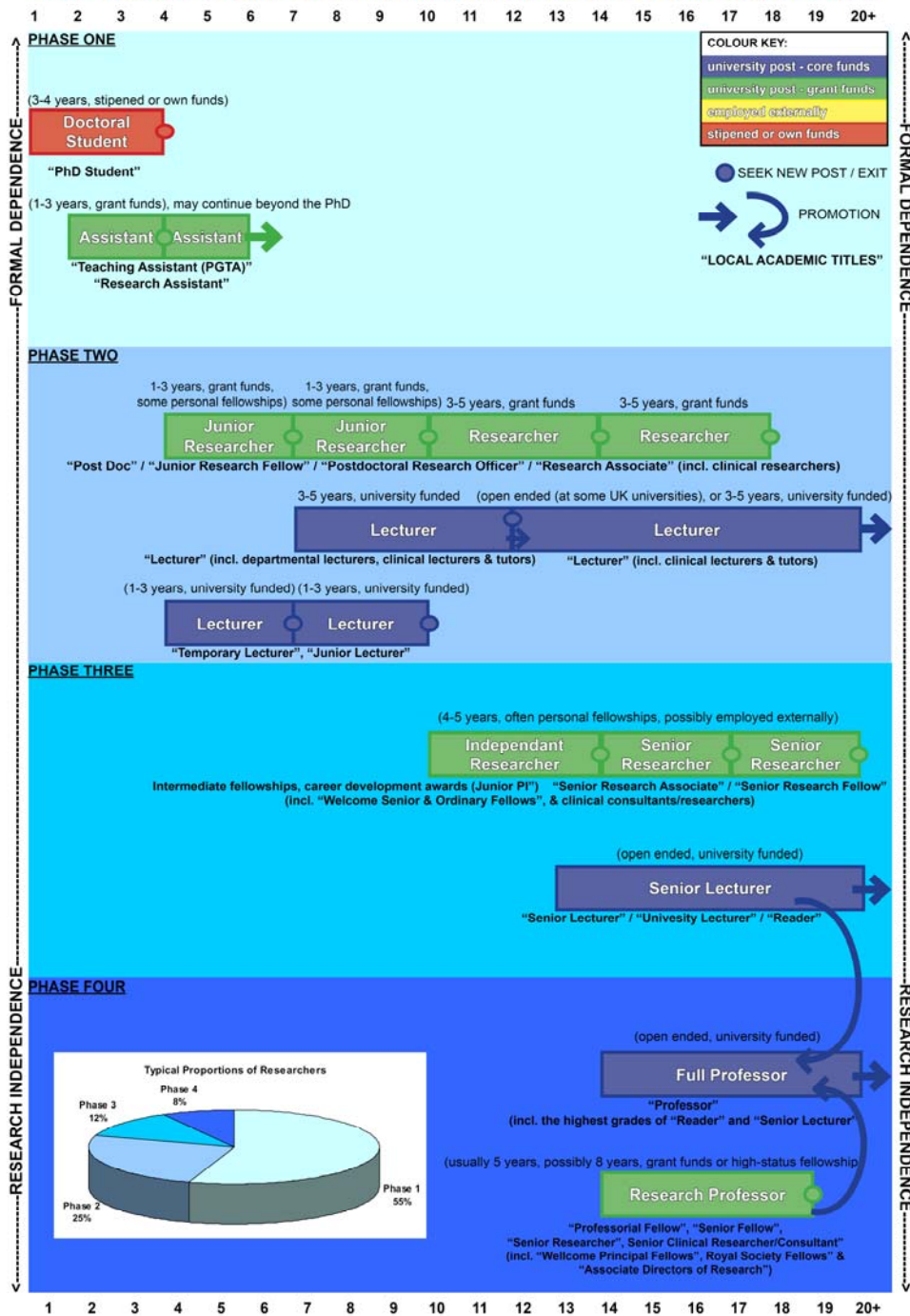
- Explore what you mean by an academic career
- Know what is necessary to progress in an academic career
- Start identifying and assessing your relevant experience



