UCEA UNIVERSITIES & COLLEGES EMPLOYERS ASSOCIATION

HIGHER EDUCATION WORKFORCE REPORT **2019**

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Foreword

I pleased to present this report on the higher education workforce which is the latest in a series of biennial reports produced by UCEA looking at the state of the HE labour market and the approaches taken by higher education institutions in planning, recruiting and managing their workforces. Throughout my tenure as Chief Executive of UCEA I have observed significant changes in our sector and in the wider economy that have shaped and influenced both academic careers and the roles of professional services staff in universities. Many of these shifts have shaped the workforce agenda in universities and shaped the information presented in this report.

The core of our workforce reports has always been the information we collect directly from our member institutions on the recruitment and retention of academic and professional services staff. This report shows us similar challenges in 2019 to those we reported in 2017. IT and finance remain the most difficult professional service functions to recruit to while medicine, STEM, economics and business remain the most challenging academic areas with difficulties varying by job level. Overall, retention indicators are positive with few HE institutions reporting employee retention issues and typical employee turnover remaining below that for similar organisations in the wider economy. I find it encouraging that issues with pay levels are confined to specific roles with the total reward package remaining competitive in local and national markets. Through New JNCHES, UCEA has been able to provide for base pay uplifts that have maintained pace with inflation since 2013-14 (Eyles, 2019) while giving due regard to institutional financial sustainability.

Checking in with our members regularly on the impact of Brexit has been important since 2016 but, while the loss of any individuals due to this is not insignificant, it appears that the impact on staffing at sector level over the last 12 months is still limited. However, we do note the concerns regarding the future ability to attract and retain international EU staff now being expressed by the majority of respondents. This is not surprising perhaps as HEIs look ahead to an eventual exit from the European Union and see many questions related to our future relationship with the European research community that are still unresolved and a post-Brexit immigration system that is not yet confirmed.

The sector can equally see that it needs to invest in developing talent and in the skills of the whole workforce, particularly as we see digital technologies transform services and the workplace. The section on apprentices shows that there is much work that can be done in this area with HE institutions currently recouping only a tiny fraction of the apprenticeship levy that they are paying. We would certainly expect to see sector employers growing the number of apprentices in the coming years, with 2,500 apprentices already in the sector and a total of three sector specific apprenticeship standards which will be available.

Finally, I would like to thank our member institutions that contributed information to enhance the richness of this report. 87 contributed extensive information through a survey and 11 senior HR colleagues made themselves available for an in-depth interview. My thanks go also to the members of our expert steering group who provided advice at key stages of the project – William Locke (University of Melbourne), Joanna Marshall (University of Bradford), Jonathan Piotrowski (UKRI) and Cindy Vallance (Advance HE) – and to Incomes Data Research that supported us with undertaking and transcribing interviews.

This report covers many topics of relevance to the HE workforce, but such presentations can only provide a constrained set of insights at a specific moment in time. It is important that the sector and policy makers can make good use of the information and data we have collected and therefore we invite any interested stakeholders to get in touch if you would like further information on any aspect of the report.

Helen Fairfoul. Chief Executive, UCEA

1 Summary

UCEA's Workforce Survey is a biennial survey of UK HEIs which looks at recruitment and retention in the sector and a range of other workforce topics including apprenticeships and alternative staffing arrangements such as outsourcing. The survey report is based on responses from 87 HEIs, 11 interviews with senior HR professionals and an analysis of the HESA Staff Record which covers 162 HEIs in the UK.

Total headcount employment by HEIs has grown by 15% since 2007-08 reaching 429,560 in 2017-18, equivalent to 362,045 full-time staff (FTE). Within the academic workforce we see significant compositional changes with a 33% increase in teaching-focused staff since 2011-12 and 21% increase in research staff. Teaching and research staff (lecturers and professors) by comparison have grown by 7%.

The available indicators show a trend towards more open-ended and full-time academic employment. This trend is against the direction of travel cited in the 'casualisation' campaigning. The number of atypical (casual) staff has fallen by 16.1% since 2011-12. New data on other contracts, available for the first time in 2017-18, shows that zero hour contracts comprise 2.3% of academic work and 1.2% of professional services work. The new figures for hourly-paid contracts indicate these account for 13.4% of academic staff by headcount, undertaking 4.3% of academic work (FTE), with by far the largest numbers in continuing education and performing arts.

The sector faces several diversity challenges particularly in regard to representation of women and ethnic minorities in senior roles. For example, 22% of early stage academic staff are from ethnic minority backgrounds compared to 7% for departmental and faculty head positions.

Recruitment and retention challenges for professional services staff are largely confined to a handful of functions including IT, finance and marketing. Only a minority of HEIs (34%) reported significant difficulties in at least one professional service function with 18% reporting significant difficulties recruiting to IT roles. Employee retention remains healthy with a median resignation rate of 7.6% and total turnover of 11.1%. This compares to wider economy benchmarks of 12.9% and 18.8% respectively.

Clinical medicine is the most challenging subject area to recruit academic staff to, particularly for lecturers and senior lecturer roles. STEM, business and economics are also relatively more difficult to recruit to, but overall respondents report specific rather than general recruitment difficulties. Academic employee turnover is low with a median resignation rate of 5% and total turnover of 8%.

There has been a shift in recent years towards broadening academic career pathways and the survey finds that two-thirds of HEIs now have a teaching-focused pathway to professor. A similar proportion have research-focused pathways and a significant minority report pathways that reward academic leadership or innovation. However, professorial positions are still dominated by staff on teaching and research contracts who comprise 94% of all professors.

Brexit has not had a major impact on staffing to date, but the majority report at least moderate levels of concern regarding ability to attract and retain international EU staff in the next 12 months. Our analysis of HESA data also highlights significant

vulnerabilities in many subject areas with a majority of non-UK nationals in economics, chemical engineering and modern languages in 2017-18. Looking at staff working abroad, we see growth in staffing in transnational education ventures with more than 800 staff reported in China and Malaysia and an estimated 1,000 'flying faculty' supporting these activities.

There were 2,500 apprentices employed by HEIs in 2017-18 according to the first official collection of these data in the staff record. The 765 apprentices in the academic workforce are nearly all studying advanced apprenticeships (Level 3) and were found mostly in first stage lecturer level or senior / principal lecturer level. Apprentices in professional services are found across a wide range of occupations but most commonly in administrative (540) and technical occupations (285).

HEIs had anticipated recouping around 25% of their apprenticeship levy in its first year of operation but at the median only 2% was recouped. However, three new sector-specific apprenticeship standards (two are still in development) targeting academic staff, technicians and managers should provide an opportunity for HEIs to recoup more of their levy in future. 16% of HEIs are already using the academic apprenticeship and 18% plan to do so in the next 12 months. For the two standards in development 40% of respondents plan to or are likely to use the HE assistant technician standard and 33% the senior leader standard.

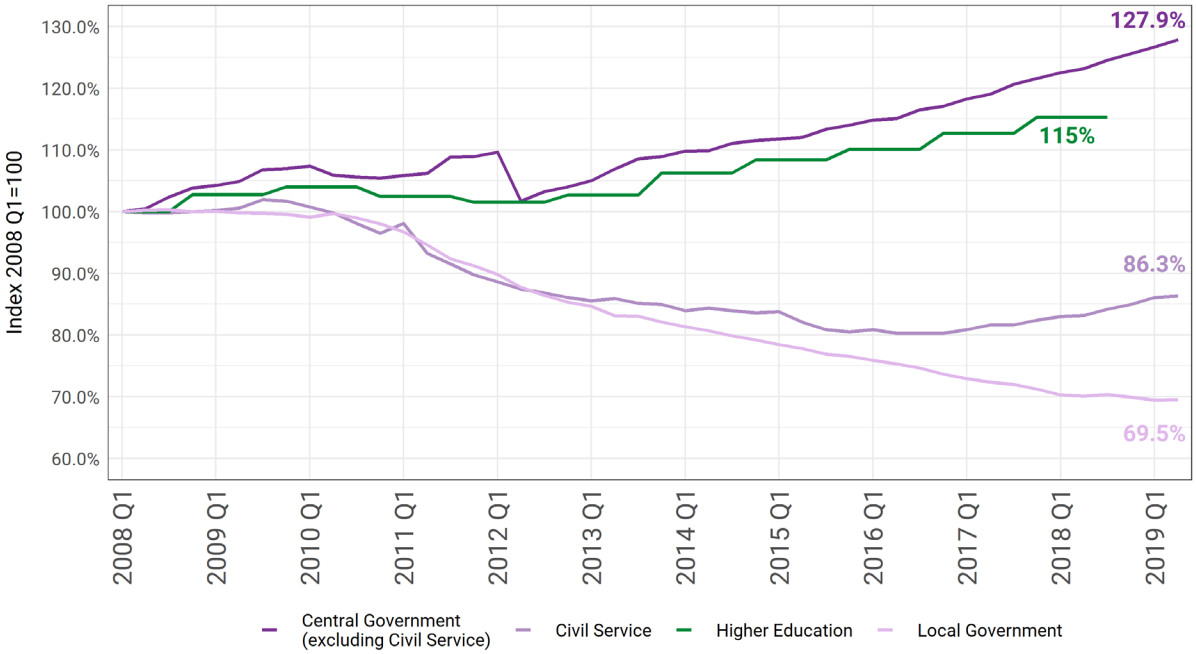
The use of alternative staffing arrangements is similar to the last survey in 2017 with cleaning, catering and security services most likely to be outsourced. Use of shared services remains limited. The main shifts are a fall in outsourcing of legal services and an increasing in part-outsourcing of security staff. Use of subsidiaries has not changed with 49% of respondents reporting use of wholly-owned subsidiaries – most commonly for business support activities, education and training, and ancillary staff. Spend on agency staff as a proportion of total expenditure fell from 2016-17 to 2017-18 and we see use of these arrangements most commonly for estates and facilities work, academic services and finance.

2 The higher education workforce

2.1 Total employment

The higher education workforce has grown every year since 2011-12 and publicly funded higher education institutions (HEIs) employed 429,560 substantive staff on 1 December 2017 across 162 HEIs in the UK. In addition to these staff the sector recorded 68,850 academic atypical contracts during the 2017-18 year[1]. As workforces are typically a mix of full-time and part-time staff, the full-time equivalent figure is also of interest and for 2017-18 was 362,045, including academic atypical contracts. This report focuses on staff in HEIs but the total higher education workforce is larger as there are many alternative providers that deliver higher education in the UK but are not currently required to submit staff returns to the official statistics agency[2]. There are also many sector-wide bodies that also employ staff in the sector. The ONS estimates the total employment in the sector at 640,000.

Figure 1: Change in higher education staff headcount compared to public sector employment



Source: HESA, ONS.

As can be seen in Figure 1, the total headcount in the sector has increased by 15% since 2007-08. Total employment has fared well compared to significant drops in civil service and local government headcount, but growth has been outstripped by that for central government employment (including teachers, health workers and police) which has increased by 28% over the period.

[1] As the atypical contract count covers the whole year, the two figures should not be added on a headcount basis. Collection of atypical data on 'non-academic' staff by HESA ceased in 2012-13.
[2] The ONS recorded 860 PAYE/VAT-based enterprises in the higher education in 2018 of which 295 (34.3%) had a turnover of at least £1,000,000.

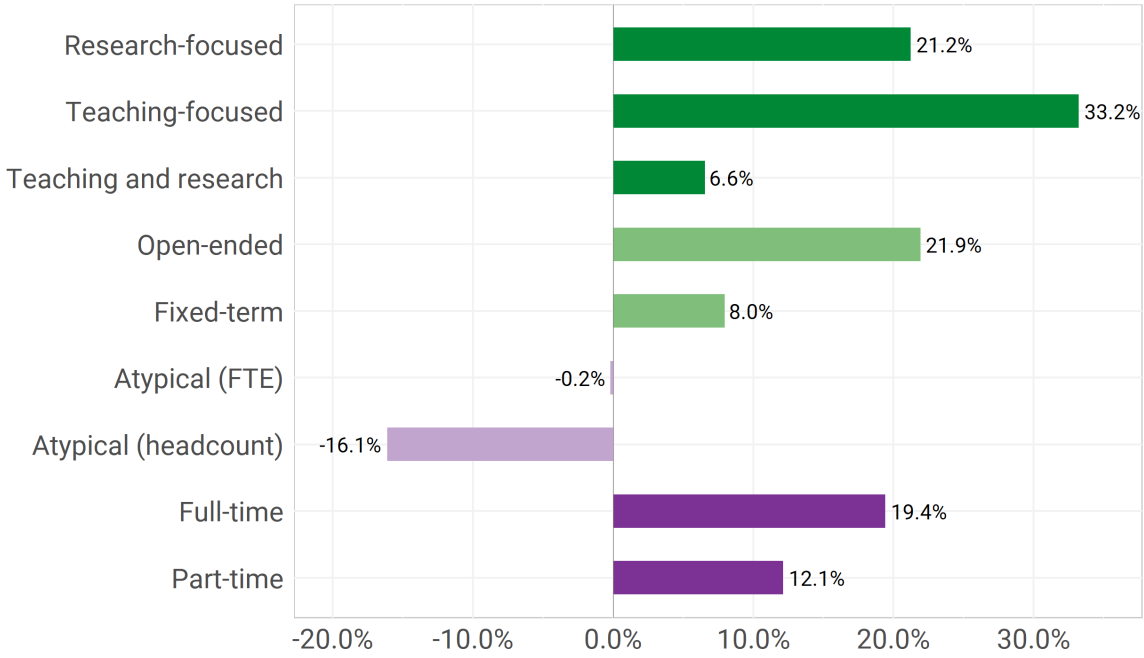
2.2 Contracts

Contract trends

While overall headcount has increased steadily, this masks changes within the workforce, particularly within the academic workforce. As shown in Figure 2, we see significant increases in the number of staff that are employed on teaching-focused or research-focused contracts which have increased by 33.2% and 21.2% respectively. Teaching and research contracts, the largest group by size, has only increased by 6.6% over this period and during this period the proportion of academic staff on these contracts fell below 50%.

All the available trend indicators suggest that the numbers of staff in casual forms of employment are declining, the opposite to the claims made in the 'casualisation' campaigning that is seen. We see that open-ended, often referred to as 'permanent', contracts have grown at a much faster rate than fixed-term and full-time employment has grown faster than part-time employment. The number of atypical contracts has also fallen significantly while the full-time equivalent of this group has not increased.

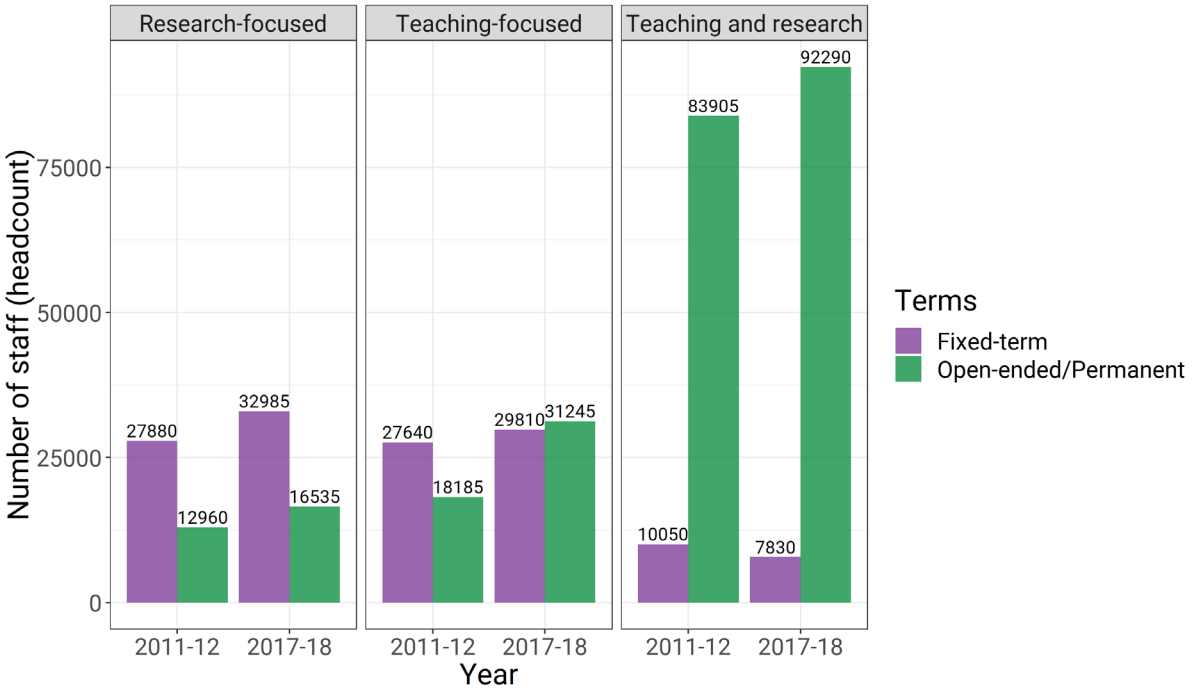
Figure 2: Change in academic contracts, 2011-12 to 2017-18



Source: HESA.

Changes in the academic workforce during this period also warrant further exploration as terms of employment vary considerably by academic employment function. Figure 3 looks at these two variables together for academic staff only. For research-focused staff in the first column, which have grown 21.2% overall, we see a small decrease in the proportion of staff from 68.3% in 2011-12 to 66.6% in 2017-18. For teaching-focused contracts on the right-hand column, we find that most of the growth has been in open-ended employment, with the proportion on fixed-term contracts falling from 60.3% to 48.8%. This is also the case for teaching and research contracts with an absolute fall in fixed-term contracts and an increase in the proportion on open-ended contracts from 89.3% to 92.2%.

Figure 3: Academic staff contract terms by academic function, 2011-12 and 2017-18



While the staff record provides valuable information on employee contracts, joint work by UCEA and the trade unions in 2015 concluded that the staff record could be improved to better capture different contractual arrangements, particularly hourly-paid contracts and those with no guaranteed hours (New JNCHES, 2015). In 2016, UCEA and the trade unions presented a case to HESA for improving the record and changes were introduced for the 2017-18 record.

