

# Planning for an academic career

Dr Sara Shinton

# *My background*

Academic researcher  
Careers adviser  
Academic development

Swansea, Heriot-  
Watt, Newcastle

Researcher Development  
Academic Leadership  
Organisational Development

Consultancy &  
Partnership

Three planned activities

opportunity



challenges



values



# Why are you here?

Your objectives and questions

A few minutes to consider and discuss, then we'll share them

# The Academic Path

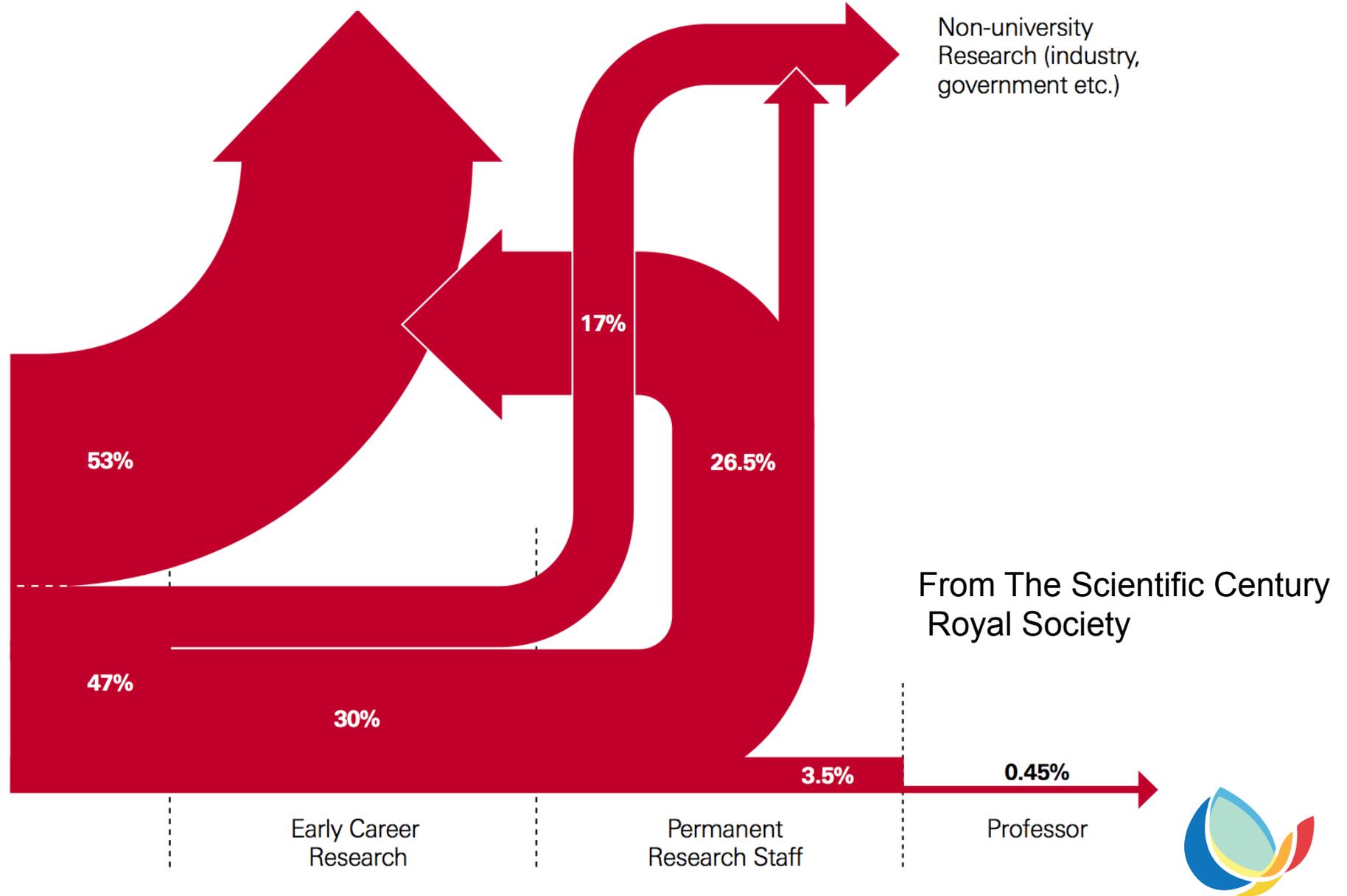
Health warning

- Data from different reports
- “science” not specific to subject
- Not specific to HWU researchers

But...

