

# Retention of early career academics: Why we should care about what they care about

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<http://ako.aotearoa.ac.nz/early-career-academics>

# The early career project

- 1) Factors influencing the success, productivity and satisfaction of early career academics
- 2) 82 interviewees from three countries (Canada, NZ & Sweden)
- 3) 538 respondents to a survey at all eight NZ universities
- 4) 104 respondents to an academic managers' survey (Heads of Department, Deans, Deputy/Pro/Assistant Vice Chancellors, etc)
- 5) Four focus groups at four different NZ universities

# “Get in behind”



A poem composed entirely from the words of respondents to my early career survey in New Zealand universities

# Definitions of 'success' in academia

## Objective

Research productivity

Promotion and tenure

Status

Teaching performance

Salary

# Definitions of 'success' in academia

Objective	Subjective
Research productivity	Life satisfaction
Promotion and tenure	Contribution to society
Status	Freedom
Teaching performance	Job satisfaction
Salary	Influencing students

Sutherland, K.A. (2017). Constructions of success in academia: An early career perspective. *Studies in Higher Education*, 42(4), 743-759.

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# How do early career academics spend their time?

**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 as teaching as you need to, and as little service as you can get away with”.**

# Early Career Academic Time

Percentage time spent on...	All NZ	Men	Women
Research	44	43	45
Teaching	35	36	34
Service & Administration	21	21	21
Total	100%	100%	100%



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Percentage time spent on...	Europe <sup>*</sup>	Aus <sup>**</sup> Go8	Aus <sup>**</sup> All
Research	44	44	37
Teaching	38	31	36
Service & Administration	18		
Total	100%		

\* Culum (2015)

\*\* Bentley, Goedegebuure & Meek (2014)

# Early Career Academic Interests

My interests lie...	All NZ	Men	Women
Primarily in research	27	26	27
In both, leaning towards research	40	48	35
Equally in research and teaching	21	22	24
In both, leaning to teaching	8	3	11
Primarily in teaching	4	1	3
Total	100%	100%	100%

# Work/life balance

Group	Mean
New Zealand	3.11*
Women	3.09
Men	3.13

\* Scale from 1-5 where 1 is positive and 5 is negative

## Work/life balance

Group	Mean
New Zealand	3.11*
Women	3.09
Men	3.13

## Satisfaction

Group	Mean
New Zealand	2.15
Women	2.18
Men	2.09

\* Scale from 1-5 where 1 is positive and 5 is negative

# Satisfaction in academia

	<b>Senior</b>	<b>Early career</b>	<b>All</b>
	%*	%	%
NZ	83	73	75
AUS	72	50	55
ALL <sup>+</sup>	67	57	62

\* Percentage responding *Very Satisfied* or *Satisfied* to the question, 'Overall, how satisfied are you as an academic?'

+ Twelve countries in the *Changing Academic Profession* survey: Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Finland, Germany, Japan, Malaysia, Portugal, South Africa, United Kingdom, United States (Bentley, et al, 2013)

# Factors influencing satisfaction

## No influence

Gender

Ethnicity

Discipline (*except  
Humanities/Law*)

# Factors influencing satisfaction

No influence	Strong negative influence
Gender	Responsibility
Ethnicity	Too much teaching
Discipline ( <i>except Humanities/Law</i> )	

# Factors influencing satisfaction

No influence	Strong negative influence	Strong positive influence
Gender	Responsibility	Administrative processes
Ethnicity	Too much teaching	Collegial relationships
Discipline ( <i>except Humanities/Law</i> )		Institutional resources



# Effectiveness of career/professional development

Item	ECAs
My career progress thus far has been at a good pace	2.91*
My career progress thus far has been well-supported by my university	2.97
My university offers adequate professional development opportunities	3.12
The academic appraisal/review process at my university has been an effective aid to my career development	3.49
The student evaluation process at my university has been an effective aid to my career development	3.54

\* Scale of 1-5 where 1 = Strongly Agree and 5 = Strongly Disagree

# Effectiveness of career/professional development

Item	ECAs	Managers
My career progress thus far has been at a good pace	2.91*	-
My career progress thus far has been well-supported by my university	2.97	-
My university offers adequate professional development opportunities	3.12	2.37
The academic appraisal/review process at my university has been an effective aid to my career development	3.49	2.31
The student evaluation process at my university has been an effective aid to my career development	3.54	2.93

\* Scale of 1-5 where 1 = Strongly Agree and 5 = Strongly Disagree

# Recommendations

- For early career academics
  - Know your own strengths and needs (*Surviving and Succeeding*)
  - Develop Resourcefulness, Resilience, Respectfulness, Rest and recreation, Relationships/relational agency
- For managers & senior colleagues
  - Know your new academics (*Conversational Guidelines*)
- For departments (actually, for everyone)
  - Tell your own stories of ‘success’ (*Sharing Successes & Celebrating Achievements*)
- For universities and government
  - Improve the doctoral experience
  - Provide targeted support for women

<http://akoaootearoa.ac.nz/early-career-academics>

# A poetic finale

# References

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