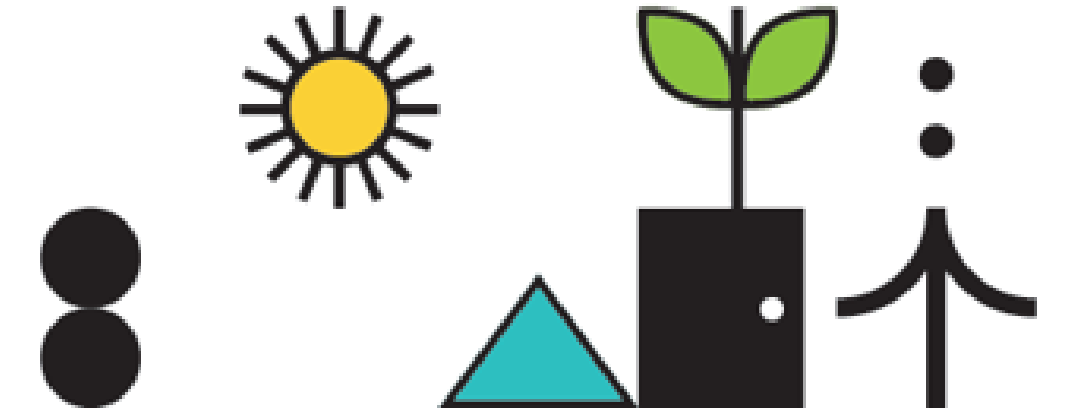


Prosper. Unlocking postdoc
career potential



Demystifying academia with Prosper

Dr Stefania Silvestri, Research Staff Developer (Prosper)
Dr Fiona McBride, Senior Researcher Developer (Prosper)

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An Academy project



Session objectives

- Clarify the different types of HEI and research institutions in the UK
- Explore academic role/s and role titles
- Highlight other role types, such as 'academic adjacent'
- Sources of funding (and other resources)
- What an academic role entails, your assumptions and aspirations

References or footnotes here.
Can also be repurposed for captions.



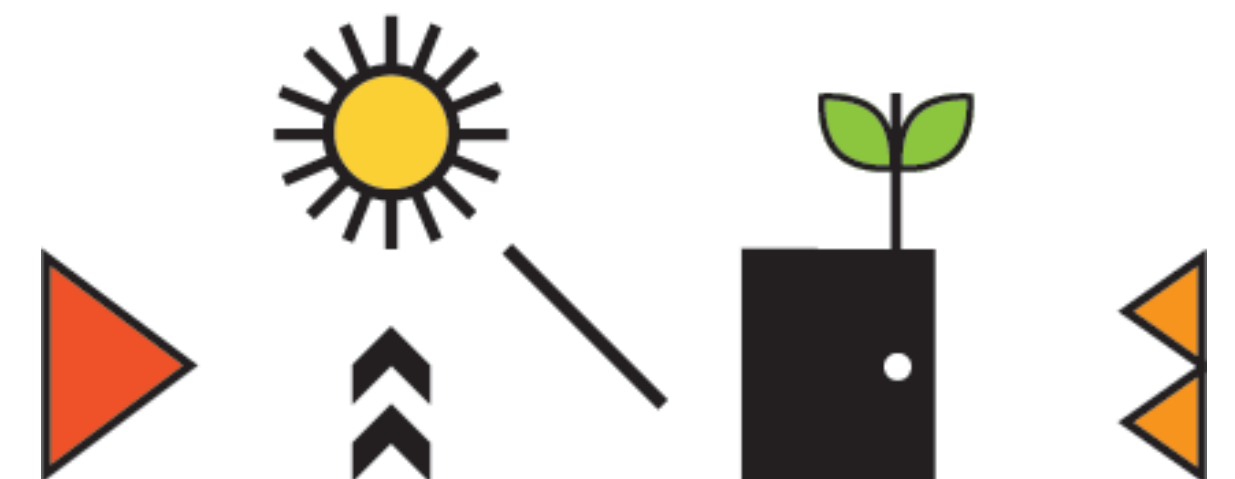
Academia myths and legends

What is success in academia?

“It’s a kind of mystery when you come up for tenure...There’s lots of gossip that: ‘So and so got tenure and only had three publications’ – ‘No, you have to have five’ – ‘Oh, no, you have to have seven’.”

p.574 Sutherland 2017

Sutherland, K. A. 2017. Constructions of success in academia: an early career perspective. *Studies in Higher Education*, 42, 743-759.