Zero hours contracts

Looking at the zero hours contract figures presented in Table 1 we see that on a headcount basis there were 6,521 academic staff on zero hours contracts and 4,919 professional services staff.[3] However, the headcount figure does not include atypical staff which are collected separately – in total there were an additional 16,165 atypical contracts in 2017-18 with an FTE of 1,185 on 1 December 2017. In terms of the proportion of total work contributed by these individuals we can look to the FTE figures which are 2.3% and 1.2% respectively. The use of zero hours contracts for academic staff varies significantly by subject with STEM subjects significantly less likely to use these contracts. The highest use, based on FTE, is continuing education (21.6%), archaeology (9.1%) and art and design (6.6%) – see Figure 26 in the appendix. For professional services staff the highest use by a large margin is caring personal services (18.5%), followed by sport and fitness occupations (3.8%) – see Figure 28 in the appendix.

[3] This report uses the term 'professional services' to refer to all staff in non-academic roles. This includes academic-related staff and ancillary staff.

Table 1: Zero hour contracts by broad occupational group, FTE and headcount, 2017-18

Staff group	On a zero hours contract	% of total
Academic staff (headcount)	6,521	3.1%
Academic staff (FTE)	3,905	2.3%
Professional services staff (headcount)	4,919	2.3%
Professional services staff (FTE)	2,261	1.2%

Source: HESA. Headcount figures and professional services FTE figure exclude atypical staff. The academic FTE is comprised of 2,720 for staff in the main record and 1,185 for atypical contracts. Out of the 68,847 academic atypical contracts recorded in 2017-18, 16,165 were zero hours contracts. This headcount figure is for a full year and should not be added to the academic staff headcount.

Hourly-paid contracts

Turning to hourly-paid contracts, as compared to salaried positions, we see that on a headcount basis 13.4% of academic staff in the main staff record are on hourly-paid contracts undertaking 4.3% of total academic work (FTE) Table 2. The subject areas with the highest use of hourly-paid contracts based on headcount are continuing education (56.6%) and music, dance, drama and performing arts (52.7%) – see Figure 27 in the appendix. The lowest are clinical dentistry (0.5%) and veterinary science (0.8%). On the professional services side we see lower proportions at 3.7% and 1.2% respectively on the basis of headcount and FTE with highest use (based on headcount) in elementary administration occupations (37.6%) and caring personal services (31.7%) – see Figure 29 in the appendix.

Table 2: Hourly-paid contracts by broad occupational group, FTE and headcount, 2017-18

Staff group	On an hourly-paid contract	% of total
Academic staff (headcount)	28,450	13.4%
Academic staff (FTE)	73,950	4.3%
Professional services staff (headcount)	7,980	3.7%
Professional services staff (FTE)	2,285	1.2%

Source: HESA. Headcount figures exclude atypical staff.

2.3 Diversity in the workforce

As would be expected with a workforce of over 400,000 there is significant diversity within the HE workforce. While we provide an overview on three protected characteristics in this report as indicators of workforce diversity[4], the occupational diversity of the sector is often overlooked. The workforce is split nearly 50/50 between academic staff (211,980 excluding atypical staff) and professional services staff (217,580) and within these groups we see significant differences. In the academic staff group lecturers and professors undertaking both research and delivering teaching are now in the minority (47% of all academic staff) with 49,520 staff employed as researchers (23%) and 61,050 (29%) employed to undertake teaching and learning activities. Among this group of staff we see expertise in 1,241 distinct academic disciplines. On the professional services side we see significant occupational variety with at least 50 employees recorded against 77 different occupational categories[5].

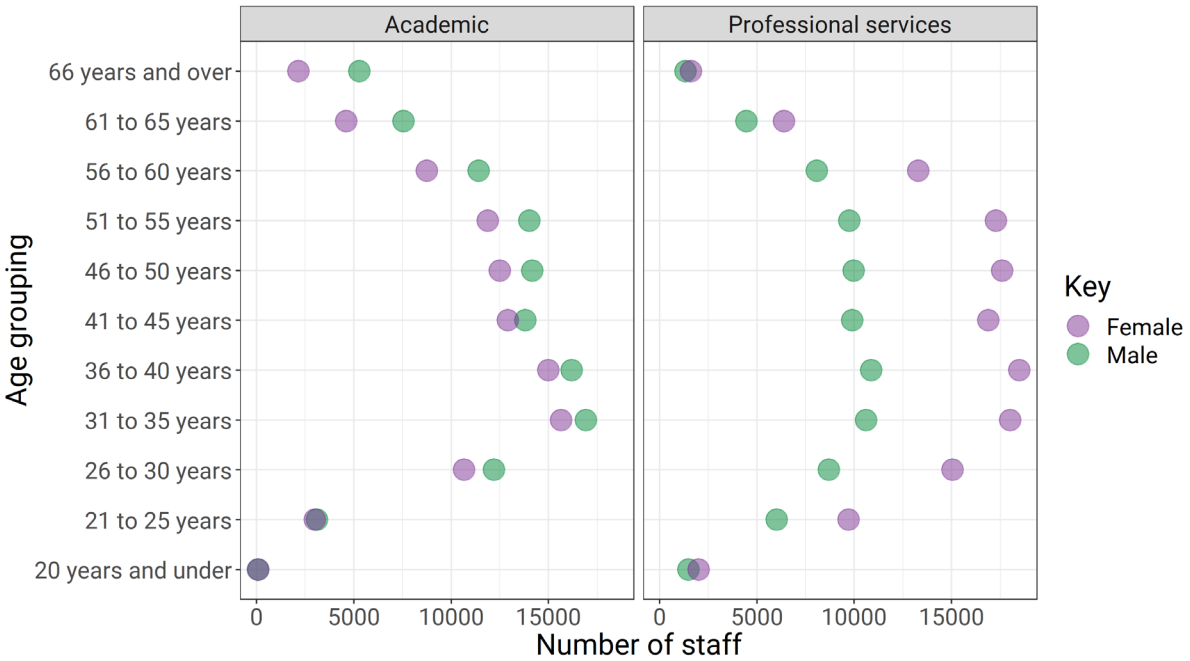
[4] Advance HE's annual statistical report provides more detail on these areas. www.advance-he.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/equality-higher-education-statistical-report-2019

[5] Standard Occupational Classification – 3 digit.

Age

Looking at the academic workforce in Figure 4, we see relatively low numbers of staff up until the 26 to 30 age group which reflects the fact that the majority of academic staff are qualified to PhD level (57.6%) or hold another higher degree / postgraduate qualification (26.9%). Only 2.9% of those aged under 25 years in academic roles hold a doctorate. The difference in representation between men and women at different age groups is also clearly visible with more males at every age group above 21 years and progressively larger differences in representation from the 46 to 50 age grouping and above. For professional services staff we see significant over-representation of female staff in age groupings between 21 and 60.

Figure 4: HE workforce by age grouping and broad occupational group



Source: HESA. Headcount.

Gender

While Figure 4 shows differences in the number of men and women at different age groups, the distributions follow similar contours – we do not see this for men and women when we look at job levels.[6] Looking first at academic staff, Figure 5 shows significant under-representation of women at higher levels, particularly at professorial level where only 25.5% of jobs are held by women. On the professional services side we see relative parity at senior levels but significant over-representation at lower levels. Such compositional features contribute significantly to the gender pay gap in the sector, which was 15.0% in 2018 based

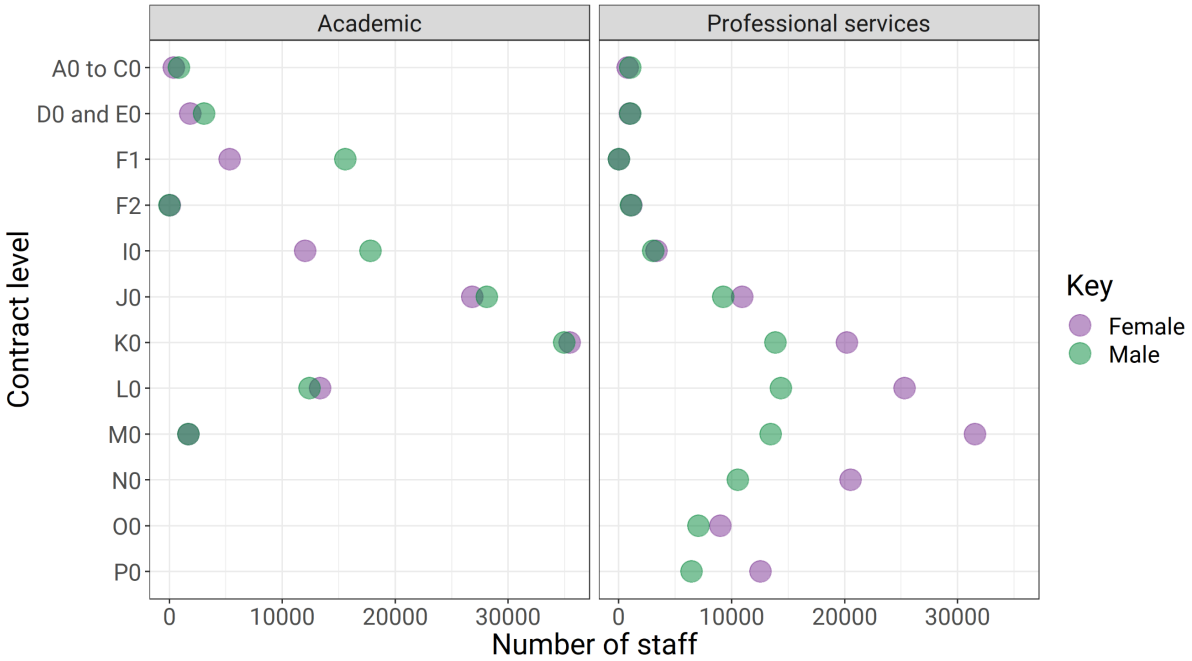
[6] HESA contract levels are based on a series of job levels from A0 to P0. There is no national grading structure for academic or professional services staff so these levels enable comparison between institutions. The full description of these levels can be found here: www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c17025/combined_levels

on median hourly earnings excluding over-time.[7] This came out in one interview with a London-based HEI:

> *We had very good representation in the lower and lower-middle quartiles; not so good in the upper-middle quartile and we were poor in the upper quartile.*

The sector has made considerable progress in addressing gender-related inequalities in the sector in recent years with the sector's Athena SWAN Charter playing an important role. Analysis by UCEA shows that the sector's gender pay gap has fallen from 23.8% a decade ago (UCEA, 2018) while our survey of gender pay gap action plans also provides good evidence that positive work in this area will continue (UCEA, 2019).

Figure 5: Gender by contract level and broad occupational group, 2017-18



Source: HESA. Headcount.

Ethnicity

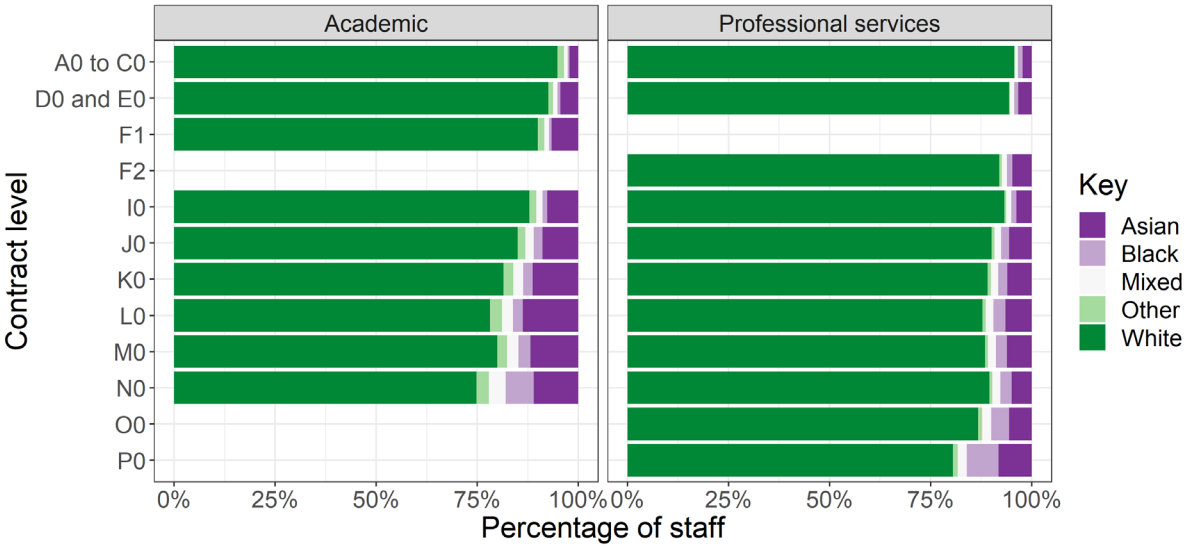
Turning to ethnic diversity within the workforce, we see that overall 13.7% of the HE workforce comes from an ethnic minority background[8] with a slightly higher proportion for academic staff 15.9% than professional services 11.7%. Looking at ethnicity by grade in Figure 7, we see that representation decreases progressively as job level increases for both academic and professional services staff. For example at level L0, the typical entry point for a lecturer, 22.1% of staff are from ethnic minority backgrounds but this falls to 7.4% for departmental and facutly head positions (D0, E0). However, for academic staff the overall figures mask a greater lack of ethnic diversity amongst UK and EU nationals. Ethnic diversity amongst academics is significantly increased by non-EU international staff members (as seen in Figure 6) where ethnic minority representation at levels J0 and below is over 50%.

[7] Based on data for higher education (SIC 8542) from the 2018 Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings. Gender pay gap is 16.1% based on the mean. UCEA's infographics on the gender pay gap in HE provide further information and data.

[8] Ethnic minority here is defined as those staff recorded in HESA record in subcategories within Black, Asian, Mixed and Other. See 'ethnicity' in www.hesa.ac.uk/support/definitions/staff

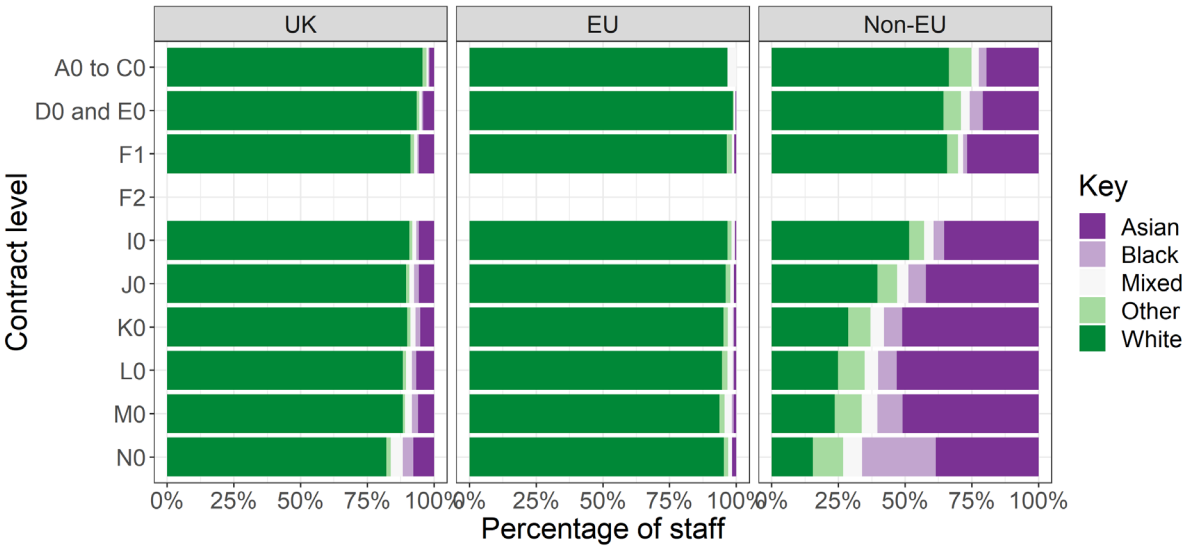
In professional services, 19.5% of staff in level P0 (which includes many security, catering and cleaning staff) are from ethnic minority backgrounds but there are much lower proportions in higher levels.

Figure 7: Ethnicity by contract level and broad occupational group, 2017-18



Source: HESA. Headcount.

Figure 6: Academic staff by ethnicity, nationality and contract level, 2017-18



Source: HESA. Headcount.

Improving ethnic diversity within the workforce featured as a topic of discussion in several of our interviews with institutional representatives with a particular focus on being more representative of local communities and the student body.

> *78% of our student population is from a BAME background so staffing needs to complement this; it won't get to 78% as the local population is only about 34% but we want to have more representation among senior managers and the leadership team.* Post-1992, Rest of England

> *Around 27% of staff are from BME communities and many are in junior roles, which is something we want to change. Since we are London-based the proportion of BME staff should probably be higher and we would like to see more BME staff in senior roles.* Pre-1992, London and the South East

> *It's very important to use that the staff cohort reflects the student cohort. We recognise this is a long-term game which is influenced by the talent population.* Pre-1992, London and the South East

In order to address under-representation, interviewees mentioned a variety of measures, including:

- The use of balanced recruitment panels
- Compulsory unconscious bias training
- Appointment of equality and diversity teams
- Establishing staff networks
- Identifying stages in the application process where diverse candidates drop off

> *We are challenging ourselves to do better, in a very systematic way…We do some fact-finding to establish a baseline; do gap analysis to work out where we need to be; and tap into advice and good practice out there. Through that process, we come up with a raft of targets and develop an action plan*. Post-1992, London and the South East

> *The HEI has been awarded the Race Equality Charter mark and is now aiming towards attaining silver-level accreditation. This will entail increasing the number of both professional and academic staff from a BAME background and it is on track to achieve this. The university also provides specific training aimed at BAME staff.* Post-1992, rest of England

For academic appointments, one HE responded that they are concentrating on developing the talent pipeline in order to think long-term about how to improve their diversity.

> *People don't like confronting the reality of the skills base of the population – it's going to take 20 years to change the profile. We need to start early, go back to basics by getting girls and ethnic minority groups involved in sciences at an early age.* Pre-1992, London and the South East.

3 Professional services staff

3.1 Recruitment challenges

The vast majority of responding HEIs (86%) reported at least moderate recruitment difficulties in at least one functional area of professional services with just over half of the sample of respondents (34%) reporting significant difficulties (rated 5) in at least one area. This is similar to 2017 when 91% of HEIs experienced difficulties in at least one of these areas.

