

Support for Arts and Humanities Researchers Post-PhD

Final report

Kay Renfrew and Professor Howard Green
September 2014

THE BRITISH ACADEMY
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September 2014

ISBN: 978-0-85672-616-3

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Designed and typeset by Soapbox, www.soapbox.co.uk

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Acknowledgements

Oakleigh Consulting would like to thank all those who contributed to the study. We are grateful to the Steering Group for their time in providing feedback and guidance on the research outputs. We would also like to thank all the early career researchers who took the time to provide what were in almost all cases reasoned and detailed responses. In particular we would like to thank all those who offered to take part in follow-up interviews, even if we could not speak to everyone who did so within the scope of the research. We are also grateful to the early career researchers we did speak to in interview for their open and frank answers. Finally, we are grateful to the representatives at the universities who provided detailed answers to the research organisation survey and to those who took part in interviews for their openness in discussing the support offered and issues faced.

About the British Academy

The British Academy is the UK's independent national academy representing the humanities and social sciences. For over a century it has supported and celebrated the best in UK and international research and helped connect the expertise of those working in these disciplines with the wider public.

The Academy supports innovative research and outstanding people, influences policy and seeks to raise the level of public understanding of some of the biggest issues of our time, through policy reports, publications and public events.

The Academy represents the UK's research excellence worldwide in a fast changing global environment. It promotes UK research in international arenas, fosters a global approach across UK research, and provides leadership in developing global links and expertise.

The findings within this report will be discussed within the British Academy and other relevant bodies, such as the Economic and Social Research Council, to compare the situation for arts and humanities researchers to that of social science researchers. The report will also be shared with the Royal Society and the Royal Academy of Engineering to ascertain the situation for laboratory science and engineering, in particular to examine whether the use of fixed-term contracts is more prevalent in the arts and humanities than in other disciplines.

The Academy would like to emphasise the importance of investment in research in the arts and humanities: for instance, these disciplines attract high numbers of both domestic and overseas students to UK higher education institutions, and world-leading academic staff and research capabilities are needed to sustain this success. The service sector, which now makes up more than three quarters of the UK economy, also benefits from the skills promoted by research in the arts and humanities (from critical analysis and problem solving skills, to fluency in foreign languages and cultural awareness). In addition, the cultural, creative and digital industries are reliant on robust research feeding into innovation, knowledge and skills.

About AHRC

The Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) funds world-class, independent researchers in a wide range of subjects: ancient history, modern dance, archaeology, digital content, philosophy, English literature, design, the creative and performing arts, and many more.

This financial year the AHRC will spend approximately £98m to fund research and postgraduate training in collaboration with a number of partners. The quality and range of research supported by this investment of public funds not only provides social and cultural benefits but also contributes to the economic success of the UK.

We support researchers at every stage of their careers, from those embarking on doctoral studies to established researchers and leaders in their disciplinary fields. Support for early career researchers is a vital element of our provision, guaranteeing our future research base and ensuring that excellence in research is developed and nurtured.

With these overarching objectives in mind, we will be looking to use the findings of this report to engage with the sector about what can be done to support people in the period during which they are exploring options for an academic or other career. Support at this stage for early career researchers is crucial for the health of the research base. It also enables researchers to understand the wider roles in which their research training and experience can be used.

It is very common for early career researchers seeking to pursue an academic career to take up teaching-only contracts of varying length in the period following their PhD. The AHRC recognises that this can be a difficult time for researchers; organisations already have support available and perhaps one of the challenges is to ensure that this reaches all those who would benefit.

We recognise too that academic opportunities are not always available to all and that, for many, an academic career is not their preferred career destination. Providing support to early career researchers to explore, and to prepare themselves for, other career options is therefore vital and can build on the support that many students now receive as part of postgraduate provision.

Individuals with high level skills in the arts and humanities can make a significant contribution to the economy and society, working across a wide range of sectors, within and outside academia, and it is important to recognise and enable this potential to be realised.

Executive Summary

Introduction

The Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) and the British Academy are concerned that they do not have a robust picture of the issues faced by researchers in the period immediately following funded doctoral study. Both funders want to obtain further insight into the diversity of roles, opportunities and employment for researchers who work in research organisations¹ immediately following their doctorate, and the needs and aspirations of researchers at this early stage.

This study is focussed on the experiences and issues facing individuals who initially pursue a career in the higher education (HE) sector. These include those funded through short-term and/or teaching funding as well as those supported on AHRC-funded projects or through the British Academy Post-doctoral Fellowships scheme. The aim is to increase understanding of the numbers and types of roles and contracts taken up and the reasons for this; the prevalence of short-term and fractional contracts and any perceived impact on career progression this may have; as well as looking at how well supported and informed individuals feel in pursuing their careers. The study also looks at how researchers currently or previously on AHRC-funded research projects envisaged the next stage of their career and the perceived impact of working as part of a research team on their career and personal development. The research also looks at the implementation of the UK Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers.²

The research was conducted by an online survey and interviews with a selection of research organisations in the UK and with early career researchers (ECRs) in the Arts and Humanities. The work was guided by a Steering Group made up of representatives from the two funders and the sector.

The research organisation survey received 32 responses from 23 universities and was completed by a cross section of staff with a range of responsibilities for early career researchers.

1. For the purposes of this study “research organisations” primarily refers to the university sector, but may include independent research organisations, as defined by the Research Councils.

2. The UK Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers is an agreement between funders and employers of research staff to improve the employment and support for researchers and research careers in UK higher education. It incorporates a set of principles to enhance the attractiveness and sustainability of research careers, and sets out standards that research staff can expect from the institution that employs them, as well as their responsibilities as researchers. Further details can be found at: <https://www.vitae.ac.uk/policy/concordat-to-support-the-career-development-of-researchers>

The survey of ECRs in the Arts and Humanities was open to anyone who identified themselves as such, with some restrictions (namely that they should be within eight years of award of their doctorate, not including any career breaks). The term “early career researcher” was applied broadly and not restricted to individuals on research contracts or in research related roles. The ECR survey received a total of 882 responses, and comprised three main groups:

1. Individuals employed outside the higher education sector. They are referred to as “ECRs not in the HE sector”, but most had an aspiration to return to the sector. (97 responses).
2. Individuals employed in the higher education sector on a variety of fixed-term contracts (including those on Research Fellowships, or who are self-employed or freelance, or on hourly or sessional contracts). They are referred to as “ECRs on fixed-term contracts”. (544 responses). This group is the main focus of the research.
3. Individuals employed in the higher education sector on permanent or open-ended contracts. We refer to this group as “ECRs on permanent contracts”. (241 responses).

The sample compares well with the known parameters and characteristics of the target population. It is difficult to say how ‘representative’ it is and to be able to calculate a confidence level. There are no readily available precise figures for the total population, i.e. number of ECRs with a doctorate who aspire to work in the higher education sector. However, the size of the sample compares well with the CROS³ sample and the Vitae surveys on career intentions of early career researchers.⁴

Early career researchers’ roles and contracts

Just over 20% of ECRs on fixed-term contracts were on contracts of less than 12 months, ranging from three to 11 months, with around a quarter on a nine month contract and a further quarter on contracts lasting six months. A small number of ECRs on fixed-term contracts described being in the position of having their contracts renewed on a semester by semester basis.

Of the ECRs with fixed-term contracts of 12 months or longer the duration ranges from 12 to 72 months (six years). Around 30% had contracts of 36 months, 25% with contracts of 24 months, and 14% with contracts of 12 months.

Two thirds of all ECR respondents in the higher education sector had previously held a fixed-term contract. The majority of respondents report having held between one and three fixed-term contracts. 70% of ECRs now on a permanent contract had previously held a fixed-term contract.

3. *Careers in Research Online Survey (CROS) 2011: Analysis of UK aggregate results*, Vitae, 2011. This survey received 5585 completed responses across all disciplines. Around 4% of respondents were in the Humanities, based on JACS subject codes of: ‘Q: English-based studies’, ‘R/T: foreign languages’, and ‘V: historical/philosophical Studies’ (approximately 225 respondents in total).

4. *What do researchers want to do? The career intentions of doctoral researchers*, Vitae 2012. This survey received 4298 responses across all disciplines, 722 of which were coded to an Arts and Humanities respondent group.

Almost 40% of ECRs on a permanent contract have held a fractional contract⁵ (14% currently and 24% previously). For ECRs on fixed-term contracts just under 50% have held a fractional contract (24% currently and 22% previously). A quarter of all ECR respondents in the higher education sector considered themselves to be “portfolio workers”.

Individuals who wish to pursue an academic career and who identify themselves as ECRs are engaged on a range of contracts, and carry out a variety of roles (with a wide variety of job titles). This can mean that their identity as a researcher is not recognised or picked up at an institutional level.

Around half of ECRs on fixed-term contracts gave negatively or neutrally phrased reasons for taking up their current position or positions. These reasons reflect a perceived lack of choice or a necessity, brought on by the need for an income or to enable them to remain within the higher education sector.

Although it is not possible to quantify precisely, over 78% of respondents to our survey on fixed-term contracts have held three or more such contracts (including their current position) since gaining their doctorate. Analysis by Vitae⁶ of data from the Longitudinal Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education (LDLHE) survey⁷ (which is carried out three years and six months after graduation) suggests that over 55% of researchers in the Arts and Humanities have held two or more contracts since gaining their doctorate. This does suggest that individuals are reliant on consecutive and often concurrent fixed-term and fractional contracts to try to maintain continuity of employment. Even though they are not convinced that these positions are necessarily providing career development or will lead to career progression, the overall impression is that most can see no alternative if they wish to remain in the higher education sector. Where individuals have left the higher education sector (not by choice) to take up positions elsewhere they are concerned that they may not be able to return.

Section 2 in the main report provides ‘career portraits’ of four ECRs on a variety of contracts in the higher education sector. These summarise their career paths to date, their motivations and knowledge of what establishing an academic career entails, as well as their expectations for the future.

How are early career researchers defined and identified?

There is no single definition of an “early career researcher” and often multiple definitions are in use in the same institution. Definitions are either based on a specific context (such as the Research Excellence Framework (REF) or research funder requirements) or related to particular types of employment contract. This has implications for the identification of

5. For the purposes of this survey a fractional contract was described as “a contract for an employee who works for a fraction of a full time equivalent (FTE). It can be referred to as a ‘term-time’ contract but can be used outside term time”.

6. *What do researchers do? Early career progression of doctoral graduates*, Vitae, 2013

7. The analysis is of the survey carried out in November 2010 that targeted individuals who graduated with doctoral degrees during 2006/07. The Vitae report notes that the 2010 survey captures activity at 24 November 2010, and in line with HESA terminology is deemed to represent a time period of approximately three and a half years after completion but in reality may be up to four and a half years after completion.

ECRs within an organisation and the implementation of the UK Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers.

Support provided and required

61% of ECRs on permanent contracts began to seek advice on pursuing an academic career prior to or at the start of their doctorate, compared to 43% of ECRs on a fixed-term contract. ECRs mainly look to academics for career advice and guidance, including doctoral supervisors and their peers.

ECRs in the higher education sector regard “advice with preparing grant applications”, “time to publish”, and “mentorship” as the support most beneficial to career development.

Over half of the ECR respondents in the HE sector did not feel fully informed of the training and development opportunities available to them, notwithstanding the significant provision in many institutions.

ECRs in the HE sector employed in research or research and teaching roles feel better supported in pursuing an academic career that involves research than those employed in teaching only or non-academic roles. They are also more likely to report that they have access to a mentor, have regular formal progress and review meetings, and have access to advice to equip them with the tools to manage their careers. This suggests that while steps are being taken to implement the Concordat, recognition of who is a researcher is somewhat limited, and so does not necessarily help those that may be in most need of such support.

Time constraints due to heavy workloads, lack of allocated ‘paid for’ time or commitments to other concurrently held jobs mean that ECRs on fixed-term contracts are frequently not able to take advantage of support offered. Therefore increasing the amount of support available will not necessarily mean that those most in need will be able to benefit from what is offered.

Research organisations stated that limited financial resource was the main barrier to their organisation providing further support, while some mentioned the limited available time of established academic staff to dedicate to career development support.

Section 3 in the main report provides case studies summarising approaches taken to identify ECRs by two research organisations.

Concordat implementation

Responses from research organisations suggested that the implementation of the Concordat is cross-institutional and researchers in the Arts and Humanities are treated in the same way as researchers in other disciplines. However, as researchers in the Arts and Humanities can be in very different positions, there may be a requirement for differentiated support.

Respondents to the research organisation survey fell into three broad groups of ‘Academics’, ‘Career advisers and staff developers’, and ‘Management’. Those in the ‘Academic’ group, including those with a role in supporting ECRs, seemed least well informed about the Concordat and how it is implemented at their institution. While ‘Career advisers and staff developers’ seem better informed, ECRs tend to look to fellow academics for career advice and guidance. This suggests institutions should consider how research staff can be encouraged to engage more with career advisers and staff developers, and how senior academics can be better informed about support and options available for ECRs.

ECRs’ perceptions and experiences of support they receive and how they are valued and recognised does not match the assertions of the research organisations. ECRs were less likely to agree with statements in the survey drawn from the Concordat principles. This is the case even for ECRs on permanent or open-ended research-related contracts. Although steps are being taken to implement the Concordat, the benefits have not yet reached all ECRs. ECRs on fixed-term or teaching only contracts, who aspire to a research-related position, are least likely to feel they are valued, recognised and supported. This may relate to how ECRs are identified and defined within an institution.

Early career researchers’ main concerns

Around 92% of ECRs on fixed-term contracts expressed concerns about their career now and in the future and these are for the most part related to achieving the “holy grail” of a permanent position.

Around 60% of ECRs on permanent contracts expressed concerns about their career now and in the future. Perhaps unsurprisingly for this group these concerns were mainly related to opportunities for career progression or workload pressures.

ECRs on fixed-term contracts in this study saw professional success as obtaining a permanent academic position that will allow them to continue with research (such as through a lectureship), but perceive that there are few new appointments available. Short fixed-term, hourly paid and sessional posts are taken to remain in academia, but these are not always considered to be contributing to the development of the skills needed to obtain an open-ended lectureship or to support career progression within or beyond the higher education sector.

ECRs on fixed-term contracts who are considering leaving the higher education sector due to concerns about establishing a career worry that the skills they have may not be relevant or transferable outside the sector. This suggests a need at an early stage (pre-doctorate) to provide information that will enable individuals to broaden their horizons, provide access to realistic and accurate information from a variety of sources about what an academic career entails, and how the skills developed during doctoral study are transferable elsewhere.

A career involving a succession of short term posts is regarded negatively, with individuals spending time applying for their next position rather than concentrating on publishing, research or developing professional networks. Over half of the ECRs in the higher education sector regarded post-doctoral researcher positions in the UK as potential stepping stones

to permanent academic positions rather than as attractive in themselves. 71% of ECRs on a permanent contract had previously held a fixed-term contract, and a quarter had held three or more, which does suggest it is a pathway for some.

Experiences of post-doctoral researchers on AHRC-funded research grants

Respondents who were currently or previously on an AHRC funded research grant were asked a set of questions related specifically to their experiences as a researcher on this grant.

ECRs involved valued the experience of being part of the AHRC research grant team for enabling them to build networks and raise their “visibility” as a researcher, for contributing to the development of skills to progress their careers and as evidence that they can collaborate.

They would value some form of transition support from the AHRC (including bridging funding to develop research proposals and publications, and in the form of advice on career development and planning) to help them obtain permanent positions. This might include information on funding opportunities and obtaining research grants.

The ECRs involved would also value AHRC providing networking opportunities with other AHRC supported researchers in the same or later stages of their career to share experiences and provide advice.

Elements of good practice

The following is drawn from comments and analysis of the ECR and the research organisation surveys and interviews and the desk research. It suggests elements of good practice in providing career development support and advice for ECRs largely at an institutional level. Within the scope of this study we have not carried out any evaluation of the impact on ECRs directly.

Advice and support is made available at an early stage

In our survey of ECRs in the HE sector, 61% of respondents on a permanent or open-ended contract had sought advice on pursuing an academic career prior to or at the start of their doctorate, compared with 43% of those on fixed-term contracts. As the majority of respondents intended to pursue an academic career in the higher education sector, this suggests that those who seek and have access to advice at an early stage may be better equipped or have more time in which to plan their career and achieve their objective. Our interviews with ECRs suggested that while individuals begin thinking about an academic career at this early stage, prior to their doctorate, all felt that they knew very little about what establishing such a career would entail in practice. While it is the individual's ultimate responsibility to be proactive in this, universities could include details of the programmes of support they offer at induction.

A broad based approach to identifying ECRs

While it is relatively straightforward to identify doctoral candidates and post-doctoral researchers on research-related contracts, there are 'grey areas'. These include for example, post-docs who have taken teaching only, or non-academic posts to maintain continuity of employment or develop other skills, but who aspire to obtaining a research-related post in the future. In some cases these individuals are not identified as ECRs within the research organisation at which they are employed and so may be excluded from support available, or it may cause individuals to believe they are ineligible, even if they are not.

To address this, we have come across examples of institutions that allow individuals working in their organisation to self-identify as ECRs. In this way, individuals are kept informed of the support and advice available to them. This does not mean that all ECRs who self-identify as such necessarily receive all the support the institution offers as this may be limited to certain contracts due to financial constraints, but it will allow the individual to maintain their identity as an ECR within that institution.

Advice is provided on a broad range of possible careers

The main concern for ECRs on fixed-term contracts in this study was competitiveness for permanent lecturer positions. As it is not possible to simply increase the number of academic positions available, career advice and support should cover a broad range of career options for the use of doctoral and post-doctoral skills and experience. One university involved in the study is currently developing a training programme for post-docs and ECRs in the Arts and Humanities that will focus on employability and transferable skills. It will include a programme of speakers on careers in other sectors, and use this as a platform to identify mentors in academia and in industry. This is being done in recognition that the university is unable to guarantee continuity of employment for Research Fellows and those on fixed-term contracts, and so it is looking at other ways to best support ECRs in the next stage of their careers.

ECRs' requirements lead and inform the advice and support made available

To ensure that the support put in place is led by the needs of ECRs, ECRs should be involved in the development of support programmes. Universities involved in this study do report directly consulting with ECRs, for example through the use of focus groups of post-docs and doctoral candidates, prior to the development of new programmes of support to ensure demands are met. In other cases, ECRs have been involved in the development of local agreements which incorporate the principles of the Concordat.

Senior academics are informed of support available and are enabled to provide this

ECRs are most likely to consult colleagues (including senior academics) for career advice and support. Our study suggested that this group seems less well informed about the implementation of the Concordat at their institutions than career advisers and staff developers. Initiatives could be put in place to better enable senior academics and Principal Investigators to direct ECRs to sources of advice beyond that which they are able to provide (such as that provided by career advisers and staff developers). There may also be a requirement for formal agreements with senior academics with roles in supporting ECRs to ensure they provide an agreed level of support.

Mentors are relevant to the needs of the individual

ECRs in our study described looking for a relationship with a mentor who understands and has experience of the situation ECRs currently face, which suggests a need for a mentor in the next stage of their career. ECRs also mentioned that they value the opportunity to be open about the barriers and difficulties they are facing, without having to worry about whether this will be interpreted as an inability to handle the pressures of work in the sector. This suggests that mentors should be chosen carefully so that ECRs feel they can speak freely.

Networks are in place to share experience

The study suggests that ECRs are making use of social media, and that one of the main uses is to network and to share and learn from the experiences of other ECRs. The study also suggests that ECRs are interested in being able to identify and communicate with other ECRs in similar circumstances within their institution, particularly when they are employed on fixed-term or fractional contracts that may not allow time for them to become (or perceive they have become) integrated into the organisation. Research Funders as well as institutions could set-up or enable networks that would allow ECRs to connect and to share experiences (online and face-to-face).

1. Introduction

1.1 Research brief and scope

The Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) and the British Academy are concerned that they do not have a robust picture of the issues faced by researchers in the period immediately following funded doctoral study. Both funders want to obtain further insight into the diversity of roles, opportunities and employment for researchers who work in research organisations⁸ immediately following their doctorate, and the needs and aspirations of researchers at this early stage.