- Clearly show the difference between PhD numbers and academic job opportunities

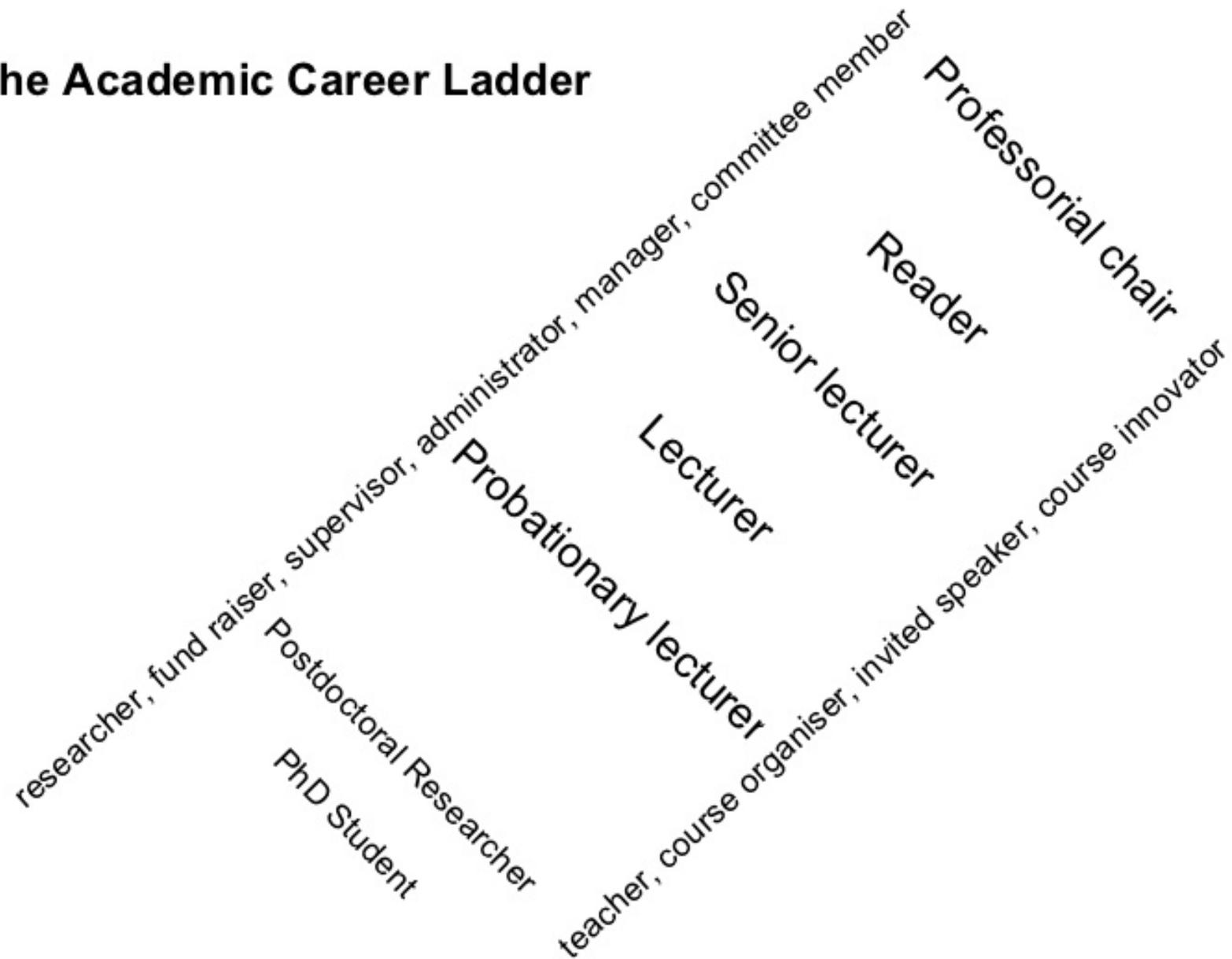
Careers outside academia  
– around half in scientific roles