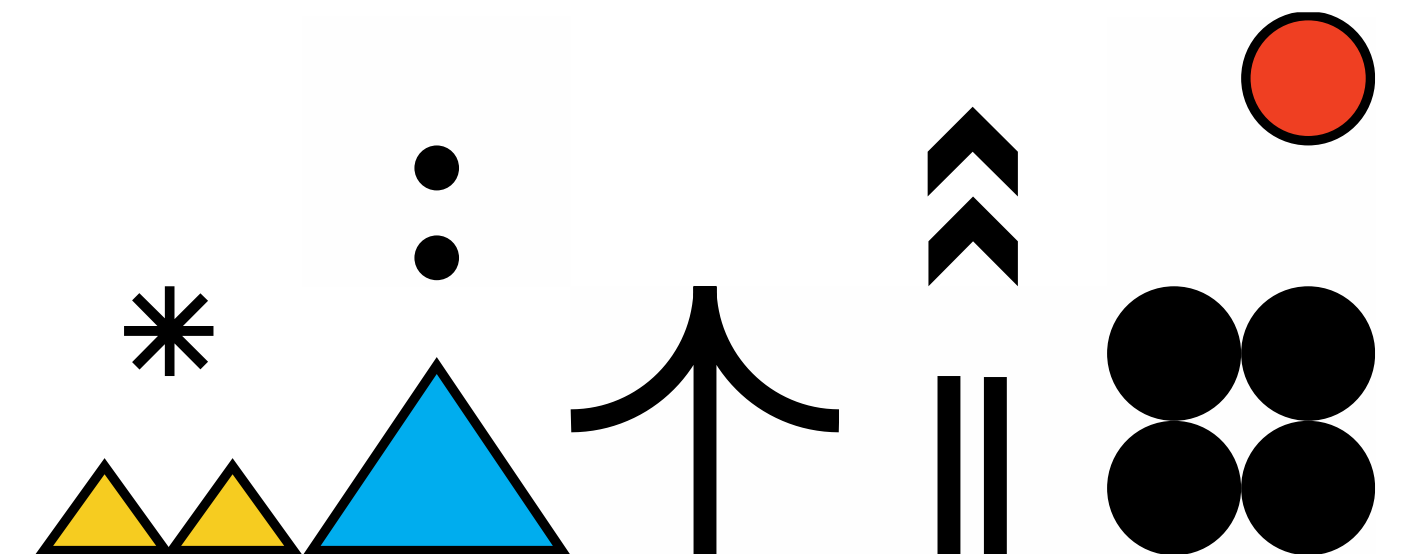
Activity – Assumption-storming

What are all your assumptions about a career in academia?

Example assumptions: “I need a PhD to be a lecturer”,
“It’s the only job where I’d get paid to think”*

* From X/Twitter thread posted by @academic_exit on 06/03/2024

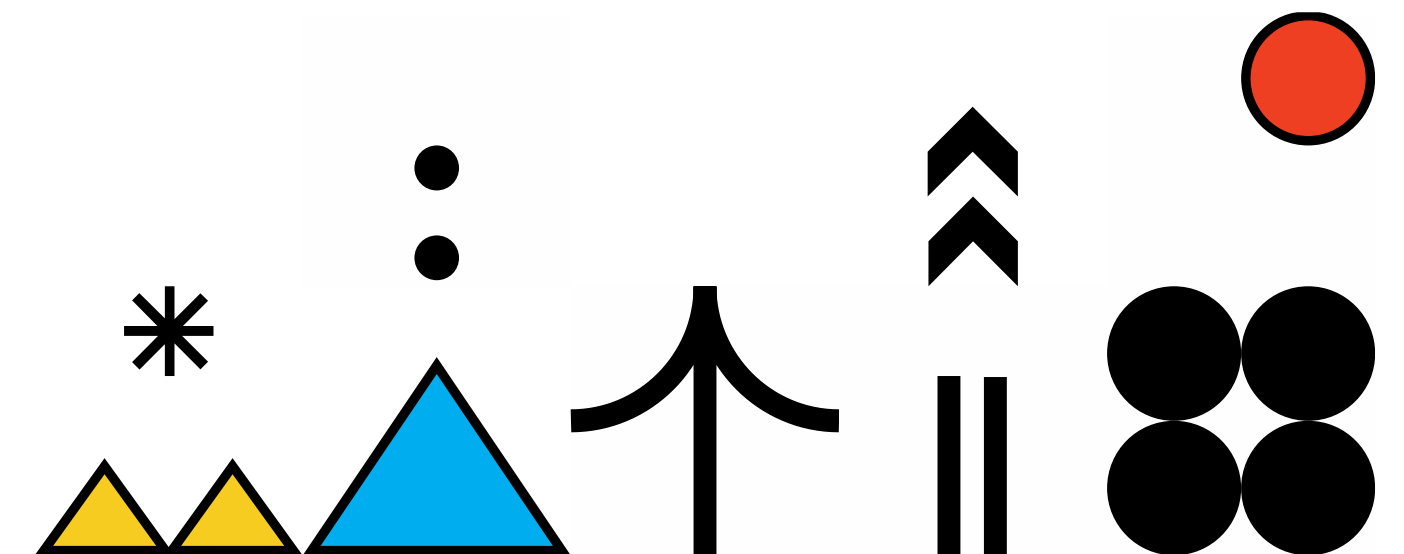
https://x.com/academic_exit/status/1765451183542698007?s=20



Activity – Assumption-storming

What are all your assumptions about a career in academia?

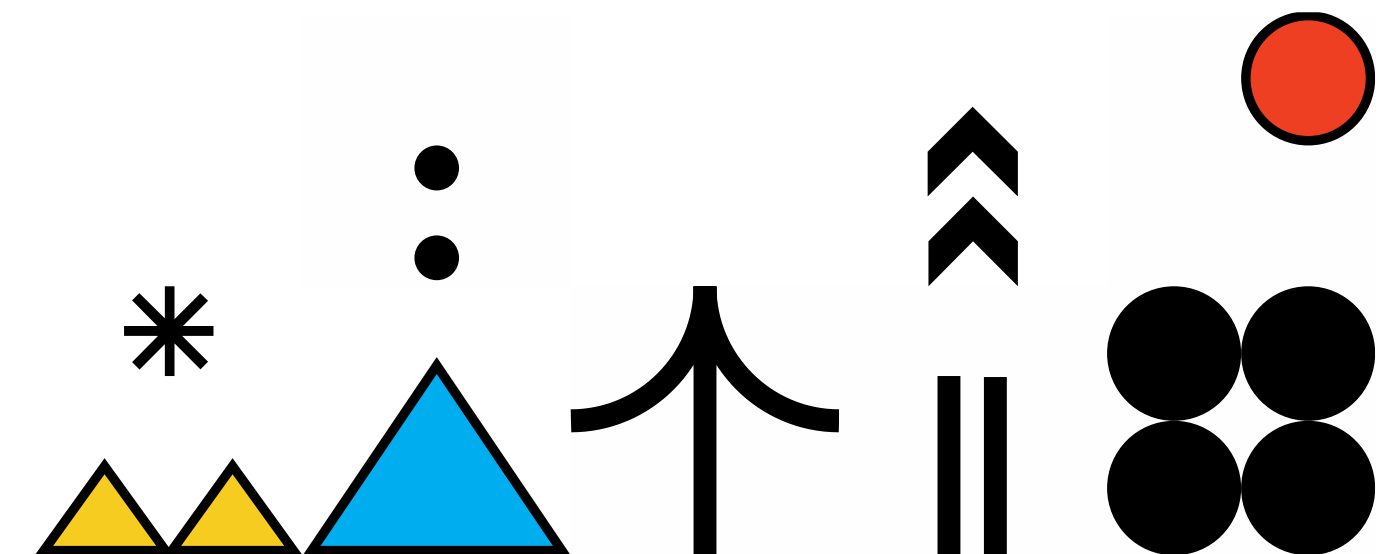
Now group these into (1) fact (2) opinion or guess