Figure 8: Recruitment difficulties, professional services staff

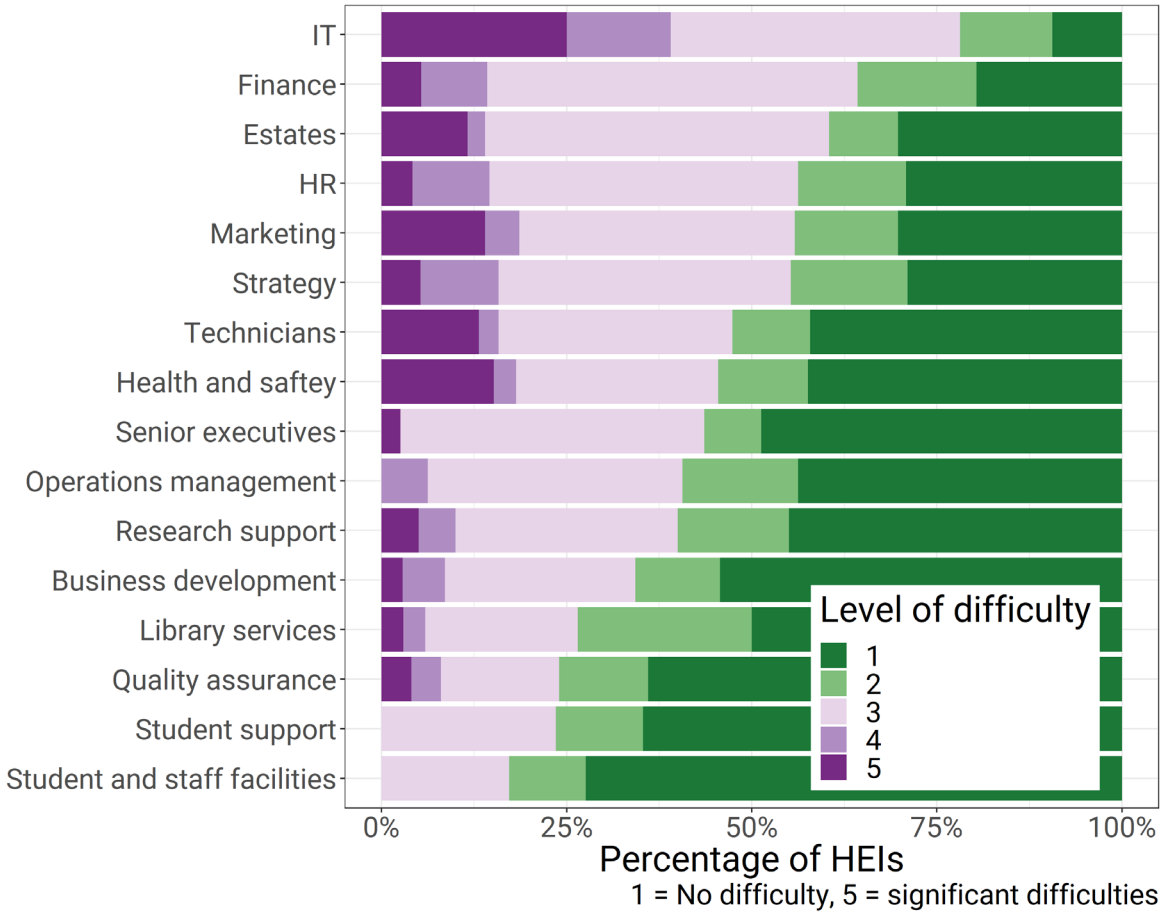


Figure 8 shows functions ranked by the proportion of HEIs reporting at least moderate difficulties recruiting staff in the 12 months to July 2019. In terms of functions, IT is clearly the most problematic area with 18% of HEIs recruiting to such positions reporting significant difficulties and 78% reporting at least moderate difficulties. This is an increase from 2017 when 62% reported difficulties in recruitment. Apart from IT, the functions with the highest proportion of HEIs reporting significant recruitment difficulties are marketing (and related functions), health and safety, technicians and estates. Looking at overall levels of difficulty finance, strategy and HR are also challenging. While the overall picture is similar to previous surveys, there are two noticeable differences - finance has become more challenging compared to 2017 with 64% reporting at least moderate difficulties compared to 23% in 2017 while student support has dropped considerably in terms of difficulty.

The main reasons for the recruitment difficulties experienced in relation to professional services staff were:

- Salary expectations in comparison to the private sector.

- Competition between HEIs.
- Concerns related to the location of the institution.
- A lack of qualified applicants.
- Difficulty filling niche roles and knowledge that is specific to the sector (e.g. understanding HESA requirements).

Each of these reasons is associated with different roles. For example, salary expectations are reported to be most problematic for IT and finance roles and meeting these creates issues for internal pay equity which have to be addressed through market supplements or engaging contractors on daily rates.

> *The main contributory factor is pay, in that generally speaking we pay lower salaries than competing organisations in the private sector. This is particularly the case in IT where there is a strong contract market.* Post-1992, rest of England

> *Salaries are the biggest barrier attracting appropriate IT skills/experience-level into a higher education context. Candidates expect a higher salary compared to equivalent roles and skills-levels.* Post-1992, London and the South East

Yet for other roles salary was not the main factor with availability of skills or competition for skills in the local labour market a common challenge among respondents across many difficult to fill roles at all levels. This was particularly an issue for HEIs outside of London:

> *A lot of technicians and IT specialists are located in London and around that area. Technicians at certain grades are not eligible for relocation support so it's been a struggle for us to get people to move for the role. We have had to do lots around salaries, paying market value supplements, and widening our relocation package offering.* Pre-1992, rest of England

> *We recently received 40 applications for a Pro Vice Chancellor role but were unable to develop a shortlist of sufficient quality.* Pre-1992, rest of England

> *[We experience a] moderate turnover of cleaners along with recruitment issues due to physical location of campus and poor public transport links to fit shift patterns.* Pre-1992, Scotland

> *Clinical academics are in decline nationally [and we experience an] additional challenge being based in Wales. Welsh-speaking academic posts also present a challenge due to a limited pool. Allied Health Professions tend to develop career in practice first then move over so also limited pool at more senior level.* Pre-1992, Wales

> *Particular IT roles such as architects, developers and digital experts are very hard to find, especially as many are based away from the South West.* Pre-1992, rest of England

> *Finance, HR and Marketing positions are difficult to fill because of a lack of skill set in the area. This means that we are then competing with major cities in which people can earn more for less travel.* Pre-1992, rest of England

Where specialist knowledge is required, such as for student support and health and safety roles, strong competition between institutions was commonly cited as a factor.

> *[There is] high competition in London for student support and administration roles that include hours of work, pay and first choice candidates being offered roles in*

other institutions. We have to frequently re-advertise for vacant positions. Pre-1992, London and South East

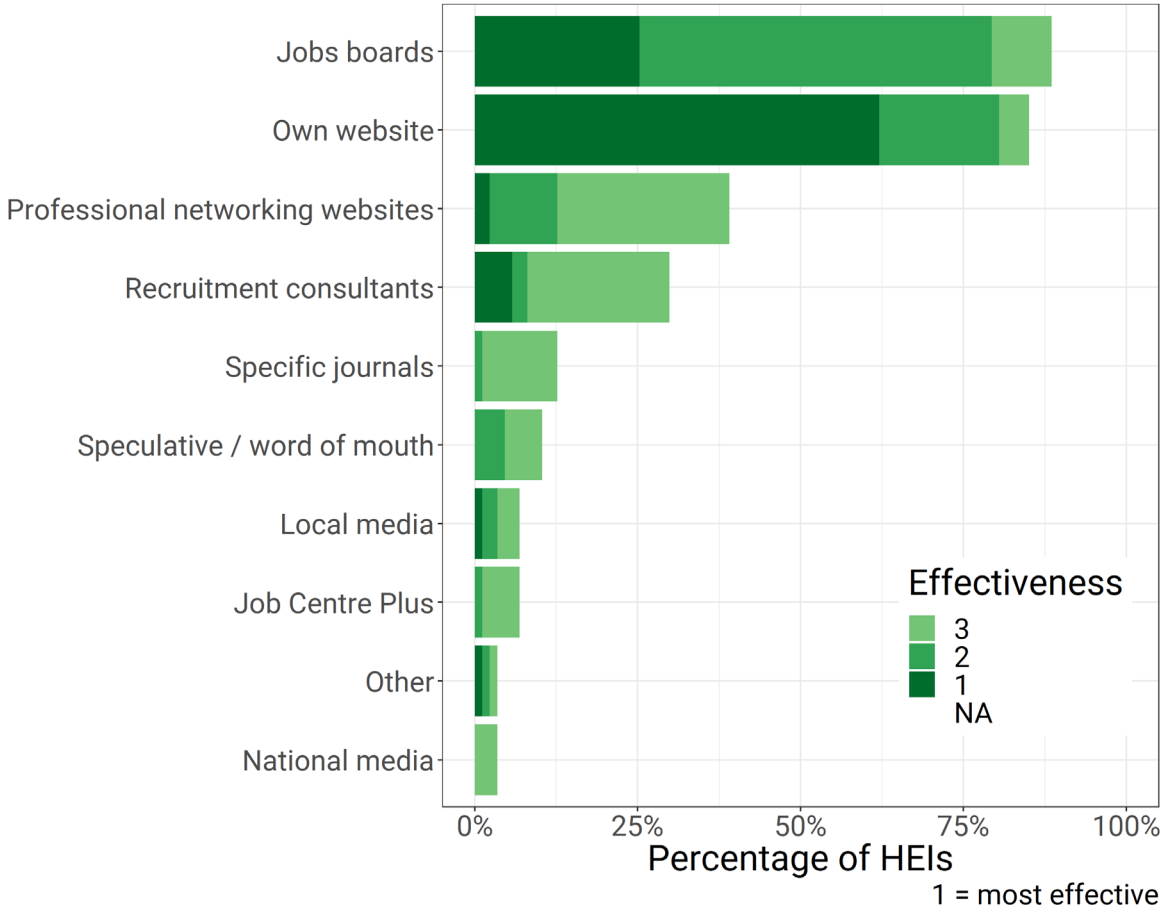
The specific skills needed to be a health and safety professional in a university mean that suitable candidates are few and far between. The need to understand the risks of a working lab and be working on H&S policy that doesn't exist due to the ground-breaking research taking place makes finding the right quality of candidates incredibly difficult. Pre-1992, rest of England

3.2 Recruitment and selection methods

Advertising vacancies

While there are a various approaches to communicating job vacancies, use of jobs boards such as jobs.ac.uk and institutional websites rank highest among the most effective methods for recruitment. Overall, 89% ranked jobs boards within the top three most effective methods with 85% reporting advertising on their own website within the top three - Figure 9. In terms of effectiveness, however, advertising on their own website is viewed as the most effective method with 62% ranking this first compared to 25% for jobs boards. Professional networking sites such as LinkedIn and the use of recruitment consultants came out as the third and fourth most effective approaches.

Figure 9: Most effective advertising channels for professional services recruitment



Responding to recruitment difficulties

Where respondents reported difficulty in recruitment, they were asked what steps they had taken to improve their recruitment practices and processes. The most popular steps taken included the uptake or increased use of social media to advertise jobs, with almost 40% of respondents citing this. In a few cases, this was linked to efforts to improve the institution's

brand as an employer with overarching campaigns which highlight the benefits of working at the institution.

> *[We] Refreshed our marketing collateral, [made] more proactive use of social media (Twitter and LinkedIn) and also utilised marketing wide social media hashtags linking to a broader University strategy.* Pre-1992, rest of England

> *[We are] working on Employer Branding and EVP (Employee Value Proposition) to highlight what life is like at the university in order to attract individuals that may not have considered working with us before.* Pre-1992, rest of England

Employing a recruitment or executive search firm was the next most commonly cited response to recruitment difficulties (36%). This was seen as particularly important for professional services staff as these roles were more likely to start a job search by using an agency. One respondent interviewed by UCEA said:

> *It could be that they're not coming forward to our adverts because of the salaries we pay, but we do tend to fill the posts when we go to an agency so I'm not completely convinced by that argument – I think it's possibly just more how that group of people tend to go to agencies to get jobs.* Post-1992, rest of England.

In other cases, institutions were simply improving their job descriptions and candidate packs. This could include:

- Highlighting other benefits such as flexible working
- Rewriting advert copy using professional advice
- Emphasising the values of the sector.

The importance of a job title

A post-1992 university in London and the South East found that applicants were being discouraged from applying for roles due to their job title. A simple change to the advert inspired more applicants who were then happy to be employed with the original job title.

The university has come to realise that the terminology used in job advertisements may initially have restricted the candidate pool for finance vacancies. It operates a business partnership model within the finance department but, when it ran two recruitment campaigns that were identical apart from job titles, it found that we had a marvellous response for the management accountant vacancy but hardly any for "finance business partner".

Having taken a closer look at how other HEIs approach such vacancies, our respondent now uses the term 'management accountant' in all such job advertisements.

We'll use a different job title so that people will apply but in interviews we find people understand the concept of business partnering and are happy to be appointed as such.'

Often a review of recruitment practices will result in various actions, for example one London HEI said:

> *[We have] taken professional advice on writing job adverts. We met with jobs.ac.uk to see how they could better promote our adverts/organisation on their web pages. Our job packs have been redesigned to make them more attractive and streamlined with links to relevant documents…. [We have also] re-written our guidance for recruiting managers and incorporated equality and diversity information.*

Reflecting comments from the 2017 Workforce Survey, there are still concerns that the sector has an 'image' issue with it being perceived by potential candidates as 'slower moving' compared to other sectors. As one interviewee from a Scottish HEI explained:

> *More commercial roles are relatively new in the sector, in historical terms at least. Attracting recruits from other sectors [involves] emphasising positives such as the traditions and values of the HE sector. But the potential downside could be that it's seen as somehow slower moving than the private sector. However, it's important to realise that we are definitely no worse in this respect than the public sector proper and are probably ahead of this sector in this respect.*

> *We experience difficulties in recruiting to finance and IT vacancies in the main. Part of this is perception, with potential applicants not realising that HEIs have significant and forward-looking finance and IT departments.* Post-1992, rest of England

> *Seeking executive level roles with industry expertise that compliments HE has been challenging both in terms of salary comparisons and perception of HE sector.* Pre-1992, London and the South East

Selection methods

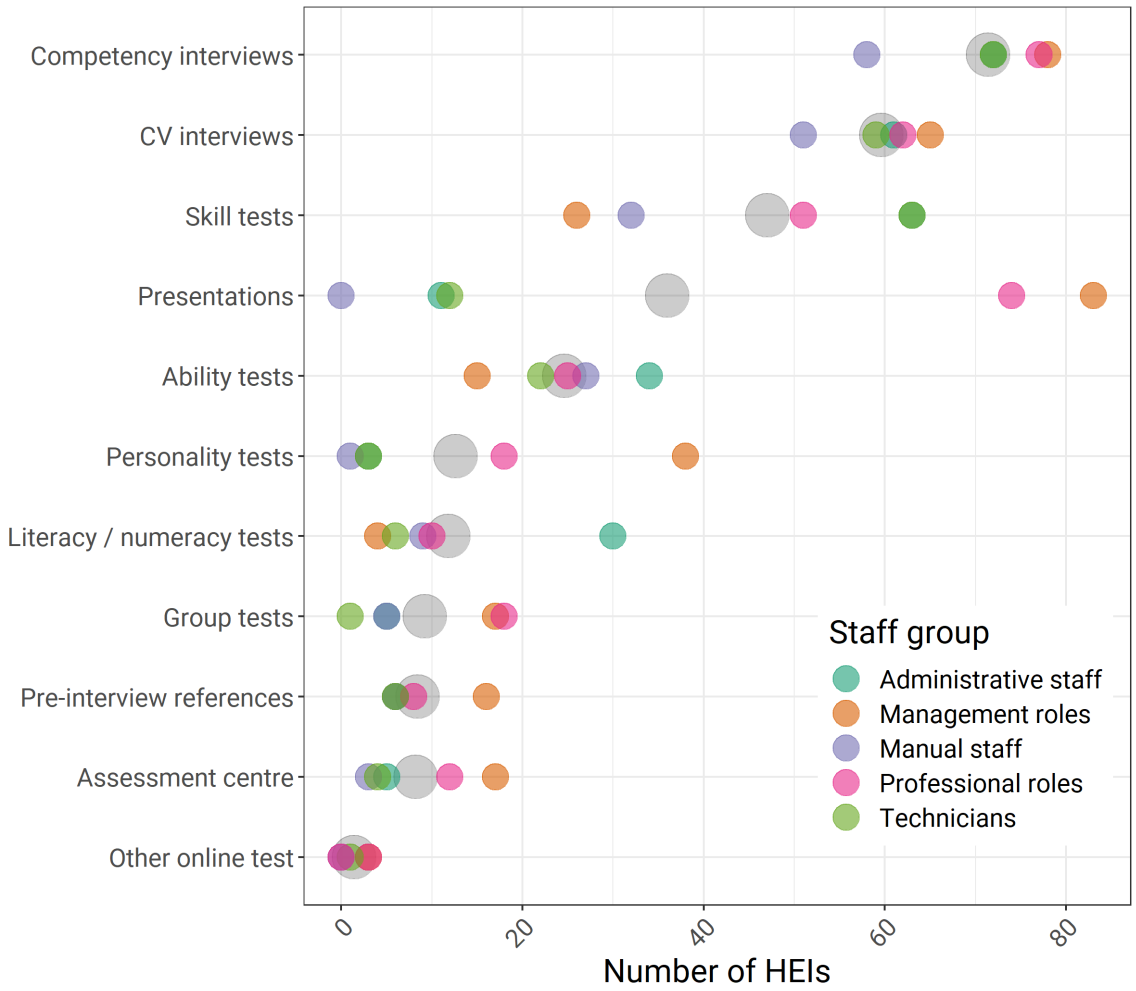
There are a range of selection methods used by institutions during the recruitment process and these vary significantly by occupational group - Figure 10. Competency interviews and CV-based interviews are the most common overall and are likely to take place within the same process. These are common for all occupational groups, albeit relatively less common for manual roles. While skill tests and presentations are the next most common in terms of average use across each of the broad occupational groups highlighted, there are considerable differences in the usage of these methods by group. Skills tests are very common among recruitment processes for administrative and technical staff (72% of responding HEIs) but less likely to be used for management roles (30% of HEIs). The situation is reversed for presentations with 95% of HEIs using these for managerial role selection with only 13-14% using these for administrative and technical roles. Among the other approaches used personality tests are relatively common for management roles but not so much for other groups. For administrative roles literacy and numeracy tests are common but less so for the other groups.

