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HOW WOULD NATIONAL SURVEY ON ACADEMIC STAFF SATISFACTION DRIVE CHANGES IN POST-92 UNIVERSITIES?

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Part 3: Career Progression at the universities in London

By Dr Solomon Habtemariam

Read part 2 of the article here.

1. **How does career progression at post-92 universities compare with the Russell group?**

As the highest level of academic position, a professorial title at any university must demonstrate personal and academic distinction in a specified field of teaching, research and/or knowledge exchange. Maintaining this standard is a key responsibility of HEIs not only to maintain their institutional integrity in the face of the external world but also keeping its workforce motivated. From my own experience, the main source of academic dissatisfaction could lie in this area given the lack of transparency in professorial promotion/appointment and standard. This is partly also a sector-wide issue as it is now the norm to award a professorial title through a teaching route to someone without a PhD, research profile or a single paper published in international journal. The UCL promotion in 2021/22, for example, included honouring 2 non-PhD holders through the teaching route. Assessment of professional standard through publicly available data must also be subject-specific and require large volume of data that smaller universities do not have (see below). Bearing in mind also every university vehemently defends the rigorous housekeeping of their professional standard, let us focus on professorial numbers instead of quality/standard.

- **How common is professorial recognition in my post-92 university?**

The 2022 announcement of professorial promotion level at the UoG listed 13 individuals – quite a big increase from six in the previous year and just 3 in 2019 – indeed a big achievement for the university. Those academics who are in the mind of my

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thinking also give credit to the university as all appointees have a PhD title and have also done demonstrable research in their field. Their H-index profiles included two outstanding (over 30) as subject leaders in their field, and four in the 20s as the norm in many good universities. Their contribution to science throughout their career can be measured in publication, but most importantly, they all represented their university as shown in **Figure 1**. ***Hence, the gap in the thinking of a professorial standard between senior managers and staunch critiques like me also seems to be narrowing.***

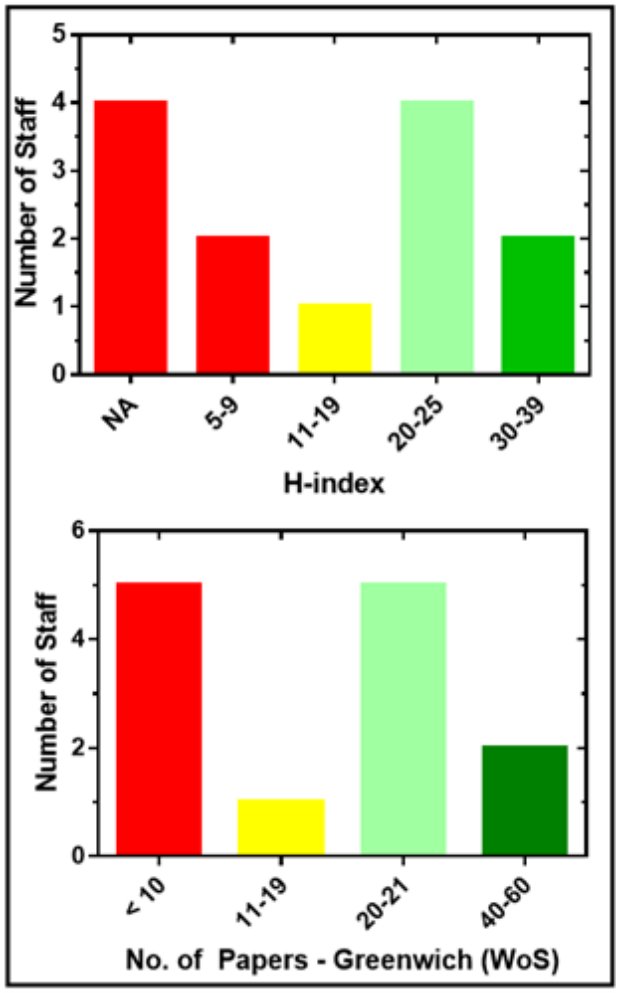


Figure 1. Professorial level academic staff promotion at the UoG (October 2022). The top panel shows the H-index profile of professors while the lower panel displays the number of papers attached to the academics with the university address (sourced from Web of Science).

- **How does the number of professors compare across the**

London universities?

The number of professors in post-92 universities is not only smaller than the Russel Group universities but also does not compare as a fraction (%) of the number of academics in the institutions (**Table 1**). There was also wide variation among the post-92 universities with the top performer being St Mary's University, Twickenham followed by Roehampton and Brunel universes. There was about 3-fold gap in the percentage of professorial position between these top three performers and the bottom four (Westminster, West London, South Bank and University of the Arts, London) post-92 universities. For my own institution (UoG), the data shows 8.76% versus UCL (15.55%), Imperial (15.56%), King's (13.06%) and QMUL(8.79%) at the same level – ***sector was 10.18%.***

Table 1. Ranking of London major London, HE providers by percentage of professorial staff.