As the AHRC and British Academy have an interest in the wider Arts and Humanities community, in respect of the health of the discipline, the study goes beyond Research Council-funded researchers to consider the wider landscape. Although it is recognised that post-doctoral researchers will follow careers outside the higher education sector, this study is focussed on the experiences and issues facing individuals who initially pursue this route. This includes those funded through short-term and/or teaching funding as well as those supported on AHRC-funded projects or through the British Academy Post-doctoral Fellowships. The research includes a small sample of individuals who began in the higher education sector and subsequently left to pursue a career elsewhere. The aim is to understand what led to this decision and whether they felt they were well equipped in terms of training and skills to undertake a new career path.

The aim of the study is to increase understanding and build a picture of:

- the issues faced and support received in developing careers and making career choices.
- the types of roles and contracts taken-up and the reasons for this.
- the prevalence of short-term and fractional contracts, and the perceived impact on career progression.
- whether individuals are taking on a number of concurrent roles and the reasons for this.
- who is providing funding for contracts.
- how well supported and informed individuals feel in regard to pursuing academic careers as well as wider career opportunities.

To identify whether the ECR sample was representative of the larger ECR population working within higher education the survey collected data on characteristics such as sex, ethnic group, disability and nationality (addressed in Section 1.4 below). The Steering

8. For the purposes of this study “research organisations” primarily refers to the university sector, but may include independent research organisations, as defined by the Research Councils.

Group requested this data be used where possible to identify any issues relating to gender, ethnicity or disability. While relevant analysis of responses by male and female respondents is reported in the main body of the report, the number of responses by other groups is too small to reach conclusions. However, Appendix D reports where findings for Black and Asian Minority Ethnic (BAME) respondents and for respondents who stated they consider they are disabled differ from the overall survey results. Appendix E comprises a table with the numbers of respondents in the different groups.

The study looks at the implementation of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers⁹ (hereafter referred to as ‘the Concordat’), comparing universities’ descriptions of the formal structures in place with the experiences and perceptions of ECRs.

In addition, the study looks at researchers currently or previously on AHRC-funded research projects as a specific group, looking at:

- how they envisage the next stage of their career and actions taken or planned to achieve this.
- their perception of the impact working as part of a research team has on career and personal development.
- whether there is more AHRC could do to engage with them and in what ways.

1.2 Who contributed to the research and how

The research was conducted by an online survey and interviews with a selection of universities in the UK and with early career researchers (ECRs) in the Arts and Humanities. The work was guided by a Steering Group made up of representatives from the two funders and the sector (details of the group are in Appendix A).

We initially conducted a workshop with AHRC’s Research Careers and Training Advisory Group (RCTAG) and Network to introduce the research, gather initial input to the study and promote participation in the later stages. Working with the Steering Group we agreed a long list of 49 universities across the UK that represented a cross section of institutions by type, size and geographical location. The AHRC and British Academy sent a joint letter to the Vice-Chancellors or equivalent at all 49 universities inviting them to take part in the research.

Oakleigh Consulting sent emails to 166 named contacts at the target universities asking them to take part in an online survey in the first instance, and to circulate details of a separate survey to ECRs at their institution. We received 32 responses to the survey from 23 universities by the closing date. (A full list is provided in Appendix B). A cross section of staff within universities provided the organisational response as the table below illustrates.

9. The UK Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers is an agreement between funders and employers of research staff to improve the employment and support for researchers and research careers in UK higher education. It incorporates a set of principles to enhance the attractiveness and sustainability of research careers, and sets out standards that research staff can expect from the institution that employs them, as well as their responsibilities as researchers. Further details can be found at: <https://www.vitae.ac.uk/policy/concordat-to-support-the-career-development-of-researchers>

Figure 1 – Who responded for universities? Job titles of respondents

- Professor
- Research Support Partner
- Careers Adviser for Post-docs in the Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences
- Dean of Research
- Head of Researcher Development
- Careers Adviser
- Head of Department
- Associate Dean for Research and Knowledge Transfer
- Career Coach – Early Career Researchers
- Lecturer
- Programme Leader for Researcher Development
- Careers Consultant for Researchers
- Dean of Arts
- PVC (Research & Knowledge Exchange)
- Staff Development Advisor
- Dean of Arts and Social Science
- Assistant Registrar (Research)
- Training and Development Manager
- Professor/Director of Centre
- Director of Research Management and Administration
- Careers adviser for researchers

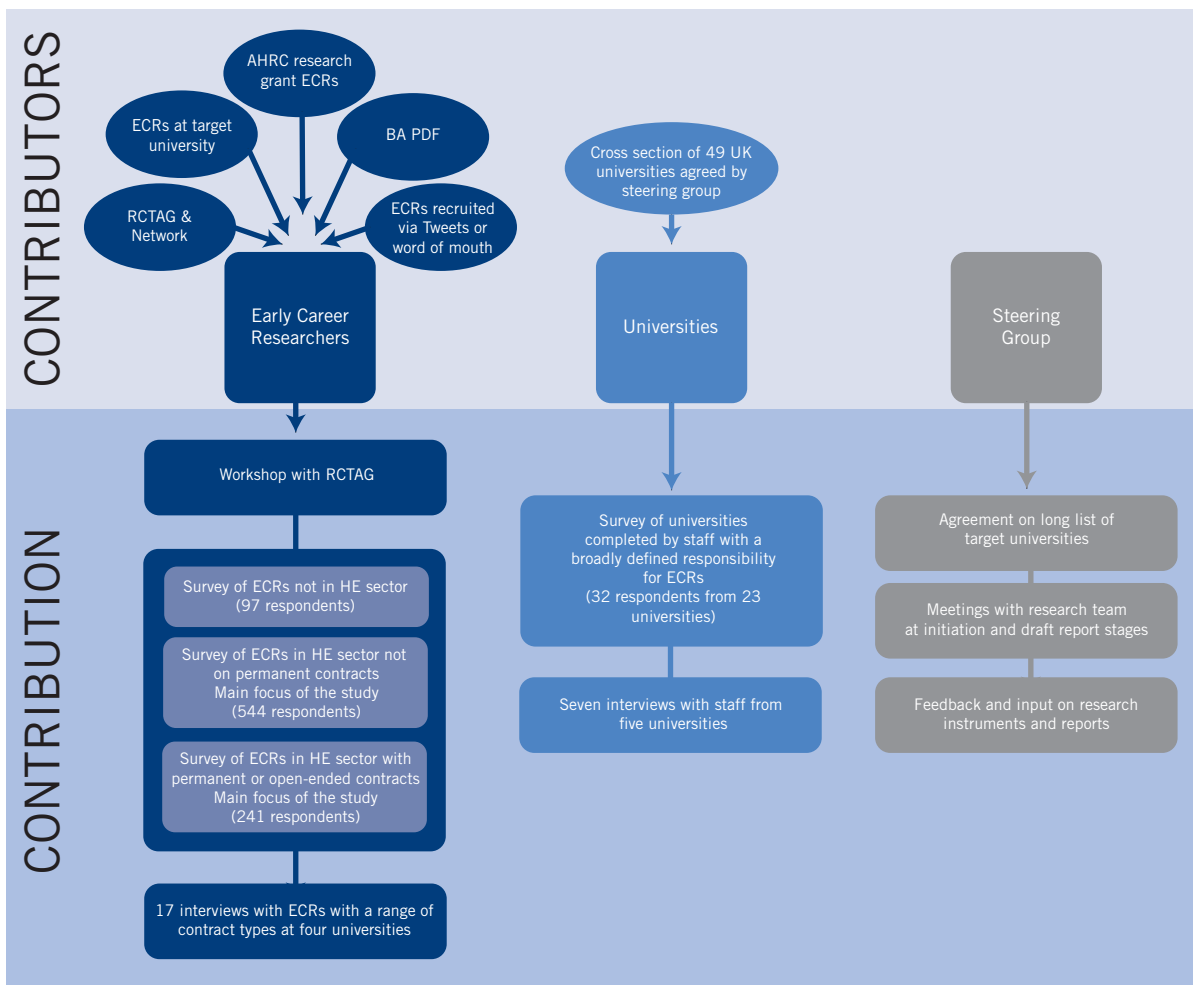
We recruited ECRs via a number of routes. AHRC sent details of the research to its RCTAG and Network, and all those who expressed an interest received an email with a link to the survey and a request that they distribute this on to others in their professional and personal networks. AHRC also sent details and a link to the survey to its grant holders with a request that they circulate these to any ECR currently or previously employed on the research. The British Academy sent details and a link to the survey to its current and recent Post-doctoral Fellows.

All 49 universities were asked to circulate details and the survey link via email (or any other appropriate mechanism) to relevant ECRs at their institution. In addition, AHRC, the British Academy and Oakleigh Consulting placed news items on their websites to publicise and provide a link to the survey. AHRC and the British Academy used their Twitter accounts to raise the profile of the research and publicise the survey link. As a result, ECR responses were received from individuals outside the targeted universities.

The ECR survey received a total of 893 responses by the closing date. After data checking to remove incomplete or non-compliant data, the data set stood at 882 responses, a significant and pleasing response, perhaps reflecting a level of interest and possibly concern.

We carried out a series of interviews to supplement the surveys. Telephone interviews lasting between 30 minutes to an hour were carried out with ECRs on a range of contracts at four universities. Staff with responsibilities for ECRs at these four universities were also interviewed, and an interview was carried out at an additional university to ensure coverage of a range of institutions and roles.

Figure 2 – Who contributed and how? Overview



1.3 Definitions

The survey of ECRs in the Arts and Humanities was open to anyone who identified themselves as such, with some restrictions (namely that they should be within eight years of award of their doctorate, not including any career breaks). In communications with universities on the distribution of the survey, we aimed to be clear that the term “early career researcher” should be applied broadly and should not be restricted to individuals on research contracts or in research related roles. The communications from the AHRC and the British Academy were similarly unrestrictive, and invited individuals with a doctorate looking to develop a career in the academic sector to take part in the study.

Respondents to the ECR survey comprise three main groups based on their answers to questions about their current occupation sector and employment status. These groups are:

1. Individuals employed outside the higher education sector. For ease of comprehension, in the remainder of the report they are referred to as “ECRs not in the HE sector”. (97 responses). It should be noted that this group includes a large number of respondents who are no longer in the higher education sector due to circumstances beyond

their control rather than through an active decision to leave, and have an aspiration to return to the sector. The results for this group as a whole cannot therefore be considered representative of the views of those that made a positive decision to pursue their career outside the higher education sector.

2. Individuals employed in the higher education sector on a variety of fixed-term contracts (including those on Research Fellowships, or who are self-employed or freelance, or on hourly or sessional contracts). Variations include contract duration and level of full-time equivalence (FTE). Individuals in this group may be required to carry out research only, teaching only or research and teaching, or may be in a 'non-academic' post. This group also includes a small number of individuals who are currently unemployed, but who have worked within the sector and aspire to return. In the remainder of the report they are referred to as "ECRs on fixed-term contracts". (544 responses). This group is the main focus of this research
3. Individuals employed in the higher education sector on permanent or open-ended contracts. These include those on full-time and fractional contracts. Individuals may be required to carry out research only, teaching only or research and teaching, or be in a 'non-academic' post. We refer to this group as "ECRs on permanent contracts" in the remainder of this report. (241 responses).

In some cases, analysis may go across more than one group (for example where we look at the use of fractional contracts in higher education). In these cases we make it clear that the findings refer to all ECR respondents in the higher education sector.

We use the term "early career researcher" as this is how individuals tended to regard themselves. However, as is evident from the report, the definition of an early career researcher varies both between, and importantly within, institutions, leading, as we demonstrate, to some confusion and issues of access to support for career development.

1.4 Profile and characteristics of the early career researchers sample

The demographic characteristics of respondents are shown in the table below. To place this in context data from the *Careers in Research Online Survey (CROS) 2011 report*¹⁰ and the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) academic staff data for 2012/13¹¹ are also shown. The number of respondents with these characteristics is provided in Appendix E.

10. *Careers in Research Online Survey (CROS) 2011: Analysis of UK aggregate results*, Vitae, 2011. CROS is targeted at research staff employed in UK higher education institutions as defined in the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers. The results relate to all disciplines and are not limited to Arts and Humanities subjects. Individual institutions are responsible for identifying their target sample and promoting the survey to potential participants

11. *Staff in Higher Education Institutions 2012/13*, Higher Education Statistics Agency

Table 1 – Early career researcher survey respondent characteristics

	This survey	CROS 2011	HESA 2012/3
Female	63%	53%	45%
Male	37%	47%	55%
Ethnic group (UK)			
White (all)	93%	93%	87%
BAME (all)	7%	7%	13%
Nationality			
UK	65%	67%	74%
Other EU	21%	19%	14%
Rest of World	14%	15%	12%
Disability			
Disability	3%	5%	3.5%

Although this seems to suggest that the percentage of female respondents to this study is out of proportion to the make-up of the sector, further explanation of the data suggests that it is closer to the breakdown in the Arts and Humanities. HESA staff data that breaks down academic staff numbers by cost centre reveals a 49% female and 51% male split for cost centres related to the Art and Humanities.¹² Further breakdown by salary level for academic staff reveals a 56:44 female to male ratio in Arts and Humanities related cost centres for academic staff on salaries under £31,331 (which may better reflect early career academics).

When this is taken into consideration with the higher proportion of female students undertaking Higher Degrees (Research) in Arts and Humanities related subject areas, this suggests that although there may be a larger proportion of female respondents compared to their preponderance in the sector as a whole it is closer to the picture in the Arts and Humanities than it might seem.

The survey has a lower proportion of respondents from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups than in the academic staff population as a whole, although it is closer to the proportion of BAME 'research only' staff at 11%.

Where the ECR respondents in the HE sector in our survey identified the institutions at which they are currently employed, 53% work at a Russell Group university. This is indicative of the concentration of research funding at these institutions, while still providing a view from across the sector.

The sample therefore compares well with the known parameters of the target population. It is difficult to say how 'representative' it is and to be able to calculate a confidence level, as there is no readily available precise figures for the total population¹³ (number of ECRs with a doctorate that aspire to work in the higher education sector). However, the size of the

12. Cost Centres used are: "Modern languages", "English language & literature", "History", "Classics", "Philosophy", "Theology and religious studies", "Art and design", and "Music, dance, drama and performing arts".

13. HESA data is available on the number of higher degree (research) qualifications awarded each year, however not all those awarded a doctorate will wish to pursue a career in higher education. HESA staff data provides numbers of academic staff for the "Humanities & language based studies & archaeology" cost centre, but it is not possible to identify ECRs in this data set.

sample compares well with the CROS sample and the Vitae surveys on career intentions of early career researchers.¹⁴

Context

The Concordat has a set of seven principles and sets out a vision of working practices, roles and responsibilities to further the attractiveness and sustainability of research careers in the UK. It is an agreement between the funders and employers of researchers in the UK.

Although the principles apply to any member of staff engaged in research, the focus is on employees engaged principally to undertake research. The Concordat recognises that the majority of these are supported by fixed-term project funding. The aim of the Concordat is to ensure maximum benefit to the researcher, their employing organisations and the research base during their period of employment as researchers in higher education and research institutions, while recognising that this may be part of a much longer career track.

The 2013 edition of the Vitae report, “*What do researchers do?*”¹⁵ notes that doctoral graduates in the Arts and Humanities appear to have been the most affected by changes in the labour market brought about by the recent economic recession. This has resulted in a higher proportion in part-time employment, a faster-rising proportion employed on short (less than 12 months) fixed-term contracts, and higher levels of portfolio working compared with other disciplines. In the Arts and Humanities portfolio working was found to be mainly a response to economic circumstances rather than a choice.

The Vitae report, which is based on analyses of data from the Longitudinal Destination of Leavers from Higher Education (LDHLE) survey¹⁶, also shows that a third of Arts and Humanities respondents have held three jobs or more since graduation, and 40% combined two or more jobs as a necessity to secure the equivalent of full-time employment.

The LDHLE data also revealed a reduction in the number of Arts and Humanities doctoral graduates in the higher education sector compared to the previous survey in 2008. Fewer doctoral graduates in all disciplines were on open-ended contracts compared to 2008, and this type of contract is least common amongst Arts and Humanities doctoral graduates.

The work by Vitae published in 2012 on career intentions of doctoral researchers noted that around 75% of respondents in the Arts and Humanities were looking for a career in the higher education sector, and that by their final year 44% of respondents in the Arts and Humanities had a definite career in mind. It seems a large proportion of researchers in the

14. *What do researchers want to do? The career intentions of doctoral researchers*, Vitae 2012

15. *What do researchers do? Early career progression of doctoral graduates*, Vitae, 2013

16. The analysis is of the survey carried out in November 2010 that targeted those who graduated with doctoral degrees during 2006/07. The Vitae report notes that the 2010 survey captures activity at 24 November 2010, and in line with HESA terminology is deemed to represent a time period of approximately three and a half years after completion but in reality may be up to four and a half years after completion.

Arts and Humanities begin their academic career with the intention of pursuing a career in higher education, with 35% reporting that they were already considering a career within higher education at entry to their undergraduate degree.

Our study therefore is of a group with, in many cases, strongly held ideas about what they wish to do with their career, many of whom wish to remain within the higher education sector. This is the group however that seem to face some of the biggest challenges in terms of the opportunities available to them.

2. Early career researchers' roles and contracts

Individuals who wish to pursue an academic career and who identify themselves as ECRs are engaged on a range of contracts, and carry out a variety of roles (with a wide variety of job titles). This can mean that their identity as a researcher is not recognised or picked up at an institutional level.

Around half of ECRs on fixed-term contracts gave negatively or neutrally phrased reasons for taking up their current position or positions. These reasons reflect a perceived lack of choice or a necessity brought on by the need for an income or to enable them to remain within the higher education sector.

Although it is not possible to quantify precisely, over 78% of respondents to our survey on fixed-term contracts have held three or more such contracts (including their current position) since gaining their doctorate. Analysis by Vitae¹⁷ of data from the Longitudinal Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education (LDLHE) survey (which is carried out three years and six months after graduation) suggests that over 55% of researchers in the Arts and Humanities have held two or more contracts since gaining their doctorate. This does suggest that individuals are reliant on consecutive and often concurrent fixed-term and fractional contracts to try to maintain continuity of employment. Even though they are not convinced that these positions are necessarily providing career development or will lead to career progression, the overall impression is that most can see no alternative if they wish to remain in the higher education sector. Where individuals have left the higher education sector (not by choice) to take up positions elsewhere they are concerned that they may not be able to return.

2.1 Current occupation and employment status of respondents in the HE sector

Survey respondents were asked to choose an option that best described their current occupation. 84% of ECRs on permanent contracts described their current occupation as “teaching and research in higher education”, and the majority of these (around 80%) are in lecturing posts.

Just over a third of the ECRs on fixed-term contracts described their occupation as “research and teaching in higher education”, and these mainly hold lecturer or tutor

17. *What do researchers do? Early career progression of doctoral graduates*, Vitae, 2013

positions. 43% described their occupation as “research in higher education”, and these comprise Research Fellow and post-doctoral researcher posts.

2.2 Duration of fixed-term contracts

Just over 20% of the ECRs on fixed-term contracts are on contracts of less than 12 months. This percentage breakdown is similar to the findings in CROS 2011¹⁸ where 23% of respondents on fixed-term contracts reported being employed on a contract of one year or less. The proportion of male and female respondents on fixed term contracts of less than 12 months is the same (at just over 20%).

Of those respondents in our survey who provided the contract duration, these range from three to 11 months, with around a quarter on a nine month contract. These contracts are described as “term time only” by a number of respondents and run from October to June, and so offer employment only during the research or teaching term. A further quarter of respondents are on contracts lasting six months.

Table 2 – Percentage of ECRs on short fixed-term contracts

Duration	%
0–3 months duration	13%
4–6 months duration	32%
7–9 months duration	33%
10–11 months	21%
Number	75

A small number of ECRs on fixed-term contracts described being in the position of having their contracts renewed on a semester by semester basis, as their contract depends on numbers of students signing up to a course. Others are on “ongoing” temporary contracts that are reviewed every three months (and in one case this had been ongoing for four years).

A slightly higher proportion of female respondents stated they are on fixed term contracts over 12 months (54%) compared with 51% of male respondents. Of the ECRs with fixed-term contracts of 12 months or longer the duration ranges from 12 to 72 months (six years). Around 30% have contracts of 36 months, 25% with contracts of 24 months, and 14% with contracts of 12 months.