Comments from respondents provided additional detail on the way in which these methods are used for different groups. Several mentioned that competency-based interviews are the core process used with other processes used to complement that depending on the role in question with discretion often left to the hiring department.

Some respondents also mentioned development of internal capacity while others mentioned plans to introduce more consistency into processes.

> *With the creation of our new specialist recruitment team we will be increasing our capacity and expanding our offering here. For example, greater use of psychometric testing, automated video interviewing and use of welcome exercises.* Pre-1992, London and the South East

Figure 10: Selection methods typically used during the recruitment process, by occupational group (grey circle is average of all occupations for each method)



3.3 Professional services staff retention

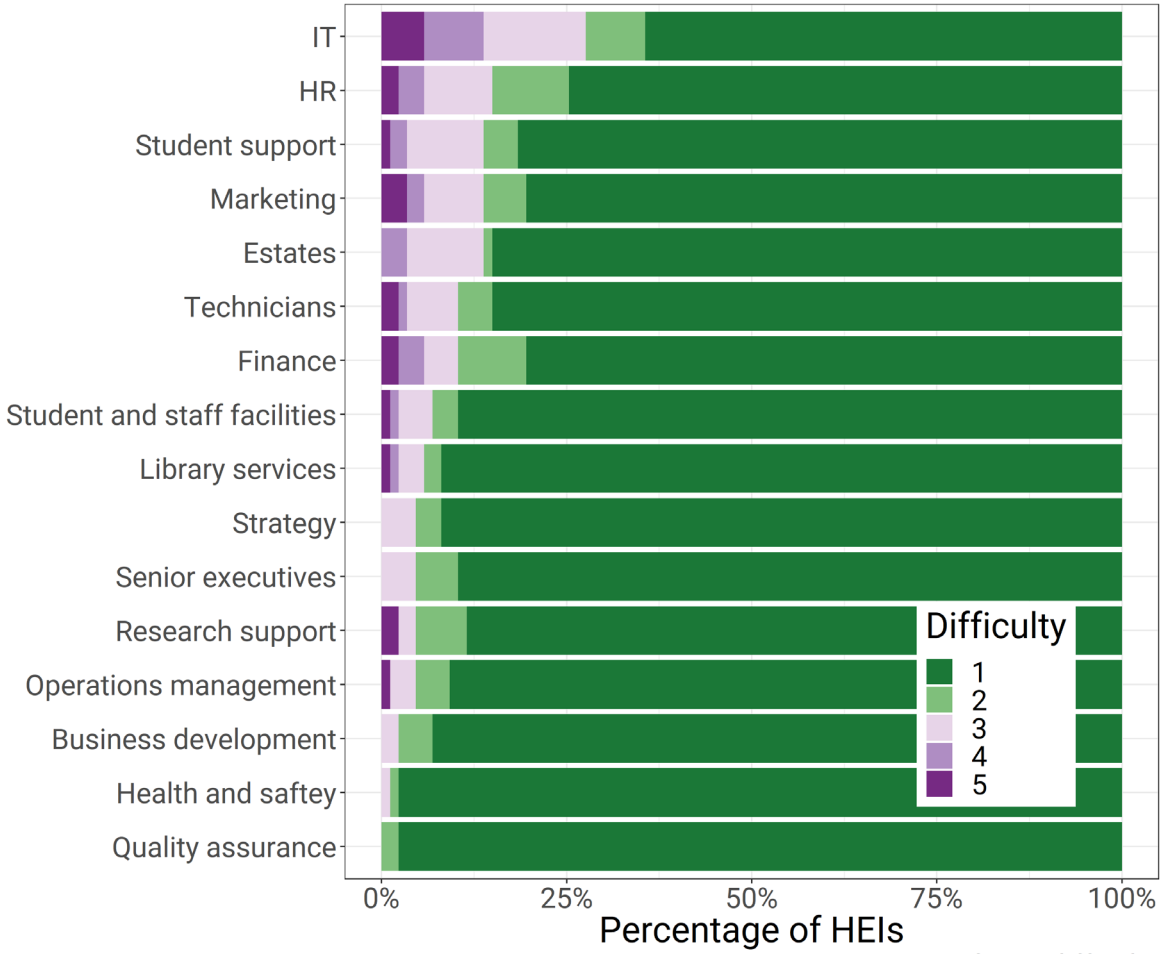
Employee turnover in the sector remains low relative to external benchmarks and has fallen since the 2017 survey. Across all UK HEIs, HESA data show a median resignation rate of 7.6% in 2017-18, based on all staff employed on open-ended contracts and total turnover was 11.8%.[9] Rates of turnover at Pre-1992 HEIs are slightly lower. The median resignation rate in the wider economy was 12.9% in 2018 according to an XpertHR survey of 349 private and public sector organisations with median total turnover standing at 18.8% (XpertHR, 2019).

Table 3: Employee turnover, professional services

Institution	Resignation rate (median)	Total turnover (median)
All HEIs	7.6	11.1
Pre 1992 institutions	7.3	10.6
Post 1992 institutions	7.8	12.7

[9] The difference between the resignation rate and total turnover is accounted for by voluntary and compulsory redundancies (0.3%), retirement (1%) and other reasons such as death in service. Figures in brackets are median institutional figures.

Figure 11: Retention difficulties by function / staff group *(ranked by % of 3-5)*



5 = significant difficulty

Consistent with previous surveys, staff retention is reported to be relatively less problematic than recruitment, suggesting that once individuals are recruited they tend to stay in post for a reasonable period with turnover not having a material impact on professional service operations – this is supported by the employee turnover rates. In one case, retention was 'possibly too good' with this post-1992 HEI in England reporting that they 'could perhaps do with slightly more turnover'. Figure 11 shows the results from the survey of 87 HEIs where 5 indicates that retention had a significant effect on operations, 1 indicates no impact. A majority of HEIs reported no impact in each of the function areas with IT appearing as the most problematic and the overall ranking of functions largely echoing the recruitment difficulties chart.

Where retention difficulties mirrored recruitment difficulties, i.e. in IT and Finance, the reasons were also mirrored – competition with the private sector remaining a concern.

> *The kind of people we were losing were highly skilled with very specific skill sets - such as deep systems experience or senior technical people. It's something that happens to us from time to time: people realise they can leave and jump into the private sector world or go self-employed and work as a consultant and can double or triple their salary - it's quite tempting.* Post-1992, London and the South East

Those in their early stage of their career were also found to be harder to retain. Institutions felt that these staff members were looking to gain a variety of experiences so anything that the HEI could offer to them would be unlikely to retain them. This was often seen as par for

the course and therefore institutions were unlikely to be able to change these employees' minds.

> *Many of the team are current or recent students who use the appointments as a stepping stone to other positions or going travelling. Whilst the turnover is high [for this group] there is always a good pool of future recruits.* Post-1992, London and South East

> *If a person is early in their mid-career and they want to gain a variety of experiences in other sectors, the university is unlikely to make a counter-offer as it won't be of help.* Post-1992, rest of England

Overall institutions appear to feel less pressure to develop or improve strategies to retain staff. Where efforts to improve retention were articulated, these tended to have a longer-term focus and were more varied than approaches taken to improve recruitment. Many institutions were at the beginning of a journey to improve retention by researching causes before implementing strategies. For example, 14% of institutions had introduced exit interviews or were reviewing results from staff engagement surveys attempting to improve retention.

> *Work has commenced for a staff-led change programme, which reviews ideas from staff that would improve the working environment or the way work is completed. This helps with employee engagement in terms of giving staff a voice, but also puts the staff in the driving seat for change. In addition to this, reviews are in progress on areas such as development opportunities (such as secondments), flexible working, childcare, equality and diversity and pay and progression / promotion...all of which can have an impact on retention.* Pre-1992, London and the South East

For those that had already taken steps to retain their workforce, 19 HEIs had improved their training and development opportunities. This is seen as a way to encourage staff to stay with the institution, particularly when combined with improved career development pathways which enabled staff to see routes for promotion.

Another retention strategy on the agenda in some HEIs is the development of career paths for professional services staff. This was an area that was felt to be especially needed for early career recruits and that was typically under-developed in the sector. As explained by one interviewee:

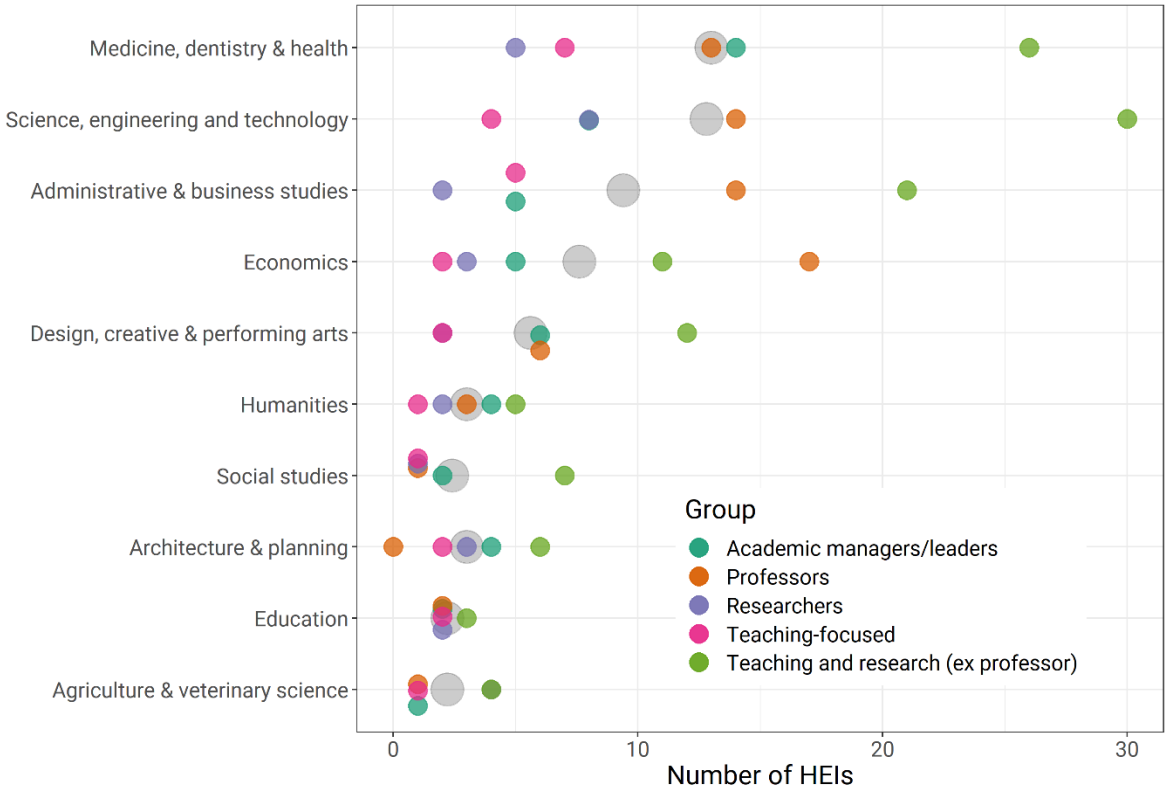
> *Academics already kind of have a career pathway but on the professional support side we really don't have anything like that - you come in on a certain grade, get increments to the top of your scale and then you're stuck, so we're looking to see what we can do about this and how we can highlight who our high-fliers are. This isn't always about money; what can we do to give people experience, even if it's something like work shadowing, coaching or mentoring - just to give people more experience that way. What can we do to make it more attractive for people to stay and give them a good experience working here?'* Post-1992, rest of England

4 Academic staff recruitment and retention

4.1 Recruitment

Looking at academic recruitment difficulties we see a similar overall picture to past surveys with medicine, dentistry and health featuring at the top of the list along with science, engineering and technology roles. Difficulties recruiting to teaching and research jobs below professor (e.g. lecturer, senior lecturer, reader) appear to be particularly problematic with 30% reporting difficulties in medicine, dentistry and health and 34% reporting difficulties in science, engineering and technology - Figure 12. Recruitment to administrative and business studies also remains among the more challenging subjects to recruit to; again, most difficult for teaching and research positions. Economic and econometrics is the only subject area where recruitment to professorial level is the most challenging and had the highest number of HEIs reporting difficulties. Across all subjects, recruitment to research and teaching-focused roles is less problematic.

Figure 12: Academic recruitment difficulties, by subject and group



Grey circle is mean HEI count of subject across all groups.

While academic recruitment was generally seen as less problematic than recruitment in professional services, where issues were reported they were more varied. The most common reason cited was a lack of suitable candidates (45%). The following response was typical:

> *[We receive applications from an] insufficient quality/level of candidates. There is a small candidate pool of specialised skilled staff with robust competition from other higher education and research institutions.* Pre-1992, London and the South East

Meeting the required standard of research outputs was often mentioned in relation to the suitability of applicants for academic positions as well as subject specialisms where there is only a small pool of individuals in the world with the required knowledge. For particularly sought-after subject areas, such as in cyber security and other IT related disciplines, survey

respondents mentioned that counter-offers from the current employer had resulted in the withdrawal of candidates.

Professional practice routes widen academic recruitment pool

A post-1992 university in London and the South East found that not enough applicants in specific fields had the required REF scores. The university has been rigorous in this respect and set high standards, in line with its aim to be regarded as a research-intensive university in London.

'The problem is a dearth of applicants with the requisite level of research outputs. Most applicants have sufficient teaching experience, but while many have one or two-star REF scores, not enough have three or four stars.

In vocational and practical areas, where many applicants had experience outside the sector, a professional practice route has been helpful. This has been successful for psychology and to a lesser extent for business and education. In education, many of its academic staff are former heads or subject specialists and this helps balance any downside when it comes to research experience.

Salary expectations from applicants were also regarded as a problem for specific subject areas, particularly where there is more competition from industry or overseas institutions.

> *The difficulties with medicine and engineering have arisen due to skills shortages, while for economics it's more that we are competing with a lot of US universities who pay more. However (with the exception of this one area) the total reward package for academic staff is felt to be quite competitive.* Pre-1992, rest of England

> *It's difficult to compete with commercial salaries and progression plus we demand PhD qualifications which professionals are not always keen to complete.*

Location was also a factor mentioned by 12% of institutions, with the nature of these challenges varying depending on location. Some institutions, for example, felt that potential employees were unwilling to relocate while others in more expensive locations felt they were being priced out:

> *For a lecturer, the salary doesn't go very far within a commutable 50-mile radius our HEI. Other parts of London have it easier, with people able to travel from comparatively lower-cost areas. [This means] it's more difficult for staff to live locally and we are at a disadvantage in comparison even to universities in other parts of London. As a result, the institution has occasionally lost good academics, to jobs in places where it is easier to maintain a higher standard of living.* Post-1992, London and the South East.

4.2 Recruitment approaches

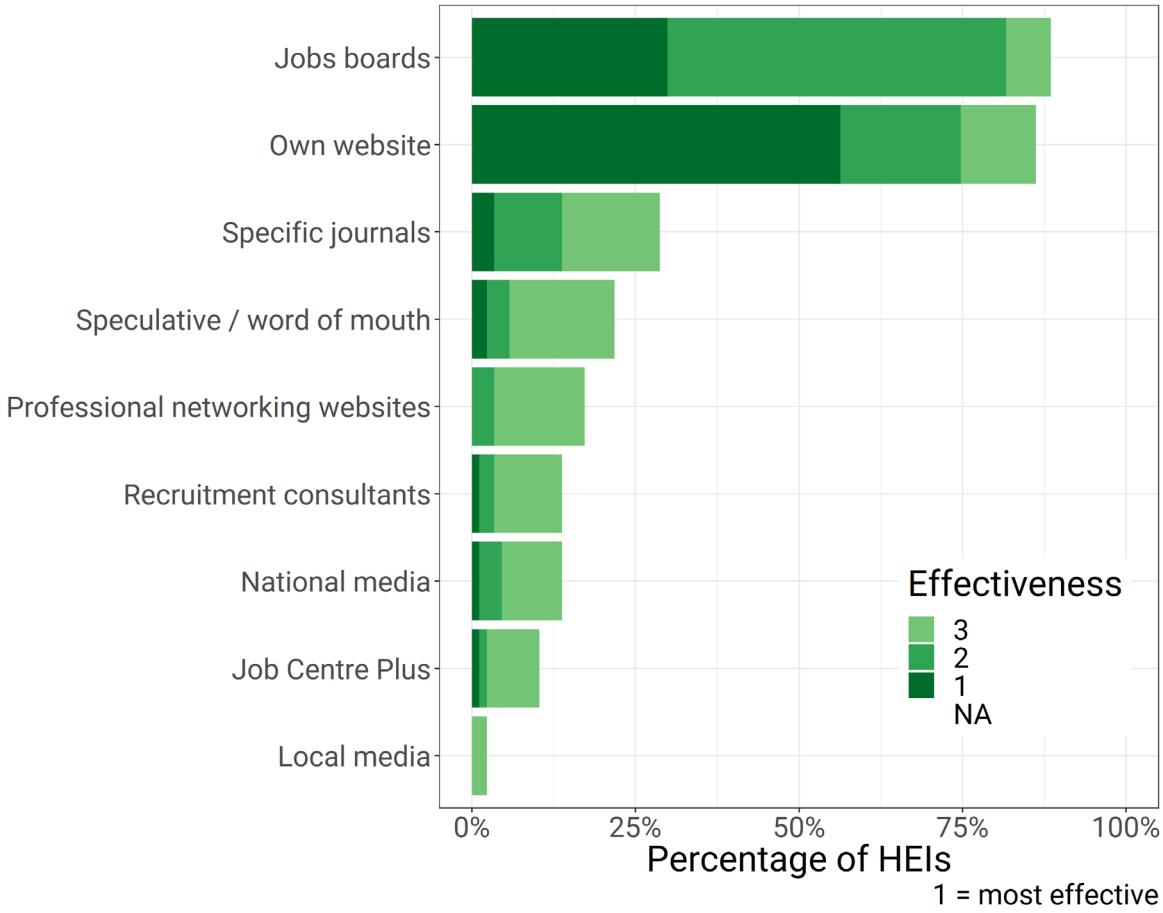
Advertising

The use and effectiveness of recruitment advertising methods for academic staff is broadly similar to that for professional services. Jobs boards (e.g. jobs.ac.uk) and the HEI's own website come out as the most effective with the vast majority of respondents putting these in the top two most effective advertising approaches - Figure 13. The main differences compared to professional services staff are a significantly lower use of professional networking websites such as LinkedIn and recruitment consultants and a much higher use

of a speculative application / word of mouth approach. The latter may relate to increasing use of academic networks as referenced in the box below.

