

Getting That First Lectureship A National Survey of Academic Recruiters

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Careers advisers acquire knowledge and insights from those active in their professional area for use with those who wish to enter/make progress in that career. This survey attempted to blend “career story” and quantitative approaches

“I think we ask more of new lecturers now because the demands on us have multiplied. Not only are they expected to have published, and taught, but also to have had teacher training to some extent and to be familiar with things like “impact”, “widening participation”, “external engagement”, “outreach”.”

Arts and Humanities respondent

“What do you think are the requirements for new lecturers in your discipline?”

- Survey questions developed and trialled with input from academic and research colleagues
- Challenges in obtaining responses
- **172** responses, **22** UK HE institutions
- 119 respondents had direct experience of recruitment in last 5 years
- 22 questions – mix of tick and comment boxes
 - Career components and career journey themes
 - Key attributes, interview advice and biggest changes in requirements for candidates in last ten years
- Full report available by **end of October**

“What do you see as the top 3 key attributes of good lectureship candidates in your discipline?”

- Research – **77%**

- publishing, research profile, impact on field or articulation of plans or ability to secure funding

- Teaching - **53%**

- evidence of ability to teach well rather than concrete experience

- Personal Attributes

- Team/Collaborative & Communication – **31% & 26%**

Research - Publications

- The highest number of responses from all disciplines (78) specified **less than five articles per year**.
- Range overall from less than five per year to an **overall number of between 10 and 20**.
- Evidence of increasing **quality** and **impact** although this was referred to most often by respondents from the biological and biomedical sciences (18)
- 22 referred to the influence of the **REF cycle**

“this depends on when in the RAE/REF cycle the appointment is being made; currently it is at least one 4 output; generally it is expected that a successful candidate will be able to produce four REFable items over the REF cycle”*

Arts/Humanities

“10 plus papers, 5 plus as corresponding author, impact factor 4 plus.”

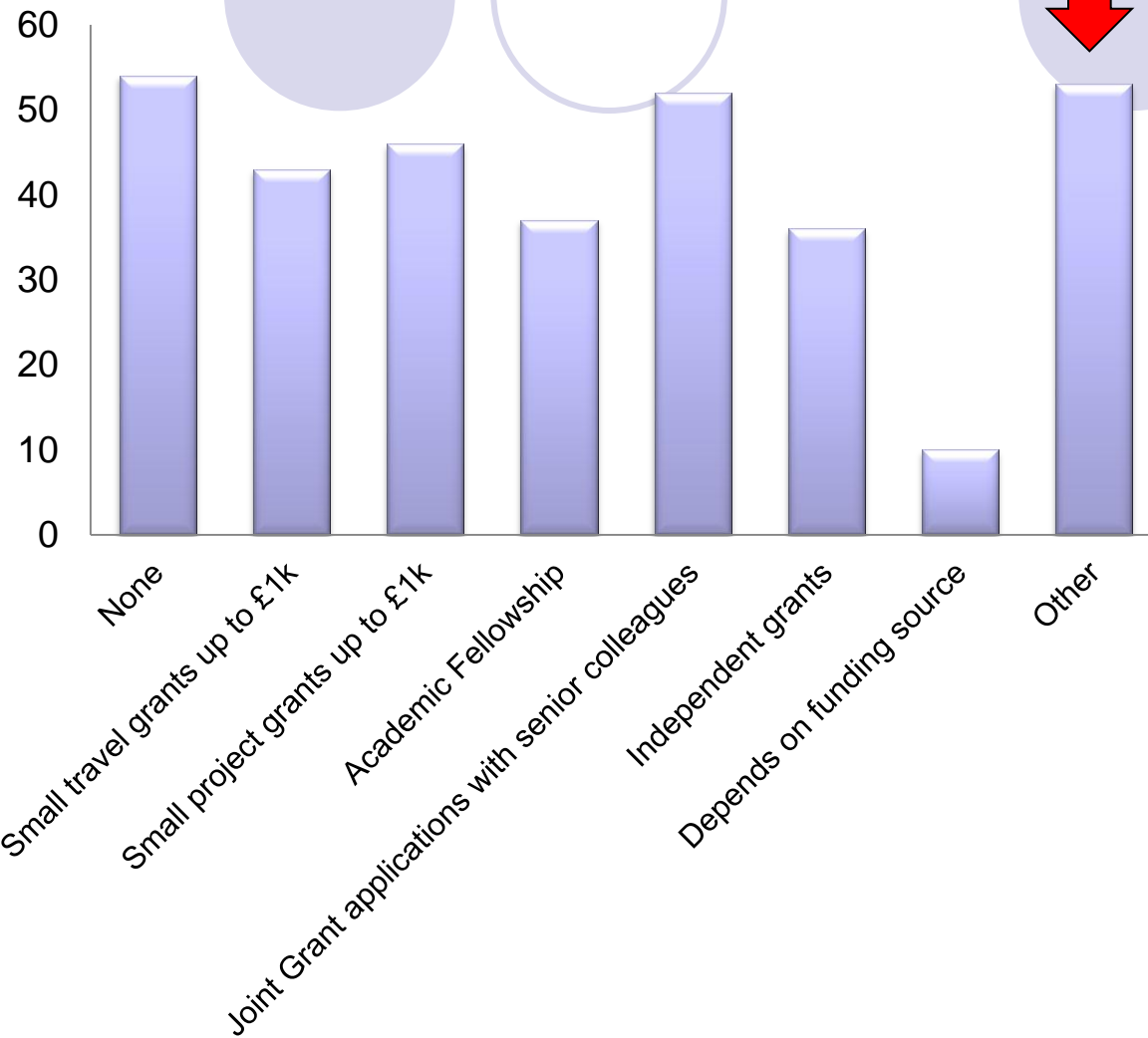
“10-20 but is highly rated journals. Original articles with mainly 1st author papers”

