

Briefing note on senior pay in HE

The New JNCHES negotiations for 2017-18 cover staff on the single pay spine from points 2 to 51 at 148 participating institutions.

The trade unions have raised issues about the perceived 'continuous rise' in 'senior pay', citing as evidence 'a continuation in the high numbers of HE staff earning more than £100,000 per annum' and therefore reported in HEIs' financial statements.

Changes to the staff record enable a more accurate understanding of the numbers of staff paid above the pay spine and these new data indicate that previous figures have over-estimated the proportion over point 51. According to 2015-16 data, the number of staff employed in job levels that are above spine point 51 is 26,820 - just 6.5% of the total HE workforce. This includes 3,070 senior managers and 19,974 professors – the remaining 3,774 are academic leaders and managers¹.

As senior staff are paid more they comprise a greater proportion of the salary bill. The table below compares these proportions based on 2015-16 data for basic salaries.

	Total staff	Proportion of all staff	Proportion of basic salary bill
Senior managers	3,070	0.8%	2.8%
Senior academics	23,750	5.9%	15.6%
Staff on pay spine	374,631	93.3%	81.6%
Total	410,451	100%	100%

Given that it is the senior academic group that has the larger impact on the pay bill beyond the pay spine, it is worth comparing how the pay of this group has tracked against staff on the pay spine in recent years.

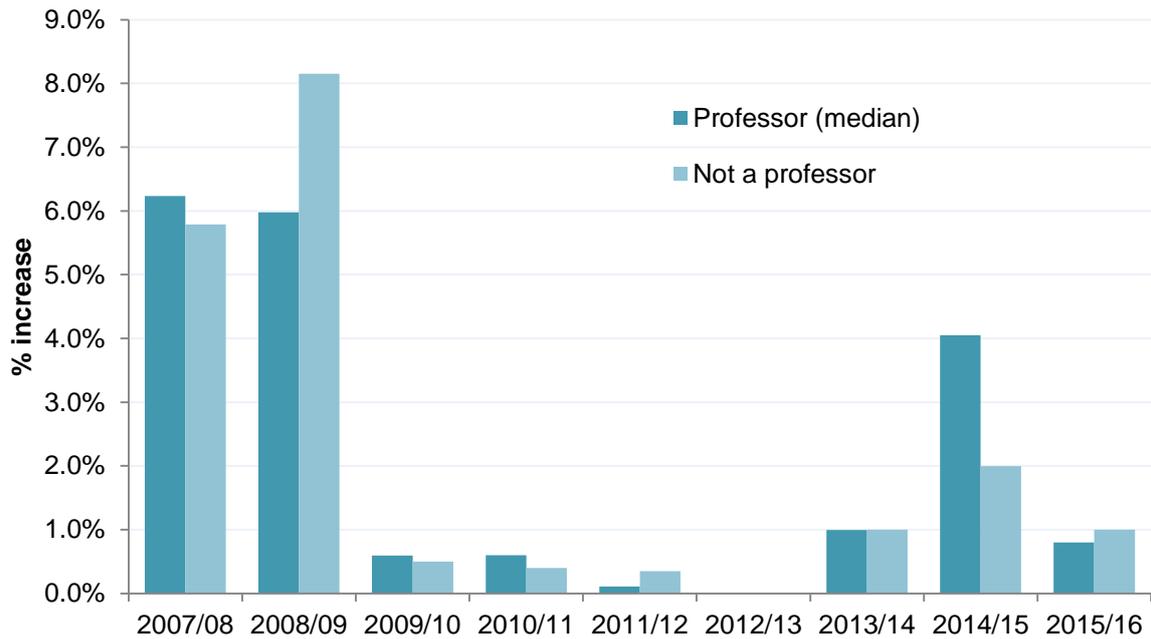
Based on HESA data from 2007-08 to 2015-16, Figure 1 compares the annual increase in median pay for senior academic staff, labelled 'professors'², and academic staff on the pay spine, labelled 'not a professor'. The chart shows that increases for the two groups have been broadly in line with the exception of two years 2008-09 and 2014-15. In 2008-09 staff on the pay spine received two increases in basic pay worth around 8% increasing median pay levels by 8.2% while median pay levels for senior academics increased by 6%, 2 percentage points lower. In 2014-15, possibly as a consequence of the Research Excellence Framework, the median salaries for senior academics increased by 4.1%, while the median for staff on the pay spine increased by 2%, 2.1 percentage points lower.

Another way of comparing these differences is to look at the ratio between the median pay of the two groups over time. Figure 2 uses HESA data from 2001-02 to 2015-16 and shows the median salaries of the two groups in nominal terms over the period. The change in methodology in 2012-13 prevents a direct comparison between figures before and after that date. Figure 3 shows 'not a professor' salaries as a proportion of 'professor' salaries over the same period beginning at 58% in 2001-02 and falling slightly to 57% in 2011-12. Over the four years of most recent like-for-like data the percentage has gone from 56% to 55%.

¹ Defined here as heads of institution and HESA levels 2A, 3A, 3/4A1, 3/4A2, 3/4A3 and 4A.