Responding to recruitment difficulties

Figure 13: Academic selection methods and effectiveness (top 3 most effective methods)



Institutions have paid close attention to the individual reasons for their difficulties in recruitment, and therefore the steps they have taken to improve recruitment are more varied than for steps related to improving professional services staff recruitment. There are some innovative approaches to reaching the academics that they require, for example targeting their students for roles in computer games design as this is a new subject area with very few academics available for these roles. Other approaches included:

- Improving use of social media, particularly paid campaigns.
- Improving use of peer networks.
- Review of salaries against the market.
- Advertising roles at multiple levels to broaden pool (e.g. Lecturer / Senior lecturer).
- Putting equality and diversity at the forefront of campaigns.
- Focusing on internal appointments and promotions.
- Developing capability internally through investment in development.
- Internal training, seminars and toolkits on 'recruiting the best'.
- Offering pre-interviews with hiring manager.
- Reviewing and refreshing recruitment packs and materials.
- Bolder national campaigns.

Improving relocation packages

Where relocation caused a specific problem, a pre-1992 university in London and the South East expanded its support and benefits for new staff. This includes:

- Promoting offers of assistance with housing for staff that need to relocate, including a rental deposit loan scheme.
- Development of a portfolio of purpose-built, furnished apartments for staff and other key workers provided at a significant discount to market rates.
- Expansion of its compliance and immigration team to provide specialised one-to-one assistance to staff, potential employees and their family members.
- Support in relation to concerns related to Brexit and relocating to the UK.
- Assistance to EU nationals that wish to apply for settled status.
- Discretionary support for payment of UK visa fees and immigration health surcharge fees.

Establishing in-house executive search capacity

A pre-1992 university in London and the South East was struggling to reach world-leading academics. This, they felt, was due to an impersonal approach to recruitment.

The university has sought to address this by establishing an internal executive search capacity, which has been highly successful. This long-term approach involves making connections with top academics, building relationships and headhunting them and as far as the Director of HR is aware, no other UK institution has adopted this approach.

Most executive search firms adopt a three-month model, whereby if a position is not filled within three months, they start to lose money. But we have the luxury of being able to take longer [since they have an internal search capability of six staff which is part of HR] so we can establish what skills we are trying to recruit and make relationships with academics worldwide.

4.3 Academic staff retention

Employee turnover rates for academic staff are lower than those for professional services staff and therefore well below wider UK averages for staff in similar organisations. As shown in Table 4, the median institutional resignation rate across the whole sector was 5.0% for academic staff on open-ended contracts in 2017-18, while total turnover is 8.0%. Rates at pre-1992 HEIs are slightly lower at 4.6% and 7.2% respectively. The main reason for turnover outside resignations was retirement with a median rate of 1.0%.

Table 4: Employee turnover, academic staff, open-ended contracts, 2017-18

Institution	Resignation rate (median)	Total turnover (median)
All HEIs	5.0	8.0
Pre 1992 institutions	4.6	7.2
Post 1992 institutions	5.4	9.2

Source: HESA.

Comments from respondents and interviewees reflect these figures with academic staff retention not perceived as a significant problem for HEIs and the examples provided were

often to do with individual cases rather than groups of staff. However, while individual tactics such as counter-offers are occasionally used, HEIs appear to be thinking about retention more strategically and holistically. Specifically, this means a focus on career pathways and workforce planning to give academic staff members a recognisable and achievable career pathway without having to move to a different institution. Recognition awards are also becoming more popular in order to recognise achievements both on an individual and team basis. The following response from a Pre-1992 HEI is typical of this approach:

> *The University has been working over the survey period to enhance the career pathways offered to academic staff to support career development and staff retention. This is particularly positive for early career academic staff, providing a mechanism for development into more senior academic roles. The University also has provision for a contribution supplement, which may be awarded as the primary means of supplementing the salary of an academic member of staff for retention. The supplement is awarded on the expectation that an individual will reach a certain level of achievement (normally no more than five years ahead).* Pre-1992, rest of England

Other common responses included:

- Support for staff seeking HEA Fellowship or National Teaching Fellowships.
- Investment in development programmes, particularly leadership and management.
- Provision of research funds or research support.
- Salary benchmarking exercises.
- Focusing on employee engagement.
- Use of market supplements.
- Accelerated consideration of promotion cases.
- Health and well-being initiatives.
- Focus on flexible working.

4.4 Academic careers

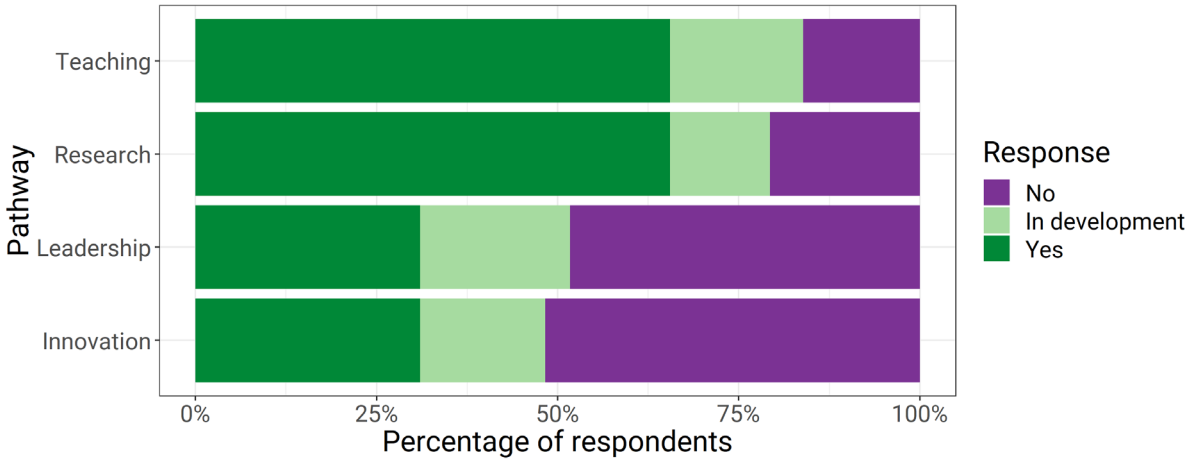
The common perception of an academic is of an individual that undertakes research and delivers teaching with some associated administrative, and possibly management, duties. While such roles are still common, the academic workforce has diversified considerably over the past decade. Studies such as 'The Changing Academic Profession' (Locke, 2008) and 'Shifting Academic Careers' (Locke, 2014) have looked at the drivers and changes in detail and identify an 'unbundling' of academic work, partly as a consequence of the partitioning of research and teaching which are funded and assessed separately. Within teaching and research further fragmentation has been observed with specialisms emerging in curriculum design, virtual learning environments and pedagogy. On the research side interaction with industry and government ('knowledge exchange') has increased in importance and there is a new Knowledge Exchange Framework that will be launched in 2020 (Skidmore, 2019) to complement the Research Excellence and Teaching Excellence Frameworks.

With the nature of academic work changing, it was natural that academic career pathways would need to evolve and adapt away from homogenous and rigid vertical structures that rewarded research excellence with only cursory acknowledgement of other contributions. In a report for the Leadership Foundation (now Advance HE), Whitchurch and Gordon (2013) described how staffing models were beginning to change with the emergence of different career 'tracks' with a focus on teaching or research. As observed by Locke (2014):

These developments usually result in more explicit criteria for the recognition and reward of teaching performance and the identification of what counts as evidence of good teaching.

Against this background, our survey sought for the first time to find out how many HEIs had now established these distinct career academic career tracks using the four main types we were seeing in the sector: teaching, research, leadership and innovation/knowledge exchange. We found that 66% of respondents had teaching pathways with a further 18% reporting pathways in development. The same proportion of respondents had research (only) pathways with slightly fewer reporting pathways in development (14%). Nearly all the research pathways extend to professor level with only three HEIs limiting progression to senior lecturer or equivalent and three extending to reader. For teaching tracks, a large majority (86%) extend to professor, but four reported extending to reader, six to senior lecturer. Although considerably fewer in number, the proportion reporting leadership and innovation career tracks (31%) is significant and if those in development are included then roughly half of the sector will have distinct career pathways in these areas.

Figure 14: Career pathways in HEIs, by track



While the proportion of HEIs with these distinct career tracks is high, the proportion of staff in research or teaching-focused positions is still low in senior academic positions according to HESA data.[10] As Table 5 shows, teaching and research-focused roles dominate in early career stages, particularly levels L0 (96%) and K0 (81%). At level J0, the proportion in these roles drops to 33% and then still further in I0 (19%). At professor level only 6% of staff are in teaching or research-focused roles. However, the total number of these roles at professor level has more than doubled since 2008-09 when there were only 225 teaching-focused professors in the sector and 320 research professors.

[10] HESA data captures 'academic employment function' as it relates to the academic contract not the actual work undertaken. It is therefore possible that the actual nature of the work carried out will differ from the official statistics.

Table 5: Academic staff by academic employment function and contract level, 2017-18

	Teaching	Research	Teaching and research	% Teaching and research
D and E Head of Schools	485	135	4,165	87%
F1 Professor	575	690	19,515	94%
I0 Senior (pre-92)/principal (post-92) lecturer, Reader	3,905	1,740	24,080	81%
J0 Lecturer B (pre-92), Senior Lecturer (post-92)	10,840	7,140	36,830	67%
K0 Lecturer A (pre-92), lecturer (post-92)	28,950	27,820	13,490	19%
L0 Research assistant, Teaching assistant	13,850	10,730	1,035	4%

Source: HESA, 2017-18. Based on headcount. Job titles are indicative only. Contract levels definitions can be found here.

5 Managing investment in the academic and professional services workforce

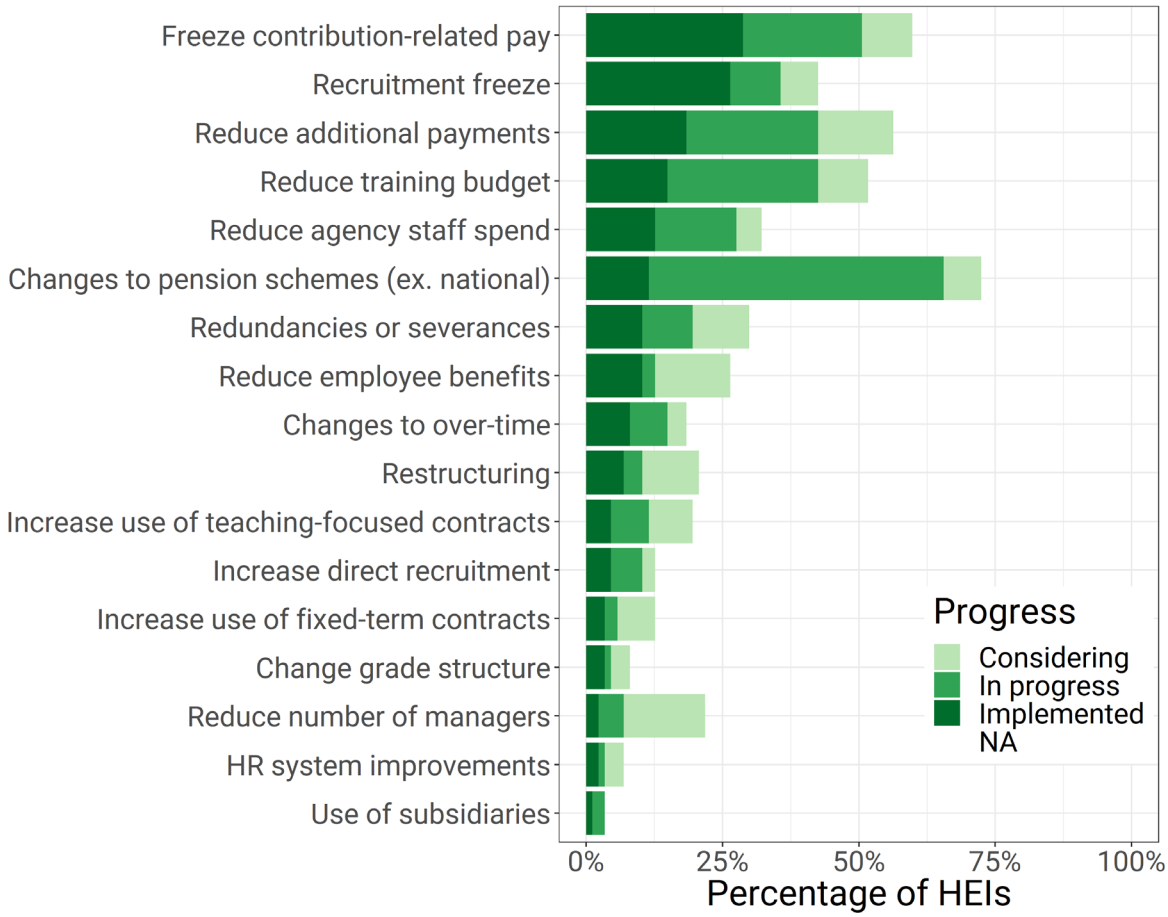
Although we have seen net employment levels in the sector increase, HEIs must carefully manage their £20.1 billion investment in staff and respond to fluctuations in demand, particularly in England where student number controls are no longer in place. 2018-19 was also a challenging financial period for the majority of HEIs. The announcement of substantial increases in employer pension contributions in several of the sector's pension schemes offered across the sector has created a very real challenge in all institutions.[11] Such pressures add to already stretched institutional finances with 47 HEIs reporting deficits in 2017-18 – the worst position seen in at least a decade - and the median HEI surplus falling again, from 2.9% in 2016-17 to 2.4% in 2017-18.

The most common approach to containing staff and staff-related expenditure implemented over the past 12 months is to freeze contribution-related pay (29% of HEIs) which is pay related to an individual or team's contribution to the institution and typically results in accelerated progression, movement into a 'contribution zone' in a grade or a non-consolidated payment. In 2017 this approach was second to last with HR system improvements topping the list. The next most common approaches among HEIs were recruitment freezes (26%), reducing additional payments (18%) and reducing training budgets (15%). These areas also tend to be the areas where HEIs are currently implementing changes, except for recruitment freezes. The most common 'in progress' approach is changes to pension schemes – as respondents were asked to exclude national multi-

[11] For Teachers' Pension Scheme in England and Wales, an employer contribution increase of 7.2 percentage points of salaries applied from September 2019. For TPS in Scotland, an employer contribution increase of 6 percentage points of salaries applied from September 2019. The employer contribution increases for the NHS Pension Scheme in England and Wales and in Scotland, which were introduced in April 2019, were 6.2 and 6 percentage points respectively. Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) employers saw increases from 18% of salaries to 19.5% in April 2019 and 21.1% in October 2019. Many employers offering the Local Government Pension Scheme have also seen their contributions increasing.

employer schemes, this reflects respondents referring to ongoing changes in the individual schemes operating at institutional level.

Figure 15: Implementation of initiatives to manage or reduce staffing and staff-related expenditure, last 12 months



6 International staff and Brexit

6.1 International staff profile

The HE sector has one of the highest proportions of non-UK nationals in its workforce of any sector in the UK economy. According to 2017-18 HESA data, 20.5% of HE staff were non-UK nationals compared to 11% in the wider UK workforce (ONS, 2019) - Table 6.[12] This is particularly the case for non-EU internationals with 8.2% of the HE workforce compared to 4.0% of the UK workforce, but the proportion of staff from other European countries (EU/EEA and Switzerland) is also higher (12.3% compared to 7.2%). Looking at the staff group splits in Table 6, we see that this disproportionate representation of international staff is entirely due to the academic staff group with the professional services group very closely resembling the UK labour market as a whole. For the academic staff group we see that 18.1% are nationals of other European countries and 12.8% are nationals of other non-European countries.

The distribution of non-UK nationals across the academic workforce is not uniform and as Table 7 shows, there are three broad subject areas (economics, modern languages and chemical engineering) where non-UK nationals are in the majority. Looking at more specific areas of academic study, we see that modern languages are highly reliant on staff from

[12] Based on those in employment aged 16 to 64.

other European countries with specific areas of engineering populated by a high proportion of non-European international staff including electric engineering (39.3%) and optoelectronic engineering (38.4%).

Table 6: Higher education staff, by nationality and staff group, 2017-18

Staff group	United Kingdom	Ireland	Other European Union countries	Other European Economic Area countries	Other Non-European Union countries
Academic	69.2%	2.1%	15.6%	0.4%	12.8%
Professional services	89.5%	1.1%	5.6%	0.1%	3.7%
All HE	**79.5%**	**1.6%**	**10.5%**	**0.2%**	**8.2%**

Source: HESA, 2017-18. Based on headcount. UK includes Guernsey, Jersey and the Isle of Man. Other European Union countries excludes UK and Ireland. Other EEA countries includes Switzerland.

Table 7: Nationality of academic staff by cost centre, 2017-18 (top 10 by % non-UK national)

Cost centre	United Kingdom	Ireland	Other European Union countries	Other European Economic Area countries	Other Non-European Union countries
(129) Economics & econometrics	34.0%	1.1%	36.6%	0.8%	27.5%
(116) Chemical engineering	43.1%	1.3%	25.1%	0.5%	30.0%
(137) Modern languages	48.3%	1.7%	35.6%	0.6%	13.9%
(125) Area studies	50.5%	1.2%	21.1%	0.5%	26.7%
(119) Electrical, electronic & computer engineering	51.6%	1.2%	17.6%	0.2%	29.4%
(122) Mathematics	53.0%	1.6%	25.2%	0.6%	19.5%
(127) Anthropology & development studies	53.4%	1.5%	22.7%	0.7%	21.7%
(117) Mineral, metallurgy & materials engineering	53.4%	0.7%	18.6%	0.2%	27.0%
(114) Physics	53.8%	1.4%	26.0%	0.6%	18.2%
(115) General engineering	54.5%	1.3%	17.2%	0.3%	26.7%

Source: HESA, 2017-18. Based on headcount. UK includes Guernsey, Jersey and the Isle of Man. Other European Union countries excludes UK and Ireland. Other EEA countries includes Switzerland.