Activity – Academic roles and seniority/hierarchy

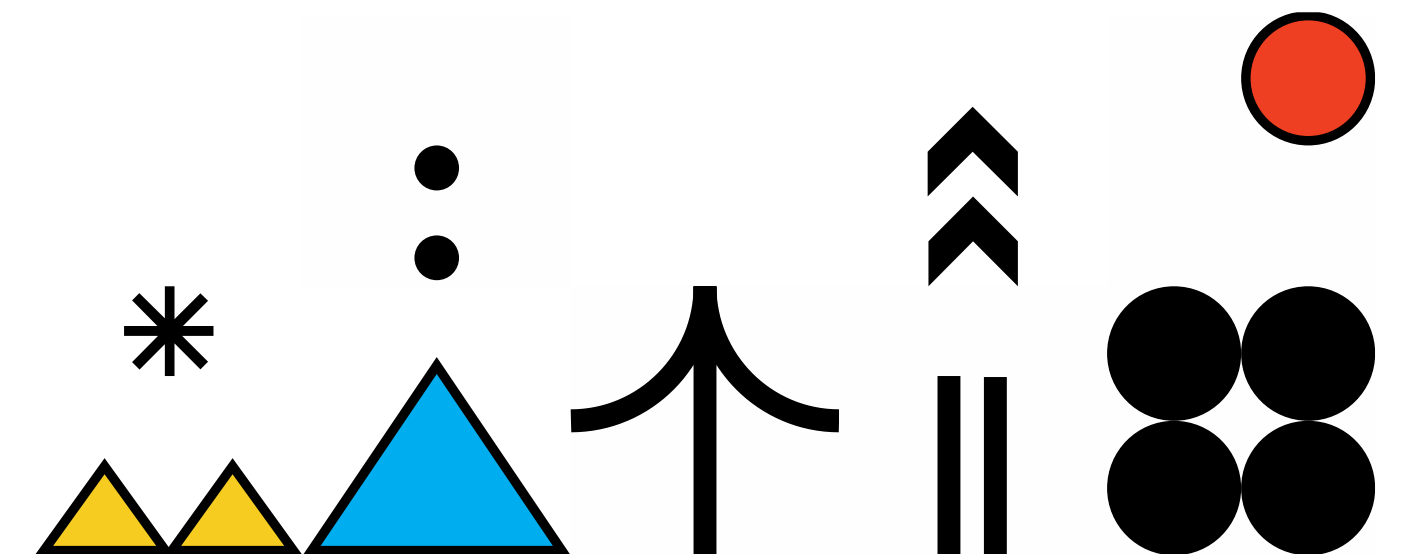
List all the academic job titles you know.

Arrange them on the sheet in order of hierarchy.



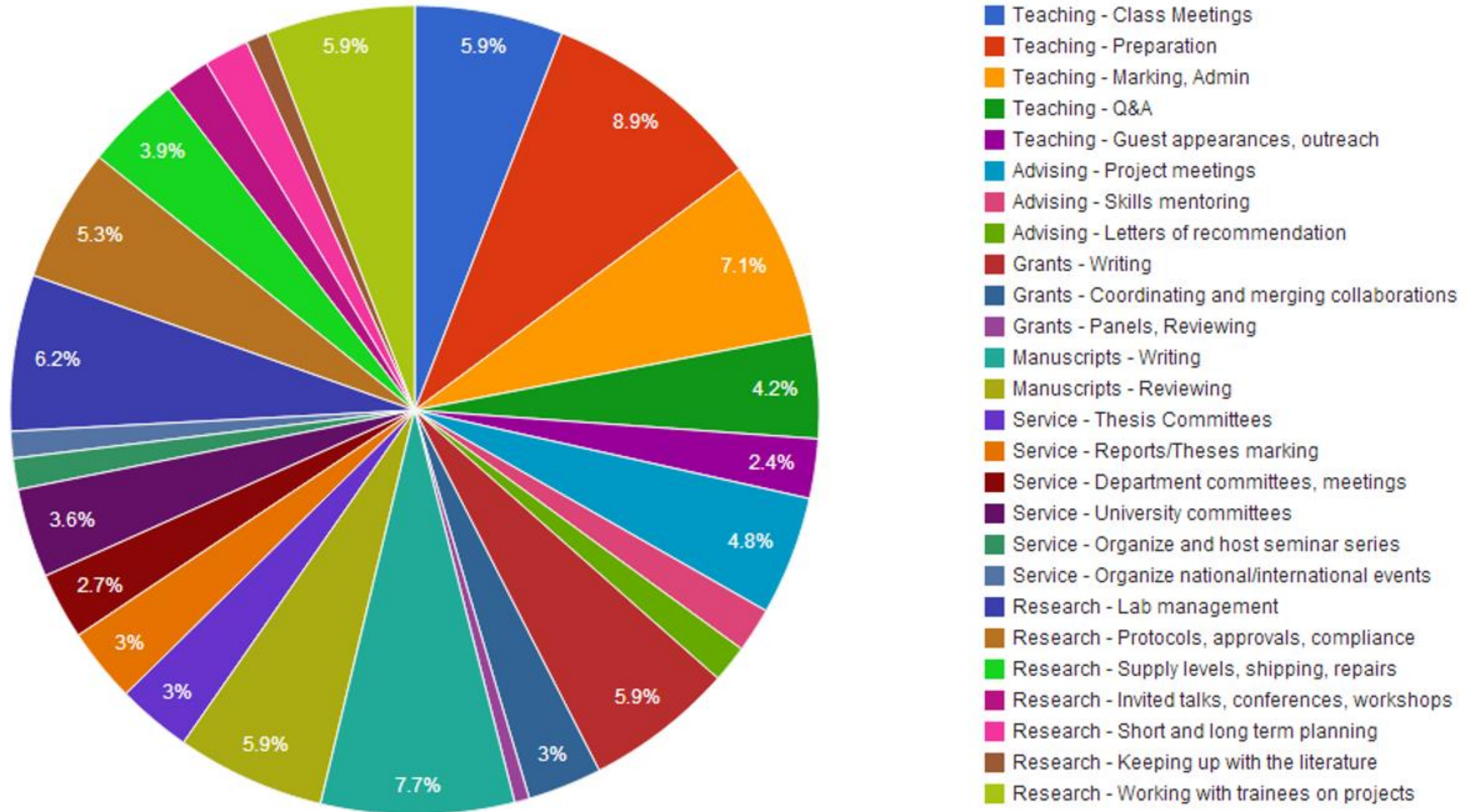
Activity – what activities does an academic role encompass?