Table 3 – Percentage of ECRs on fixed-term contract over 12 months

Duration	%
12 months up to 23 months	20.9%
24 months up to 35 months	30.5%
36 months up to 47 months	31.4%
48 months and over	17.2%
Number	239

18. Findings from the CROS 2011 report referenced in this report refers to all disciplines and is not specific to Arts and Humanities respondents, as the published findings do not provide subject-based analysis.

Where data is available it seems that a similar proportion of male and female respondents hold contracts of 12 to 23 months duration (22% and 20% respectively). A higher proportion of male respondents hold contracts of 24–35 months and 36–47 months (34% in both cases compared with 28% and 29% respectively for female respondents). However, 22% of female respondents hold fixed term contracts of 48 months and over, compared with just over 9% of male respondents.

Of those ECRs on fixed-term contracts between 12 to 23 months, 80% are in positions as post-doctoral researchers or Research Fellows/Associates. The percentage in these posts reduces in the longer term contracts with 68% in these types of positions on contracts of 24–35 months, and around 57% on contracts of 36 months or longer. The other positions held are mainly as lecturers or teaching fellows/tutors.

Where respondents state their occupation as “non-academic in the higher education sector”, and are on fixed-term contracts, five of the seven are on contracts of 12 months duration.

ECRs on fixed-term contracts who completed their doctorates prior to 2013 were more likely to be on contracts of 12 months or longer (56% of those completing in 2011–2012 and 62% of those completing prior to 2011 are on contracts of 12 months and longer compared with 40% of those completing after 2012).

Although we used the word “contract” in the survey it should be noted that in a small number of the interviews we conducted with ECRs it became clear that a contract did not always exist in practice, and that individuals were carrying out work in response to a verbal request to carry out an agreed number of hours. In the survey, one respondent stated that they are “*not formally contracted. I am usually paid by fee form*” and another made reference to having a letter of engagement but no formal contract.

2.3 A picture of fixed-term and fractional contracts

Two thirds of all ECR respondents in the higher education sector had previously held a fixed-term contract. The majority of respondents report having held between one and three fixed-term contracts, (not including their current role), with some individuals exceptionally reporting 10, 18 or 30 contracts. 70% of ECRs now on a permanent contract had previously held a fixed-term contract.

Table 4 – Number of fixed-term contracts held since gaining doctorate

	ECRs on fixed-term contracts	ECRs on permanent contracts
One contract	21.4%	42.4%
Two contracts	37.1%	31.2%
Three contracts	22.0%	14.1%
Four or more contracts	19.5%	12.4%
Number	318	170

The largest percentage (42%) of ECRs on a permanent contract have held one fixed-term contract prior to obtaining their current permanent position, while the largest percentage

of ECRs on fixed-term contracts (37%) have held two such contracts prior to their current contract.

The results suggest that there is a cohort of ECRs and academics in the Arts and Humanities who have a career based on a series of fixed-term contracts. This is indicated by further analysis of the data, which shows that 61% of ECRs on fixed-term contracts who gained their doctorates prior to 2011 have held three or more fixed-term contracts, compared to around a quarter of ECRs on fixed-term contracts who gained their doctorates after 2011 who have held three or more such contracts. Of the ECRs on a permanent contract, 32% who completed prior to 2011 have held three or more fixed-term contracts.

The responses also paint a picture of a sector with a reliance on fractional contracts.¹⁹ Almost 40% of those with a permanent contract have held a fractional contract (14% currently and 24% previously). For ECRs on fixed-term contracts, just under 50% have held a fractional contract (24% currently and 22% previously).

Table 5 – ECRs in the HE sector on fractional contracts

	ECRs on fixed-term contracts	ECRs on permanent contracts
Yes, currently	24.3%	13.5%
Yes, previously	22.4%	24.3%
No	48.0%	60.9%
Don't know	5.3%	1.3%
Number	510	230

The 2013 Vitae research on “*What do researchers do?*” noted that a significantly lower proportion (59%) of Arts and Humanities respondents are in full-time paid work, with 22% in “part-time” paid work. This is a similar percentage to the ECRs on fixed-term contracts in our survey who report they are currently on a fractional contract. Although Table 5 above indicates that there has only been a small increase in the percentage that are currently (24%) and previously (22%) on fractional contracts, read in conjunction with the Vitae analysis of the LDHLE survey (where 15% in 2008 were in part-time paid work compared with 22% in 2011) this does suggest a small rise in the number of Arts and Humanities ECRs on fractional contracts. (It should be noted that the LDHLE data includes doctoral graduates employed outside the higher education sector – although 57.5% do work in HE).

In our survey, a larger percentage of female respondents are currently on fractional contracts – 25% of female ECRs on fixed-term contracts and 17% of female ECRs on permanent contracts. This compares with 20% of male ECRs on fixed term contracts and 6% of male ECRs on permanent contracts.

However, a higher percentage of male respondents report that they have previously held a fractional contract (22% of male ECRs on fixed term contracts compared to 20% of female ECRs, and 25% of male ECRs on permanent contracts compared with 21% of female ECRs).

19. For the purposes of this survey a fractional contract was described as “a fractional contract is for an employee who works for a fraction of a full time equivalent (FTE). It can be referred to as a ‘term-time’ contract but can be used outside term time”.

This finding does not necessarily suggest that female ECRs are more likely to hold fractional contracts. A more targeted approach of sampling across contract types, along with detailed analysis of HESA staff data for example would be required, which was outside the scope of this research. The finding is reported however, as it may have a bearing on differences in experiences and perceptions reported by male and female respondents examined later in this report.

2.4 The occurrence and reasons for portfolio working

Perhaps as a consequence of the numbers on fractional contracts, a quarter of all ECR respondents in the higher education sector considered themselves to be “portfolio workers²⁰”. This is higher for ECRs on a fixed-term contract at 31% (12% of ECRs on a permanent contract see themselves in this way). Several of those interviewed suggested that ‘portfolio worker’ was a useful euphemism for ‘part-time, no rights, frequently no contract workers’.

Of the ECRs on a fixed-term contract who consider themselves to be portfolio workers, 60% currently hold two contracts, although the numbers range from one to 10 contracts, with 20% holding three contracts.

The reasons ECRs on fixed-term contracts gave for engaging in portfolio working are:

- unable to secure a full-time position / all that was available (81%).
- supplement income (52%).
- employer is unable to offer a full-time position (41%).

The main reasons given for undertaking portfolio work are the same for female and male respondents. A larger proportion of female ECRs on fixed-term contracts consider they are portfolio workers (49% compared to 27% of male ECRs). Although, as reported above, a larger proportion of female ECR respondents hold fractional contracts, and a slightly higher proportion of those on fixed term contracts are female, this does not entirely account for this difference. Based on the results of the survey, where data is available, it does not seem that female respondents have held a greater number of jobs prior to their current position than their male counterparts. This may suggest the difference is one of perception, and further research may be required to understand the reasons behind this.

Only 16% of ECRs on fixed-term contracts identified “Choice – I like the variety”. Few respondents chose portfolio working due to a preference for freelance-type work, or to maintain a balance between work and personal/family commitments. Other reasons provided relate largely to gaining experience to develop their CV and keep career options open, or to provide better continuity of employment by overlapping fixed-term contracts.

Within this group of respondents referred to as ECRs on fixed-term contracts, a small number identified themselves as “Self-employed/freelance” (n 33) and just over half of

20. In response to the question “do you consider yourself to be a portfolio worker (currently in more than one job)?” The question posed and answer options offered enables cross referencing with the results of the Vitae analysis of the LDHLE survey in their “*What do researchers do?*” report.

these (n 17) consider themselves to be portfolio workers. However, the overriding reason for this, chosen by 13 of the respondents was due to being “unable to secure a full-time position / all that was available”.

For ECRs on a permanent contract, the reasons for undertaking portfolio work are:

- to supplement income (46%)
- choice – I like the variety (43%)
- unable to secure a full-time position / all that was available (43%)

The ‘other reasons’ given by those with a permanent contract relate to needing to keep skills up-to-date, or keeping their career options open by carrying out activities not available in their “day job”. Indicative comments include:

“I am research active two days a week unpaid to up my profile.”

Female, Doctorate completed in 2012

“No student contact in my ‘day job’, so I am doing extra teaching work to keep career options open.”

Female, Doctorate completed in 2009

As the Vitae report on “*What do researchers do?*” has similar results on the prevalence of portfolio working, the conclusion can be reached that where Arts and Humanities ECRs are undertaking more than one job it is often due to employment needs rather than a preference for portfolio working in a positive sense. However, individuals in the Arts and Humanities are, according to the Vitae report, more likely to engage in portfolio work to maintain a work-life balance and due to a preference for freelance type work than other disciplinary groups. The Vitae report does not present any analysis to indicate if there are any differences in the proportions of male and female ECRs who consider themselves portfolio workers.

2.5 What else are ECRs on fractional contracts doing?

Of those ECR respondents in the HE sector on a fractional contract, around a third have only one contract. Just under half of ECRs on a fractional permanent contract have one contract as their total employment (although figures are small with 31 reporting they are on a fractional contract and 14 of these reporting no other occupation). For ECRs on fractional fixed-term contracts around 30% report holding one contract with no other employment.

The reasons given by ECRs on fixed-term contracts for taking their current position give an indication in a small number of cases of how they are using the remainder of their time. One stated that it allowed them time to work on publications, another that it gave them time to pursue their own research agenda, and a further three made reference to personal or family commitments. In one of our interviews with ECRs, the interviewee who was on a 0.7 FTE contract spent the remainder of his time preparing for work on this contract, and so had no ‘spare’ time in which to pursue other work.

Of the ECRs on fractional fixed-term contracts who provided details in the survey of the positions they currently hold, where their main position was as a lecturer or teaching

fellow or tutor, almost 60% had a further position in a teaching related role within higher education. Less than 20% also held researcher positions (such as a post-doctoral researcher or research fellow). For those that gave their main position as a post-doctoral researcher, half of these also hold a lecturing or teaching role as an additional position. This seems to suggest that where possible individuals are taking on positions that will enable them to obtain a range of experiences that will help their career progression within the higher education sector.

The main reasons given by those on a permanent contract for taking their fractional role relate to allowing them time to publish, to continue in their chosen field, or for personal reasons such as to fit around childcare. One respondent stated that a full-time contract was withheld “on account of the REF²¹ submission” but did not provide further details. Another noted that they require interdisciplinarity for their overarching work.

Eleven of the twelve ECRs on permanent fractional contracts, who provided details of their current positions, hold lecturing or course leader roles as their main positions, with one working a ‘research facilitator’. Six of the 11 with lecturing roles hold additional teaching or lecturing related positions and two carry out work as freelance practitioners in their field.

2.6 The use of ‘zero-hour’ contracts

As there is no legal definition of a ‘zero-hour’ contract, in the survey we provided the following description to guide respondents: *“ACAS states that the term ‘zero hours’ is not defined in legislation, but is generally understood to be an employment contract between an employer and a worker, which means that the employer is not obliged to provide the worker with any minimum working hours, and the worker is not obliged to accept any of the hours offered.”*

There is some evidence of the use of “zero hour” contracts in the sector, although the majority have not experienced these. It is also not clear from the responses if all these contracts are within the HE sector and may relate to other work they carry out alongside their employment in higher education. Nonetheless, 7% of ECR respondents in the higher education sector report that they are currently on a zero hours contract and 15% that they have previously held a zero hour contract (5% did not know if they had done so).

Of those ECRs on a permanent contract who are currently on a zero hour contract, only one listed a university as the sole organisation they are working for currently. The other four respondents work for a range of organisations and their zero hour contracts could be with one of these.

For ECRs on fixed-term contracts, 44 respondents stated that they are currently on a zero hour contract. Of these, 13 currently hold fractional contracts at universities, with 10 of the 13 not reporting working for any organisations other than a university. A smaller number (8) who are not on a fractional contract, state they are currently on a zero hour

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contract, and in this case six of the eight list universities as the only organisations that they work for currently. Therefore it suggests that at least 16 of the respondents with fixed-term contracts have zero hour contracts with a university (which equates to approximately 3% of respondents on fixed-term contracts). In all these cases the positions that respondents state they hold are academic type roles.

2.7 What types of positions do ECRs take up?

Respondents were asked what position or positions they currently hold. ECRs on fixed-term contracts have a broad variety of job titles and a range of positions compared to ECRs on permanent contracts. Respondents on fixed-term contracts used over 70 different job titles to describe the research and teaching related positions they hold compared with only six job titles used by those on permanent contracts. The titles can also be misleading. In our interviews and in the survey it was clear that for some ECRs on fixed-term contracts who were designated as 'Director' this role could be anything from a lead tutor to programme leader.

Almost 90% of those on permanent contracts have roles as lecturers (based on a description of their current position as lecturer / senior lecturer / assistant professor / associate professor). One respondent described their position as a lecturer but categorised their occupation as "non-academic in HE" as the role "*does not involve any teaching, its managerial*". Eleven other ECRs on permanent contracts had a non-academic role in higher education. These positions are either in research management, student advisory or support, or technical.

Just under a third of the positions currently held by ECRs on fixed-term contracts are research-related positions (job titles provided include "associate research fellow", "contract researcher", "post-doctoral research fellow") and just over a third are in teaching and research related positions (job titles here include "assistant professor", "fixed-term lecturer" and "teaching fellow"). A further 36% carry out a range of 'other' positions. In some cases these seem to make use of subject knowledge and expertise, for example in positions such as "curator", "translator", "artist in residence" and "community engagement consultant". Others are related to education in positions such as "qualification design consultant", "university examiner", and "widening participation officer". Other positions are in research management and coordination, including "research study coordinator", "research data manager" and "project administrator". Around 20% of these 'other' roles are administrative, with job positions such as "administrative assistant", "clerical assistant" or "temporary receptionist" and it is likely that these are providing an income rather than directly contributing to career development.

Of those working outside the HE sector and who are not self-employed, 15 work for cultural organisations – mainly museums and galleries, but also in publishing. A similar number (14) work in education-related positions in adult or secondary education or language schools. A further seven work in local or central government or for commercial companies such as retailers or consultancies. A smaller number (5) work for charities, for research organisations (3) or religious organisations (1).

2.8 Why are ECRs taking these positions?

To help understand why people took up these positions we coded responses to the question “what are your reasons for taking your current position?” Firstly, where possible we coded responses in terms of whether the reason given was phrased in a positive, neutral or negative manner. We then further coded to group the main themes that emerged for taking the position.

2.8.1 Reasons provided by ECRs with fixed-term contracts

Only one respondent who stated they had a ‘non-academic occupation’ in higher education (on a fixed-term contract) gave a ‘positive’ reason for choosing their current position. The reasons the other 22 respondents with non-academic positions gave were either negative (11) or at best neutral (11). For most, they accepted these posts for financial reasons (mentioned in 12 responses) and because they had been unable to obtain academic related positions (also mentioned in 12 responses). For two respondents it allowed them to remain in academia and provide access to university facilities, while three mentioned that the positions are allowing them to develop some experience that may be useful in the longer term.

However, over half ECRs on fixed-term contracts with academic positions in higher education gave positive reasons for accepting their current role, with around 17% negative. The proportions of male and female respondents giving positive, neutral or negative reasons were comparable.

2.8.2 ‘Negative’ reasons provided by ECRs on fixed-term contracts for accepting current position

Where responses were coded as negative, the main reason given for taking the position was financial. One respondent expressed this as:

“Need to earn money, hourly paid and fractional is all I can get.”

Male, completed doctorate in 2005, on a number of fixed-term fractional teaching contracts at several universities

Around 27% of respondents gave reasons that suggested they had accepted the position to enable them to remain in academia.

“There are very few permanent jobs (whether full or part time) advertised in my field. Sessional teaching is the only way of remaining in academia and maintaining good contact with staff.”

Gender not given, completed doctorate in 2008, on a fixed-term contract of less than 12 months as Visiting Lecturer

One respondent, who reported holding six different jobs concurrently, noted that she had accepted these to try to develop knowledge and experience to progress her career.

“I want a career in academia and have applied for a number of jobs since I was awarded my PhD and haven’t been shortlisted for any. This is probably partly because I need publications. However, I need an income while I’m working on my publications so I have taken these positions. I hope that these

roles will give me skills, knowledge and experience that will help me in the job market.”

Female, completed doctorate in 2013, on fixed-term contracts of less than 12 months

Those who gave ‘negative’ reasons often spoke in terms of a lack of available options. Many (almost half of those who responded negatively) suggesting that this was the only post that had been offered or they had accepted the first post offered as they did not have confidence they would find a more suitable alternative.

A larger proportion of ECRs on fixed-term contracts of less than 12 months gave negatively phrased reasons (around a quarter) compared to those on contracts of 12 months or longer (10%). Respondents were more likely to give negatively phrased reasons for taking their current position if they had previously held four or more fixed-term contracts or had completed their doctorate prior to 2010. This group were least likely to give positive reasons for taking their current position (under 50% did so). ‘Older’ respondents (born before 1980) were also more likely to give negatively phrased reasons. These are in many cases the same respondents, as respondents in the survey who completed their doctorate prior to 2010 are older and a greater proportion have held four or more fixed-term contracts.

Of the small group of respondents (n 21) born before 1980, who completed their doctorate before 2010 and had previously held more than four fixed-term contracts only six (32%) gave positive reasons for taking their current position.

This suggests that respondents may become disillusioned with undertaking a series of fixed-term contracts if they do not believe that the posts are contributing to career development or progression. The longer this carries on after completion of their doctorate, the more likely individuals may be to accept a job simply because it allows them to remain in any role related to their area of interest or that provides an income and allows them to remain within the higher education sector.

2.8.3 Neutral reasons provided by ECRs on fixed-term contracts for accepting their current position

Where the responses have been coded as being neutral, respondents tended to suggest that the position was not their preferred one, but that they had identified positives that they could draw on, or trade-offs that they were willing to accept. Apart from the financial aspects, these include allowing them to remain in an academic setting with the possibility of continuing to build networks and access university facilities. Others identified that the position would allow them to develop some experience that should be of use to them in the next stage of their career. One respondent described this by saying:

“It was all I could get in the field; it was good experience for creating and teaching on my own course. I am hoping that the experience will help my CV stand out in the crowd somewhat.”

Female, completed doctorate in 2011, on fixed-term contract of less than 12 months which is renewed on a semester basis

Others gave reasons related to the location which enabled them to remain near their home base, or enabling them to combine work with family commitments.

“Needed part-time post for family reasons (childcare).”

Male, completed doctorate in 2008, on a 3-year fixed-term contract as a lecturer

2.8.4 Positive reasons provided by ECRs on fixed-term contracts for taking current position

Respondents who provided positively phrased reasons for taking their current position valued the opportunity to further their research interests and build experience and networks required to progress their career in the sector.

Over half ECRs on fixed-term contracts gave reasons related to opportunities to gain experience and career development.

“Three years’ worth of solely research funding, with the option for additional hours work teaching, in a very highly-respected institution ... Chance to build up my research portfolio, and make new contacts, before applying for permanent jobs.”

Female, completed doctorate in 2013, Research Fellow at Russell Group University

This was closely followed by the opportunities offered to work in an area closely related to their research interests (mentioned by 35%).

“I had, in effect, created my current job! I developed and secured funding for a major project. It is a position which allows me to use my skills as a researcher but combines this with community outreach work which I have discovered that I love doing.”

Female, completed doctorate in 2009, four year fixed-term contract

A number noted the duration of the contract had been one of the reasons for accepting where it provided longer term stability than previous contracts (11%). The prestige of the host institution or department also featured (8% mentioned) while a similar number gave reasons related to being able to work around family or personal commitments.

2.8.5 Reasons provided by ECRs on permanent contracts for taking current position

The main reason given by those on a permanent contract for taking their current position is that it is permanent and therefore offers stability. 51% mentioned this as their main reason for accepting the position. After this, reasons relate to allowing them to continue to work in their area of research interest (14%), the conditions offered by the contract (8%), or the experience it would give them to further develop their career (7%).

Some were less positive however, with 9% noting that it was the first or only position offered to them, with others prioritising the financial stability it offered even if it was not their first choice or ideal role. A small number, 3% (6 n), had accepted the role as a way to remain in academia. For example one respondent stated:

“End of previous contract. Took a 50% cut in salary in order to stay in academia.”