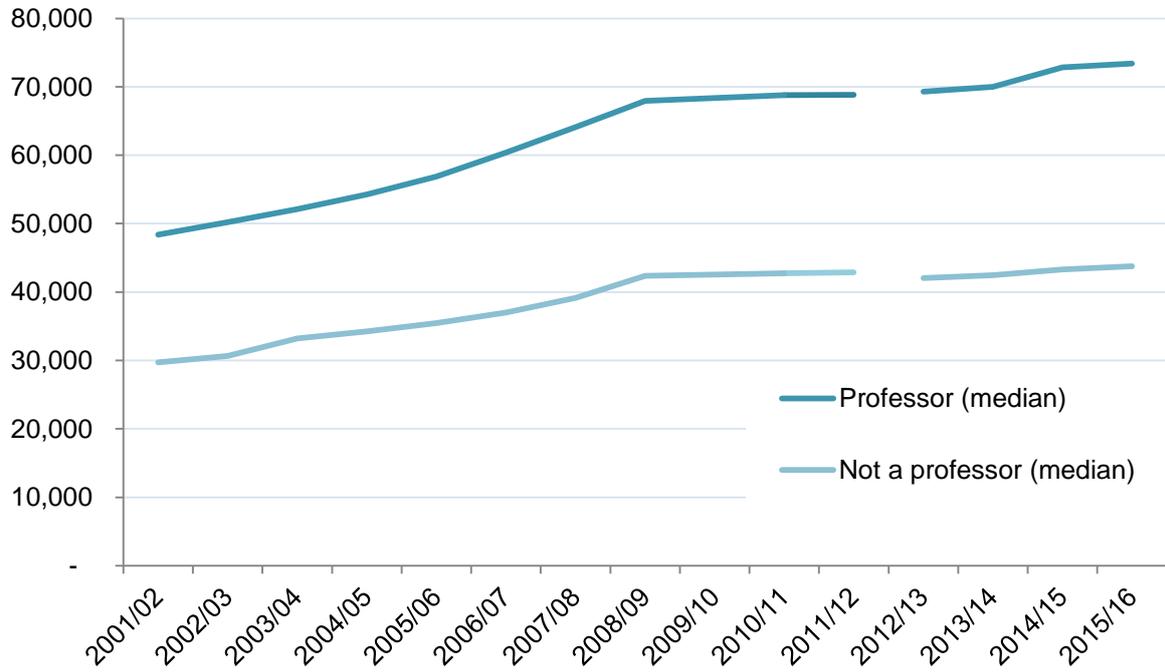
² Heads of institution and HESA levels 2A, 3A, 3/4A1, 3/4A2, 3/4A3, 4A and 5A.

Figure 1: Annual increase in median salary, 'professor' and 'not a professor', 2007/08 to 2015/16



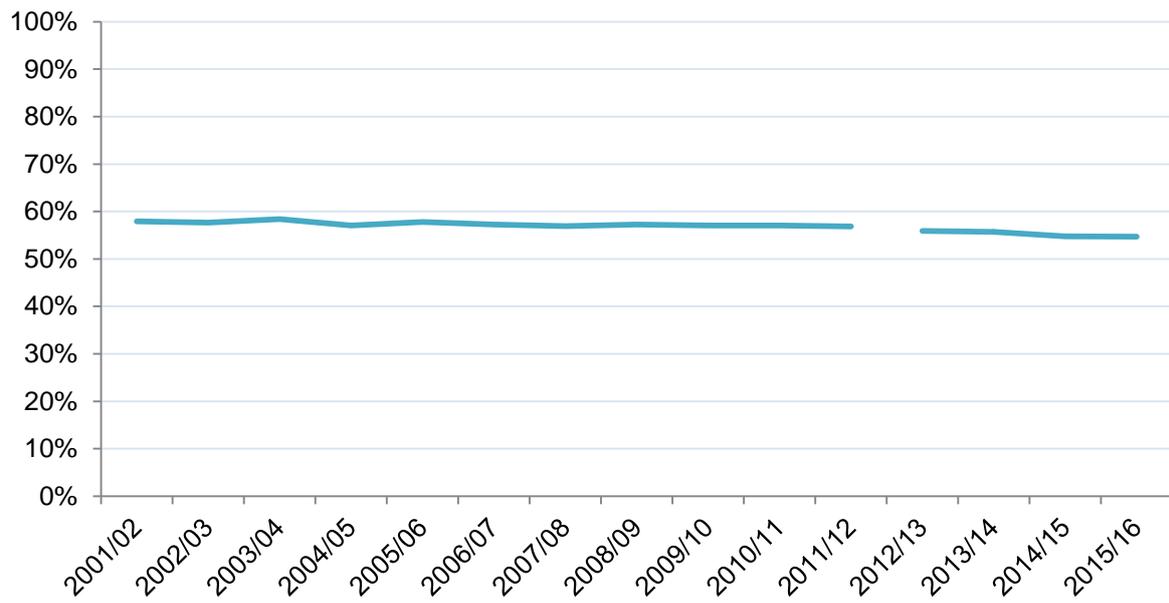
Source: HESA. Figures for 2012-13 not comparable due to change in methodology.

Figure 2: Median salary, professor and not a professor, 2001-02 to 2015-16



Source: HESA. Change in methodology in 2012-13.

Figure 3: Not a professor median salary as percentage of median professor salary, 2001-02 to 2015-16



Source: HESA. Change in methodology in 2012-13.

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