*“10-20 peer reviewed papers with at least half as first or last author”
Biological/Biomedical Sciences*

Specific comments from a physical sciences and engineering academic

- **1-2 papers a year** for new lecturers, 5-10 papers published if they have done several years post doc.
- Show a continued and, ideally, an **increasing output**.
- **First authorship** on at least a proportion of papers, including **papers from the PhD** and then from postdoctoral research. If there are no first author papers I might be concerned.
- Co-authorship may indicate **collaborations** with others which would be good.
- I would hope to see at least some of the papers in **top journals in the topic area**, ideally those where the potential candidate is first author.

Research: Funding



“For us, this is icing not cake. If they have some, that's to their credit, but not something we would require.”

Arts/Humanities

“None is “expected”, but successful applications for independent project grants (however small) are a good sign.

Fellowships and large independent grants are a very good sign.”

Biological/Biomedical

Interview Advice

Clearly demonstrate past excellence in **research** and clear, realistic plans for future research

Evidence of past **funding** success or willingness to explore funding / evidence that have a plan for grant applications

Give a really good / inspiring **seminar**

“I would hope for more than just small travel grants and small project grants. An **academic fellowship** is ideal because it implies funding won in competition with other high quality candidates ...”

“...realistic **ideas for projects and collaborations** is very important.”

“We would like to see some evidence of **successful grant gaining**, however, and certainly would want candidates to be clued up about **funding sources**. They need to have some **ideas and plans**.”

Other Research Experience

Conference Activity

“there seems to be [more of] a focus on publications, teaching and research income”

“This is an important signal of research quality, especially for those candidates who have as yet no publications!”
(SS)

Collaboration

“I think it's good to see evidence of collaboration as it indicates a willingness and ability to work with others ...a good record of collaborating with e.g. the public sector but not with academics, industry or not for profit, that would be OK.”
(PSE)

“The single scholar model remains dominant, but this will have to change in the next few years as funding becomes more scarce.” (SS)