Table 8: Specific academic discipline by nationality, 2017-18 (top 25 by % non-UK national)

Current academic discipline	United Kingdom	Ireland	Other European Union countries	Other European Economic Area countries	Other Non-Europea n Union countries
(R410) Spanish language	21.3%	0.5%	70.3%	0.0%	7.9%
(R210) German language	28.3%	0.0%	69.1%	1.9%	0.6%
(R300) Italian studies	29.6%	2.7%	64.1%	0.0%	3.6%
(R110) French language	35.1%	0.8%	63.7%	0.0%	0.4%
(R400) Spanish studies	36.6%	2.5%	53.5%	0.0%	7.3%

Current academic discipline	United Kingdom	Ireland	Other European Union countries	Other European Economic Area countries	Other Non-European Union countries
(L100) Economics	36.7%	1.3%	35.6%	0.9%	25.5%
(H810) Chemical engineering	38.8%	1.4%	28.2%	0.6%	31.0%
(H680) Optoelectronic engineering	40.8%	0.0%	20.8%	0.0%	38.4%
(R800) European studies	41.0%	1.1%	43.1%	2.3%	12.5%
(R700) Russian & East European studies	41.5%	0.7%	29.3%	0.0%	28.5%
(Q910) Translation studies	42.1%	0.8%	42.6%	1.6%	12.9%
(N300) Finance	42.4%	1.8%	25.0%	0.8%	30.0%
(H620) Electrical engineering	42.5%	1.3%	16.9%	0.0%	39.3%
(R200) German studies	43.7%	2.5%	50.3%	1.5%	2.0%
(R910) Other European languages	43.9%	2.0%	38.5%	1.0%	14.6%
(F340) Mathematical & theoretical physics	44.6%	3.0%	36.8%	0.7%	14.9%
(H400) Aerospace engineering	45.1%	0.6%	26.2%	0.9%	27.3%
(H660) Control systems	45.5%	0.0%	16.8%	0.0%	37.6%
(I520) Bioinformatics	47.3%	0.0%	26.8%	0.8%	25.1%
(G120) Applied mathematics	47.3%	0.8%	30.2%	0.3%	21.5%
(H900) Others in engineering	47.3%	1.1%	16.7%	0.0%	34.8%
(F764) Climate & climate change	47.6%	1.0%	23.3%	3.9%	24.3%
(I190) Computer science not elsewhere classified	47.7%	1.3%	18.1%	0.7%	32.2%
(G110) Pure mathematics	47.8%	1.6%	27.9%	0.8%	21.9%
(H990) Engineering not elsewhere classified	47.9%	2.1%	16.7%	0.7%	32.5%

Source: HESA, 2017-18. Based on academic disciplines with more than 100 staff in UK HEIs.

6.2 Brexit concerns

Given these workforce demographics and the ongoing uncertainty related to the UK's exit from the European Union at the time of the survey, we asked respondents to provide feedback on both the impact that Brexit-related uncertainty had had on recruitment and retention to date and what their concerns were over the next 12 months.

In terms of impact of Brexit over the past 12 months, this has been relatively low with only a handful of HEIs reporting a significant or moderate to significant impact - Figure 16. However, the level of impact is not negligible with 26% of responding HEIs reporting at least moderate impact to academic staff retention and 23% reporting at least moderate impact to academic staff recruitment. Reflecting the composition of the workforce, levels of impact on professional services staff are considerably lower.

Looking to the future, HEIs are more concerned about the impact of Brexit on recruitment and retention and many have moderate concerns regarding the ability to recruit and hold on to other international staff - Figure 17. In terms of EU staff, 1 in 4 HEIs has a high or medium-high degree of concern regarding their ability to recruit and retain EU/EEA staff over the next 12 months, with the majority indicating at least a moderate level of concern.

Figure 16: Impact of Brexit and Brexit-related uncertainty on recruitment and retention, by staff group, last 12 months

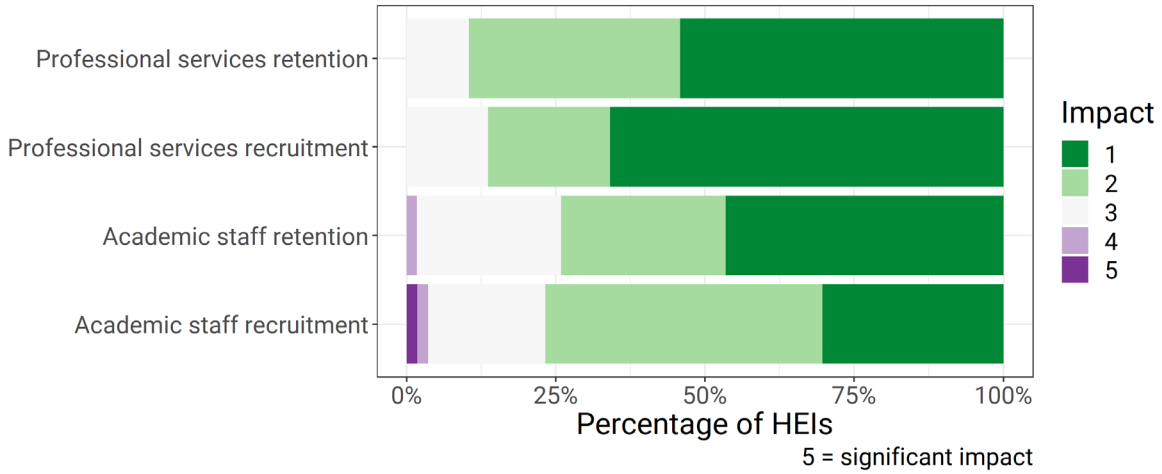
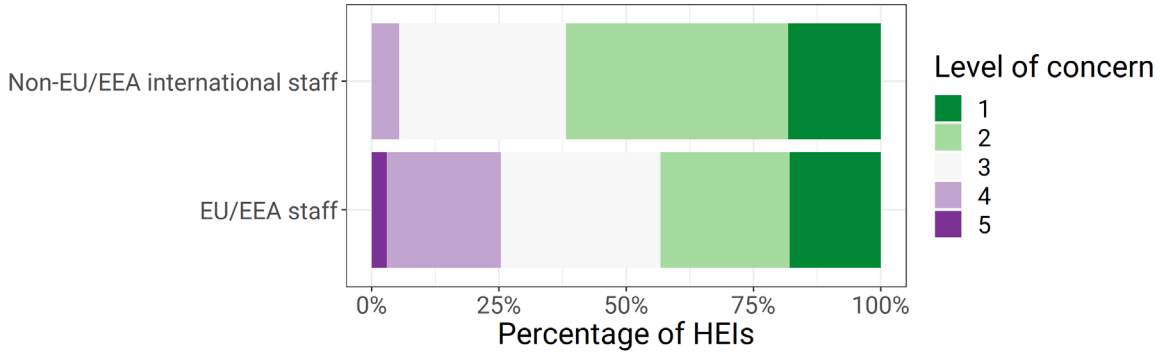


Figure 17: Level of concern regarding ability to recruit and retain international staff over the next 12 months



Despite reporting limited impact in actual numbers of leavers, comments from survey respondents and interviewees indicate that Brexit is still worrying many HEIs in terms of the potential impact that it could have on their institution. For example, an interviewee at a research-intensive HEI said:

> *Brexit is concerning us. We are starting to see that people are questioning whether to come from overseas because of it. And we have also seen that some staff are getting a bit nervous and people are leaving, feeling that maybe they should go elsewhere.* Pre-1992, rest of England

Even HEIs that are less reliant on EU staff are monitoring developments:

> *Although [we have] a relatively small number [of EU staff], we need to be mindful since one or two leavers in small teams can have a significant impact.* Pre-1992, London and the South East

The lack of clarity around the access to European research funding and immigration arrangements means that with many institutions are unsure of the long-term impact and this makes workforce planning more challenging. In the short-term, planning for a no-deal Brexit has been resource intensive and institutions are concerned that such activity will have to continue in the absence of any resolution to Brexit.

> *We're holding a lot of planning groups to prepare for different scenarios. Then there's the whole engagement piece to support people with the uncertainty of not knowing what's happening. It doesn't just affect EU nationals but also other people who are reliant on funding from the EU. Not to mention our immigration team - they just don't know what's going to be happening this year and what headcount they might need in the future.* Pre-1992, rest of England

> *Brexit has been a concern for staff in the last six months particularly with the unknown elements of it but also apathy with the subject in general. Should Brexit impact our ability to recruit, it will in turn impact our research and teaching performance.* Pre-1992, Scotland

The uncertainty has also impacted on the wellbeing of current staff members according to some HEIs. The first two excerpts below from survey responses and interviews are typical of concerns in the sector while the third demonstrates how Brexit pervades many areas of academic and operational activity:

> *Academics are anxious and nervous about bringing grants to our HEI without knowing for certain that they will have the ability to live and work here easily.* Pre-1992, Wales

> *We have a number of EU funded research projects with staff attached which gives us serious cause for concern. Pre-1992, London and the South East*

> *There is concern about the opportunities in research and innovation - will UK HEIs still be able to bid into funding schemes; if not what will the impact be? The impact on operations and activities is more in relation to funding, research and procurement. In terms of an extensive refurbishment project, availability of laboratory furniture from a European supplier now has a higher cost and longer lead time…exchange rates are of great concern as the cost of many consumables and kit from suppliers around the world is now higher. We have also had staff withdraw applications for and/or leave from research and academic posts in the last 18 months.* Post-1992, rest of England

Looking to the future, one interviewee explained:

> *We are making sure that we are competitive globally as much as we can be and that we're offering a good onboarding experience to our international people who do join us, to make them feel like they are joining a global university. So we're increasingly aware we've got to be and feel more global so we're not just relying on EU staff, we're looking wider than that.* Pre-1992, rest of England

6.3 Staff working in overseas campuses

In addition to the diverse range of staff working on UK campuses, there has been an increasing number of HEIs with overseas campuses that are staffed by resident employees and 'flying faculty', who are staff working at a UK campus that fly for short-term teaching and research assignments at overseas campuses or operations. Transnational education (TNE) can take many forms and according to UUK 84.7% of UK HEIs delivered some form of TNE in

2016-17 to 707,915 students (UUK, 2018). Although physical overseas campuses attract attention, only 3.6% of TNE students are studying in overseas campuses of UK HEIs. In the majority of cases (58%), these students are studying for an award of the institution, with collaborative provision (20.7%) and distance learning (16.6%) accounting for most of the remainder. While there is widespread involvement by UK HEIs, TNE delivery is concentrated in a smaller number of HEIs with 75% of UK TNE students enrolled at just 16 HEIs[13].

While the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) captures detailed information on TNE students, there is no comparable comprehensive collection of staff data. To fill this gap we began collecting information through the Workforce Survey in 2015. Looking only at the 87 respondents to the survey, there were nine that have teaching operations in China and six with teaching operations in the United Arab Emirates.[14] The other two countries with more than one HEI reporting operations were Singapore and Malaysia with three HEIs apiece. While Malaysia, China and Singapore are also the top three for UK TNE students, the UAE is only ninth – however, this likely reflects higher physical campus presence in Dubai as opposed to other forms of TNE.[15] Other countries with UK teaching operations identified from survey respondents are Australia, Costa Rica, Gambia, Hong Kong, Italy, India, Kenya, Malawi, Malta, Mauritius, Oman, Qatar, Sierra Leone, Uganda and Zimbabwe.

Table 9: UK HEIs with overseas teaching operations

Country	Number of HEIs	Total FPE	% of UK TNE students (HESA)
China	9	830	8.0%
United Arab Emirates	6	175	3.2%
Singapore	3	35	7.8%
Malaysia	3	865	12.6%
Other	16	180	-

While the total number of HEIs reporting operations is similar to numbers in the 2015 survey, staff levels appear to have increased significantly.[16] For example, an average of 2.3 staff were employed in operations in China in 2015 compared to 92.2 in 2019. Similarly, comparative figures for Malaysia were 29.2 and 288.3 respectively. Figures for Singapore have fallen.

Looking at non-permanent overseas posts, 45% of respondents reported having 'flying faculty' that work abroad to deliver and support TNE activities. The average number of flying faculty for those HEIs able to supply information was 13.8 (n=20[17]) with 17 HEIs reporting staff on secondments to overseas operations (average 3.3). A basic estimate using these figures puts the total flying faculty employed across UK HEIs at around 1,000.

[13] Oxford Brookes University alone accounts for 43% of the total number of students.
[14] Excludes operations not related to teaching such as an overseas office for student counselling, student recruitment, vetting of applications, and alumni/fundraising activities.
[15] In terms of overseas campus provision, the UAE ranks third after Malaysia and China.
[16] The comparisons are illustrative as we do not have a full set of institutional responses or a reliable set of panel data.
[17] In several cases respondents noted that this information is not held centrally.

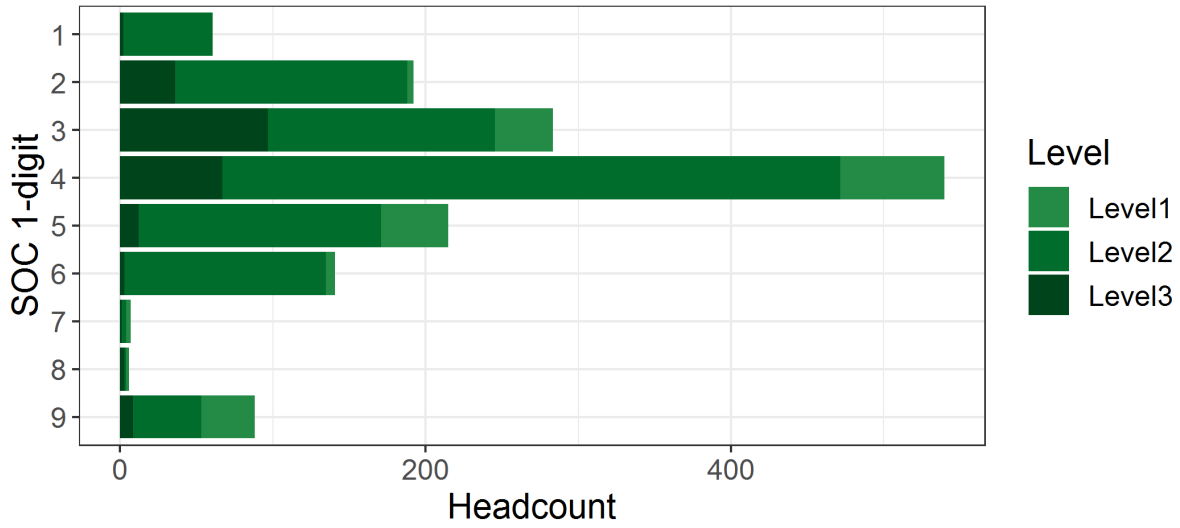
7 Apprentices

7.1 Apprenticeships in the sector

As a result of joint work between the HE trade unions and UCEA, the HESA record introduced a new field in the staff record which identifies whether or not the employee is an apprentice and if they are the level of the standard they are enrolled in. The 2017-18 staff record featured this information for the first time and found that there were 2,350 apprentices employed by HEIs of which 765 were academic staff and 1,580 were professional services staff. Looking at the academic apprentices in the sector, 98% of these were studying advanced apprenticeships (Level 3 qualifications) and most of these were found at first stage lecturer level (64%) or senior/principal lecturer level (20%).

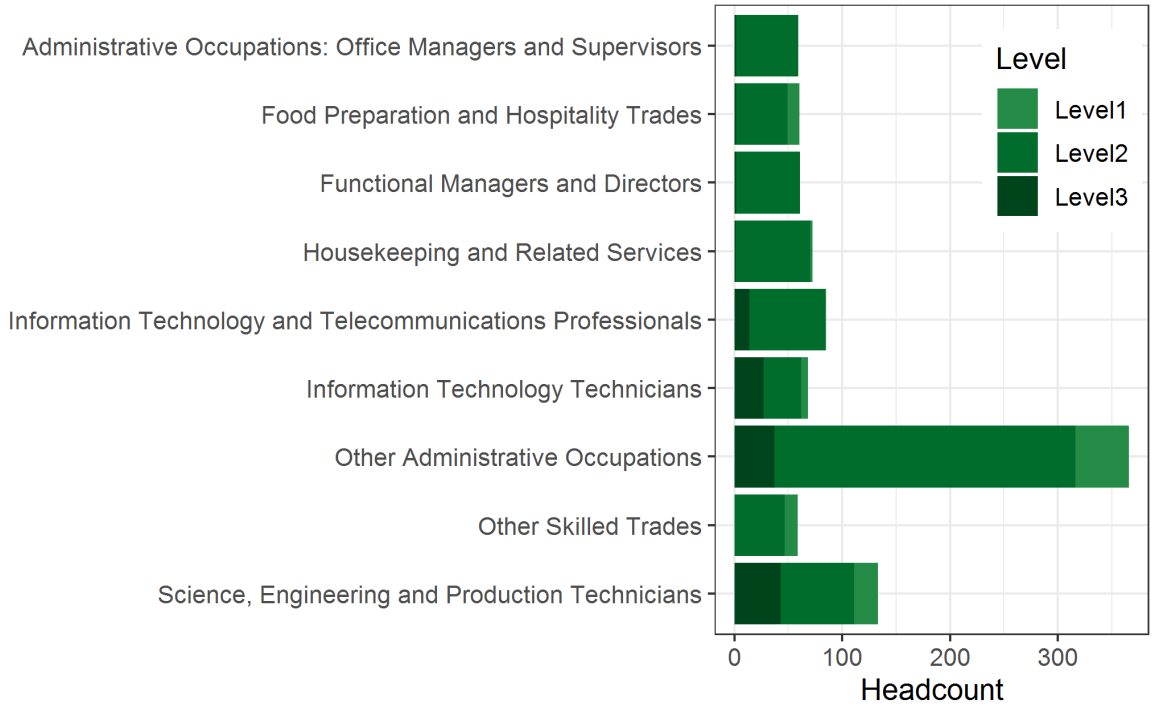
In professional services there is a much wider range of apprentices reflecting the range of activities undertaken by these staff. In terms of broad occupational areas[18], we see that there were 540 apprentices at SOC level 4 (administrative and secretarial occupations) followed by 285 at level 3 (associate professional and technical occupations) - Figure 18. Figure 19 focuses on more detailed occupational groups where there were more than 50 apprenticeships in 2017-18. Although this breakdown offers little more information on the apprentices in administrative roles it is more helpful in highlighting the importance of apprentices for training technicians as well as use of apprenticeship standards to improve management capabilities.