Male, completed doctorate in 2010, permanent contract as Lecturer, previously held three fixed-term contracts

Those with a permanent contract in a non-academic role in the higher education sector (12 respondents) mainly gave positively phrased reasons for taking up their current position. They spoke of the position providing more career options and scope for professional development; allowing them to continue in their chosen role in an academic setting; or providing creative autonomy. Other positives mentioned include providing stability while allowing time to develop academic publications; or to acquire the expertise to develop a non-academic career in higher education.

Of those who expressed the reasons in a more neutral or negative manner, this was mainly related to taking the position solely due to requiring an income and being unable to secure an academic job. For one it was a matter of visa compliance, requiring them to be employed by their sponsoring institution (which meant they could not pursue an academic career at another institution).

2.8.6 Reasons provided by ECRs not in the HE sector for taking current positions

Our survey also gathered the views of ECRs not in HE. The initial purpose was to gather the views of those who had made an active decision not to pursue a career in the higher education sector. However, the majority of those who responded (59 out of a total of 97 responses) had taken this path because they were unable to secure a job in the sector, and most wished to return if possible.

Some had left the sector because they had become disillusioned after completing their doctorate.

“No funding, no support, no opportunities, no advice – just left in the cold after finishing.”

Male, completed doctorate in 2005, self-employed

Another felt that to advance as an academic meant moving around the country to take up suitable posts, which was incompatible with a “*healthy family life*”. Others pointed to perceived constraints on funding and the requirements of the REF which impacted on the types of research that could be carried out and the application of that research to the “real world”.

Others were deterred by the lack of job security and a stable salary. Two respondents made specific reference to age-related concerns (that they were too old to be offered an academic post).

In cases where the respondents had made an active decision to take on a role outside higher education, due to positive reasons (in the case of 14 out of 97 responses) the main reasons given relate to a preference to operate beyond what they perceived as the constraints of the sector. They spoke of:

“better access to research resources in the corporate sector.”

Male, completed doctorate in 2012, employed by major US foundation

and of:

“learning and development [that is] much better supported and, surprisingly, I have much more freedom to do the tasks that I am interested in.”

Female, completed doctorate in 2011, working for private sector industrial company

In two cases respondents had returned to their existing area of practice outside academia, which had been their intention when undertaking their doctorate. Two others are using their experience for career development with the intention of returning to the higher education sector at some point (one of whom is currently working for a national charity, the other for an educational trust).

It should be noted that the group of respondents referred to as ECRs not in HE should not be regarded as representative of those who have made an active decision to pursue a career outside the higher education sector. The AHRC report²² by DTZ on career paths of AHRC funded doctoral students indicates reasonably high job satisfaction levels for those employed in other sectors, and the majority of respondents to that survey enjoyed their work and intended to remain in their current field and seek progression there.

Career portraits of a small number of key pathways based on interviews with four ECRs, looking at their career paths and motivations, knowledge of what establishing an academic career entails, and expectations for the future.

CASE STUDY 1

One ECR is currently on a part time, short, fixed-term contract as a post-doctoral researcher. She completed her undergraduate and Masters degree at the same institution, but with a year gap between as she was undecided about what to do next. Her Masters degree was also followed by a break of a few years. During this time she identified a cross disciplinary research topic and went on to complete a doctorate in this field. On completion, she obtained a six month fellowship, the purpose of which was to help launch a career in academia, and shortly after started in her current post. For financial reasons she also carries out two administrative jobs outside the academic sector.

This ECR had decided on a career in academia prior to her first degree, but reconsidered following her Masters. Her experience on her doctorate reignited her original intention, and she began to seek advice on what this might entail. She now realises that her real interest is to further her research rather than to work in the academic sector per se. Her current role has revealed opportunities to do this in the charitable or third sector and she is interested in identifying opportunities where she can use her research “in the real world”. She is also considering how she might be able to combine this with a post in the higher education sector.

To achieve this she is applying for longer term Research Fellowships, setting aside a day a week to focus on producing publications and identifying ways to build up her teaching profile. This is difficult to do in the context of carrying out the work she is contracted to do at the university alongside the other jobs she needs to maintain financial stability. Time is also required in which to complete applications to try to maintain continuity of employment, particularly over the summer months as she is currently reliant on short term contracts.

CASE STUDY 2

Another ECR we spoke to currently has funding for a 3-year post-doctoral researcher position in an interdisciplinary area. After completing her undergraduate degree she

22. *Career Paths of AHRC funded PhD students*, DTZ, October 2012

worked for a year in the public sector before applying for a Masters with the intention of pursuing a career in the cultural sector. While studying she recognised the overlap with the academic sector and came into contact with people who had her “ideal job” of working between the cultural sector and the higher education sector.

After doing well in her Masters she was encouraged by her university to apply for a doctorate, and began to seek advice on a career in the academic sector at this stage. As this coincided with the start of the recent economic recession it seemed an attractive option, particularly as roles within the cultural sector were very competitive. The doctorate seemed to offer opportunities to keep her practice base alive while gaining a qualification and expertise that would expand her career options. While working for her doctorate she carried out consultancy work that drew on her experience prior to her Masters and the cross sectoral aspects of her doctoral research. On completion of her doctorate she obtained her current position.

She now intends to remain in academia and pursue a career in the sector, and envisages the next stage of her career involving a further post-doctoral role, perhaps overseas, or a lectureship. To achieve this she is concentrating on publishing and is undertaking unpaid teaching work to develop her CV. She is also actively collaborating with others and developing her networks. This can entail working 50–70 hour weeks.

Although this current position is potentially contributing to career development and progression the fixed-term nature of the appointment impacts on plans for the future beyond work. It can also create conflicts between being ‘loyal’ to the research project (by completing the full term of the research contract) but facing the prospect of no continuing employment when it ends, or leaving to take up a permanent post elsewhere if this is offered. She feels that universities can expect loyalty from post-doctoral researchers but are not in a position to return that loyalty to the individual (in the form of continuity of employment) which places ECRs in a difficult position.

CASE STUDY 3

Our third ECR currently has a short fixed-term teaching only contract, which is his first academic post since completing his doctorate at a different institution. Although he has had a more or less straight trajectory from his undergraduate degree to his current position, his doctorate was completed at a different university to his Masters and he spent a year working outside the HE sector between Masters and doctorate before deciding it “was not for him”.

There was no moment when he decided that he wanted to pursue a career in the academic sector. He chose his undergraduate subject because he was good at it, but by his Masters he was certain that he wanted to teach and had the skills and capability to do so, and saw research and teaching as interdependent. He began to seek advice on a career in the sector prior to his doctorate.

He now realises that he knew very little about what establishing an academic career would entail, and although his understanding developed as he completed his doctorate even then he did not fully understand the “shape of academic life”.

His intention is to stay in the sector as long as is possible, but recognises that he may have to give up as he “has to eat” and it is not possible to plan for the future when the career path for new academics seems to involve a series of short term contracts that require the need to relocate. While this was not an issue for him previously it will become more difficult as he establishes a family life.

His current position, in which he is only hired to teach, does not allow time to develop a publication profile which is essential for career development. In practice, his Department is very helpful and tries to provide space in which to carry out research-related work or attend job interviews, but he does not envisage continuing at this institution once his contract ends as there is a lack of available positions.

CASE STUDY 4

The final case study ECR had the most straightforward trajectory to reach her current position as a Research Fellow (in the early stages of a four year contract). She has completed her undergraduate degree, Masters and doctorate at the same institution at which she currently holds a Fellowship, and has had no breaks between each stage.

She started to consider a career in academia during her Masters, and began to seek advice at this stage, but had held definite ideas of following another career while an undergraduate, and had chosen her degree to help achieve this. Her decision to stay on to complete a Masters was based on her enjoyment of the subject, and her subsequent decision to study for a doctorate was based on her enjoyment of her Masters. At this point she made a decision to see how far she could progress in academia while retaining her original plan at undergraduate level as her alternative (not fall back) career.

While her decision to follow a career in academia is based on enjoyment of her subject and of research, she was not aware of what it would require to establish a career in the sector. Although aware in terms of qualifications required, she was less informed about the requirements to publish and the need to have teaching and research experience to obtain a permanent position. She regards the Research Fellowship as a good step on her career path, but is aware obtaining a lectureship will not be easy.

To be able to progress with her career she is scanning relevant job adverts to identify the skills and experience needed so that she can work toward gaining these during the Fellowship. She feels she is “working for herself” and will need to organise the opportunities to gain experience, but feels this might be easier than for some of her contemporaries because of her continuous relationship with the university. She is also involved in the academic community on Twitter to find out about the experiences of others and to inform her career planning on what to do next.

2.9 Who is providing funding for contracts?

77 respondents held a Research Fellowship, and 65 reported holding funding from the following sources:

Table 6 – Research Fellowship funders

Source of funding for Research Fellowships	Number with funding
AHRC	5
ESRC	1
British Academy	19
Leverhulme Trust	8
Alexander von Humboldt Foundation	1
Mellon Foundation	2
US-UK Fulbright Commission	1
Non-UK Research Councils or Funds	3
EU Funds	6
Economic History Society	1
Institute for Historical Research	1
University or College	17

Most of the Research Fellows in the survey have funding from a UK research council or funder, followed by funding provided by the respondent's university or college.

Of the 405 respondents on fixed-term contracts, 52 report the following funders:

Source of funding for fixed-term contracts	Number with funding
AHRC	14
ESRC	1
British Academy	8
Leverhulme Trust	6
Wellcome Trust	3
Scottish Funding Council / Scottish Government	1
Heritage Lottery	1
Carlsberg Foundation	1
Mellon Foundation	2
Atlantic Philanthropies	1
EU Funds (Marie Curie & ERC)	6
German Academy of Science and Humanities	1
University or College	7

This reveals a range of funders, but may not be representative of funding sources in the sector as AHRC and British Academy contacts were used to promote the survey.

2.10 Career paths in the higher education sector

In the report to the AHRC on career paths of PhD students by DTZ, 20% of respondents had a previous career before starting their doctorate. In the Vitae report "*What do*

researchers want to do?” most respondents in the Arts and Humanities had entered postgraduate research either from employment or after having completed a Masters, which suggests a more diverse doctoral and post-doctoral community than in most other disciplines. However, according to the analysis in the Vitae report “*What do researchers do?*” almost 60% of Arts and Humanities doctoral graduate respondents to the LDHLE are employed in the higher education sector (higher than any other discipline except Social Sciences). 72% of the respondents to the AHRC study on PhD student career paths worked in a university. Therefore an academic career in the higher education sector seems to be the ambition for a majority of doctoral graduates.

Responses to our survey and interviews with ECRs does not suggest a model of an Arts and Humanities “contract researcher” (where a researcher chooses to hold a number of research posts which leads to an academic career or research career) such as can exist in the Sciences. Nor does it suggest that ECRs are necessarily looking for this type of career path.

The analysis of the reasons provided by ECRs on fixed-term contracts on why they took their current positions suggests that the respondents are more likely to give ‘negative’ reasons the more fixed-term contracts they have previously held and as more time elapses since they completed their doctorate. The reasons given by a majority of ECRs on permanent contracts suggest that their main aim was to obtain this permanent or open ended contract which will allow them to continue to work in the sector and to develop their research interests. ECRs on fixed-term contracts also suggested that they had accepted their current contracts to enable them to remain in academia while they applied for permanent positions. For the majority of respondents holding a permanent position related to their research interests is their main ambition.

“It is the best opportunity for me to develop a strong track record of post-doctoral research that will help me to secure a permanent post in the future!”

Male, completed doctorate in 2011, five previous fixed-term contracts, now on a Research Fellowship

ECRs on fixed-term contracts who have held only one other fixed-term contract previously tended to make reference to the career development opportunities offered by their current position when they gave positive reasons for taking the position. (60% of comments made reference to this, with the remainder referencing the fit with their research interests). Reference to career development tended to decrease the more fixed-term contracts an ECR had previously held. ECRs on fixed-term contracts with four or more previous contracts tended to provide reasons that referred to helping them obtain a permanent position and to carry on working in their area of research interest.

While a pattern of ECRs undertaking consecutive (and sometimes concurrent) fixed-term contracts does emerge the reasons for this tends to be primarily based on the need to maintain a certain level of income and some continuity of employment, rather than for career development and enhancement. The more fixed-term contracts an ECR in the survey has held, the more likely they were to speak of necessity in their reasons for accepting their current position.

Although there is some agreement amongst ECRs in our survey that post-doctoral positions are attractive in themselves and not just as potential stepping stones to permanent

academic positions it is not the prevailing view (48% of those on fixed-term contracts agree, and 33% of those with a permanent position). For this type of career path to be a success there needs to be continuity between contracts, and this does not appear to be the case based on responses from ECRs and research organisations involved in the research. Only 33% of respondents (11 universities) to the research organisation survey agreed that “organisational systems support continuity of employment for researchers, such as funding between grants, other schemes for supporting time between grant funding, or systems for redeploying researchers within organisations where resources allow”. This support in practice is through university redeployment policy which is available to all staff as they come to the end of their contracts, and are not ECR specific.

Examples are provided of actions taken by universities to try to ensure continuity of employment such as naming researchers in funding applications which ensures continuity where there is a successful outcome, and short term teaching appointments used to bridge gaps. One university reports that Faculties have an agreement to provide bridging funding up of to three months’ salary between contracts, where it is clear that further research funding to secure employment will be available.

From the ECRs’ point of view there is little agreement that systems are in place to support continuity of employment, with only 11% of those on fixed-term contracts stating that these exist. A comment from a respondent that encapsulates this view is:

“Although I have been lucky in that I have found one fixed-term contract after another, never spending more than a couple months unemployed, it is not entirely clear to me that each of these succession of posts actually leads towards a permanent post, or that they provide a series of logical steps in career development terms. Although taking them together I have been able to steer my experience into developing most key areas of my academic profile, each new post has been conceived as a stand-alone contract, and they have all, even the research fellowship, been geared more towards my satisfying the needs of the institution that hosted me or paid my salary than towards helping me develop into a well-rounded candidate for permanent positions.”

Male, completed doctorate in 2010, on fixed-term contract of 12 months or longer, has held four fixed-term contracts previously

3. How are early career researchers defined and identified?

There is no single definition of an “early career researcher” and often multiple definitions are in use in the same institution. Definitions are either based on a specific context (REF or research funder requirements) or related to particular types of employment contract. This has implications for the identification of ECRs within an organisation and the implementation of the Concordat.

In Section 4 we look at the support required and made available to ECRs for career development. Before addressing this it is important to look at how research organisations define an “early career researcher” and who qualifies or is recognised as such within the organisation. In our survey of research organisations we posed two questions on this topic:

1. How is an early career researcher defined at your organisation?
2. Who qualifies / is recognised as an early career researcher at your organisation (i.e. what types and range of roles and positions)?

No single definition emerged from the responses and most organisations did not have an official or generally agreed definition, often noting that it depended on context. In some cases respondents from the same organisation gave differing definitions.

A number made reference to the REF definition²³ or the AHRC or RCUK definitions of an ECR. Some responded in terms of the number of years since completion of a doctorate and others stated that the definition was related to particular contract types or job roles, in some cases limited to those on research only contracts. A selection of responses is provided below.

“We use the RCUK and FP7²⁴ (Horizon 2020²⁵) definitions.”

Dean of Research

“We have no fixed definition for all purposes. The REF definition would serve in some cases. Standard probation for teaching and research posts is three

23. Defined in paragraphs 85 and 86 in Part 3: Data Requirements and Definitions of REF2014 Assessment framework and guidance on submissions (REF 02.2011) <http://www.ref.ac.uk/pubs/2011-02/#d.en.69578>

24. 7th EU Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development (funding from 2007 to 2013)

25. Horizon 2020 is an EU Research and Innovation programme (funding from 2014 to 2020).

years, and we would certainly regard all probationers as ECRs, but we recognise that in practice ECR status doesn't end abruptly. Staff on temporary contracts would usually be regarded as ECRs. In practice, all academic staff on research contracts, and all those on teaching contracts who have not yet been promoted to Senior Lecturer, would be treated as ECRs for most purposes."

Head of Department

"Good question! I don't think there is an agreed definition. This was discussed recently and the definition was agreed that it would be someone taking up their first position (usually a post-doc) after their PhD. However, there was heated debate about this and a feeling that people in a second or third research position post-PhD (but not in a permanent or independent role) would also qualify."

Career Adviser

"There is no official definition, but generally we mean researchers who are post-PhD but not yet in an academic role (such as Lecturer). We do not define career stage in terms of age or years post-PhD."

Careers Adviser for Post-docs in Arts and Humanities

The following three definitions are from respondents in the same institution:

"The term is a bit of a slippery one and it depends on the context in which it is being used and who is using it. Sometimes it will be used to refer to Research Only Staff on particular grades and new Lecturers on particular grades ... on probation. Sometimes this will be expanded to include PGRs²⁶ and other times it will only refer to Research Only staff on particular grades."

Head of Researcher Development

"We would regard them as colleagues who are on researcher-only contracts, typically post-docs, associate research fellows, research fellows. Terminology is not terribly helpful here because of course in REF terms 'early career researcher' means something else – staff who have entered their first academic contract in the REF period and are therefore able to return fewer than four items."

Associate Dean for Research and Knowledge Transfer, Humanities

"In terms of salary grade"

ECR Career coach

Similarly, these definitions are from respondents from within one institution:

"Any member of staff (permanent or fixed-term contract) that has completed his PhD less than five years ago."

Professor

"We do not have a strict, single definition of an ECR, but this is normally taken to be some immediately or recently post-PhD, and possibly – for academic staff – working under probation."

Dean for Research

“There is no strict definition. The most important definition has been that in relation to REF where the definition has implications for submission to the exercise. However, this has certain features which would not meet with a common-sense definition such as the time based one used by AHRC.”

Head of School

Generally institutions reported that ECRs are individuals on contracts that require research to be carried out. This includes positions such as Post-doctoral Fellow, Research Fellow and Research Assistant. New lecturers are also often included in this group, although it is not stated whether this includes individuals on fixed-term as well as permanent or open-ended contracts.

In some cases those in their first teaching post may be included (even when this does not necessarily include research activities) and some report that any member of staff (on permanent or fixed-term contract) who has completed a doctorate within a certain timeframe can be considered an ECR. In two cases institutions reported that they enable individuals to “self-identify” as “research staff” or “early career researcher”.

3.1 What does this mean in practice?

We used the interviews with a subset of the institutions in the survey to probe what recognition as an ECR meant in practice. At one university those on ‘3-legged’ contracts (research, teaching and administration) and those on research grant contracts are eligible for a full range of formal support, which is provided on a contractual basis and the individuals are formally monitored. This is the case whether the contract is permanent or fixed-term.

However, the university recognises that those on teaching only contracts may regard themselves as ECRs and have ambitions to develop their career to include research, and so these individuals are eligible for ‘informal support’. This includes mentoring and access to research support team services, but there is no contractual basis for this. The rationale for not putting this on a contractual basis is to enable the university to support individuals towards their goal of being a researcher and to develop their staff, but without placing an expectation that they must carry out research for which they are not being paid.

Even in this case individuals working at the university on a ‘casual’ basis would not have access to structured development support as they would be unlikely to be identified as an ECR. Another university noted that it circulates details by email of support for ECRs to everyone in the university. But even this approach requires that a recipient has a university email address, which is not guaranteed for those employed on a ‘casual’ basis.

The interviews with universities suggested that post-doctoral researchers hoping to establish their careers but who are not on a research grant or research related contract may fall through the gaps, even when universities actively try to make support available to as large a group as possible. For example, contact information used to circulate details about what support is available often comes from HR, and in the interviews we carried out, contract type was used as the means of identification, rather than whether an individual had obtained a doctorate within a certain time frame.

The Concordat defines researchers as “*individuals whose primary responsibility is to conduct research and who are employed for this purpose*” also recognising that they can be on a range of contracts (“*fixed or open-ended, full or part time*”). The experience of ECR respondents to our survey suggests that there may be a disjoint between the support offered to those who are employed as researchers (in that they hold a contract at a university or other research organisation that defines them as such) and those who identify themselves as such, but may not currently hold a contract that defines them as researchers within an institution.