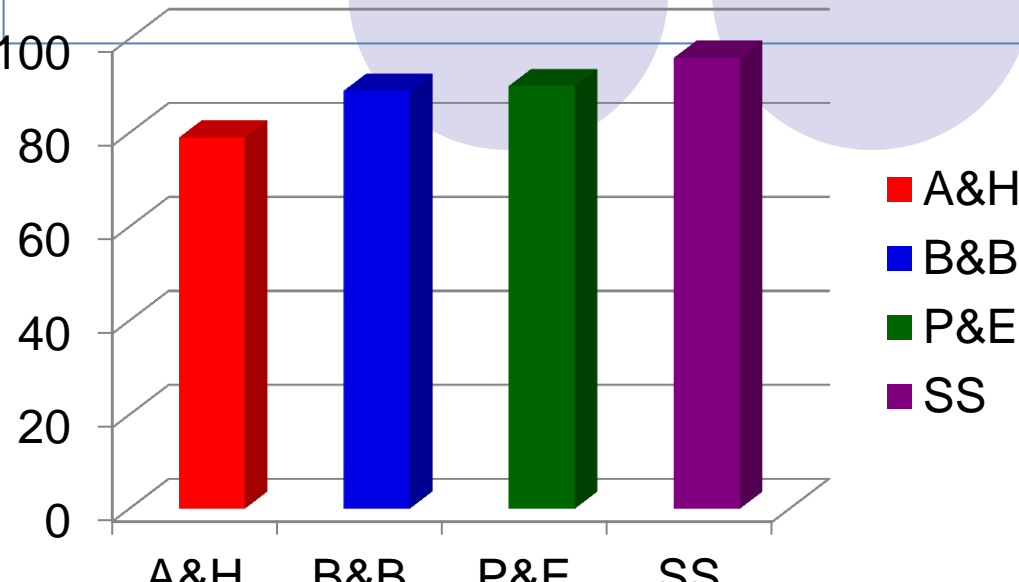
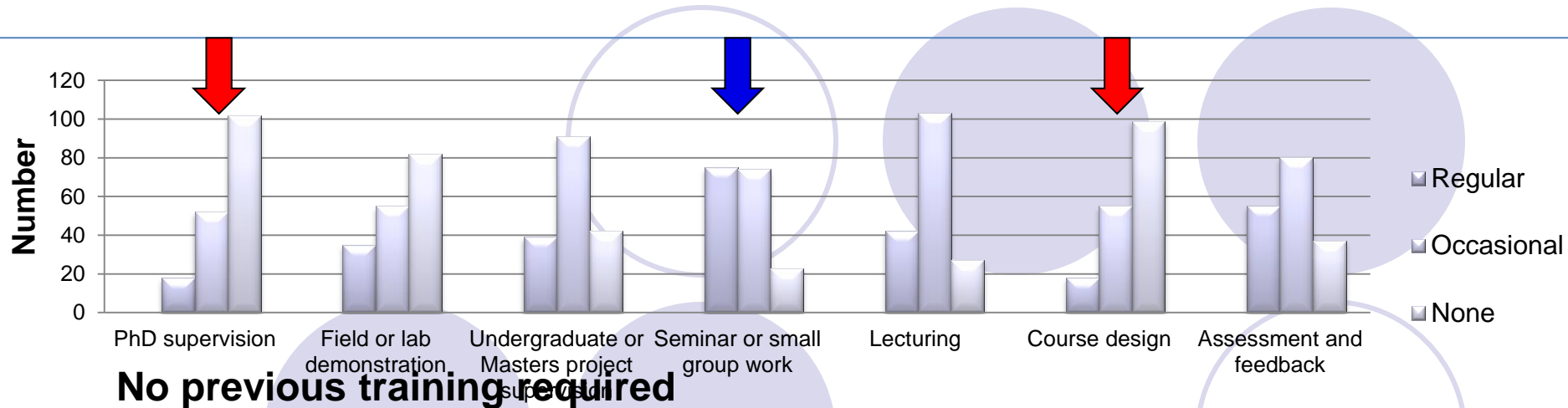
Interdisciplinary

“No modern research can progress if keeping to its ivory tower: so interdisciplinary research is necessary.

It is also a good way to show adaptability and ability to bridge gaps, which are good attributes for future teaching.” (PSE)

Teaching

Level & Extent of Teaching Experience Looked for. Overall results;



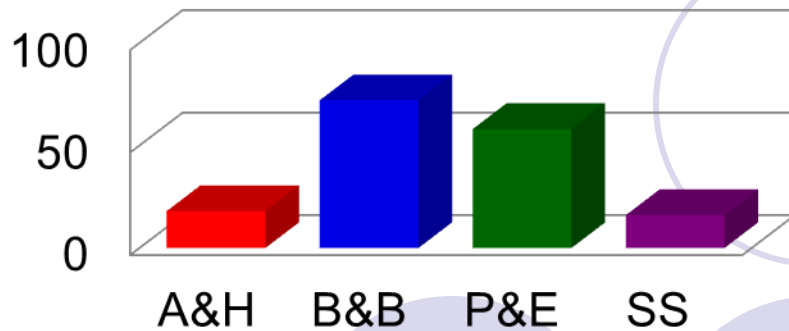
At least a minimum **understanding** of, and **enthusiasm** for, teaching was Important