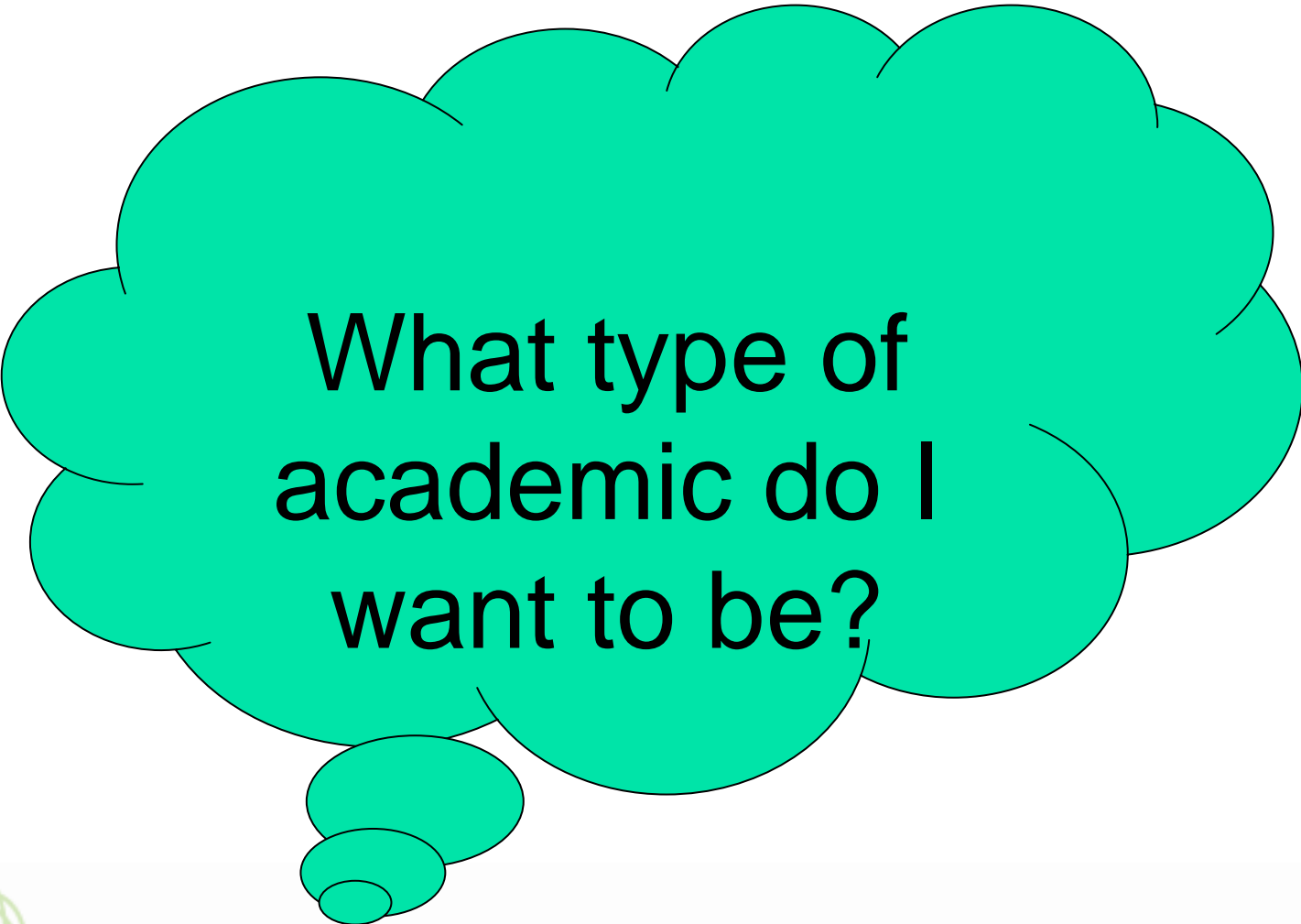
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# CAREER PATHS OF UNIVERSITY RESEARCHERS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM (ENGLAND)



Harvesting talent:  
strengthening research careers  
in Europe. LERU, 2010  
(www.leru.org)



What type of  
academic do I  
want to be?



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# Some facts – academic positions

- 179,000 academics working in the UK
- 63,000 on fixed term contracts (35% and declining)
- 34% part-time (and increasing)

Teaching ONLY 26% (82% of these working PT)

Teaching AND Research 51% (18% of these working PT)

Research ONLY 22% (17% of these working PT)

Source: HESA Resources of HEIs 2008/2009



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# Academic staff use of time

- Time with students (lectures/seminars/tutorials)
  - 10 hours or less a week – 50% lecturers
  - 5 hours or less a week – 15% lecturers
  - Range was 5 – 30 hours (2% at top end)
- Time on bureaucracy / paperwork
  - Between 6 and 15 hours a week – 50% lecturers
  - At least 16 hours a week – 33% lecturers

(Taken from a UCU poll of members, August 2006; [www.ucu.org.uk](http://www.ucu.org.uk))



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# Take a moment.....

- So what is your picture of an academic career?
  - What do you enjoy doing?
  - What do you want to take forward into a career?
- At a later date you may wish to think about constraints / barriers to what you envisage...but not today



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What makes a  
successful  
academic?



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# What do you need?

- Evidence of Research excellence
- Teaching experience
- Administration / management



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# Evidence of research excellence

- Papers...papers...papers...published in good, high impact, top journals
- Contract to publish a book initially as good as writing it (but not forever!)
- Proof of grant earning ability... develop a convincing grant strategy
- Network / communicate.. GOOD talks at conferences...raise your profile / reputation
- Collaborate...internationally / cross-discipline
- Prove independence from PI / supervisors
- Move around?..choose carefully (referees)



# Teaching experience... do a BIT well

- Varied – tutorials, demonstrating, lectures (in other universities), supervising students
- Course design, organisation, development of learning materials
- Wide range of subjects (fill a gap / unpopular subjects?)



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# Other stuff!

Be a good colleague

- Organising conferences, seminar series
- Sit on committees, e.g. ethics, health and safety
  - But be choosy (what may be better for your research?)



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# What the academics say....

*“Passion...passion for the subject, passion for learning and passion to help others learn. Sacrifice might be another important word as work and home rapidly become one. Commitment and endurance too!”*

*“Get your name on grants, get your own grants, get papers out, go to conferences, give talks, give lectures, supervise students, build up personal academic networks beyond your university”*

**Education**

*Papers. Papers in good journals. Papers in high impact journals. Papers in the top journals. More papers. More papers in good journals. More papers in high impact journals. More papers in the top journals. Some other stuff.*

**Biological Sciences**

Both from a research-intensive university



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What I have to  
offer...



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# Where next?

- What have you done so far in;
  - Research
  - Learning & teaching
  - Managerial & administration responsibilities
- You have 5 minutes



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# For where you want to go...

- Identify gaps in skills / experience
- What could you do next to plug gaps?
- What other barriers / opportunities are there if you want to make the next step?
- Who or what can help you?



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# Finally..

- Prioritise
- Learn to say no...nicely!
- Find a mentor / s
- Raise your profile
  - Take responsibility
  - Take action



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