List all the tasks/types of activity that an academic job includes.



What do you spend your time doing?

Year 2 as assistant professor



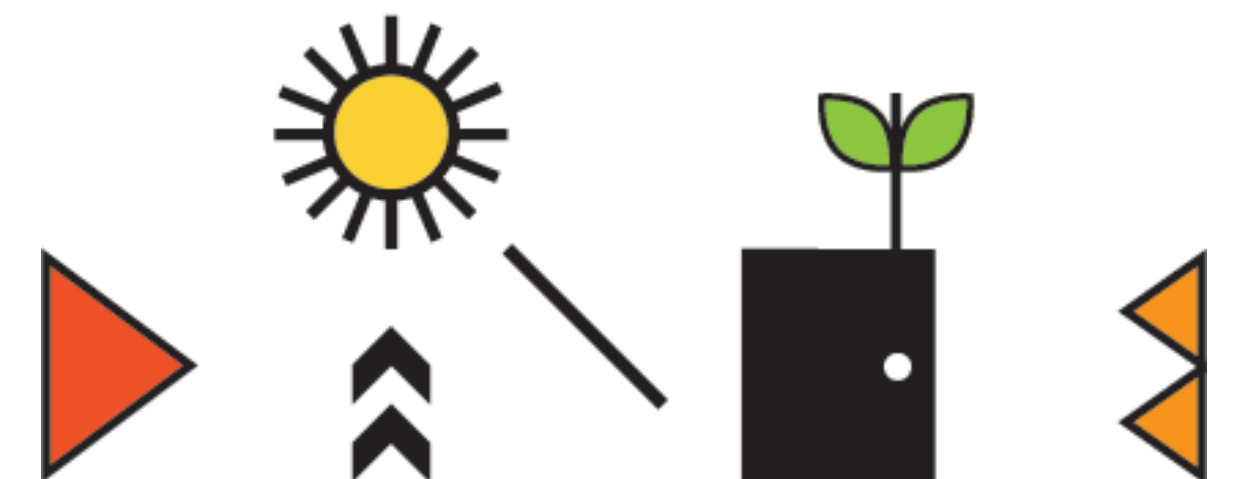
Academia myths and legends

What are you expected to spend your time doing?

“The politically correct answer is one third research, one third teaching, one third service, right? The more realistic expectation is ‘as much research as you can do, as much teaching as you need to do, and as little service as you can get away with.’”

p.574 Sutherland 2017

Sutherland, K. A. 2017. Constructions of success in academia: an early career perspective. *Studies in Higher Education*, 42, 743-759.



Other roles in academia

Academic roles; teaching-only lectureship, research manager/coordinator, staff scientist

Academic or research-adjacent roles; lab coordinator/manager, technician or other technical roles

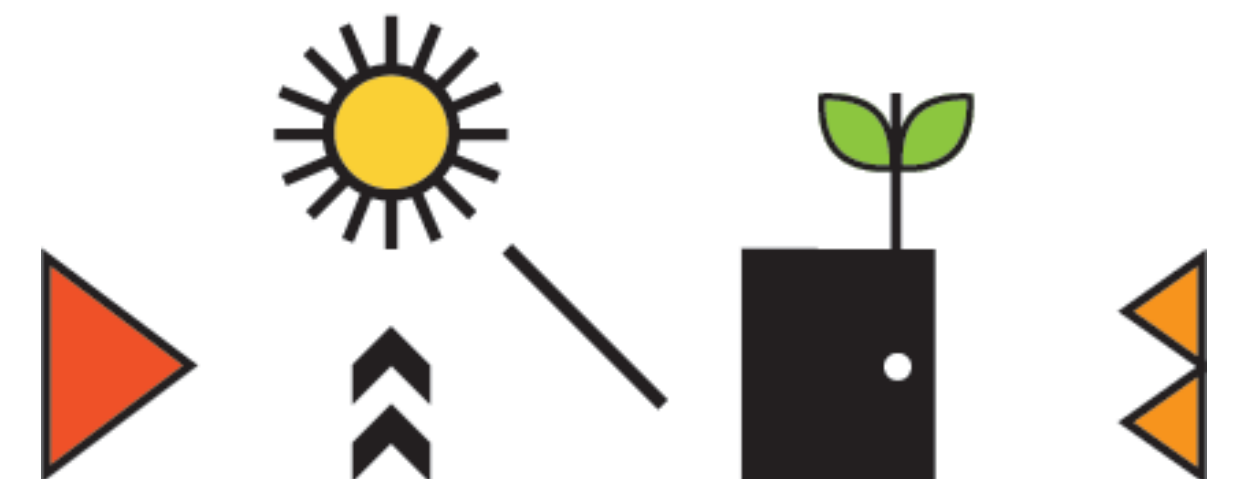
Professional service roles; Project manager, research coordinator/developer, development roles

Alternative terms used for some of the above - Research enablers or Alt-Ac (although sometimes this refers to roles beyond academia)