Flexibility with regards to what **evidence** could be

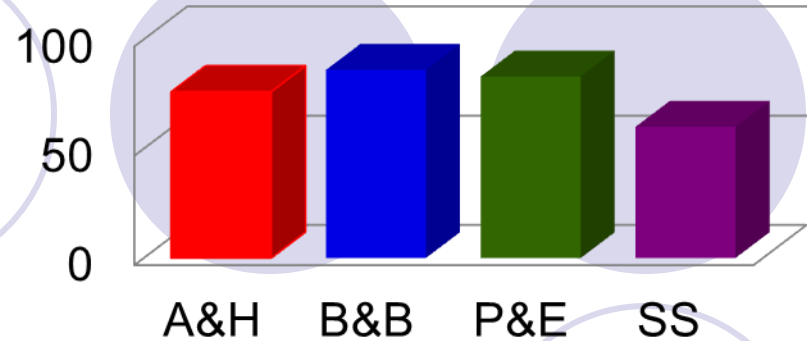


Regular or Occasional Experience Requirements

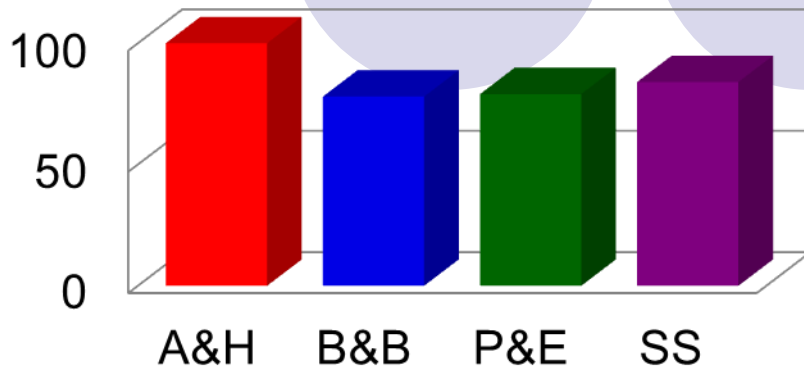
PhD Supervision



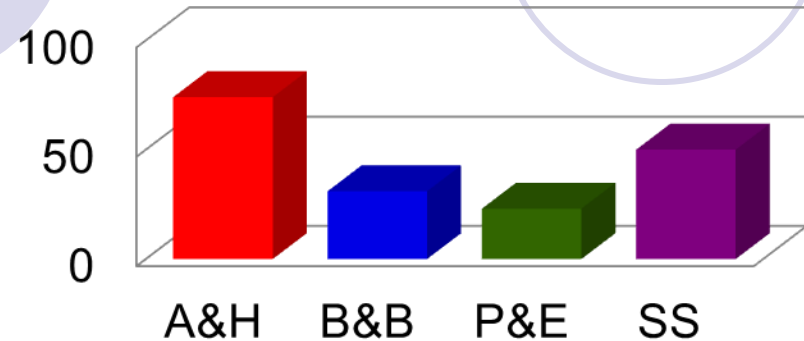
UG / Masters Supervision



Lecturing



Course Design



UG & Masters supervision – *not a deal breaker, but we'd be surprised if it wasn't there (Phys & Eng)*

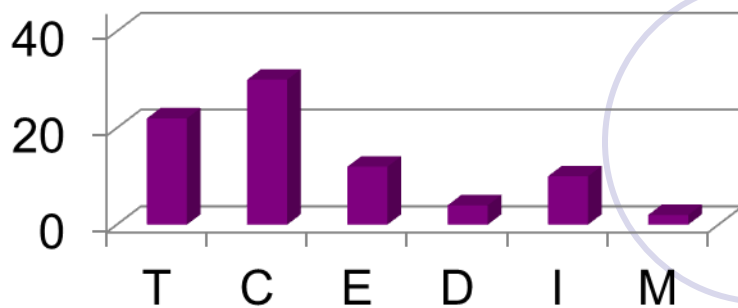
Lecturing – *Some knowledge & experience is VERY useful (Social Sci)*

PhD Supervision – *For first time post, no requirement for past exp. .. but would make applicant competitive (Biol & Biomed Sci)*

Course design – *This would be a bonus. Some institutions facilitate this in junior staff, other's don't. We would take that into consideration (Arts & Humanities)*



Social Sci.