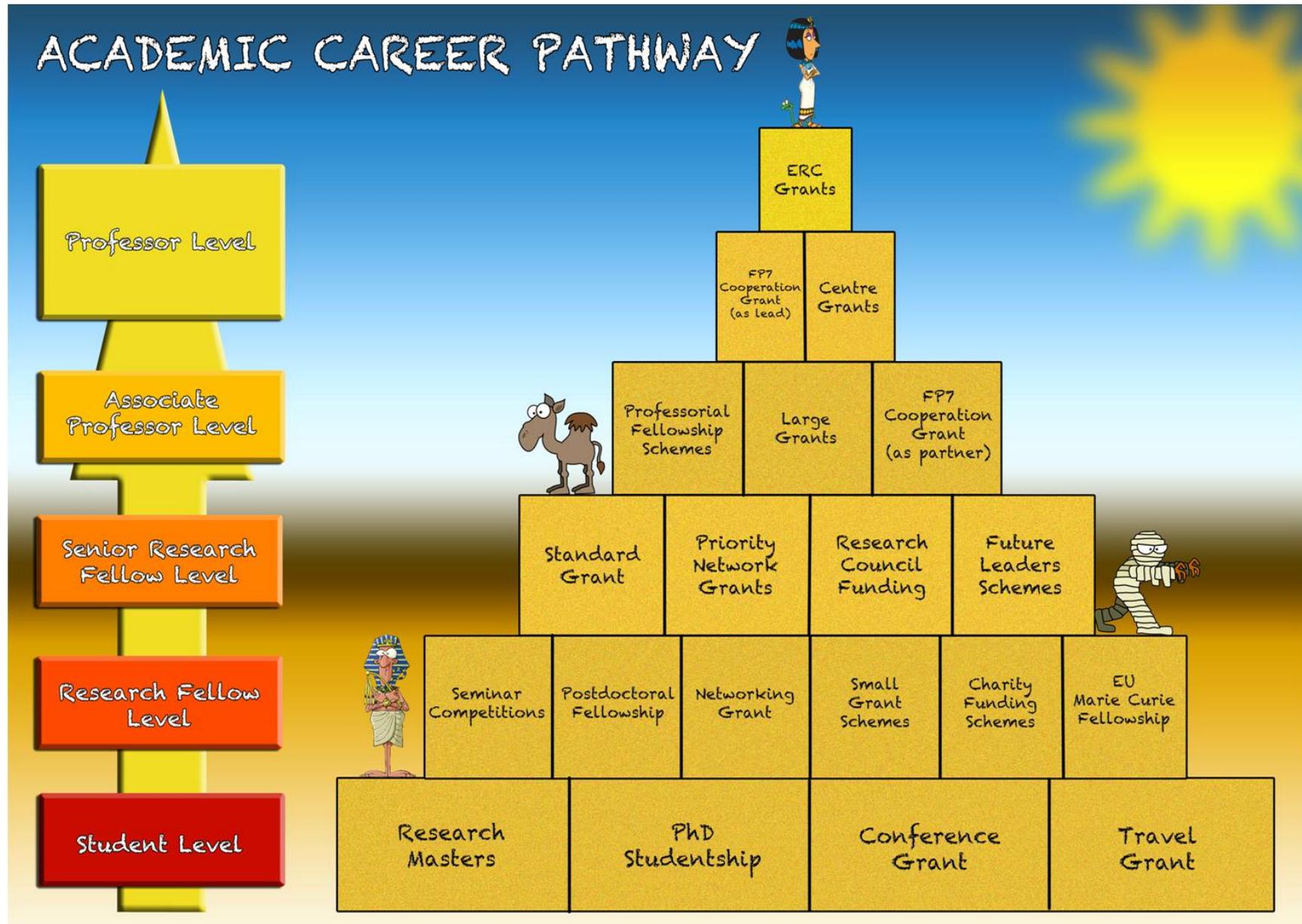
<http://www.compbio.dundee.ac.uk>

The UK Academic System

# The Academic Career Ladder



<http://blogs.bournemouth.ac.uk/research/files/2012/05/Academic-Career-Pathway.jpg>



<http://www.postdoc-pathways.lifesci.dundee.ac.uk>

stories in science  
POSTDOCTORAL CAREER PATHWAYS



# If you want to stay...

What do you think characterises the people who manage to stay?