UK University groups

- Research consortia; Eastern Academic Research Consortium (ARC), GW4, Midlands Innovation, N8 research partnership, Science and Engineering South (SES), White Rose University Consortium, MedCity
- Mission groups: The Russell Group, Universities Alliance, Million+ group, The Cathedrals group of Universities
- Business incubation, spin-out and research commercialisation: Midlands Innovation Commercialisation of Research Accelerator (MICRA), Northern Accelerator, Northern Gritstone, SETsquared
- Other: Wallace Group, Chartered Association of Business Schools



UK research organisations

- Alan Turing Institute
- All NHS Trusts, Hospitals, Boards and GP Practices
- All UK Higher education institutions
- Arts council
- British Museum

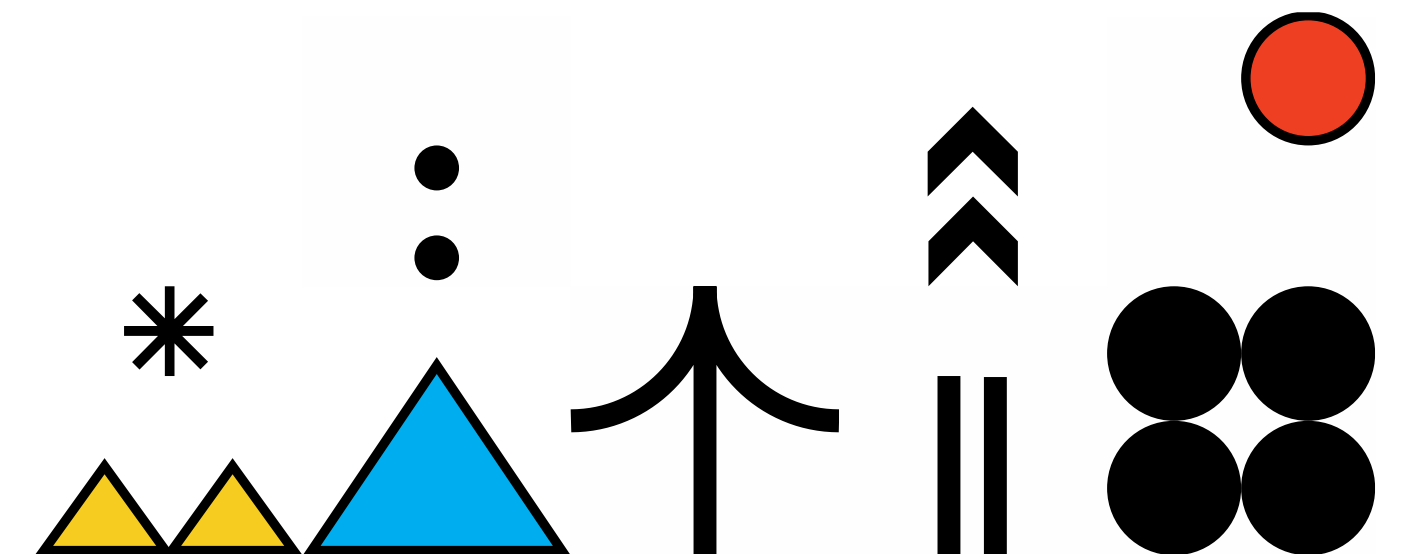
For the full list of all UKRI approved research organisations see;

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ukri-endorsement-employing-or-hosting-institutions-global-talent-visa/ukri-list-of-approved-research-organisations>



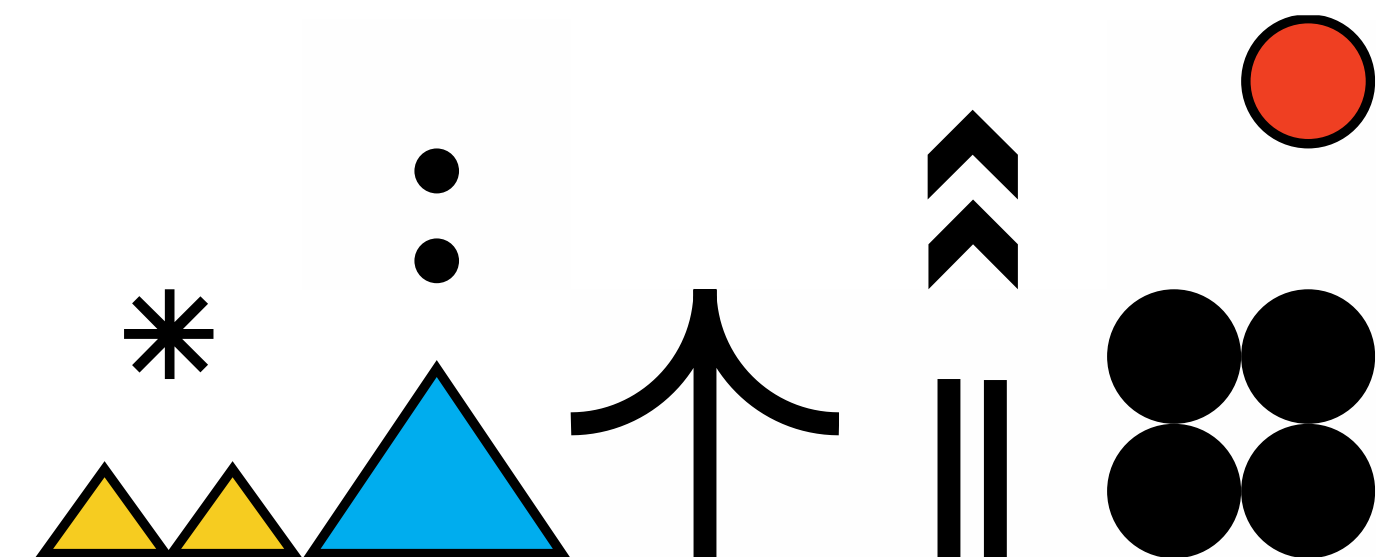
Sources of funding and support – any UK HEI