Physical Sci & Eng.



T = Collaborative
C = Communicative
E = Enthusiastic
D = Driven

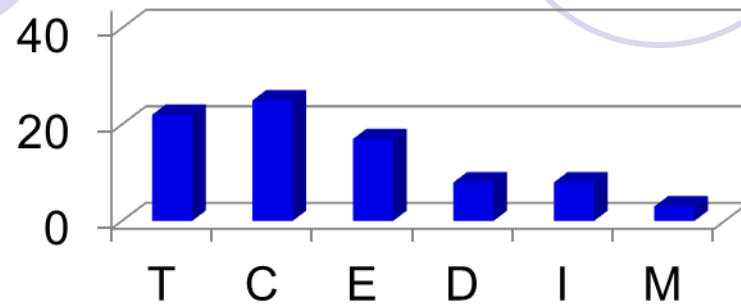
I = Ideas generator
M = People manager

Behaviours looked for during recruitment

Arts & Humanities



Biological & Biomed.



What length of time in academic research is expected?

- All respondents – 50 % up to **5 years**, 25.6 % **5 – 10 years** (Sciences – longer)

Specific Advice for those 10 year +

- *Show more than just academic performance, how diverse is your CV, how much teaching experience? All of this makes you competitive (B&B)*
- *In the application tell a story of what you have achieved in those 10 years, and future potential. If appropriate anticipate 'why has this person not been promoted yet' (SS)*
- *I would recommend pushing hard to get a fellowship (P&E) – similar comments emphasised **developing independence***

Career Breaks

Overview of responses

- Perceived as a real challenge for sustained career due to expectation of continuous achievement
- High awareness of mechanisms, schemes & policies but scepticism over helpfulness

Some Quotes

- **Try to publish plenty before you go off, so there's a stream of publications while on leave (SS)**
- **Get your foot in the door & make yourself invaluable in time you have before break (SS)**
- **Secure a non-stipendary assocn with dept & try to keep publishing at reduced rate. Maintain informal connections – e.g. attend some research seminars. Keep up with literature (A&H)**

Getting back in:

- **[on CV] declare it, don't hide it (B&B)**
- **Be honest & constructive about reasons when making applications (P&E)**
- **Show that when you come back you got back up to speed with field & made contributions (P&E)**

- Publications dominate - consistent and developing output – REF cycle influence
- Funding experience varied from plans/ideas to fellowships. Collaboration with senior colleagues key in STEM disciplines
- Interdisciplinarity & collaboration – once in the job
- Most don't expect extensive teaching experience & few require formal teaching quals.
- Candidates who seem collaborative (esp at dept. level) & excellent communicators are sought after
- Postdocs should be aiming for a lectureship by 5+ years. After 10 it becomes difficult.
- Career breaks widely seen as challenging for career maintenance – try to keep 'foot in door'

Over to You

How would you use the survey findings to support early career researchers in such things as training activities, appraisal and careers discussions?

What further research do you think should be done into academic career progression in order to support researchers and those who support them i.e. managers/appraisers/careers and staff developers?

Interesting, thought provoking, worrying?

Advice to researchers with 10 years + experience – *“Forget it.” “Why aren't they already a lecturer”*

Advice on planned or unplanned career break – *“Undesirable except in special circumstances such as parenting”*

Biggest changes in last 10 years

“Unfortunately, the expectations have risen due to the volume of potential candidates. This has had the effect of discriminating against "late bloomers".

“New lecturers seem to be expected to have some experience of all aspects of the post before they apply for lecturership positions.”

“As competition has increased and funding decreased in the UK, new Lecturers need to be able to hit the ground running, e.g. fully capable of setting up an independent research group whilst accepting limited teaching duties.”