Interviews with ECRs revealed that they sometimes feel unsure about their position in the university, and whether they are eligible for the support offered. One interviewee noted that she did not feel included in formal structures. She is aware that the university is setting up a programme for ECRs but is not sure if she meets the eligibility criteria, being on a fixed-term fractional contract (although our interview with the university suggests that she would be). This uncertainty was echoed by another ECR at the same university on a permanent teaching-only contract who receives informal support from his Head of Department, but is unsure about access to formal support. This may be related to a perceived lack of integration into the institution’s research community. The CROS 2011 report showed that fewer respondents who had held five or more contracts with their current institution felt integrated with their communities. 59% of all respondents felt integrated with their institution’s research community.

APPROACHES TO IDENTIFY ECRS WITHIN INSTITUTIONS

CASE STUDY 1

A university described how it is putting in mechanisms to enhance support for researchers, so that it spans from doctoral students to senior researchers. The institution realised at the outset of this work that it was unable to identify who within the organisation was an early career researcher. To address this they revised the HR database to add a check box for an “ECR”. All staff on academic contracts of 0.2 FTE and above were then contacted by email, requesting that they log in to the HR system and ‘tick’ the ECR box if they wanted to be identified as such. A list was generated of those that had self-identified which was cross checked and approved by the Directors of Research. This is an iterative process to ensure that all relevant staff have been contacted, and that new staff are offered the opportunity to self-identify when they join. Individuals identified as ECRs automatically receive email notifications of the support available to them.

CASE STUDY 2

A Faculty covering Arts and Humanities is in the process of developing a new programme to support ECRs through access to training to broaden their skill set and help them consider their career options more broadly. Identifying those who might benefit is driven by provision of details from the HR database of staff on permanent or fixed-term research contracts (including those on research fellowships). Staff employed on teaching only contracts however would not be identified through this process, even though they would benefit from the support offered. Following discussion of this during the interview for this study the project manager is reconsidering ways to address this, although any financial implications will need to be taken into consideration.

4. Support provided and required

ECRs in the higher education sector regard “advice with preparing grant applications”, “time to publish”, and “mentorship” as the support most beneficial to career development.

Over half of the ECR respondents in the HE sector did not feel fully informed of the training and development opportunities available to them, notwithstanding the significant provision in many institutions.

ECRs in the HE sector employed in research or research and teaching roles feel better supported in pursuing an academic career that involves research than those employed in teaching only or non-academic roles. They are also more likely to report that they have access to a mentor, have regular formal progress and review meetings, and have access to advice to equip them with the tools to manage their careers. This suggests that while steps are being taken to implement the Concordat for Researchers, recognition of who is a researcher is somewhat limited, and so does not necessarily help those that may be in most need of such support.

Time constraints due to heavy workloads, lack of allocated ‘paid for’ time or commitments to other concurrently held jobs mean that ECRs on fixed-term contracts are frequently not able to take advantage of support offered. Therefore increasing the amount of support available will not necessarily mean that those most in need will be able to benefit from what is offered.

4.1 How informed do ECRs feel about the training and development opportunities available to them?

ECRs in the HE sector were asked in the survey whether they felt fully informed about the training and development opportunities available to develop their career. (For those on permanent or open-ended contracts the question was phrased to ask about whether they had felt fully informed prior to obtaining their current position).

Table 7 – Do ECRs feel fully informed of the training and development opportunities available to them to develop their career?

	ECRs on fixed-term contracts	ECRs on permanent contracts
Yes	40.0%	44.0%
No	39.8%	40.2%
Don't know	20.3%	15.8%
Number	543	241

Of those on a fixed-term contract, only 40% feel fully informed, while only a slightly larger percentage of ECRs on a permanent contract had felt fully informed (44%). So this does not suggest that those who have obtained a permanent position have done so because they had better access to information. An initial analysis indicated that a smaller percentage of female ECRs feel fully informed compared to their male counterparts (39% of female ECRs on fixed-term contracts compared with 42% of male ECRs). As has been reported earlier, in Section 2.3, a greater proportion of female respondents in this group hold fractional contracts, and so this may account for the difference, as they may have less access to sources of information. However, there is a similar result for female ECRs on permanent contracts to the question “prior to obtaining your current (permanent) position, did you feel fully informed of the training and development opportunities available to you for your career development”. 43% of female respondents answered yes, compared with 48% of male respondents.

It is not possible from the survey results to reach a conclusion on whether there are other factors that may account for this difference. However, comments related to whether respondents felt they were able to take full advantage of support offered suggests that for both male and female respondents time constraints related to carrying out contracted work alongside making applications for permanent positions and trying to publish made it difficult to take full advantage of support when made available.

4.2 When do ECRs begin to seek advice on pursuing an academic career?

61% of ECRs on permanent contracts began to seek advice on pursuing an academic career prior to or at the start of their doctorate compared to 43% of ECRs on a fixed-term contract. Both groups report that, in the majority of cases, advice was available to them at this stage. This perhaps suggests that those on a permanent contract have been more proactive in finding out what establishing an academic career requires and so are better equipped to plan their career. They also have more time in which to begin positioning themselves for an academic career (such as developing publications and networks). A larger proportion of male ECRs on fixed term contracts stated that they began to seek advice prior to or at the start of their doctorate than did their female counterparts (a 6% difference between groups). However, the proportion of male and female ECRs on permanent contracts who sought advice at this stage was comparable at around 60%.

4.3 What support is regarded as beneficial?

The support most ECRs in the higher education sector regard as beneficial is:

1. Advice with preparing grant applications
2. Time to publish
3. Mentorship

‘Advice on where to publish’ is also regarded as beneficial by over 50% of respondents, and comments made in the survey suggest that ECRs feel a pressure to publish and value advice that would help them to make the best decisions on how to go about this.

The academic career advisor is very good with applying for academic jobs. However I need advice about publishing and writing outside of the support of a tenured institutional position.

Female, completed doctorate in 2013, on fixed-term contract less than 12 months as Associate Lecturer

There is some variation across different groups depending on contract type or employment status, and between male and female ECRs, as Table 8 below illustrates. However, “advice with preparing grant applications” and “time to publish” are regarded by all groups as the most beneficial support.

Table 8 – Variations by contract type and gender

What each sub group regard as beneficial	1	2	3
All respondents in HE	Advice preparing grant applications 71.7%	Time to publish 70.3%	Mentorship 52.9%
Fractional fixed-term	Time to publish 76.6%	Advice preparing grant applications 75.0%	Funding to publish 58.1%
Fractional permanent	Advice preparing grant applications 71.0%	Time to publish 71.0%	Mentorship 64.5%
Fixed-term under 12 mths	Advice preparing grant applications 75.6%	Time to publish 67.2%	Funding to publish 56.3%
Fixed-term over 12 mths	Advice preparing grant applications 77.3%	Time to publish 77.3%	Mentorship 58.7%
Research Fellowship	Advice preparing grant applications 77.9%	Time to publish 72.7%	Regular feedback or appraisal 55.8%
Female fixed-term	Advice preparing grant applications 80.2%	Time to publish 73.7%	Mentorship 54.2%
Male fixed-term	Advice preparing grant applications 69.9%	Time to publish 69.9%	Regular feedback or appraisal 53.1%
Female Permanent	Time to publish 73.2%	Advice preparing grant applications 69.7%	Advice on where to publish 59.2%
Male Permanent	Time to publish 80.5%	Advice preparing grant applications 72.4%	Regular feedback or appraisal 55.2%

The support regarded as beneficial ties in with the concerns expressed about careers (discussed in Section 5 below) which for ECRs on a fixed-term contract relate to obtaining a permanent or open-ended contract and the uncertainty caused by fixed-term contracts, along with the pressure and requirement to publish. For those on a permanent contract, concerns are mainly around career development and a workload that makes it difficult to develop their research. Therefore support to build a publication portfolio and attract research funds can help to address these concerns.

Overall, more female respondents regard mentorship as beneficial than do their male counterparts, more of whom regard “regular feedback and appraisal” as being of benefit. Respondents considered mentorship as a means of accessing impartial advice on career development that is not related to a research project. This includes advice on papers and grant applications in development and advice on where to publish. Having a mentor assigned seems to make individuals feel they are sanctioned to ask for advice, as some comments suggest respondents are reluctant to place what they regard as additional demands on already busy senior colleagues.

“I have a mentor at my current workplace which I find very useful. The arrangement provides time and space to discuss my professional development with a senior member of faculty.”

Female, completed doctorate in 2010, on fixed-term contract less than 12 months as Teaching Fellow

However, there is recognition that mentorship requires support at a local level for it to be effective, particularly when those assigned as a mentor have other commitments on their time.

“Mentorship – but it has been poorly supported at a local level. For example, my direct boss told me he thought it was a waste of time.”

Female, completed doctorate in 2009, on 15 month fixed-term contract as post-doctoral researcher

“I have been assigned a Mentor now that I am a lecturer, but he is so busy with admin commitments that he hasn't even acknowledged my e-mail.”

Female, completed doctorate in 2009, permanent contract as Lecturer

A number of respondents referred to mentorship in a fairly informal sense, being provided by the supervisor of their doctorate and other (senior or otherwise) colleagues, rather than via a mentor assigned to them with a specific role.

“Individuals (especially senior academics) are often helpful when asked for advice, but this is rarely formalised.”

Male, completed doctorate in 2008, permanent contract as lecturer

ECRs on fractional fixed-term contracts and fixed-term contracts under 12 months regard “funding to publish” as more beneficial than mentorship. The survey did not provide a definition of what ‘funding to publish’ might consist of in this context and so respondents may interpret this in different ways. Where respondents made comments that refer to this type of support they suggest they see it as a form of bridging funding to enable them to publish immediately post-doctorate. One respondent made reference to the benefits of a publishing fellowship. As those on fractional contracts often have to undertake a number of jobs to maintain an income, funding to publish could help provide the ‘breathing space’ to concentrate on becoming published. Funding to publish is also regarded as beneficial by those on fixed-term contracts of less than 12 months, possibly to provide financial support between contracts while they build their publication profile.

“I would have benefitted from funding to publish my work and begin my next project immediately after my PhD, instead of doing several part-time jobs to make ends meet while I applied for jobs. Indeed, I would still benefit from funding to take time to do my own research and backlog of publishing (i.e. not that of the project I'm attached to).”

Female, completed doctorate in 2011, on a four year and six months contract as a post-doctoral researcher

More ECRs on a permanent contract regarded access to networking opportunities as beneficial than those with other contract types, particularly those on fractional permanent contracts. Comments suggest that networking opportunities are useful for the development of grant applications, identifying potential research collaborators, for information on job opportunities and as sources of advice on developing a publication strategy. Comments

from ECRs on permanent contracts suggest that networks have been self-developed and that ECRs have been proactive in establishing these as an expected part of their role.

A small number of ECRs on fixed-term contracts expressed concern that not having or being part of a network of academics could reduce their chances of obtaining a position, and that their occupational circumstances make it difficult to spend time to create or become part of networks. There seems to be evidence that ECRs are using social media as a networking tool as Section 4.7 illustrates.

4.4 What support are research organisations providing?

Our survey of research organisations asked what support they provided to ECRs.

Table 9 – Support provide by universities

	Available to all ECR as defined by AHRC	Available only to individuals in specific roles	No answer
1 Advice with preparing grant applications	97%	0	3%
2 Development of management skills	72.7%	15.2%	12.1%
3 Regular feedback or appraisal	90.9%	3%	6.1%
4 Development of time management skills	78.8%	6.1%	15.2%
5 Media training	63.3%	12.1%	24.2%
6 Access to networking opportunities	87.9%	0	12.1%
7 Training in teaching	78.8%	12.1%	9.1%
8 Time to publish	66.7%	15.2%	18.2%
9 Funding to publish	42.4%	27.3%	30.3%
10 Advice on where to publish	78.8%	3.0%	18.2%
11 Dedicated time for research	63.6%	21.2%	15.2%
12 Training in managing budgets	39.4%	24.2%	36.4%
13 Mentorship	75.8%	12.1%	12.1%
14 Advice on careers outside academia	69.7%	6.1%	24.2%

All universities except one stated that “advice with preparing grant applications” is made available to “all ECRs as defined by the AHRC”. “Time to publish” is less widely available, with 67% stating it is available to “all ECRs as defined by the AHRC” and 15% stating support is “available only to individuals in certain roles”, and 18% not responding. “Advice on where to publish” is more widely available, as the table shows, although again 18% did not answer. The responses from ECRs suggest that this support is largely made available informally, and so researchers are reliant on relationships with their supervisor / line manager or other academics in their department.

The findings suggest that “regular feedback and appraisal” is more widely available than “mentorship” which may disadvantage female ECRs who see mentorship as a more beneficial form of support.

Although universities state that they provide regular feedback or appraisal, this is not particularly highly rated by respondents, which may reflect the way appraisals are

conducted in practice. In interviews with ECRs the general consensus was that although regular feedback and appraisal was carried out it did not seem to have much impact on a day to day basis, and not much was done to put the discussions and decisions into practice. Where appraisals take place they tend to be “light touch” or a “paper exercise” and not really concerned with staff development. Agreed actions are not always followed up and there are no sanctions if these do not take place. Some interviewees noted that they needed to be proactive in following up appraisals but that their uncertain position in the organisation did not always mean that they felt empowered to do this. There was also the issue of time in which to do so, as they tend to use their ‘spare time’ to concentrate on being published to improve their chances of securing a permanent position.

“Most of this support [identified as beneficial] has been made available, but as a new teacher, with new modules to write and only limited time to take advantage of these opportunities I have not really been able to do training or complete grant applications.”

Male, completed doctorate in 2011, on a 12 month fixed-term fractional contract as Teaching Fellow

The support provided also needs to be seen in the context of the earlier discussion of who is regarded as an ECR, which suggested that individuals on teaching only contracts and / or hourly paid may not have full access to this support as they fall outside the definition. Universities report variations in support available across the organisation or across grades and contracts, for example:

“It depends what support is referred to. Sometimes it might include Research Only staff on particular grades and Lecturers on Education and Research contracts but exclude those on Lecturing contracts in Education and Scholarship roles. Other times it might only refer to those on certain grades in the Lecturing job families or just in the E&R Lecturer job family or to those just in Research Only roles.”

Head of Researcher Development, Russell Group University 1

Research organisation respondents differentiated between formal and informal support offered.

“We provide informal support to all Early Career Researchers within our community, however formal support is provided to ECRs as relevant to roles that they are employed to undertake. ECRs who are employed on teaching only contracts are not formally supported as they are not contracted to undertake research, however they are supported informally to develop their research profile.”

Research Support Partner, Russell Group University 2

ECRs may not be automatically provided with time to work on their own publications.

“I’m not sure that temporary college teaching officers are given ‘dedicated’ time for research. Similarly, I think that RAs working on research projects under the direction of a PI will have to negotiate time or funding to publish their own independent work. Anecdotally, I believe that some departments offer more guidance on publishing than others – but this is not contingent on any individual’s role.”

Careers Adviser for Post-docs, Russell Group University 3

Support can also vary between Departments in devolved institutions.

“For roles read ‘departments’ – support is devolved and so what is available to an individual may depend on what is offered by their department or division.”

Humanities Training Officer, Russell Group University 4

4.5 Did ECRs succeed in obtaining this support?

The majority of ECRs did feel that they were able to take advantage of the support offered, although a sizable proportion did not (44% of those on a fixed-term contract). There were no differences in the results for male and female ECRs.

The reasons given for not being able to take advantage of the support offered in most cases was due to time constraints (154 out of 257 comments referred to a lack of time due to workload, or a need to carry out other work to provide an income).

“There is such a lot of information out there, but I don’t have the time to sit there and work through it. I have to earn money to survive, there’s no spare time.”

Female, completed doctorate in 2012, on fixed-term contracts less than 12 months as Research Associate, Module Leader and Lecturer

For those on fractional or hourly paid contracts the scheduling of support, such as training events, when they had teaching commitments or were carrying out work outside the university meant that they were often unable to attend. Other respondents also reported that they felt the support offered was sometimes too generic to be of any value, and that they were looking for more subject specific advice, such as where to publish for example.

This suggests that increasing the amount and type of support available, or improving communication of what is available will not necessarily mean that all ECRs are able to take advantage if the time constraints remain.

4.6 Where do ECRs look for career advice and guidance?

We asked who ECRs looked to for the provision of career advice and guidance.

Table 10 – Sources of advice

	ECRs on a fixed-term contract	ECRs on a permanent contract
Other academics	85.3%	78.4%
Your peers	70.2%	68.5%
Doctoral supervisor	62.9%	76.3%
Careers Service at university	25.0%	19.5%
Research funders	12.9%	8.3%
Vitae	12.5%	9.1%
Human Resources	3.1%	1.2%

These results are comparable to those in CROS 2011, where the majority of respondents in that survey would consult third parties in academic roles for training and career development needs. In that survey around a quarter consulted career advisers and 7% HR specialists.

Therefore, ECRs mainly look to academics for career advice and guidance, including doctoral supervisors and their peers. In those cases where respondents stated that they looked to “others” when they specified who these were, almost all were academics. This suggests that unless academics with a line management or supervisory role are given a formal responsibility to provide this support in an already pressurised environment, then ECRs will have to rely on the good will of individuals. This could lead to an uneven playing field in terms of who receives advice and the quality of the advice provided.

Career Services are also a focus, as is Vitae to a limited extent, but very few ECRs look to Research Funders or Human Resources for career advice and guidance.

There are some minor differences between results for male and female respondents, most noticeably in the proportion of female ECR who look to Vitae (15% of female ECRs on fixed term contracts and 11% on permanent contracts, compared with 9% and 7% respectively for male ECR respondents). Otherwise, the top three sources are the same as the survey overall, although the largest percentage of female ECRs on permanent contracts looked to their doctoral supervisor for advice (76%), while the largest percentage of male ECRs on permanent contracts looked to other academics (85%).

Research organisations that took part in the survey suggested that they could best support ECRs to develop their careers through the provision of mentorship and coaching, which aligns with the requirements of a large proportion of ECRs (particularly those on fixed-term or fractional contracts). This also ties in with ECRs looking to other academics for advice and guidance. One university suggested that research funders could encourage grant applicants to pay more heed to including realistic costs for researcher development in their submissions. Another suggested that individuals who genuinely value the importance of supporting ECRs’ careers should be placed in roles that require this oversight.

Research organisations also mentioned provision of funding, for example in the form of teaching “buy out” to provide time for research and work on publications. One university we spoke to in interview funds 50 hours of teaching remission for ECRs in the first two years of their academic contract (research and/or teaching as the primary function) at the university.

In almost all cases however, the research organisations stated that limited financial resource was the main barrier to their organisation providing further support, while some mentioned the limited available time of established academic staff to dedicate to career development support.

4.7 Use of social media and the web

ECRs in the HE sector do report making use of social media and the web, and ECRs on fixed-term contracts were more likely to make use of these sources.

Table 11 – Do you / did you make use of social media or web sources?