- Typical funders of your research area; examples include UKRI <https://www.ukri.org/>, European Research Council <https://www.ukro.ac.uk/funding-and-guidance/erc/>, Wellcome <https://wellcome.org/>
- Charities may also fund research so think broadly
- Some companies fund research too; for example Carlsberg were one of the funders of a seagrass project (along with WWF-UK) <https://www.swansea.ac.uk/research/research-highlights/sustainable-futures-energy-environment/seagrass/>



Sources of funding and support – any UK HEI

- Ask colleagues, your PI or line manager who they've been funded by (or find out on their institutional webpages)
- Find out if your institution has any workshops on grant writing or internal peer reviewing groups
- Find out if your institution hosts events with funders – they'll often come around to talk about particular schemes or funding calls



Sources of funding and support – at UoL

- Research Professional

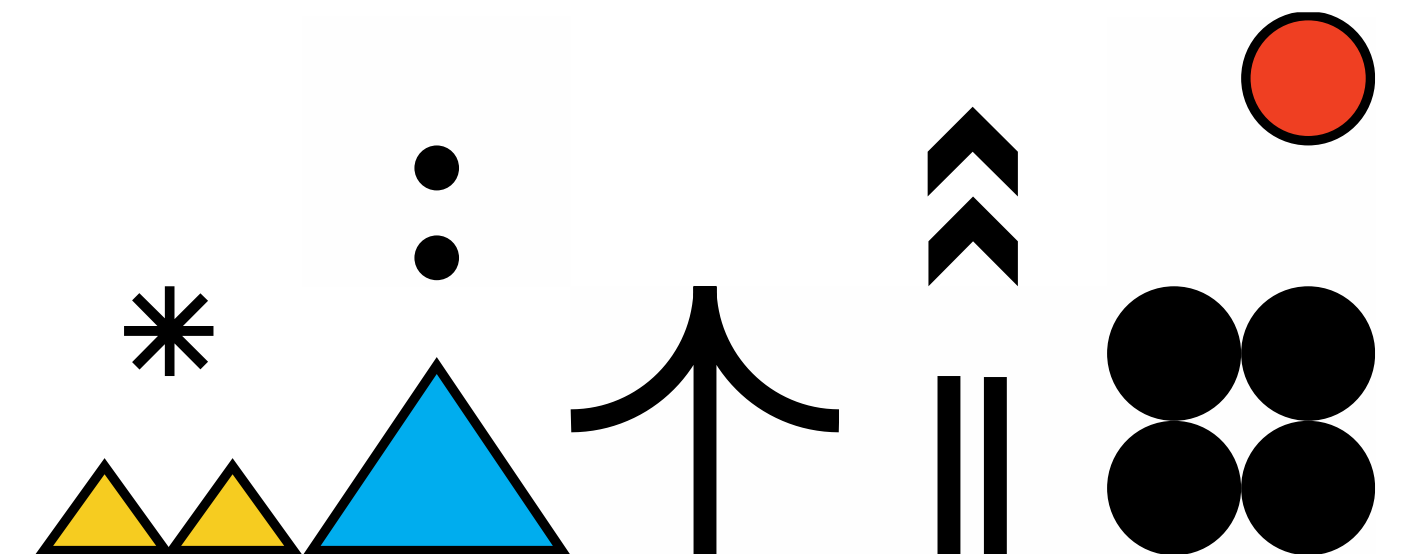
<https://www.researchprofessional.com> (and training on this <https://staff.liverpool.ac.uk/research/research-impact-strategy/research-systems-support/research-professional/>)

- Institutional funding pots; examples include Derby fellowships

<https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/humanities-and-social-sciences/research/training-and-support/postdoc-fellowship/derby-fellowships/#:~:text=The%20Faculty%20of%20Humanities%20and,against%20a%20high%2Dquality%20threshold.> and

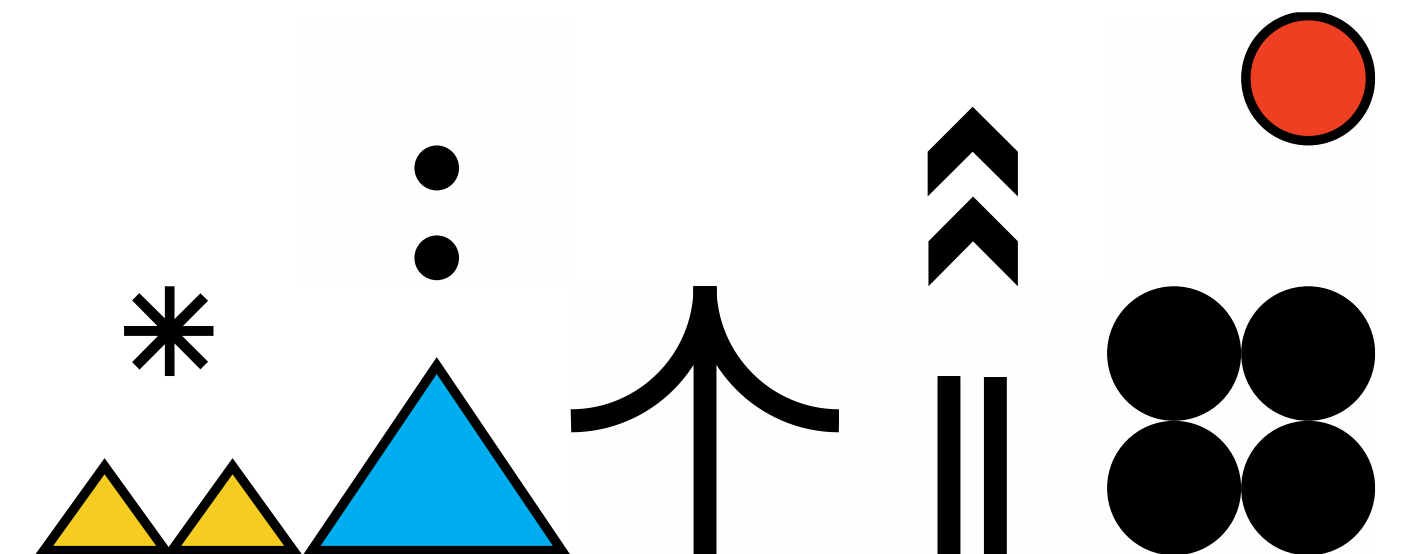
University of Liverpool Research Fellowships

<https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/research/fellowships/>



Sources of funding and support – at UoL

- Research and Partnerships Development – Peer Review College <https://staff.liverpool.ac.uk/research/rpd/peer-review-college/> for a range of funding schemes
- Funding <https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/researcher/staff-resources/funding/>



Prosper.