Figure 18: Professional services apprenticeships by major occupational group (SOC1) and level, 2017-18



[18] The key for major SOC groups can be found here: https://onsdigital.github.io/dp-classification-tools/standard-occupational-classification/ONS_SOC_hierarchy_view.html

Figure 19: Professional services by minor occupational group and level, 50 or more apprentices, 2017-18



7.2 Apprenticeship levy

Since 6 April 2017 employers with an annual pay bill over £3 million must pay the 'apprenticeship levy' which is 0.5% of paybill less £15,000. Nearly every HEI in the UK is within the scope of the apprenticeship levy. In England and Wales, employers can use their levy funds to invest in apprenticeships within their own workforce or up to 25% within their supply chain. Funds that are not used within two years expire and are reclaimed by the government – so unused funds are essentially an additional payroll tax. In Scotland the levy is hypothecated for investment in training and skills across Scotland with no individual employer accounts.

The 2017 Workforce Survey was the first opportunity the sector had to look at the potential impact of the apprenticeship levy. It found that 54% of HEIs were likely to recruit more apprentices or start recruiting apprentices if they did not do so already (UCEA, 2017). It also found that 51% of HEIs would look to adapt existing training courses so that they could become accredited apprenticeship programmes. Only 13% of HEIs reported that they were likely to write the levy off as a tax and HEIs expected to recoup around 25% of the levy at the median and a mean of 38%. Post-92 HEIs expected to recoup a much higher proportion (60% at the median) than pre-92 HEIs (17.5%).

The 2019 survey finds that even at 25%, HEIs were highly optimistic in their forecasts for spending levy funds with a median spend of 2% of levy funds and a mean of 7.5% - Table 10. Even at the upper quartile the proportion of levy funds was only 8.3%, based on the 65 responding HEIs that were able to supply this information. In terms of the split by institution type, post-92 HEIs had a median value of only 0.6% compared to 2.7% among pre-92s. However, the mean was higher than pre-92s, largely due to one HEI that recouped 60% of its levy.

Table 10: Proportion of apprenticeship levy funds spent in 2017-18

	All	Post-92	Pre-92
Median	2.0%	0.6%	2.7%
Mean	7.5%	9.6%	4.0%

N = 65.

Institutions that are recouping funds from the levy report that the introduction of the levy has changed their approach to apprenticeships, with the institution increasing opportunities for both internal and external staff members. As one HEI that has ramped up its apprenticeship programme explained:

> *We certainly have changed our approach to apprentices following the Levy. Before we employed maybe one apprentice; we now have around 30, and we've done this through a combination of responding to personal development plans for existing staff and bringing in new entrants.* Post-1992, rest of England

However, for the institutions that are not currently making use of the apprenticeship levy, resourcing is still seen as a large barrier. The location of apprenticeship providers was also cited as a challenge for HEIs situated away from metropolitan areas. Some institutions only use apprentices sparingly in areas like IT and technical support where recruitment is an issue for the HEI.

> *We really battle with apprenticeships simply because it requires so much resource. We only have apprentices in IT, and apprenticeships are not a major focus for us at this point. Pre-1992, London and the South East*

> *The university has run a successful programme for science technicians. This is an area that it is looking to develop more in an effort to get more value for money from the apprentice levy.* Pre-1992, Scotland

> *We're now asking the question of hiring managers all the time: when they need to recruit, we always ask if it could be an apprenticeship*. Pre-1992, rest of England

> *We feel we are not using apprenticeships to full effect, not least since we run apprenticeship schemes on behalf of other employers, including the local police force. We're looking at the levy to see how it can be used for internal staff training. If we're going out saying we can offer apprenticeships, it would be really good to have our own staff doing them.* Post-1992, rest of England

> *[The quality assurance frameworks of Ofsted and the Office for Students] don't fit together very well so we'd effectively be running parallel systems…which would require a lot of investment and training.* Post-1992, London and the South East

In many cases, these apprenticeships and apprenticeships like them were changing perceptions that apprenticeships were only for those at the beginning of their careers or without first degrees. These institutions are beginning to use apprenticeships to upskill their existing staff members.

> *It is being seen as an opportunity for staff development across the whole university. A lot of work has been done, and further work is required, on how apprenticeships are perceived - for example, changing the perception that apprenticeships are aimed at career entry-level*. Post-1992, rest of England

7.3 Sector-specific apprenticeship standards

In terms of apprenticeship development, the sector has been busy developing new standards aligned to the needs of the sector. One of these standards, the Academic Professional Apprenticeship[19], was approved for delivery by the Institute for Apprenticeships in May 2018 and is a level 7 apprenticeship that typically takes 18 months to complete. Although this standard is just over a year old, our survey found that 16.1% of respondents are already using it and a further 18.4% plan to do so in the next 12 months.

We also asked HEIs whether they planned to use two other apprenticeship standards which have been developed by the sector but not yet approved for delivery. Looking at the results of the survey in Table 11, we see that 14.7% of respondents are planning to use the senior leader apprenticeship[20], which is an existing standard being adapted for HE, with a further 18.7% likely to use. For the HE assistant technician standard[21], not yet approved, there is a lower proportion with plans to use it (8%) but 32% are likely to use it. It also appears that better advertisement of these standards is required with around one in five HEIs unaware of either standard.

Table 11: Likelihood of using HE-specific apprenticeship standards

Likelihood of use	Senior leader	HE assistant technician
Plan to use	14.7%	8.0%
We are likely to use	18.7%	32.0%
We are unlikely to use	45.3%	41.3%
We are not aware of the apprenticeship	21.3%	17.3%

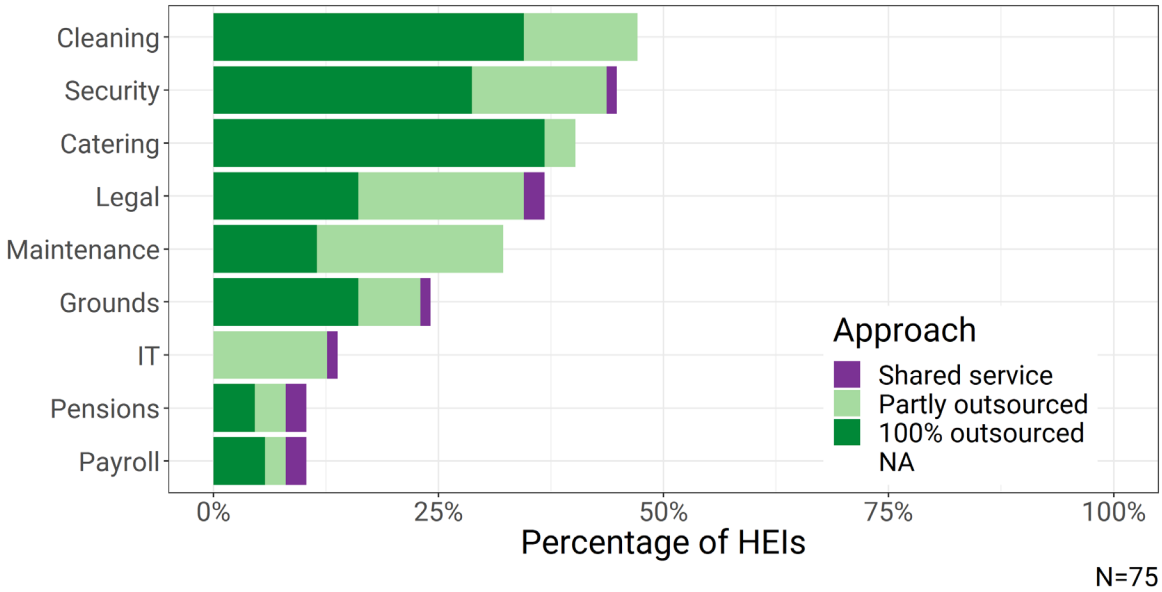
8 Alternative staffing arrangements

8.1 Outsourcing and shared services

Since 2013, the Workforce Survey has looked at outsourcing and shared service arrangements at HEIs. Looking at the results from this year's survey we see that 47.1% of respondents currently outsource part or all of their cleaning function with 34.5% outsourcing this function completely. The other areas where a significant proportion of HEIs outsource are security (28.7% completely, 14.9% in part), catering (36.8% completely, 3.4% in part), legal (16.1% completely, 18.4% in part) and maintenance (11.5% completely, 20.7% in part). Shared services are much less common with only one or two HEIs reporting shared services in any one function. Compared to 2017 there has been a significant fall in outsourcing of legal services and a noticeable increase in part-outsourcing of security staff. Part-outsourcing of cleaning and catering has fallen with complete outsourcing remaining the exactly the same for catering and staying within the margin of sampling error for cleaning.

[19] www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/apprenticeship-standards/academic-professional
[20] www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/apprenticeship-standards/senior-leader
[21] www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/apprenticeship-standards/education-technician

Figure 20: Outsourcing and shared services by function



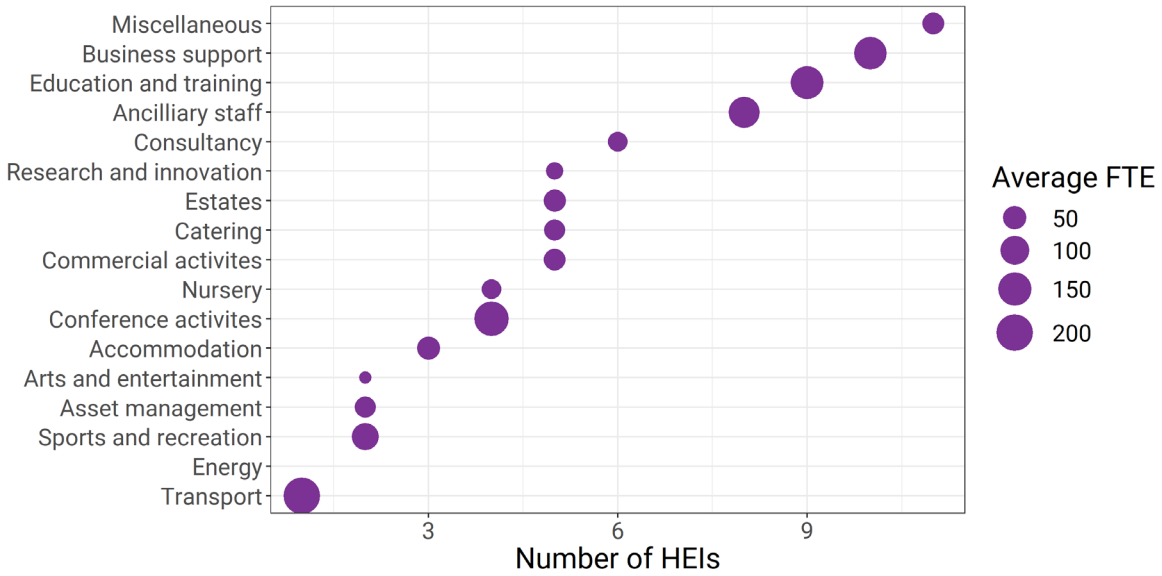
8.2 Subsidiaries

The proportion of HEIs using one or more wholly-owned subsidiary companies has remained stable since the 2017 survey at 49% with similar proportions in post-92 and pre-92 HEIs - Table 12. The most common area for these companies to be used are business support services, education and training activities and ancillary staff (security and cleaning). We also see some of the highest averages of staff FTEs in these areas. Subsidiaries are also used for a range of commercial activities from consultancy to asset management but, apart from conference activities, these areas have significantly fewer staff employed on an FTE basis.

Table 12: Use of subsidiaries

Group	Subsidiaries	No subsidiaries	% with subsidiaries
All	41	43	49%
Post-1992	23	23	50%
Pre-1992	16	20	44%

Figure 21: Subsidiaries by function and average FTE



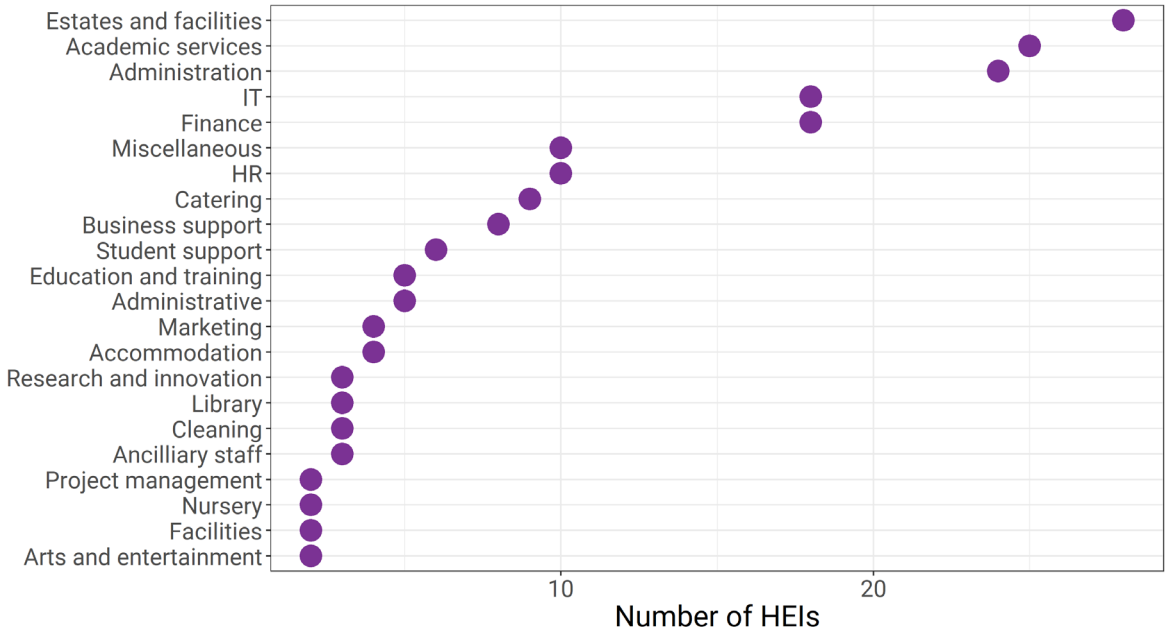
8.3 Agency staff

Agency staff have a contract of employment with an employment agency but work temporarily for an employer. HEIs use agency staff across a range of areas with estates and facilities and academic services the most common areas - Figure 22. According to data from our respondents, HEIs spent a median of 0.5% of expenditure on agency staff in 2017-18, falling from 0.7% in 2016-17. The average spend as a proportion of expenditure fell only slightly.

Table 13: Proportion of institutional expenditure spent on agency staff

Year	Median	Mean
2016-17	0.74%	0.93%
2017-18	0.50%	0.91%

Figure 22: Agency staff functions



9 Diving into the detail

This report covers many topics of relevance to the HE workforce, but such presentations can only provide a constrained set of insights at a specific moment in time. While we have made choices in terms of the analyses presented here, we would not want to limit the outputs of this work to a static report. The data captured and analysed in previous reports has been used regularly by UCEA and we have interrogated Workforce Survey data further for government departments, sector agencies and our member HEIs. It is important that the sector and policy makers can make good use of the information and data we have collected and therefore we invite any interested stakeholders to get in touch if you would like further information on any aspect of the report.

research@ucea.ac.uk

10 The survey and data sources

10.1 Background

The analysis in this report is based on data from a sector-wide survey of UK HEIs, qualitative interviews with senior HR staff and data from the 2017-18 HESA Staff Record. We received a total of 87 complete responses to the survey and conducted 11 qualitative interviews. HESA data, where used, are for all HEIs in the UK.

10.2 Methodology

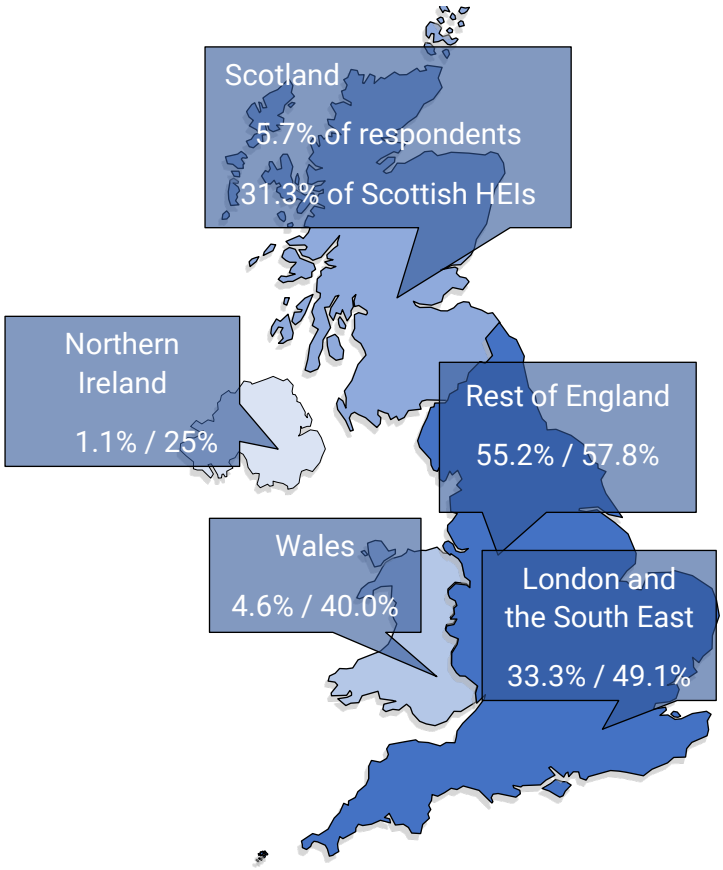
The biennial UCEA workforce survey has been conducted since 2013. The questions remain largely the same as the survey disseminated in 2017 in order to allow direct comparisons. However, each iteration of the survey is updated to reflect the changing workforce landscape. This year, the steering group reviewed the contents of the 2017 survey to consider changes in data collection as well as collect information to new areas of interest.