Into small groups

**THE BEST JOB  
IN THE WORLD.**

Islands of the Great Barrier Reef, Queensland Australia.  
**Position Vacant: Island Caretaker**  
 Salary: AUD\$150,000 6-month contract  
 Responsibilities: • Clean the pool • Feed the fish • Collect the mail • Explore and report back  
 Applications close 20 February 2008 Interviews 4 May 2008 Announcement made 8 May 2008  
 Work begins: 1 July 2008

**ANYONE CAN APPLY.**  
[www.lizardreef.gov.au](http://www.lizardreef.gov.au)

Write a job advert which you think reflects what universities *really* want from the ideal candidate



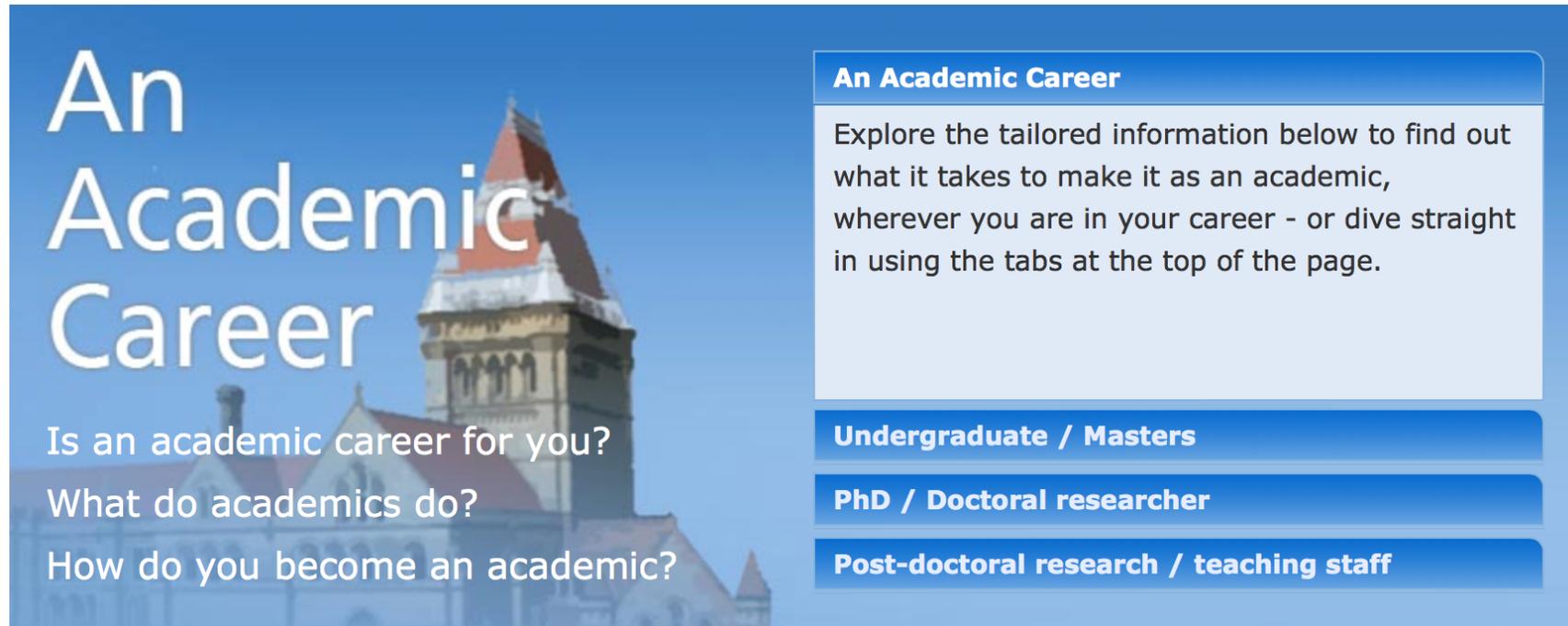
How do you find out?