Unlocking postdoc
career potential



Thank you. Get in touch:

Email prosper.postdoc@liverpool.ac.uk

Website <https://prosper.liverpool.ac.uk/> and
<https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/researcher/prosper/>

LinkedIn <https://www.linkedin.com/company/prosperproject/>

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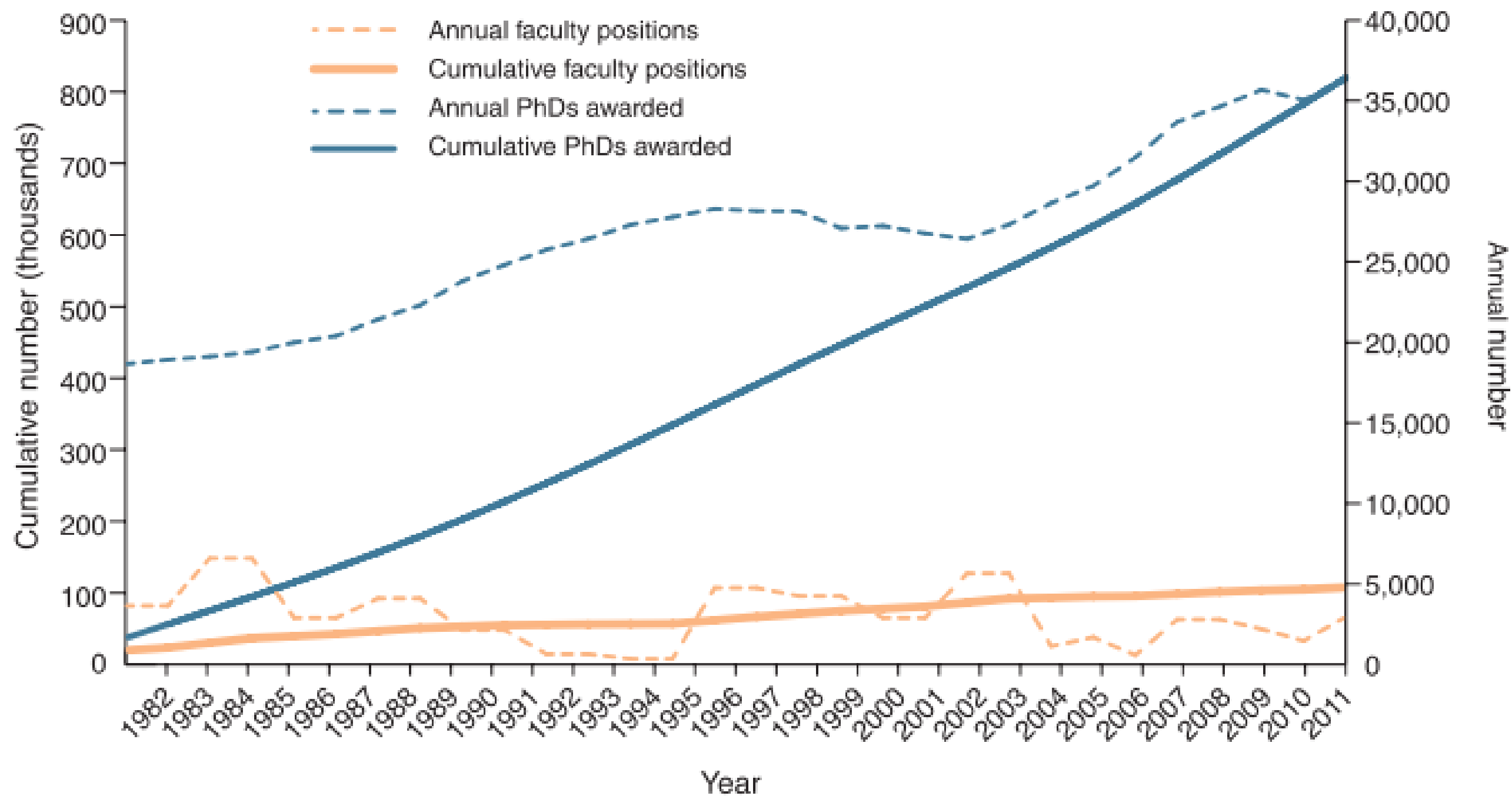


Figure 1 New faculty positions versus new PhDs. Since 1982, almost 800,000 PhDs were awarded in science and engineering (S&E) fields, whereas only about 100,000 academic faculty positions were created in those fields within the same time frame. The number of S&E PhDs awarded annually has also increased over this time frame, from ~19,000 in 1982 to ~36,000 in 2011. The number of faculty positions created each year, however, has not changed, with roughly 3,000 new positions created annually^{2,10}.

Reference: Hillebeeckx, M., Maricque, B. & Lewis, C. 2013. The missing piece to changing the university culture. *Nature Biotechnology*, 31, 938-941

In the region of 10% to 15% of postdocs become permanent academic (tenure tracked) staff (Sauermann and Roach 2016, McConnell et al. 2018).

Across the OECD, the majority of researchers (62.5%) eventually end up working in the business enterprise sector (OECD, 2020, p.37). From Edwards 2021 (p. 11) longitudinal study of PhD students (science) there is no such thing as a ‘traditional’ pathway from the diverse range of careers observed, the majority of PhD holders hold jobs beyond academia after graduation. The majority of postdocs who go onto have careers beyond academia are satisfied with their career (Vitae, 2018 and Vitae, 2016).

What is the likelihood of getting an independent fellowship?
What’s the success rate?