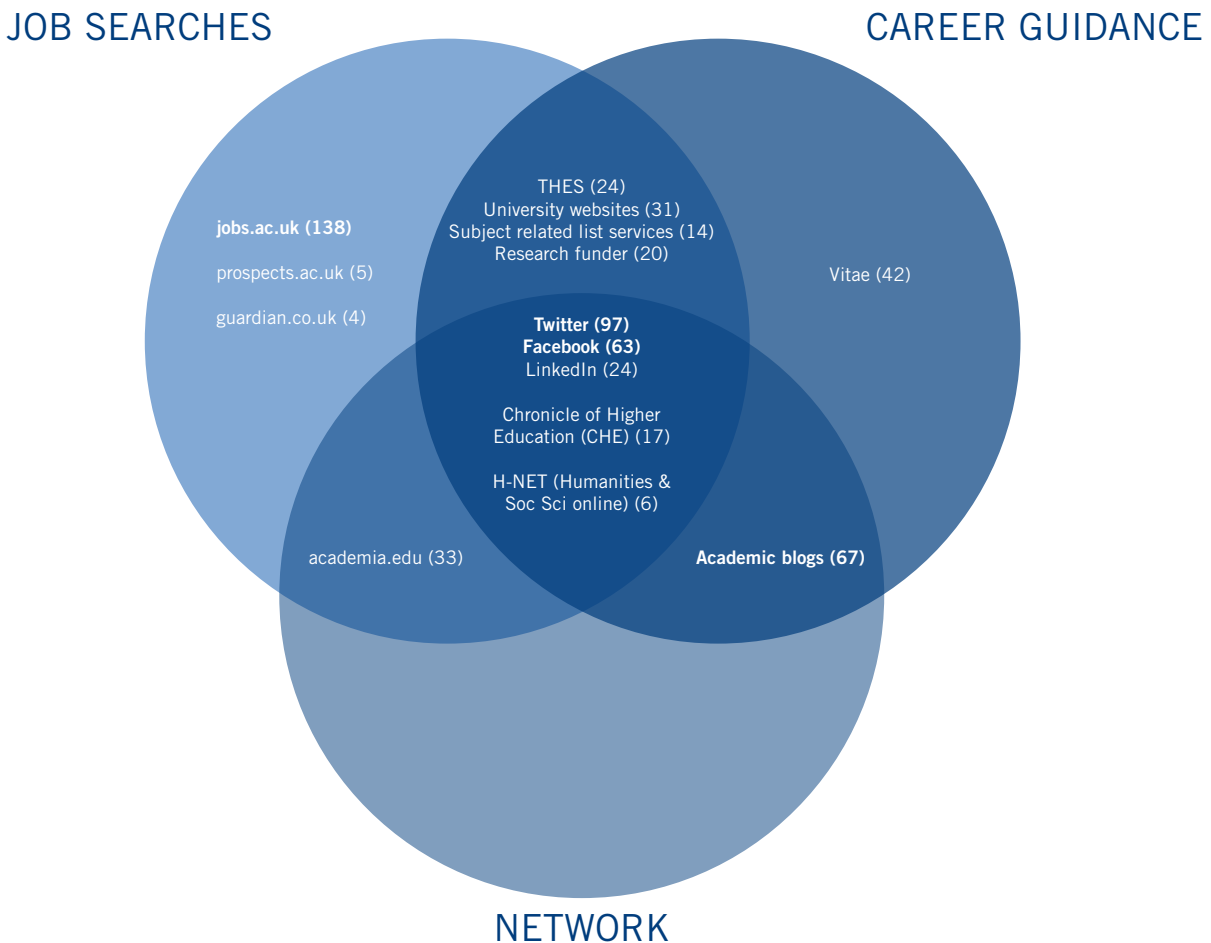
	ECRs on fixed-term contracts	ECRs on permanent contract
Yes	65.25%	42.3%
No	34.75%	57.7%
Number	541	241

The main source mentioned is *jobs.ac.uk* which reflects ECRs on fixed-term contracts’ search for a permanent position or continuity of employment. Other sources mentioned most frequently are Twitter, blogs by academics, and Facebook. These sources seem to be a way of networking, keeping abreast of what is happening in the sector and of gaining an insight into the experiences of other ECRs.

“I think social media broadly gives you a good insight into academia and is definitely a strong method for networking and collaborating. Twitter is very helpful to share and gain opportunities cross discipline so that’s the easiest way I see to combat the interdisciplinary battle. LinkedIn is good to find contacts. Social bookmarking is also handy.”

Female, completed doctorate in 2013, on a 12 month fixed-term contract as a Research Associate

The sources used, grouped by main purpose is illustrated in the diagram below, with the number of times the source was mentioned in brackets.



5. Concordat implementation

Respondents to the research organisation survey fell into three broad groups of 'Academics', 'Career advisers and staff developers', and 'Management'. Those in the 'Academic' group, including those with a role in supporting ECRs, seemed least well informed about the Concordat and how it is implemented at their institution. While 'Career advisers and staff developers' seem better informed, ECRs tend to look to fellow academics for career advice and guidance. This suggests institutions should consider how research staff can be encouraged to engage more with career advisers and staff developers, and how more academics can be better informed about support and options available for ECRs.

ECRs perceptions and experiences of support they receive and how they are valued and recognised does not match the assertions of the research organisations. ECRs were less likely to agree with statements in the survey drawn from the Concordat principles. This is the case even for ECRs on permanent or open-ended research-related contracts. Although steps are being taken to implement the Concordat, the benefits have not yet reached all ECRs. ECRs on fixed-term or teaching only contracts, who aspire to a research-related position, are least likely to feel they are valued, recognised and supported. This may relate to how ECRs are identified and defined within an institution.

5.1 Variations across type of respondent

The surveys of research organisations and of ECRs asked questions related to the Principles in the *Concordat to Support the Development of Researchers*. The survey of research organisations specifically asked how the Concordat was implemented in the Arts and Humanities at their organisation.

Respondents to the research organisation survey fell into three broad groups with approximately the same number of respondents in each group. These are:

- 'Academics' including lecturers, professors and Heads of Departments with line management, supervisory or mentoring responsibilities for ECRs.
 - 'Career advisers and staff developers', who offer career guidance, coordinate career support and deliver researcher development programmes and activities.
 - 'Management', although also academics this group included Deans and Directors of Research or Deans of Arts and Humanities faculties. As would be expected this group has strategic level involvement, and lead initiatives and policy development, or have general oversight of ECRs.
-

We have differentiated in this way as there are identifiable differences between how these groups respond to questions related to the Concordat. In response to the question on how the Concordat is implemented, 'Academic' respondents seemed less aware of its existence and implementation than the two other groups. Of the eleven respondents in this group three did not answer, two responded that they didn't know or hadn't heard of the Concordat, a further two that they could not find or did not know the documentation that underpinned the implementation. Only in one case did a respondent refer to a particular programme that aimed to support the implementation of the Concordat's principles.

We also asked if the support that an Arts and Humanities ECR can expect to receive is captured in any policy or procedure. Only three of the 'Academic' group answered 'yes' and gave examples (specifically, REF5 Environment template, university Research Strategy, probationary lecturer documentation, and the Concordat). Respondents in the 'Career advisers and staff developers' and 'Management' group made reference to:

- Concordat Action Plans and associated review and monitoring mechanisms.
- University policies and procedures that “embed” the Concordat principles.
- Work carried out to apply for the HR Excellence in Research Award.
- Specific institutional programmes to support researchers.

Responses therefore suggest that knowledge of the Concordat (and therefore also the support offered and what researchers can expect) is less well-developed amongst academic staff. While this is understandable, it is those individuals that will have day-to-day contact with ECRs through their roles as supervisors, mentors or colleagues. Our survey of ECRs indicated that this is the group that ECRs look to for career advice and guidance, with only around a quarter using the university Career Service.

The CROS 2011 report also revealed that the majority of respondents would consult their Principal Investigator, line manager or colleagues about training and development and career planning. A far lower proportion would consult a career adviser about training and development (23%) or career planning (31%). The CROS report recommended that institutions should consider how they can encourage research staff to engage more with staff developers and career advisers. We suggest this might include ways in which they can ensure academics with responsibilities for ECRs are better informed of what staff developers and career advisers can offer, and the benefits of these to ECRs. This may require some form of incentive or formal agreement, as respondents to the PIRL survey²⁷ when asked which activities are important in helping research staff become effective future research leaders, only 21% thought that “providing career development advice” was very important, with 25% regarding this as not very or not at all important.

5.2 Implementation in the Arts and Humanities

Responses from research organisations suggested that the implementation of the Concordat is cross-institutional and researchers in the Arts and Humanities are treated in the same way as researchers in other disciplines. The published analysis of CROS

27. *Principal Investigators and Research Leaders Survey (PIRLS) 2011: UK Aggregate results, Vitae, 2011*

2011 in relation to the Concordat does not differentiate by discipline, but it may be worth investigating whether it is possible to do this to understand whether Arts and Humanities researchers are benefitting comparably to researchers in other disciplines. As researchers in the Arts and Humanities can have quite different backgrounds and be in quite different positions, there may be a requirement for differentiated support.

The 2013 report from Vitae on *'What do Researchers do?'* also indicates that a higher proportion of researchers in the Arts and Humanities are employed on short, fixed-term contracts or are working part time than researchers in other disciplines, and this may impact considerably on their access to support for career development, as our findings in the following sections indicate.

5.3 Do institutions' and ECRs' idea of what support is provided agree? Policy versus practice

To understand whether research organisations' perceptions of the implementation of the Concordat's principles matches ECRs' perceptions and experiences of how they are supported we asked respondents to both surveys the extent to which they agreed with a series of statements drawn from the Concordat. In the tables and discussion below we compare responses from the universities with those of the ECRs.

5.3.1 Recognition and value

Table 12 below compares the percentage of respondents who agreed with statements drawn from the Concordat relating to Principle 2 on recognition and value.

Table 12 – Statements relating to Principle 2

Principle 2 – Researchers are recognised and valued by their employing organisation as an essential part of their organisation's human resources and a key component of their overall strategy to develop and deliver world-class research.					
Statements in the research organisation survey	RO survey respondents % Agree	Statements in the ECRs survey	All ECRs in HE sector % Agree	ECRs on permanent research related contracts % Agree	ECRs on fixed-term research related contracts % Agree
Steps are taken to ensure that the development of researchers is consistent, irrespective of contract	58%				
Researchers are recognised and valued as an essential part of our human resources	85%	Post-doctoral researchers are recognised and valued by my current organisation as an essential part of the organisation's human resources	35%	34%	40%
Researchers are a key component of our overall strategy to develop and deliver world-class research	91%	Post-doctoral researchers are recognised and valued by my current organisation as a key component of their overall strategy to develop and deliver world-class research	39%	40%	44%
Research managers participate in active performance management, including career development guidance and supervision of those who work in their teams	67%				

Researchers have regular formal progress and review meetings, that focus on their wider career and personal development	64%	I have regular formal progress and review meetings that focus on my wider career and personal development beyond the current project	28%	45%	26%
Organisational systems support continuity of employment for researchers, such as funding between grants, other schemes for supporting time between grant funding, or systems for redeploying researchers within organisations where resources allow	33%	The organisation has systems in place to support continuity of employment for researchers, such as funding between grants, other schemes for supporting time between grant funding, or systems for redeploying researchers where resources allow	14%	24%	12%
Promotion opportunities are transparent, effectively communicated and open to all staff	70%	Promotion opportunities are clear and effectively communicated	30%	39%	13%
Clear career frameworks for early career researchers are outlined in our HR strategies	30%				

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the majority of research organisation respondents agreed that researchers were recognised and valued as an essential part of their human resources, and as a key component in developing and delivering world class research. ECRs however were less likely to agree that they are valued in this way.

We present the responses of ECRs on permanent contracts (who are involved in research or research and teaching, hereafter referred to as ‘research-related’) as a separate group from ECRs on fixed-term research-related contracts. Although in most other respects ECRs on permanent research-related contracts were most likely to agree with the statements, in this case a smaller proportion agreed that post-doctoral researchers are recognised and valued as an essential part of the organisation’s human resources than did ECRs on fixed-term-research related contracts.

The reasons for this may be that those on fixed-term contracts include Research Fellows who may feel valued and recognised due to the prestige that a Research Fellowship can bring to a Department. In fact, when looked at as a separate group, 49% of Research Fellows agreed that “post-doctoral researchers are recognised and valued by my organisation as an essential part of the organisation’s human resources” and 60% agreed that “post-doctoral researchers are recognised and valued ... as a key component to develop and deliver world class research”. ECRs on permanent contracts expressed concerns relating to pressure to bring in research funding and the teaching and administrative workload which may affect how valued they feel by the organisation.

“The extent to which I will find the time and suitable environment in which to pursue my research fully, without being overwhelmed by the demands of teaching.”

Female, completed doctorate in 2013, on permanent contract as a lecturer, describing concerns for the future

“There is a lot of pressure to raise research money (for its own sake).”

Female, completed doctorate in 2009, on permanent contract as a lecturer

When it comes to more practical aspects of value and recognition such as progress and review meetings or systems to support continuity of employment ECRs on research-related

permanent contracts were more likely to agree that these are in place than ECRs on fixed-term research-related contracts (although in both cases the percentage agreeing is low) as Table 1.2 illustrates. Correspondingly, only 33% of respondents from research organisations agreed that there are organisational systems that support continuity of employment for researchers, and only 30% agreed that clear frameworks for ECRs are outlined in HR strategies.

We asked universities to provide evidence to support their assertions in relation to these statements. In the case of the statement:

“Researchers are recognised and valued as an essential part of our human resources”

Evidenced by reference to:

- University strategies
- HR employment policies
- Vice Chancellor annual address
- HR Excellence in Research Award
- Research Strategies
- Local agreements
- Availability of teaching buy-outs

In most cases evidence is through reference to university level strategy and policy, although in two cases there is specific reference to local agreements developed at a faculty level that describes what researchers can expect. In one case reference is made to the availability of teaching buy-out.

In the case of the statement:

“Researchers are a key component of our overall strategy to develop and deliver world class research”

Evidenced by reference to:

- University strategy
- Research Strategy
- Employment policies
- ECRs featuring in grant applications
- Availability of conference financial allowances

Again, evidence offered is largely by reference to strategies that describe the university's objectives and inform its culture, although there was also reference to the practice of including ECRs in grant funding applications, and the availability of financial allowances to enable ECRs to participate in conferences.

Evidence for organisational systems that support continuity of employment largely relates to institutional redeployment policies. In one case reference is made to the practice of including researchers in funding applications to try to achieve continuity where there is a successful funding outcome. Another respondent referred to the use of short-term teaching appointments to bridge gaps. One university noted that bridging funding of up to three months' salary is available between contracts where it is clear that further research funding to secure employment will be available.

Less than 30% of ECRs reported that they had regular formal progress and review meetings, and only 64% of research organisation survey respondents agreed that these are provided. Although 21 of the 32 respondents to the research organisation survey agreed with the statement that “researchers have regular formal progress and review meetings,

which focus on their wider career and personal development”, five respondents did not make reference to any evidence to support this. In most cases respondents referred to Performance Development and Annual Review policies. There were some provisos that suggested that although performance management and progress reviews are expected to take place they can be ignored or there may be variations in how they are implemented. One respondent to the research organisation survey noted that “*not all research managers see their supervisory role as extending beyond the needs of the research project*”.

These results seem in line with the findings from CROS 2011, in that it suggests that there is a proportion of eligible researchers who are not invited to appraisal/review. However, a lower proportion in our survey of ECRs report having regular formal progress or review meetings than in the CROS survey where 55% of respondents report that they had taken part in a staff appraisal/review within the last two years or since taking up their current position if more recent.

Although not within the scope of this study, it would be useful to investigate the CROS data to determine whether the lower percentage in our survey with regular formal progress reviews is related to Arts and Humanities researchers specifically or is a consequence of other factors such as career stage (as all the respondents in our survey completed their doctorate in the last eight years excluding career breaks). Although in our survey 45% of ECRs on permanent research-related contracts agree that they have regular progress and review meetings this is still lower than the 55% in CROS 2011.

5.3.2 Support and career development

Statements were also included that related to Principles 3 and 4 of the Concordat, on support and career development.

Table 13 – Statements relating to Principles 3 and 4

Principle 3 – Researchers are equipped and supported to be adaptable and flexible in an increasingly diverse, mobile, global research environment.					
Statements in the research organisation survey	RO survey respondents % Agree	Statements in the ECRs survey	All ECRs in HE sector % Agree	ECRs on permanent research related contracts % Agree	ECRs on fixed-term research related contracts % Agree
Researchers are provided with support to develop the communication and other professional skills that they will need to be both effective researchers and highly-skilled professionals in whatever field they choose to enter	81%	I am supported to develop the communication and other professional skills needed to be an effective researcher or a highly-skilled professional in whatever field I choose to enter	37%	41%	40%
Researchers are provided with effective research environments for their training and development and encouraged to maintain or start their continuous professional development	73%	I am encouraged to undertake continuous professional development	51%	68%	48%
Researchers are provided with specific career development strategy regardless of their contractual situation	39%	I have been provided with a specific career development strategy as a post-doctoral researcher	10%	15%	11%

Researchers have access to mentors to provide support and guidance for personal and professional development	76%	I have access to a mentor to provide support and guidance for my personal and professional development	52%	63%	51%
Principle 4 – The importance of researchers' personal and career development, and lifelong learning, is clearly recognised and promoted at all stages of their career.					
Statements in the research organisation survey	RO survey respondents % Agree	Statements in the ECRs survey	All ECRs in HE sector % Agree	ECRs on permanent research related contracts % Agree	ECRs on fixed-term research related contracts % Agree
Researchers have access to honest and transparent advice on their prospects for success in their preferred career	64%	I have access to honest and transparent advice on the prospects for success in my preferred career	36%	44%	36%
Researchers are provided with teaching and demonstrating opportunities as part of their career development	61%	I am provided with teaching and demonstrating opportunities	71%	83%	66%
Researchers are provided with suitable training and support to develop their teaching and demonstrating skills as part of their career development	64%	I am provided with suitable training and support to develop my teaching and demonstrating skills	47%	64%	40%

As with the previous statements relating to recognition and value, ECRs on permanent research-related contracts are more likely to agree that they are provided with support and career development opportunities than those on fixed-term contracts. This suggests that institutions may need to examine whether the work they have undertaken to implement the Concordat is reaching all eligible individuals, and this may be related to how ECRs are defined and identified within their organisation.

Only 10% of ECRs in the HE sector agreed that they had been provided with a specific career development strategy, and where universities agreed that they provided this, the evidence given mainly refers to appraisal and development or performance reviews (to which only 28% of ECRs agreed they have access).

Almost 70% of ECRs on permanent research related contracts agreed that they are encouraged to undertake continuous professional development, which although not directly comparable, is similar to the percentage in the CROS 2011 report of those who “feel encouraged to engage in career/personal development” at 77%.

ECRs are more likely to have access to mentors if they have a permanent research related contract than ECRs on fixed-term research related contracts. However, only 28% of ECRs on permanent contracts that are teaching only or non-academic agreed that they have access to a mentor, and less than 40% of ECRs on fixed-term contracts of less than 12 months agree that they have access to a mentor to provide advice and guidance. So although 76% of respondents to the research organisation survey agreed that researchers have access to mentors, they seem to be available to a relatively limited group.

5.3.3 Overview of the implementation of the Concordat

While the picture presented seems to suggest that there is a long way to go on the implementation of certain areas of the Concordat principles, this is not to down play the work that has been carried out. A number of responses to the survey and in the interviews provided examples of detailed and integrated programmes of support available.

It is not unexpected that ECRs may be less likely to agree with the statements as they may be less well informed of what provision is available than those individuals within universities involved in implementing the Concordat and developing programmes of support. However it does suggest that more needs to be done to communicate to ECRs and to more senior academics what support is available, particularly from career advisers and staff developers, as fewer ECRs consult these for advice on career development.

There is little evidence offered of ECRs being involved in the development of an institution's position and implementation of the Concordat and hence this may account for perceived mismatches between what is offered and what is needed.

The support provided should also be considered in the context of who is recognised as an ECR (as individuals can be overlooked who are not on research related contracts). In addition, the devolved system in some universities can affect ECRs' access to support. In some cases this can mean that even those who are on research contracts may not appear on the central HR systems and so may not be picked up as eligible for the support provided. In a collegiate structure individuals may not be eligible to access services provided to university employees.

Table 14 – Summary on the implementation of the Concordat Principles

Principle 2 – Researchers are recognised and valued by their employing organisation as an essential part of their organisation's human resources and a key component of their overall strategy to develop and deliver world-class research.

There is work remaining to be done across the sector as a whole to ensure that the words captured in documentation are translated into meaningful actions to ensure ECRs are valued. In the worst cases, ECRs feel that they are not valued and in many cases are merely workhorses.

Whilst there is some excellent linkage between research and HR in the development of policy and associated actions, for many ECRs some processes, such as development appraisal are only tick box exercises at most. Although the CROS 2011 results suggest that the number undertaking appraisals is increasing, 45% still do not receive appraisals. Our work suggests that performance management is very variable across institutions. In at least one, it appears to be largely absent. 10% of research organisation respondents for example do not provide regular feedback or appraisal.

There is little evidence of systems being in place to support continuity of employment for researchers. Many ECR respondents appeared to be left to their own devices to find 'fill in' employment. Many of the research organisation respondents were not aware of any explicit policy on clear career frameworks for ECRs outlined in HR strategies.

Principle 3 – Researchers are equipped and supported to be adaptable and flexible in an increasingly diverse, mobile, global research environment.