*Great jobs for bright people*



# How do you find out?



**An Academic Career**

Explore the tailored information below to find out what it takes to make it as an academic, wherever you are in your career - or dive straight in using the tabs at the top of the page.

**Undergraduate / Masters**

**PhD / Doctoral researcher**

**Post-doctoral research / teaching staff**

[www.academiccareer.manchester.ac.uk](http://www.academiccareer.manchester.ac.uk)

# How do you find out?

## **Social Media:**

A guide for researchers



<http://www.rin.ac.uk/>

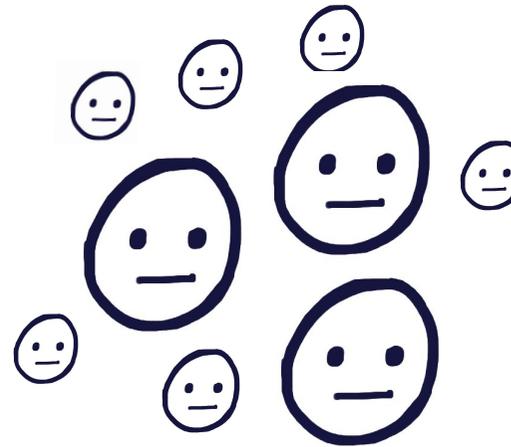
Scroll down for link

Some of my thoughts on  
what institutions are looking  
for...

Do you fit in with our strengths and  
complement our weaknesses?  
Are your interests going to add value  
to our portfolio?  
Will you be able to collaborate?  
Will you bring us access to new and  
interesting networks?



Some of my thoughts on  
what institutions are looking  
for...



Do you stand out from the crowd?  
Are you publishing more and with more  
impact?  
Can we measure that you are better than  
your peers?  
Do you have the potential to be a leader in  
your field?

Some of my thoughts on  
what institutions are looking  
for...

Does your work fit in with the newer agendas  
(impact) and our need to demonstrate that  
academic research has wider relevance?  
Can you address questions asked by society,  
the economy, other stakeholders?  
Is your work fundable in the future?



Some of my thoughts on  
what institutions are looking  
for...



Funding: we want people who won't  
cost us any money.

We need to see evidence that you will  
bring in enough research (or teaching  
fees) money to cover your salary and  
be a net contributor

Some of my thoughts on  
what institutions are looking  
for...

Are you enthusiastic and passionate  
about your work?

Do you inspire great people to want to  
work with you?

Are people excited by you and your  
research?



# So, what does this mean?

As a PhD student, what can you do to stand out from the crowd?

Into groups and think of three things that will help you to start progressing

# My thoughts

Try to get money to do *something* (go to a conference, supervise an undergraduate project, visit another group)

Talk to academics and ask their advice

Plan your postdoc early

Start thinking about your long term vision and gather the skills you'll need

Start writing up your work for publication

Public engagement develops skills and builds networks

Consider social media as a mechanism for building your reputation and visibility

Now imagine you have secured an academic position.

What are the main challenges in your job?



Once you have your list, think about what you are doing now to build these skills



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# Challenges for new PIs



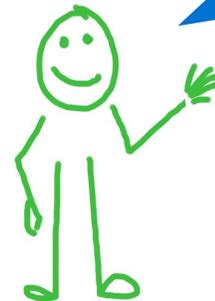
Some advice on building your personal capacity for the challenges ahead

Understand your strengths  
Understand your weaknesses  
Recruit a board of directors  
Invest time in your own development  
Invest £ and time in your own development  
Become more strategic  
Work out what your definition of success is  
Enjoy it (& let your enjoyment show)  
Be easy to work with  
Lose the imposter syndrome

Why do you want an academic career?

What does it offer which is unique?

How is it the perfect match for you?



Now we're exploring your values. Are there other careers which could offer similar satisfaction?

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# Final thoughts

Know what you are aiming for – get the whole picture of life as an academic

Focus on your outputs – build your CV and understand what you need to focus on

Tell people you want an academic career – they may create opportunities for you

Be positive and enthusiastic about your work