As an example of success rates, UKRI’s 2021 success rate across all of its competitive grants was about 21%, with the success rates for fellowships of around 22% (Baker, 2021). However, the statistics don’t show the full picture (*see notes for full details).

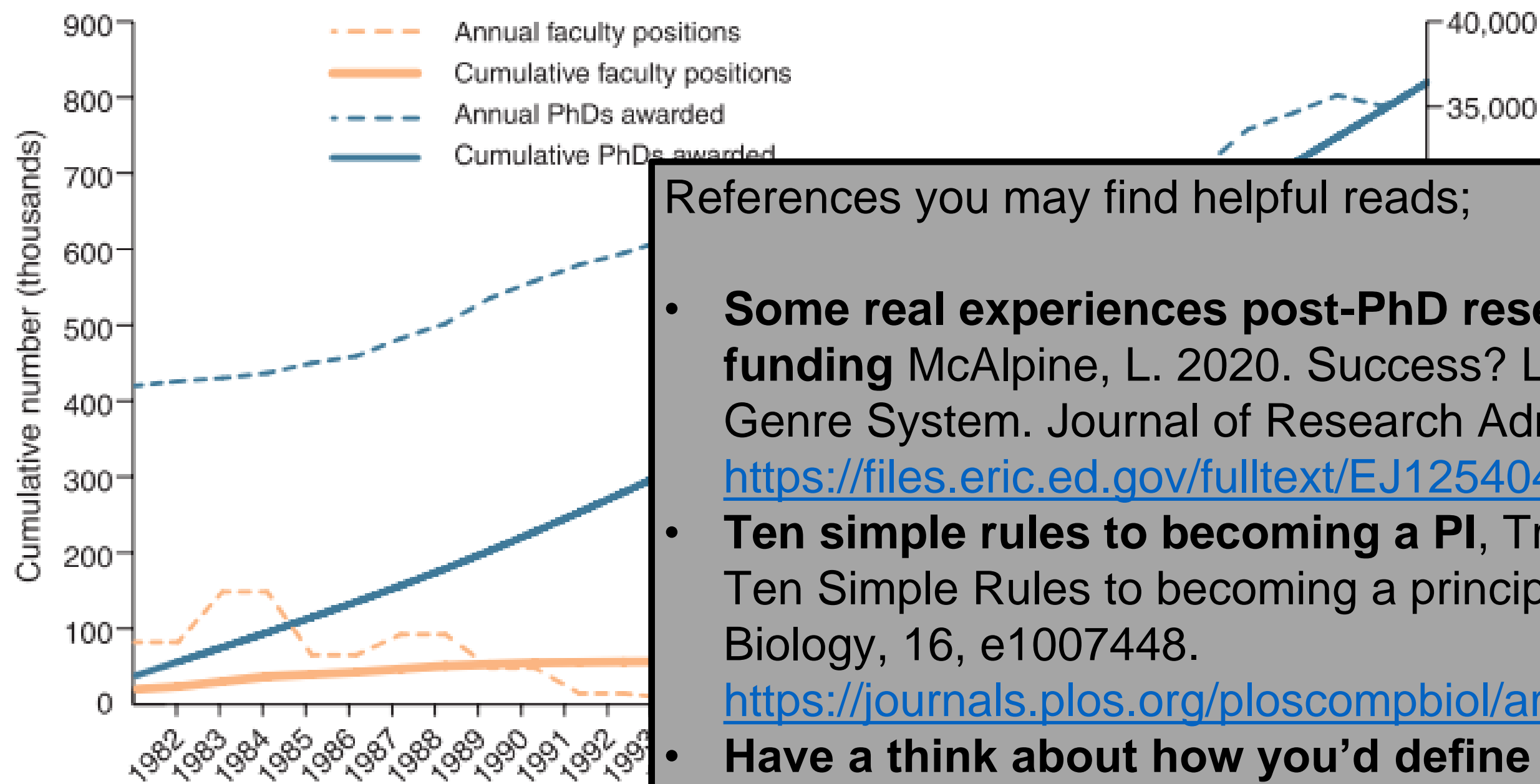


Figure 1 New faculty positions versus new PhDs in science and engineering (S&E) fields, which were created in those fields within the same time frame. The number of new faculty positions created each year, however, has also increased over this time frame, from 10,000 in 1982 to 15,000 annually^{2,10}.

Reference: Hillebeeckx, M., *The missing piece to changing Biotechnology*, 2010, p. 100-101.

In the region of 10% to 15% of postdocs become permanent

References you may find helpful reads;

- **Some real experiences post-PhD researchers had learning to navigate grant funding** McAlpine, L. 2020. Success? Learning to Navigate the Grant Funding Genre System. *Journal of Research Administration*, 51, 10-31. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1254040.pdf>
- **Ten simple rules to becoming a PI**, Tregoning, J. S. & McDermott, J. E. 2020. Ten Simple Rules to becoming a principal investigator. *PLOS Computational Biology*, 16, e1007448. <https://journals.plos.org/ploscompbiol/article?id=10.1371/journal.pcbi.1007448>
- **Have a think about how you'd define success in academia and what career success looks like for you** with the three following articles;
 - Sutherland, K. A. 2017. Constructions of success in academia: an early career perspective. *Studies in Higher Education*, 42, 743-759 <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1254040.pdf>
 - Roostervane's blog on how to be successful <https://roostervane.com/how-to-be-successful/> ,
 - and lastly, Walkowicz, L. M. 2018. Choose Your Own Adventure: Developing A Values-Oriented Framework for Your Career <https://arxiv.org/abs/1805.09963>

ermann and Roach 2016, researchers (62.5%) eventually leave the private sector (OECD, 2020, longitudinal study of PhD graduates). Among those entering academia as a 'traditional' career path, 62.5% of postdocs observed, the majority of those who remain in academia after graduation. The majority of those who leave academia for other careers beyond academia (OECD, 2020, Vitae, 2016). dependent fellowship? It's 2021 success rate is about 21%, with the success rate at 22% (Baker, 2021). full picture (*see notes for