Institutions can have elaborate and well documented provision for ECRs to develop the communication and other professional skills needed to be effective researchers and highly skilled professionals. This is an area where ECRs' perceptions and experiences most closely matched the research organisations' assertions on what is provided. However, a significant minority of ECRs is unable to access these opportunities because of workload or because support events are provided in non-paid for time. 25% of research organisations did not seem to have a policy of mentorship to ECRs, although this is one of the main areas that ECRs in this survey identified would be of benefit to them.

Principle 4 – The importance of researchers' personal and career development, and lifelong learning, is clearly recognised and promoted at all stages of their career.

ECRs are more likely to receive support for career development and lifelong learning support if they are on permanent contracts. The majority of ECRs agreed or strongly agreed that they were provided with teaching and demonstrating opportunities. Perhaps this high figure reflects an increasing use of post-doctorates in university teaching. However, ECRs were less positive about the provision of teaching skills development.

Principle 5 – Individual researchers share the responsibility for and need to pro-actively engage in their own personal and career development, and lifelong learning.

ECR respondents felt that all too often, career development was not a shared responsibility but one in which the ECR was on their own. Monitoring and evaluation appears to be less satisfactory with more needed to be done to ensure that career development requirements and activities are regularly discussed, monitored and evaluated.

6. Early career researchers' main concerns

ECRs on fixed-term contracts in this study saw professional success as obtaining a permanent academic position that will allow them to continue with research (such as through a lectureship), but perceive that there are few new appointments available. Short fixed-term, hourly paid and sessional posts are taken to remain in academia, but these are not always considered to be contributing to the development of the skills needed to obtain an open-ended lectureship or to support career progression within or beyond the higher education sector.

ECRs on fixed-term contracts who are considering leaving the higher education sector due to concerns about establishing a career worry that the skills they have may not be relevant or transferable outside the sector. This suggests a need at an early stage (pre-doctorate) to provide information that will enable individuals to broaden their horizons, provide access to realistic and accurate information from a variety of sources about what an academic career entails, and how the skills developed during doctoral study are transferable elsewhere.

A career involving a succession of short term posts is regarded negatively, with individuals spending time applying for their next position rather than concentrating on publishing, research or developing professional networks. This is not seen as providing a career progression path. Over half of the ECRs in the higher education sector regarded post-doctoral researcher positions in the UK as potential stepping stones to permanent academic positions rather than as attractive in themselves. However, 71% of ECRs on a permanent contract had previously held a fixed-term contract, and a quarter had held three or more, which does suggest it is a pathway for some.

6.1 The main concerns of ECRs on fixed-term contracts

Around 92% of ECRs on fixed-term contracts expressed concerns about their career now and in the future. We coded responses about concerns according to the main themes expressed. The two main concerns are competition for a limited supply of permanent positions, and uncertainty caused by reliance on a series of fixed-term contracts. Although 58% of this group agreed or strongly agreed that they view “post doctorate researcher positions in the UK as attractive in themselves and not just as potential stepping stones to permanent academic positions” achieving the “holy grail” of a permanent position is their main concern.

The competition to obtain a permanent position and uncertainty caused by fixed-term contracts are each mentioned over 200 times in the 499 responses from ECRs on

fixed-term contracts. Other concerns are also raised, but to a lesser extent. Table 15 illustrates what percentage from each group expressed these concerns, and the total number of times these concerns were mentioned.

Table 15 – Main concerns of ECRs on fixed-term contracts

	All ECRs on fixed-term contracts	Number of mentions	Self-employed / freelance	Research Fellow	Fixed-term over 12 months	Fixed-term less than 12 months
Permanent position	49.3%	246	54.5%	56.2%	48.3%	48.2%
Uncertainty	43.9%	219	39.4%	35.6%	40.6%	51.8%
Pressure to publish	13.0%	65	9.1%	8.2%	13.0%	16.4%
Family-work balance	10.2%	51	6.1%	8.2%	11.5%	9.1%
Workload	9.8%	49	3.0%	2.7%	13.4%	9.1%

“Permanent position” refers to comments where the respondent expressed concerns about obtaining such a position due to competition in the sector and a perception that “demand is outstripping supply”.

“I’m concerned that after my present post-doc funding is up I may still not have enough publications to be in the running for a permanent position and that I will not win another post-doc.”

Male, completed doctorate in 2013, on a Research Fellowship

“Uncertainty” is used where comments suggest that ECRs do not know what will happen next and the difficulties this causes for personal and professional life.

“Similarly fixed-term contracts concern me because they only provide financial and professional security for a short time with no guarantee of anything afterward and the potential for yet more years of unemployment etc.”

Female, completed doctorate in 2013, self-employed, Seminar Tutor

We have used “family-work balance” as a code where comments suggest negative impacts on personal and family life, and the perception that family responsibilities could limit career expectations. “Pressure to publish” relates to the need for a publication portfolio which is seen as a pre-requisite to obtaining a permanent position, and the perceived impact of the REF on hiring policies.

“The pressure to publish high quality work and often, and the few channels available to discuss this issue with other academics. Work/life balance issue. By not spending 24/7 working, per se, will I have a career?”

Female, completed doctorate in 2013, on fixed-term contract of more than 12 months as post-doctoral researcher

“Workload” comments are usually made in relation to teaching only contracts, or by ECRs with multiple concurrent contracts which do not allow time to apply for permanent or research related contracts. They are also linked to comments on the pressure to publish, with workload commitments not allowing time in which to develop publications or identify where best to publish.

“I worry that I will not be given enough time and flexibility in my workload with regards to teaching, marking and dissertation supervisions to undertake good research that will launch me into a good academic position and that will place me in my discipline/research area as a leading researcher after the post-doc.”

Female, completed doctorate in 2012, on a three year Research Fellowship

Minority concerns relate to a lack of continuing support with no transition support between obtaining a doctorate and the next career stage (mentioned by 26 respondents). The same number express concerns about limited access to opportunities either due to a lack of teaching qualifications or not being regarded as an ECR if on hourly paid teaching only contracts.

A similar number of respondents (25) were concerned about a lack of funding in the Humanities or funding to develop independent research. This is related to comments coded as concerns about conducting research which relate to a perceived lack of opportunity to carry out high quality research due to a perceived emphasis placed by universities on numbers of outputs rather than quality of outputs. 24 respondents mentioned that the level of remuneration is not commensurate with the number of hours they need to commit or the level of experience expected.

Respondents' concerns also relate to the extent to which they felt integrated into their institutions or the Academy, with 22 voicing concerns relating to a feeling of isolation due to the nature of their research placing them “between” Departments, or that the type of contracts they hold meant that they feel they are not regarded as part of the Department they work in. This can mean they are not able to take full advantage of opportunities for career development available to others.

6.2 Do male and female ECRs on fixed-term contracts have different concerns?

There is little difference between the concerns expressed by female and male ECRs. More male respondents were concerned than female respondents about obtaining a permanent position, and slightly less so about maintaining an academic career and a family life, although the 'top 5' main concerns are the same for both groups as the table below indicates (based on the percentage of ECRs who raised these concerns).

Table 16 – Main concerns of female and male ECRs on fixed-term contracts

	Ranked concerns expressed by Female ECRs	Ranked concerns expressed by Male ECRs
Permanent position	1	1
Uncertainty	2	2
Family-work balance	3	5
Pressure to publish	4	3
Workload	5	4

6.3 Do ECRs in different age groups have differing concerns?

Similar concerns are also expressed by different age groups, with gaining a permanent position and the uncertainty of fixed-term contracts the two main concerns for those born before 1983 and those born during or after 1983. More ECRs on fixed-term contracts who are over 30 years old were concerned with reconciling an academic career with a family life than their younger colleagues, followed by concerns over the pressure to publish. Those under 30 felt the pressure to publish more strongly, followed by pressures caused by workload.

Table 17 – Main concerns of ECRs aged over and under 30 years old

	Ranked concerns of ECRs born before 1983	Ranked concerns of ECRs born in 1983 and later
Permanent position	1	1
Uncertainty	2	2
Family-work balance	3	5
Pressure to publish	4	3
Workload	5	4

6.4 Main concerns of ECRs on permanent contracts

Around 60% of ECRs on permanent contracts expressed concerns about their career now and in the future. Perhaps unsurprisingly for this group these concerns were mainly related to opportunities for career progression or workload pressures.

Table 18 – Main concerns of ECRs on permanent contracts

	All ECRs on permanent contracts	Number of mentions	Female ECRs on permanent contracts	Male ECRs on permanent contracts	ECRs aged 30+ on permanent contracts	ECRs aged under 30 on permanent contracts
Career progression	53.5%	61	48.5%	26.3%	63.2%	72.2%
Workload	47.4%	54	37.1%	36.8%	58.8%	44.4%
HE-Research culture	37.7%	43	24.7%	44.7%	51.5%	38.9%

Concerns around workload related mostly to a heavy teaching and administrative workload limiting the time available to conduct research, publish and develop grant applications to enable them to develop their career or research interests. Concerns were also expressed, although to a lesser degree, in terms of the mental pressures a heavy workload placed on individuals and the impact it had on maintaining a work/life balance or family life. The current culture in higher education and research (described in terms of the requirements of the REF and the perceived “marketisation” of HE) was put forward as a reason for this increased workload.

“Pressure to do research, but lack of timetabling support or resources to free me up one day a week to do anything.”

Male, completed doctorate in 2013, permanent contract as lecturer

Concerns were also expressed that there was an assumption that individuals no longer required support or advice once they had obtained a permanent position, even though

those that expressed this concern felt they were not yet well equipped to plan the next stage of their career or knew what was required of them to achieve progression.

Male and female respondents both had the same 'top 3' concerns, however these were reversed with a larger percentage of male ECRs expressing concerns related to the prevailing culture in HE and research, followed by workload and career progression opportunities. More women spoke of concerns about career progression, followed by workload and then the culture in the sector. Most concerns about managing a career alongside family or personal commitments were raised by female ECRs in the survey (9 out of the 10 mentions) and in a small number of cases (5) expressed concerns that as female academics they were more likely to be overlooked for promotion than their male colleagues, and in one case of the potential consequences should they take a career break due to pregnancy or caring commitments.

“As a female ECR, I am currently concerned about the potential consequence of any career break due to pregnancy or caring commitments. While these are protected in law, the practical enactment of such protections are unlikely to support my career progression as I will be unlikely to experience flexibility around teaching, but only at the consequence of my research progress.”

Female, completed doctorate in 2011, permanent contract as Lecturer

Although the 'top 3' concerns do not differ for those born before 1983 and those born in 1983 or later, a slightly larger proportion of the younger age group that expressed an opinion are concerned about career progression.

6.5 Perception of the impact that a succession of short-term posts has on subsequent career progression

The impact of a succession of short term contracts on subsequent career progression is almost entirely framed in negative terms by ECRs who responded to the survey or took part in interviews. Although some did see some positives in terms of developing skills or experience needed to obtain permanent contracts, these are outweighed by the uncertainty this type of employment confers.

“I am concerned that there is no clear progression for me within academia. I have had three fixed-term post-PhD positions and have been very lucky not to be out of work. However, there are very few full-time, permanent posts and I cannot, with a young family to support, continue indefinitely on temporary and often part-time contracts.”

Male, completed doctorate in 2011, fixed-term contract over 12 months as Senior Research Associate

One of the main negative impacts expressed is that short term contracts mean that time that could be spent on developing work for publication is spent trying to obtain the next contract to ensure continuity of employment and remuneration. Some also express the perception that if they fail to obtain a contract they can “fall out” of academic employment and will not be able to re-enter the sector.

“Primarily, that it is very easy to fall out of an academic career, when a fixed-term contract ends for instance, and find no way back in. There is a general

sense that once you are out, you are out for good – whether this is true or not I couldn't quite say, though I have seen it happen.”

Male, completed doctorate in 2012, fixed-term contract over 12 months as University Teacher

Short term contracts, which may be held concurrently at different institutions, means that there is little time or opportunity to build an affiliation with one place or develop networks. CROS 2011 reported that although there has been an increase in the proportion of researchers who feel integrated into their departmental or institutional communities, even so, just over 20% did not feel integrated into their departmental research communities, 33% in their wider disciplinary community and 41% did not feel integrated into their institution's research community.

“Current work is low paid and so have to do long hours and supplement with work less relevant to research = less time to research, build career, apply for jobs, attend training etc. Also no way to apply for funding for conferences etc means out of the networking loop and unable to present research.”

Female, completed doctorate in 2013, with two fixed-term contracts under 12 months as Sessional Lecturer and in non-academic role in HE

A succession of short-term contracts can necessitate movement around the country (or between countries) which means that ECRs can feel unable to build a family or put down roots at a time when others in a similar age group are doing so. This is leading a number to consider leaving the HE sector (although they do not feel supported in finding out what other opportunities are available to them).

There is also a perception that ECRs can become 'caught' in teaching only posts which due to their often heavy workloads do not leave time for publishing or independent research. This therefore makes them less attractive as candidates for research-related positions for which there is already a high level of competition.

“Having the time and connections to develop a research profile that is attractive to employers whilst carrying out preparation, teaching and marking as a lecturer on a fixed-term contract.”

Female, completed doctorate in 2009, on fixed-term 12 month contract as Lecturer

7. Experiences of post-doctoral researchers on AHRC-funded research grants

ECRs involved valued the experience of being part of the AHRC research grant team for enabling them to build networks and raise their “visibility” as a researcher, for contributing to the development of skills to progress their careers and as evidence that they can collaborate.

They would value some form of transition support from the AHRC (including bridging funding to develop research proposals and publications, and in the form of advice on career development and planning) to help them obtain permanent positions. This might include information on funding opportunities and obtaining research grants.

The ECRs involved would also value AHRC providing networking opportunities with other AHRC supported researchers in the same or later stages of their career to share experiences and provide advice.

Respondents who were currently or previously on an AHRC funded research grant were asked a set of questions related specifically to their experiences as a researcher on this grant.

7.1 How ECRs currently on an AHRC funded research grant envisage the next stage of their career

When asked how they envisaged the next stage of their career, the comments describe the positions respondents wished to obtain rather than a process for trying to obtain these. The majority of respondents envisage the next stage of their career in terms of securing a lectureship (mentioned by 67% of respondents) or obtaining further post-doctoral research funding, including as a Research Fellow (mentioned by 42%). Where respondents envisage a different career they are looking to establish a research career outside the higher education sector (specific mention is made of organisations in the cultural sector). Only one respondent who wished to secure a lectureship thought it likely they would have to leave the higher education sector instead. In this case the respondent did not think that it

was possible to develop a career in academia while also carrying out caring responsibilities for a young family.

17% expressed how they envisaged the next stage of their career in tentative terms, they “hoped” to do something, rather than planned to, while a further 14% are pessimistic about whether they will achieve what they envisage in the short term.

“I think I need to publish, publish, publish, possibly find a post-doc fellowship, or start a Research Project...and then hope to find something more stable. I don’t see it happening right now.”

Female, on first contract since obtaining doctorate in 2014, on 12 month Research Assistant contract

Around 10% expect to undertake a series of fixed-term or temporary contracts while they apply for permanent positions, and in around half of these cases this is a planned approach to develop the skills and experience they believe they will require to obtain a lectureship post.

7.2 Actions being taken to achieve goals

63% report that they are taking steps to try to establish a publication profile and 40% are ‘networking’ used in the broadest sense to describe actions that include attending and presenting at conferences, taking part in organised networking events, and making connections with academics in their research field or institutions of interest, with the intention of raising their profile as a researcher.

“I am applying to funding schemes for post-doctoral work, and monitoring the job market, while trying to get as many publications out as possible and add some valuable items to the CV (e.g. participation in widening access activities).”

Female, completed doctorate in 2012, one year remaining on a two year and six months contract as a post-doctoral researcher

“Working hard on publications, attending conferences and networking events where I can afford them, and developing several funding applications.”

Male, completed doctorate in 2012, on a fixed-term contract of less than 12 months

30% report that they are taking the practical steps of completing applications for lectureships and / or making research grant applications (a further 30%). Just under 30% also describe actions taken to broaden the experience they believe they need to obtain a permanent academic position in higher education, either through teaching (18%) or experience related to their field of research (for example taking part in archaeological digs in one instance) or to develop managerial experience (10%) such as through project management or managing teams.

As respondents reach the end of their contract on the research grant they tend to describe a ‘3-pronged’ approach of publishing, networking and either applying for permanent lectureships or for posts that will provide the experience they believe will help them obtain a lectureship. Respondents early in their contract are already thinking about developing their publication profile, and are starting to develop networks.

7.3 Perceived impact that working as part of research team will have on career and personal development

Responses were coded in terms of whether respondents described the impact in a positive, neutral or negative manner. Almost 80% of those who answered the question regarded the impact as positive with only 13% providing neutrally phrased responses and 9% responding negatively.

40% of respondents who provided substantive comments described the impact in terms of providing an opportunity to build networks with colleagues in ways that would be useful for developing their careers or research interests. This networking was also a means of raising their visibility as a researcher in their particular field.

Over half referred to the opportunity to develop skills needed to progress their careers – either organisational (mentioned by 27%) or research related (24%). Four respondents mentioned that having access to feedback from colleagues enabled them to develop these skills.

Respondents also saw the impact in terms of providing evidence that they could collaborate and allowing them the opportunity to develop the skills to do so, and as a result improve their career development opportunities or ability to carry out their research.

“It will show I am able to move from the doctoral environment to work with other academics in a range of institutions. It has allowed me to develop and refine the skills learnt during the PhD and provide a basis for further work.”

Male, completed doctorate in 2012, on 12 month contract as post-doctoral researcher

7.4 What ECRs previously on AHRC funded research grants are doing now

84% of this group are currently employed in “teaching and research in higher education” or in “research in higher education”. Of the five respondents who chose “Other occupation not in higher education” only one respondent had actively made the choice to leave the sector. The other four respondents gave reasons related to lack of job opportunities.

Almost 30% (16 respondents) have obtained permanent or open ended contracts. In all except two cases these are lecturer posts. One respondent is currently on a research fellowship and another is a career adviser for postgraduate students and research staff. A quarter (14 respondents) has fixed-term contracts of over 12 months, and where current job titles were provided, five are employed as Post-doctoral Researcher or Research Fellows and seven as Lecturers.

7.5 How had this group envisaged the next stage of their career and what did they do to achieve this?

53% had envisaged the next stage of their career in terms of obtaining a lectureship and 42% mentioned continuing in a research-related role either as a Research Fellow or

Principal Investigator on a research project or more generally obtaining funding to continue the research they were engaged in during the AHRC research grant.

Three respondents envisaged a career outside the higher education sector, one because of what they described as the “precarious” nature of employment based on “*short-term teaching contracts*” and two because they were not committed to an academic career.

Just over half (51%) of respondents described making applications for permanent lectureships as the actions undertaken to achieve their goal and a further 21% stated that they had made applications for research fellowships or grant funding. 34% stated that they had developed their publication profile (a much lower percentage than those currently on an AHRC research grant at 63%). 30% had carried out actions to develop networks (also lower than for those currently on an AHRC research grant). This may suggest that researchers currently on AHRC-funded research grants are more informed about the importance of these actions in developing an academic career.

“In my own time kept writing, and publishing, which meant working at most weekends. Also developed my reputation and profile within the academic community, working for external academic councils, getting grants for KE and impact. Developed my skills by attending courses for researchers provided by the university. Endless job applications!”

Female, completed doctorate in 2007, AHRC research grant funding ended in December 2013, now employed on a three year fixed-term fractional contract

7.6 Success in achieving planned next stages and barriers faced

Just under half (47%) of respondents felt they had successfully achieved their plans for the next stage of their career. Based on answers to the question on what actions they had carried out to achieve their goals (outlined in Section 7.5 above), those that felt they had succeeded do not seem to have carried out any specific actions or combination of actions that distinguish them from those that felt they had not.

Over half (52%) described the barriers to achieving their goals in terms of the perceived competitiveness of the job market in higher education, where demand for permanent or open ended lectureships is greater than the number of jobs available. 15% felt they had been unsuccessful in achieving their goals due to not being able to secure continued research funding.

“Mainly the financial crisis meant that whereas before one would compete with a dozen or 20 candidates for a position, suddenly one was competing with hundreds and even when a position was advertised as for an early career individual it was often filled by someone mid-career who had far more experience. I had to scale back my expectations.”