The survey was disseminated to all 168 member HE institutions and was open for three months from June to September 2019 to allow respondents time to collate and answer the survey as accurately and in as much detail as possible. Near to the survey closing date, we invited 11 respondents who had signalled willingness to take part in an in-depth interview. We commissioned Incomes Data Research, a specialist reward consultancy, to conduct these 11 interviews.

10.3 Profile of respondents

We received responses from 87 institutions to the survey. Our respondents were fairly representative of the overall make up of UK institutions by region, although there was an relative under-representation of HEIs in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales - Figure 23.

Figure 23: Survey respondents by region and nation



Representation of pre- and post-1992 universities was similar with 54.9% of pre-92 HEIs providing a response and 56.1% of post-92s - Figure 24. There was also good representation of different sector groupings (Figure 25). This means that findings can be viewed as broadly representative of universities more generally despite different challenges that each grouping might face. However, due to a limited number of HE colleges we have not shown this category of institution in our analysis.

The spread of universities we received responses from which we received responses means we can be confident that this report is generally reflective of the sector at large.

Figure 24: Respondents by institution type (% of total respondents)

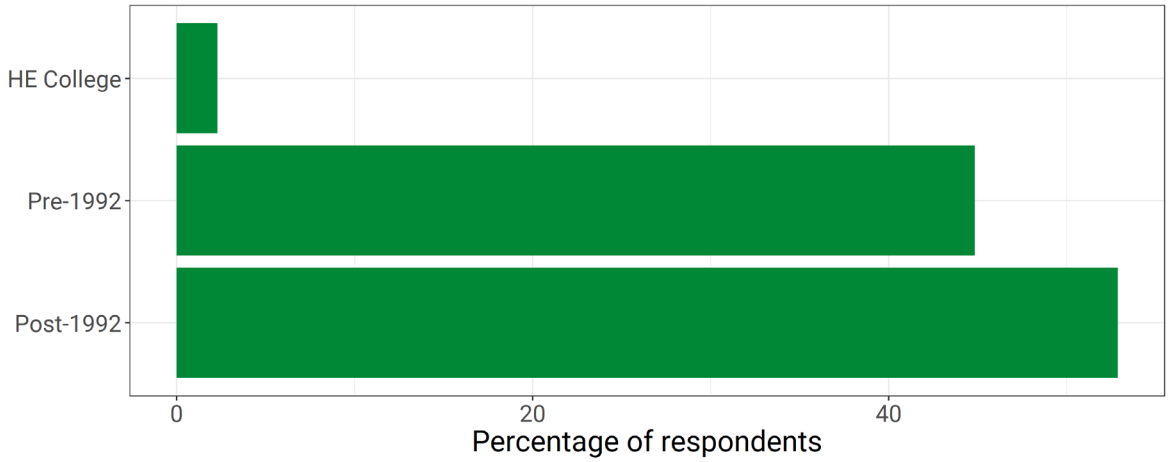
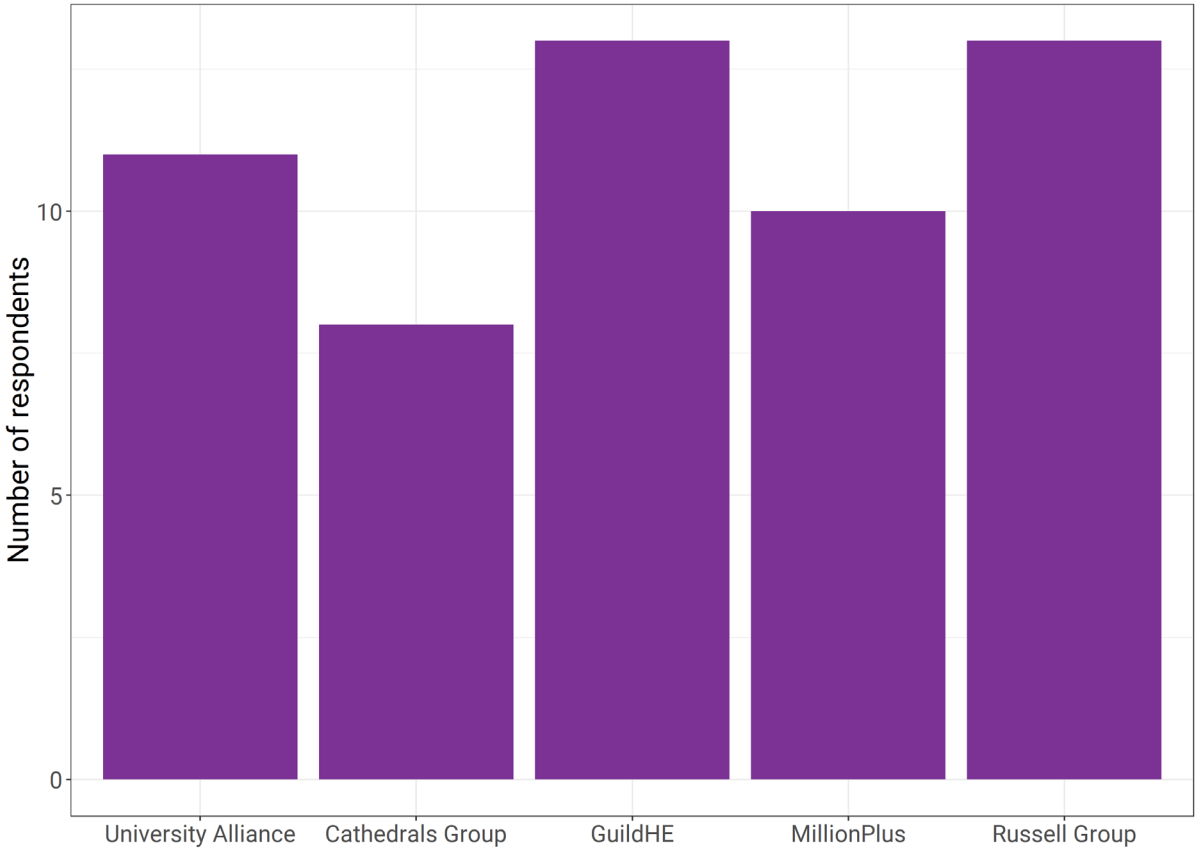


Figure 25: Respondents by mission/sector group



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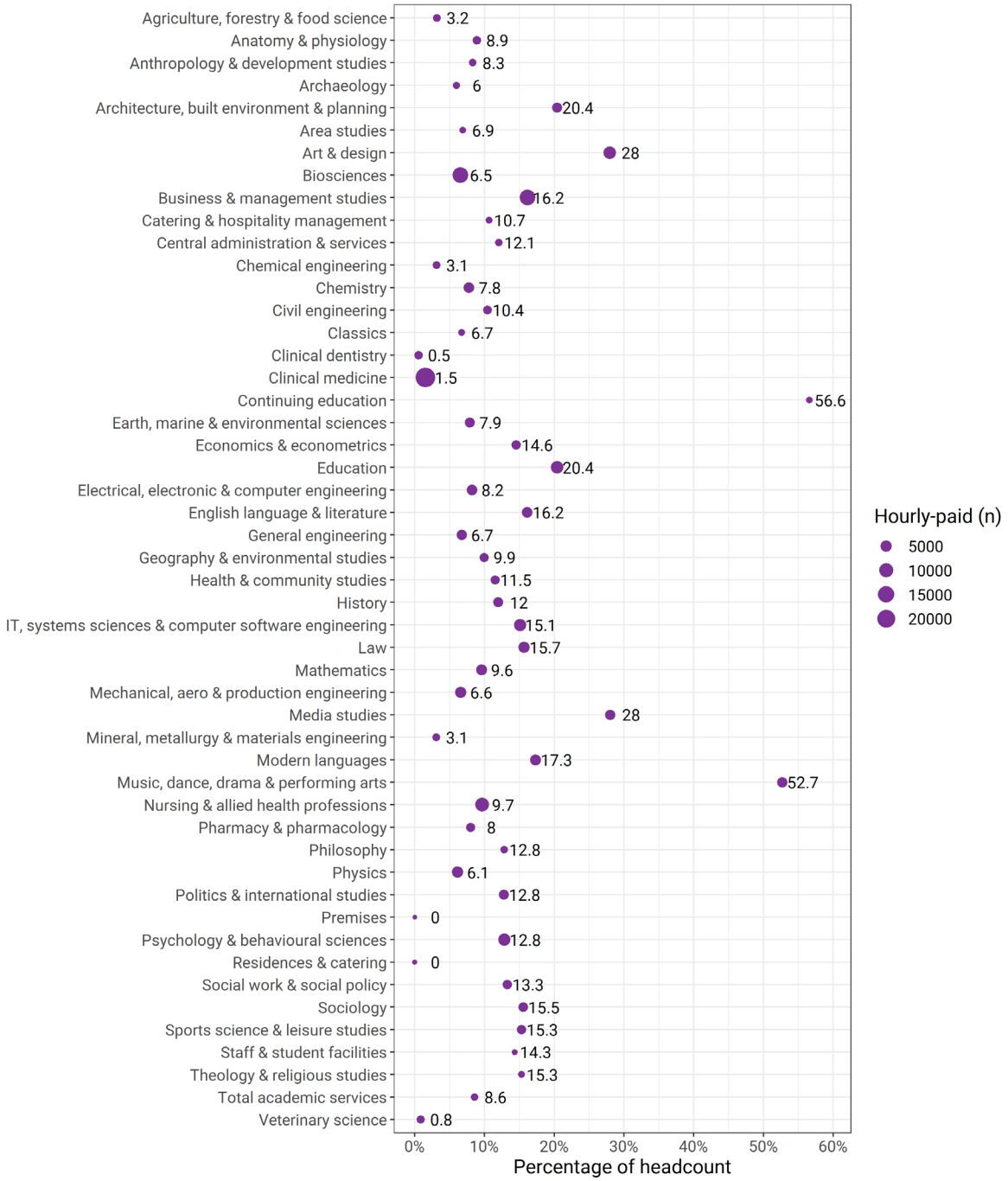
12 Appendix

Figure 26: Academic zero hour contracts, % FTE by cost centre, 2017-18

Source: HESA. Continuing education = 21.6% (70 FTE)

Figure 27: Academic hourly-paid contracts, % headcount, 2017-18



Source: HESA.

Figure 28: Professional services zero hours contracts, % FTE, 2017-18

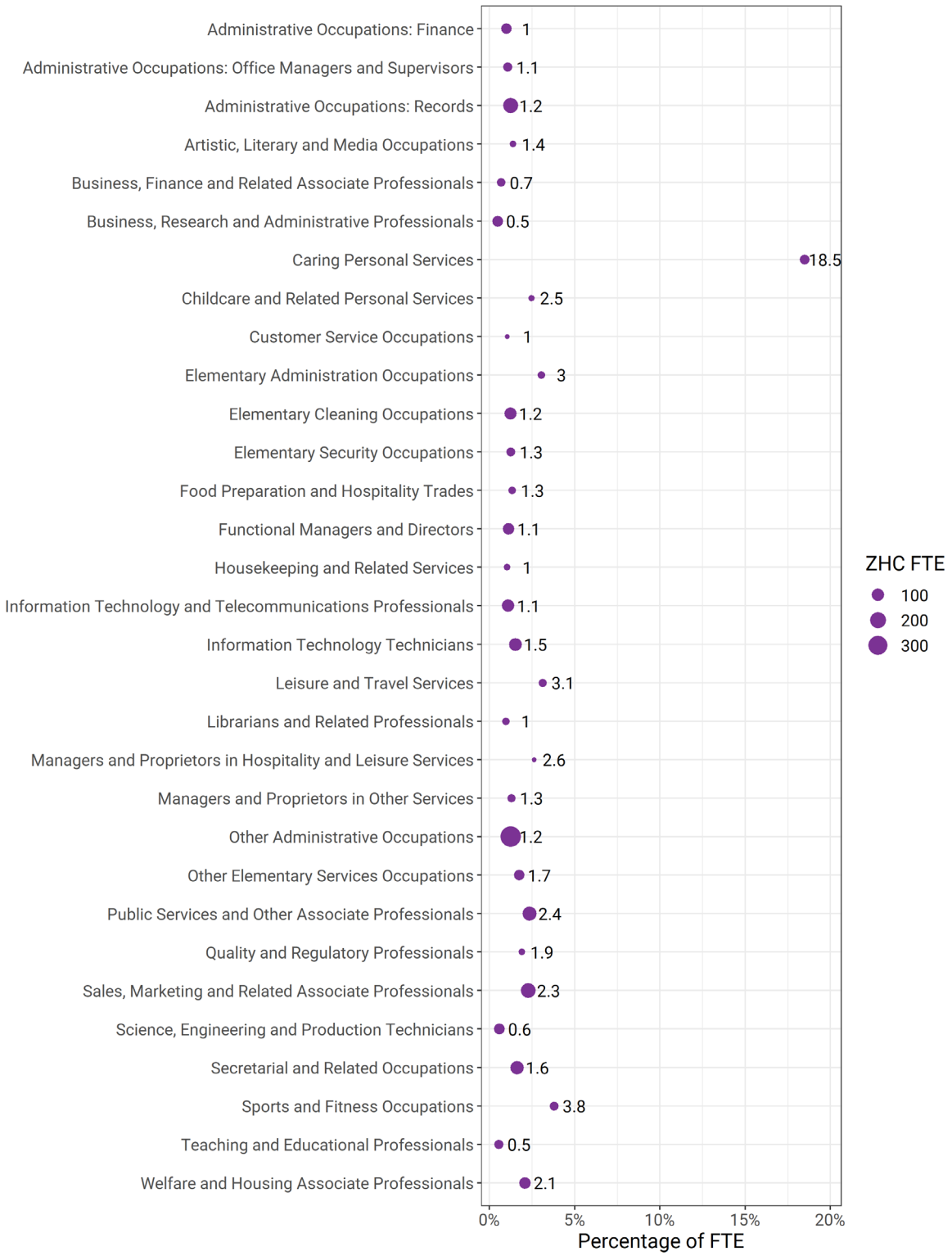
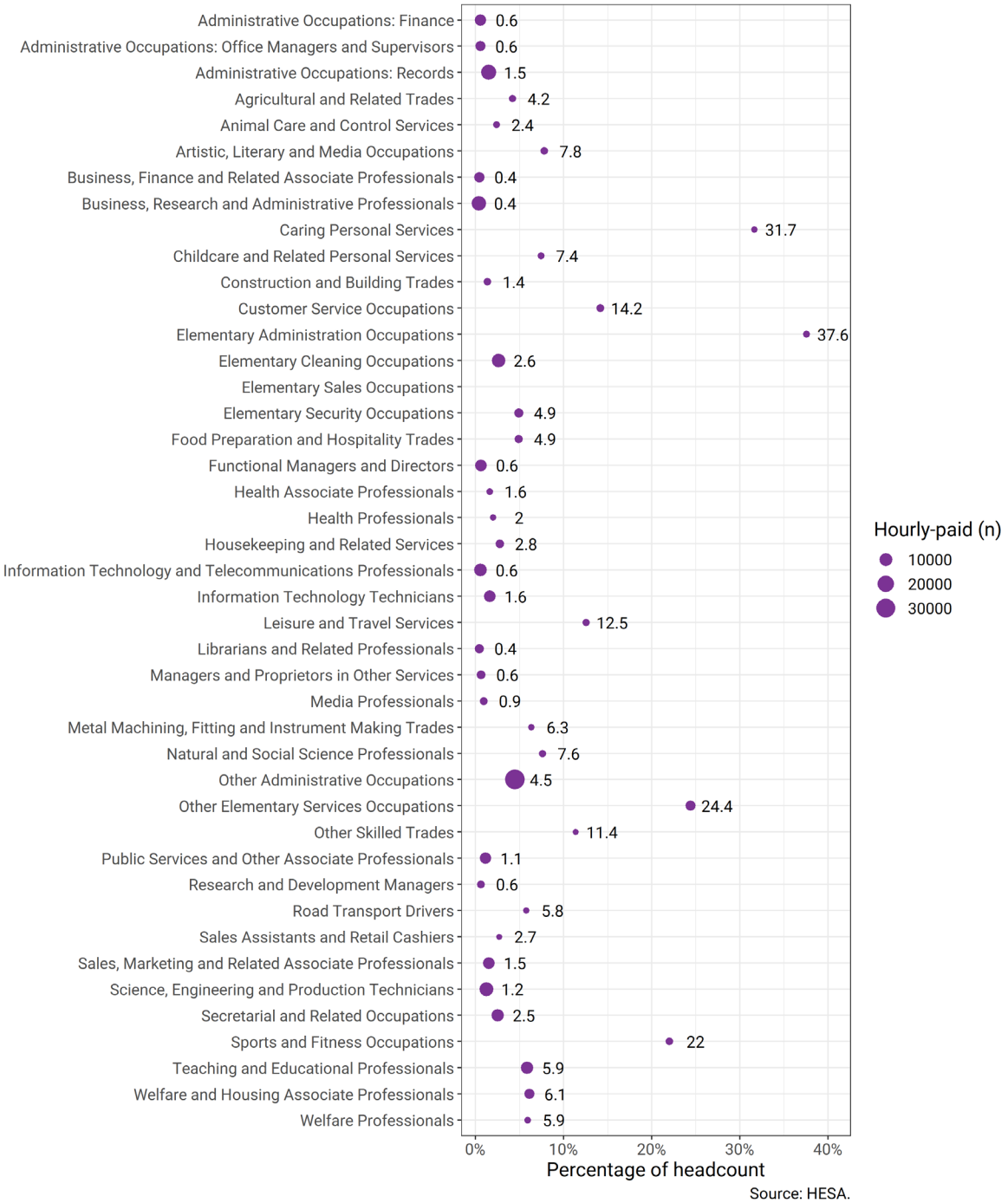


Figure 29: Professional services hourly-paid contracts, % headcount, 2017-18



Source: HESA.

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