

Investigating Researchers' Careers: New Cohort Study



Arts & Humanities
Research Council



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Research Careers and Diversity Unit

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Session Plan

- Background
- Current Position
- Improving responses (Q&A)
- Next Steps
 - Qualitative data (workshop on case studies)



Options Analysis

- Evidence-based policy development
- About tracking career pathways
- Measuring the impact of researchers
 - Societal/quality of life
 - Economic
- IER (Warwick) commissioned to undertake the analysis



Options: Recommendations

- Build on existing surveys
 - Work with HESA
 - Longitudinal DLHE
- Need qualitative as well as quantitative
- Cross-reference with other data
- “Impact” difficult to measure

DLHE: Destinations of Leavers of Higher Education



First destinations of 2003/04 UK-domiciled PhDs working in the UK by broad subject of study

Subject	No. of respondents	HE lecturers	Post-doc research	Most popular occupation	Other kinds of work
Arts and humanities	640	30%	15%	HE lecturers and researchers (45%)	Culture and public admin.
Social sciences	510	39%	14%	HE lecturers and researchers (53%)	Health and social work, social policy
Biological and biomedical sciences	1,795	8%	26%	Researchers in industry and HE (44%)	Health and social work
Physical sciences and engineering	1,550	17%	23%	Researchers in industry and HE (42%)	Manufacturing, ICT professionals

Source: Grad UK *What do PhDs Do?* (HESA DLHE 2003/04 survey)

In terms of values, PhD graduates were..

- somewhat more ambitious than other graduates;
- more concerned than others to do socially-useful work;
- more concerned than others to achieve job satisfaction and do interesting and challenging work;
- less concerned about job security than others;
- less inclined to regard high financial reward as important.

In terms of employment outcomes, seven years after graduation, ESRC graduates were..

- more likely than other graduates to work in education;
- more likely than other graduates to work in manufacturing;
- more likely to be at the extremes in terms of overall job satisfaction and appropriateness of employment;
- more likely to be in fixed-term employment (30% of PhDs, 13% of masters graduates, 9% of those with professional qualifications and 8% of others);
- earning lower average salaries than those of all the other sub-groups.

Key issues raised by ESRC PhDs interviewed on use of research skills and expertise developed as research students

- Diversity in research training and, even more, in research management skills – ranging from excellent to negligible.
- Regret that skills-set was narrow and supervisors had colluded in enabling them to avoid wider research training.
- Frequent mention of inadequate training in quantitative methods.
- Lack of research management skills.
- Lack of career management skills and information.
- BUT (in most cases) belief that possession of a PhD had enabled them to develop skills and knowledge used in their current employment and had given them a distinct career advantage.

Conclusions – filling the ‘gap in knowledge’

- Regular national data sources are too broad or too infrequent to be of much use.
- Best candidate for future monitoring will be the planned HESA Longitudinal Study....BUT
... competition among sponsors for question space – may not provide detail required
...it will provide a database of accessible and ‘well-identified’ potential respondents.
- Suggest combining support for the HESA study with web-based enquiries of PhD completers from within this study at annual intervals.

Timing

- L DLHE this Autumn
- Analysis starts May
- Analysis informs targeting for case studies
 - to start Autumn 09
- Longer term
 - Panel
 - Web-based routes



Improving Responses

- Respondents to “early DLHE”
- Permissions essential
- Universities provide contact details
- IFF Research commissioned to conduct survey



Case Studies

- Attractiveness of research training
- Influences towards/from research career
- What they have gained as a result of their training
- Contribution(s) to:
 - Employer/economy
 - Social group
 - Wider society