Female, completed doctorate in 2008, on a fractional fixed-term contract less than 12 months as a post-doctoral researcher

Around a fifth (22%) considered their lack of a publication profile as a barrier. This was either attributed to being at an early stage in their career which meant they had not had

time to build up a body of work, or to work commitments to complete the research project which had not left enough time to publish independently. Only two respondents attributed their lack of success in achieving their goals to the advice or guidance they were given (or lack of this).

“I focussed on teaching at the start of my career when, as I now know, I should have focussed on research. I was not given helpful guidance.”

Female, completed doctorate in 2005, currently has a permanent contract as a Lecturer

7.7 Impact of a role on an AHRC research grant on subsequent career and personal development

We coded the responses to this question in terms of whether they described the impact as positive, neutral or negative. 80% described the impact in positive terms and only 5% (3 respondents) described the impact negatively. Therefore, even those that did not feel they had achieved the planned next stage of their careers were positive about the impact on career and personal development.

28% of respondents described the impact in terms of the opportunities offered to collaborate and work in a team. A quarter described the opportunities to network and a further quarter made reference to skills development (particularly organisational skills such as project management or managing teams) which they regarded as of value for career development in the sector. Around 18% saw the impact in terms of developing subject knowledge.

“A positive impact, as I developed skills that I did not demonstrably obtain during my PhD, such as working in a team, negotiating with colleagues, managing a project, budgeting, engaging with the public.”

Male, completed doctorate in 2012, completed post as Research Assistant on AHRC research grant towards end of 2013, currently working outside the HE sector

In two cases respondents valued the interdisciplinarity of the research teams, and one researcher stated that their role on an AHRC research grant had helped them to obtain a job “*outside academia*” although they did not elaborate further.

“Working as a team is wonderful, not only do you have support and mentorship, but you learn hugely especially if you are working interdisciplinarily. Funding bodies seem to encourage interdisciplinary work, but departments do not always value that work or that publishing.”

Female, completed doctorate in 2008, currently on a fixed-term contract of less than 12 months as a post-doctoral researcher, AHRC research grant funding ended in 2012

7.8 Ideas on how AHRC could engage to support their career development

43% of respondents currently on AHRC research grants suggested that AHRC could engage through the provision of some form of ‘transition support’. This could include

advice on subjects such as grant applications and career planning, or through the provision of funding through “career bridging grants” which could fund time spent writing up monographs. Respondents suggested that these funds could be made available to ECRs who do not currently have a contract with a research organisation.

“If the AHRC could provide follow-up grants to research projects that are aimed at supporting early career researchers to give them more time to secure the second post-doc (which is often the hardest to get) this would be most welcomed.”

Male, completed doctorate in 2010, currently on a three year contract as a post-doctoral researcher

14% suggested that the AHRC could be more proactive in providing updates on funding opportunities. Only 9% of this group was interested in the AHRC establishing networks to enable individuals to share experiences with other researchers on AHRC grants.

Providing networking opportunities was however suggested by 34% of respondents who had previously been on an AHRC funded research grant. The purpose of these would be similarly to share experiences and also to help identify other AHRC funded researchers within an institution.

“A shadow PI programme. Creation of community for PDRAs who are often isolated in their work.”

Female, completed doctorate in 2007, AHRC research grant ended in 2012, currently on a permanent contract as a lecturer

This group was also interested in some form of transition support. 26% made reference to the provision of advice on career planning and skills requirements for career progression, as well as bridging funding to develop research proposals or publications.

“It might have been helpful to have advice about what kind of positions to look for next, or about projects that might have similar roles coming up. Guidance about managing a part-time post and your own research would be helpful – with hindsight I would have done things differently.”

Female, completed doctorate in 2013, AHRC grant ended in October 2013, currently holds six concurrent academic positions

8. Key observations and elements of good practice

This section brings together the key observations from each section of the report and outlines elements of good practice based on these.

8.1 Key observations

8.1.1 Early Career Researchers' roles and contracts

Individuals who wish to pursue an academic career and who identify themselves as early career researchers (ECRs) are engaged on a range of contracts, and carry out a variety of roles (with a wide variety of job titles). This can mean that their identity as a researcher is not recognised or picked up at an institutional level.

Around half of ECRs on fixed-term contracts gave negatively or neutrally phrased reasons for taking up their current position or positions, and these reflect a perceived lack of choice or a necessity brought on by the need for an income or to enable them to remain within the higher education sector.

Although it is not possible to quantify precisely, over 78% of respondents to our survey on fixed-term contracts have held three or more such contracts (including their current position) since gaining their doctorate. Analysis by Vitae of data from the Longitudinal Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education (LDLHE) survey (which is carried out three years and six months after graduation) suggests that over 55% of researchers in the Arts and Humanities have held two or more contracts since gaining their doctorate. This does suggest that individuals are reliant on consecutive and often concurrent fixed-term and fractional contracts to try to maintain continuity of employment. Even though they are not convinced that these positions are necessarily providing career development or will lead to career progression, the overall impression is that most can see no alternative if they wish to remain in the higher education sector. Where individuals have left the higher education sector (not by choice) to take up positions elsewhere they are concerned that they may not be able to return.

8.1.2 How are early career researchers defined and identified?

There is no single definition of an “early career researcher” and often multiple definitions are in use in the same institution, either based on a specific context (such as the REF or

Research Funder requirements) or related to particular types of employment contract. This has implications for their identification within an organisation and the implementation of the Concordat.

8.1.3 Support provided and required

ECRs in the higher education sector regard “advice with preparing grant applications”, “time to publish”, and “mentorship” as the support most beneficial to career development.

Over half of the ECR respondents in the HE sector did not feel fully informed of the training and development opportunities available to them, notwithstanding the significant provision in many institutions.

ECRs in the HE sector employed in research or research and teaching roles feel better supported in pursuing an academic career that involves research than those employed in teaching only or non-academic roles. They are also more likely to report that they have access to a mentor, have regular formal progress and review meetings, and have access to advice to equip them with the tools to manage their careers. This suggests that while steps are being taken to implement the Concordat for Researchers, recognition of who is a researcher is somewhat limited, and so does not necessarily help those that may be in most need of such support.

Time constraints due to heavy workloads, lack of allocated ‘paid for’ time or commitments to other concurrently held jobs mean that ECRs on fixed-term contracts are frequently not able to take advantage of support offered. Therefore increasing the amount of support available will not necessarily mean that those most in need will be able to take advantage of what is offered.

8.1.4 Concordat implementation

Respondents to the research organisation survey fell into three broad groups of ‘Academics’, ‘Career advisers and staff developers’, and ‘Management’. Those in the ‘Academic’ group, including those with a role in supporting ECRs, seemed least well informed about the Concordat and how it is implemented at their institution. While ‘Career advisers and staff developers’ seem better informed, ECRs tend to look to fellow academics for career advice and guidance. This suggests institutions should consider how research staff can be encouraged to engage more with career advisers and staff developers, and how more senior academics can be better informed about support and options available for ECRs.

ECRs perceptions and experiences of support they receive and how they are valued and recognised does not match the assertions of the research organisations. ECRs were less likely to agree with statements in the survey drawn from the Concordat principles. This is the case even for ECRs on permanent or open-ended research-related contracts. Although steps are being taken to implement the Concordat, the benefits have not yet reached all ECRs. ECRs on fixed-term or teaching only contracts, who aspire to a research-related position, are least likely to feel they are valued, recognised and supported. This may relate to how ECRs are identified and defined within an institution.

8.1.5 ECRs' main concerns

ECRs on fixed-term contracts in this study saw professional success as obtaining a permanent academic position that will allow them to continue with research (such as through a lectureship), but perceive that there are few new appointments available. Short fixed-term, hourly paid and sessional posts are taken to remain in academia, but these are not always considered to be contributing to the development of the skills needed to obtain an open-ended lectureship or to support career progression within or beyond the higher education sector.

ECRs on fixed-term contracts who are considering leaving the higher education sector due to concerns about establishing a career worry that the skills they have may not be relevant or transferable outside the sector. This suggests a need at an early stage (pre-doctorate) to provide information that will enable individuals to broaden their horizons, provide access to realistic and accurate information from a variety of sources about what an academic career entails, and how the skills developed during doctoral study are transferable elsewhere.

A career involving a succession of short term posts is regarded negatively, with individuals spending time applying for their next position rather than concentrating on publishing, research or developing professional networks. This is not seen as providing a career progression path. Over half of the ECRs in the higher education sector regarded post-doctoral researcher positions in the UK as potential stepping stones to permanent academic positions rather than as attractive in themselves. However, 71% of ECRs on a permanent contract had previously held a fixed-term contract, and a quarter had held three or more, which does suggest it is a pathway for some.

8.1.6 Experiences of post-doctoral researchers on AHRC-funded research grants

ECRs involved valued the experience of being part of the AHRC research grant team for enabling them to build networks and raise their “visibility” as a researcher, for contributing to the development of skills to progress their careers and as evidence that they can collaborate.

They would value some form of transition support from the AHRC (including bridging funding to develop research proposals and publications, and in the form of advice on career development and planning) to help them obtain permanent positions. This might include information on funding opportunities and obtaining research grants.

The ECRs involved would also value AHRC providing networking opportunities with other AHRC supported researchers in the same or later stages of their career to share experiences and provide advice.

8.2 Elements of good practice

The following is drawn from comments and analysis of the ECR and the research organisation surveys and interviews and the desk research. It suggests elements of good practice in providing career development support an advice for ECRs largely at an institutional level. Within the scope of this study we have not carried out any evaluation of the impact on ECRs directly.

8.2.1 Advice and support is made available at an early stage

In our survey of ECRs in the HE sector, 61% of respondents on a permanent or open-ended contract had sought advice on pursuing an academic career prior to, or at the start of their doctorate, compared with 43% of those on fixed-term contracts. As the majority of respondents intended to pursue an academic career in the higher education sector, this suggests that those that seek and have access to advice at an early stage may be better equipped or have more time in which to plan their career and achieve their objective. Our interviews with ECRs suggested that while individuals begin thinking about an academic career at an early stage prior to their doctorate, all felt that they knew very little about what establishing such a career would entail in practice. While it is the individual's ultimate responsibility to be proactive in this, universities could include details of the programmes of support they offer at induction.

8.2.2 A broad based approach to identifying early career researchers

While it is relatively straightforward to identify doctoral candidates and post-docs on research-related contracts, there are 'grey areas'. For example, these can include post-docs who have taken teaching only, or non-academic posts to maintain continuity of employment or develop other skills, but who aspire to obtaining a research-related post in the future. In some cases these individuals are not identified as ECRs within the research organisation at which they are employed and so may be excluded from support available, or it may cause individuals to believe they are ineligible, even if they are not.

To address this, we have come across examples of institutions that allow individuals working in their organisation to self-identify as ECRs. This may involve changes to organisations' HR systems to capture the data, and should be iterative to capture new starters and any individuals whose circumstances may change. In this way, individuals are kept informed of the support and advice available to them. This does not mean that all ECRs who self-identify as such necessarily receive all the support the institution offers as this may be limited to certain contracts due to financial constraints, but it will allow the individual to maintain their identity as an ECR within that institution.

8.2.3 Advice is provided on a broad range of possible careers

The main concern for ECRs on fixed-term contracts in this study was the competitiveness for permanent lecturer positions, and work by Vitae and DTZ suggests that the majority of doctoral graduates wish to work in the higher education sector. As it is not possible to increase the number of lecturer positions available, career advice and support should cover a broad range of career options for the use of doctoral and post-doctoral skills and experience. One university involved in the study is currently developing a training programme for post-doctorates and ECRs in the Arts and Humanities that will focus on employability and transferable skills. It will include a programme of speakers on careers in other sectors, and use this as a platform to identify mentors in academia and in industry. This is being done in recognition that the university is unable to guarantee continuity of employment for Research Fellows and those on fixed-term contracts, and so it is looking at other ways to best support ECRs in the next stage of their careers.

8.2.4 ECRs' requirements lead and inform the advice and support made available

To ensure that the support put in place is led by the needs of ECRs, rather than to satisfy the requirements of regulators, ECRs should be involved in the development of support

programmes. Universities involved in this study do report directly consulting with ECRs, for example through the use of focus groups of post-doctorates and doctoral candidates prior to the development of new programmes of support to ensure it meets demands. In other cases, ECRs have been involved in the development of local agreements which incorporate the principles of the Concordat.

8.2.5 Senior academics are informed of support available and are enabled to provide this

ECRs are most likely to consult colleagues (including senior academics) for career advice and support. Our study suggested that this group seems less well informed about the implementation of the Concordat at their institutions than career advisers and staff developers. Initiatives could be put in place to better enable senior academics and Principal Investigators to direct ECRs to sources of advice beyond that which they are able to provide (such as that provided by career advisers and staff developers). There may also be a requirement for formal agreements with senior academics who have roles in supporting ECRs to ensure they provide an agreed level of support.

8.2.6 Mentors are relevant to the needs of the individual

ECRs in our study described looking for a relationship with a mentor who understands and has experience of the situation ECRs currently face, which suggests a need for a mentor in the next stage of their career. ECRs also mentioned that they value the opportunity to be open about the barriers and difficulties they are facing, without having to worry about whether this will be interpreted as an inability to handle the pressures of work in the sector. This suggests that mentors should be chosen carefully so that ECRs can speak freely.

8.2.7 Networks are in place to share experience

The study suggests that ECRs are making use of social media, and that one of the main uses is to network and to share and learn from the experiences of other ECRs. The study also suggests that ECRs are interested in being able to identify and communicate with other ECRs in similar circumstances within their institution, particularly when they are employed on fixed-term or fractional contracts that may not allow time for them to become (or perceive they have become) integrated into the organisation. Research Funders as well as institutions could set-up or enable networks that would allow ECRs to connect and share experiences (online and face-to-face).

Appendix A. Steering Group

The role of the Steering Group was to:

- Provide advice and guidance on the direction of the study. This was carried out through an initial meeting to launch the study, inputting to and agreeing the list of universities to approach to take part in the research, providing feedback on the survey instruments and interview topics, and providing feedback on the draft report.
- Monitor the study and ensure that it will meet the specification and be delivered on time and on budget
- Agree any request for change, if necessary
- Agree the final report prior to sign off by AHRC and the British Academy.

The Steering Group met twice with the Oakleigh Research team and client representatives from AHRC and the British Academy, and the start of the work and on presentation of the draft report.

The Steering Group comprised:

Name	Organisation
Professor Roger Kain (Chair)	School of Advanced Study, University of London Member of AHRC Council Vice-President-elect (Research & HE Policy), British Academy
Professor Linda McDowell	University of Oxford Chair of Research Awards Committee, British Academy
Professor Jennifer Richards	University of Newcastle Member of AHRC Advisory Board
Dr Jane Wellens	University of Nottingham Member of RCTAG
Professor Mark Llewellyn	Director of Research, AHRC
Vivienne Hurley	Director of Programmes, The British Academy

Appendix B. Research organisations invited to participate

University of Aberdeen
Aberystwyth University
Bangor University
University of Bedfordshire
University of Birmingham
University of Bradford
University of Bristol
University of Cambridge
Cardiff University
Courtauld Institute Of Art
University of Dundee
Durham University
University of East Anglia
University of Edinburgh
University of Exeter
University of Glasgow
Glasgow School of Art
Goldsmiths College
Keele University
University of Kent
King's College London
Institute of Education
Lancaster University
University of Leeds
University of Leicester

University of Liverpool
Liverpool Hope University
Newcastle University
University of Nottingham
Open University
University of Oxford
Oxford Brookes University
Queen Mary, University of London
Queen's University of Belfast
University of Reading
University of Roehampton
Royal College of Music
Royal Holloway, University of London
The University of Manchester
University of Sheffield
University of Southampton
University of St Andrews
University of the Arts London
University of the West of England
University of Ulster
University College London
University of Wales
University of Warwick
University of York

Appendix C. Desk research summary

- *Arts and Humanities Research Landscape*, February 2009, AHRC
 - *Career Paths of AHRC funded PhD Students*, 2012, DTZ Education for AHRC
 - *Academic Career Paths of Social Science PhD Graduates*, Project led by the London School of Economics. http://www.apprise.ox.ac.uk/academic_career_paths/
 - *Harvesting talent: strengthening research careers in Europe*, 2010, League of European Research Universities (LERU)
 - *Professionalism, a Career in Research, and Fixed-term Contract Culture. Are the three compatible?* Tony Bromley, Linda Evans and Jim Baxter, University of Leeds. Paper presented at the conference of the Society for Research into Higher Education, Adelphi Hotel, Liverpool, December 9–11th 2008
 - *Excellence, Equality and Entrepreneurialism Building Sustainable Research Careers in the European Research Area: Final report drafted for the European Commission – Directorate General for Research and Innovation*, 2012, Expert Group on the Research Profession
 - *Zero hours, infinite anxiety*, Times Higher, 13 March 2014
 - *Research Careers in the UK: A Review*, Thrift, N, 2008, DIUS
 - *Impact of the REF on Early Career Academics*, 2013, University and College Union (UCU)
 - *The REF and Anti-Casualisation, Circular UCUHE/151* 9 May 2012, University and College Union
 - *The Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers*, 2011, Vitae
 - *What do researchers want to do? The career intentions of doctoral researchers*, 2012, Vitae
 - *What do researchers do? Early career progression of doctoral graduates*, 2013, Vitae
 - *Careers in Research Online Survey (CROS) UK aggregate results*, 2013, Vitae
 - *Progress with Concordat Implementation: measures of progress by principle*, 2013, Vitae
 - *Principal Investigators and Research Leaders Survey (PIRLS) 2011: UK aggregate results*, 2011, Vitae,
 - *Review of the UK Implementation of the HR Excellence in Research Awards process, benefits to Institutions and next steps*, 2012, Vitae
 - *What do researchers do? Career profiles of doctoral graduates*, 2009, Vitae
 - *Research Councils UK (RCUK) response to independent review of researcher skills development (Hodge Review)*, 2011
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Appendix D. Analysis using equality and diversity data

In the survey of ECRs we collected data on gender, disability, ethnicity and nationality. The main purpose was to identify whether the ECR sample was representative of the larger ECR population working within higher education. We did carry out analysis related to diversity and equality where possible using this data, but apart from gender (the findings for this are reported in the main body of the report) the sample numbers are too small to report without caveats.

Therefore, analysis based on disability and ethnicity is included in this appendix only. The number of responses from ECRs who stated that they considered they are disabled, and from BAME (Black and Asian Minority Ethnic) ECRs are:

- 29 respondents indicated they are disabled (3 ECRs not in HE, 16 ECRs on fixed-term contracts, and 10 ECRs on permanent contracts).
- 61 respondents from across a broad range of BAME groups (8 ECRs not in HE, 39 ECRs on fixed-term contracts, and 14 ECRs on permanent contracts).

Further details on the numbers of respondents based on characteristics and contract type is provided in the table in Appendix E.

We looked at responses from both groups, and in almost all cases the results were in line with overall findings. There were some areas where there seemed to be noticeable differences, and these are reported below.

Disabled ECRs

A larger proportion of disabled respondents on fixed-term contracts do not feel fully informed about the training and development opportunities available to them to develop their career (10 out of 16 respondents, 63% compared to 40% in the survey overall). Further analysis however revealed that of these 10 respondents, three are self-employed/freelance, two are on fractional contracts, and one on a zero hour contract. Based on the findings in the main report, and the small sample size, it is not possible to rule out the contract type as the main contributing factor, which can mean ECRs are not able to take full advantage of opportunities.

Analysis also revealed that a greater percentage of disabled ECRs are or have been on zero hour contracts, at 38% (10 of the 26 respondents in the HE sector) compared with 7% of

total responses. Analysis did not reveal any other likely contributing factors. However, the numbers are too small to reach the conclusion that ECRs with a disability are more likely to be on zero hour contracts. This could however be an area for further study to determine if this is the case, and if so, why this is happening.

BAME ECRs

Amongst BAME respondents, there was only one area where there was a noticeable difference to overall results. More BAME respondents on fixed-term contracts gave positively phrased reasons for accepting their current positions (65% compared with 50% of total respondents), and fewer gave negatively phrased reasons (8% compared with 17% overall). However, the main reasons provided for accepting their current position did not differ from the survey overall.

It is not clear what inference can be drawn from this based on the small sample size (39 respondents) and the broad range of ethnic groups covered, or if it is useful in shaping support or advice.