HE provider	%	Rank by %
London Business School	34.78	1
London School of Economics and Political Science	16.29	2
Imperial College of Science, Technology and Medicine	15.56	3
University College London	15.55	4
London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine	14.22	5
SOAS University of London	14	6
St Mary's University, Twickenham	13.64	7
King's College London	13.06	8
The Royal Veterinary College	12.70	9
Roehampton University	12.25	10
Brunel University London	10.78	11
St George's, University of London	9.90	12
Birkbeck College	9.77	13
Queen Mary University of London	8.79	14
The University of Greenwich	8.76	15
Goldsmiths College	8.56	16
London Metropolitan University	7.53	17
Kingston University	7.33	18
Middlesex University	7.14	19
City, University of London	6.96	20
The University of East London	4.29	22
The University of Westminster	3.92	23
The University of West London	2.63	24
London South Bank University	2.16	25
University of the Arts, London	1.94	26
Guildhall School of Music and Drama	0.64	27

Older (Russel Group) – member of the federal University of London
Older (Pre-92) Universities
Post-92 universities

- **How does the proportion of academic staff to students' numbers compares across the London universities?**

One way of measuring academic workload condition is through direct analysis ofstudent:staff ratio (SSR). On the bases of entry of students and academic staff numbers in the HESA data for the year 2020/21, the SSR for the major London HE providers can be calculated. Interestingly, the total number of students in London post-92 universities is almost identical with that in the old traditional universities. As shown in **Table 2**, the ranking of universities by SSR clearly shows a favourable working condition for academics in the Russel Group universities except for London Business School. The top performer for the post-92 universities on the FTE basis was the University of the Arts,

London, and my institution (UoG) was among those with SSR of over 20. ***Thus, we can design various workload assessment formula, but it remains that academics in post-92 universities have more teaching load than the Russel Group universities. The implication of this SSR disparity to staff wellbeing must be noted.***

Table 2. Ranking of major HE providers in London by SSR.*

	Total Number				Full Time Equivalent (FTE)			
HE Provider	Students	Staff	SSR	Rank by SSR	Students	Staff	SSR	Rank by SSR
London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine	1,105	1,055	1.05	1	900	915	0.98	1
Guildhall School of Music and Drama	1,065	785	1.36	2	1,010	200	5.05	3
Imperial College of Science, Technology and Medicine	21,370	4,530	4.72	3	20,190	4,100	4.92	2
University College London	45,715	9,100	5.02	4	41,195	7,185	5.73	4
London School of Economics and Political Science	13,435	1,780	7.56	5	12,350	1,255	9.84	8
Queen Mary University of London	23,870	3,130	7.63	6	22,465	2,300	9.77	7
King's College London	38,445	5,015	7.67	7	33,400	4,025	8.30	6
The Royal Veterinary College	2,375	315	8.18	8	2,290	285	8.04	5
City, University of London	21,325	2,515	8.48	9	16,150	955	16.91	17
Goldsmiths College	9,830	1,110	8.86	10	8,780	650	13.51	12
University of the Arts, London	21,105	2,313	9.12	11	19,225	1,590	12.09	10
St George's, University of London	5,185	505	10.27	12	3,750	380	9.87	9
The University of Westminster	19,680	1,785	11.03	13	17,570	920	19.10	20
Birkbeck College	12,070	1,075	11.23	14	8,520	580	14.69	13
SOAS University of London	5,865	500	11.73	15	4,865	370	13.15	11
St Mary's University, Twickenham	5,580	440	12.68	16	4,695	285	16.47	16
The University of West London	15,165	1,140	13.3	17	12,100	765	15.82	14
Brunel University London	17,745	1,160	15.3	18	15,160	940	16.13	15
London South Bank University	18,545	1,160	15.99	19	14,655	865	16.94	18
Kingston University	18,500	955	19.37	20	15,895	800	19.87	22
Middlesex University	20,155	980	20.57	21	16,440	880	18.68	19
The University of East London	17,395	815	21.34	22	14,695	575	25.56	24
London Business School	2,460	115	21.39	22	2,125	110	19.32	21
The University of Greenwich	22,760	970	23.46	24	19,355	855	22.64	23
Roehampton University	12,430	490	25.37	25	11,395	425	26.81	26
London Metropolitan University	12,525	465	26.94	26	10,665	400	26.66	25
The University of Law	13,590	370	38.85	27	10,590	370	28.62	27

* A smaller value of SSR means better working condition for academics
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- **How much did my post-92 university invest on academics to do research?**

We have measurable investment input and academic output as well as assessment criteria available to make judgment in this field. Opportunities to career progression can also go through

either the teaching or research route and can be measured. When one joins a post-92 university by choice or luck, however, their opportunity to do research in their field is statistically known to be far less than the Russel Group universities. Thus, this investment which by and large is based on the sharing of limited resources at post-92 university is not worth of a comparative scrutiny.

You want to know more about this topic? Read more in the next part of the article here.

The opinion expressed in this article is solely the author's.

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