

# Career tracking of British Academy funded early-career researchers

Published by the  
Careers Research &  
Advisory Centre (CRAC)

## ***Career tracking of British Academy funded early-career researchers***

An independent report commissioned by The British Academy

Research by the Careers Research & Advisory Centre (CRAC) Ltd,  
supported by the Institute for Employment Studies (IES).

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Published by the Careers Research & Advisory Centre (CRAC)  
May 2025

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## **About CRAC**

The Careers Research & Advisory Centre (CRAC), registered as a charity in 1964, provides research, expertise and innovation services for all those who support career development, at all ages and across all sectors. CRAC's research and consultancy work focuses on career-related learning, employability development and career transitions, including STEM and researcher careers. CRAC also owns and manages the Vitae programme, which enhances support for the professional and career development of researchers and, increasingly, development of the research environment and improvement in research culture.

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The Institute for Employment Studies (IES) is an independent, international centre of research and consultancy on public employment policy and human resources (HR) issues. It works closely with employers in all sectors, government departments, agencies, professional bodies and associations. IES is a focus of knowledge and practical experience in employment and training policy, the operation of labour markets, and HR planning and development. IES is a not-for-profit organisation with research specialists and consultants from a range of countries, and conducts projects focused on UK, European and International issues

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## 1. Executive summary

The British Academy seeks to invest in the best researchers and high-quality research in the disciplines it fosters. It is a leading provider of fellowships and career-related funding in the humanities and social sciences. At the early-career stage, it has had two key schemes:

- The British Academy Postdoctoral Fellowship (PDF), a three-year award for outstanding early-career researchers within three years of doctoral completion, largely freeing them from other duties to focus on research to enhance their prospects of an academic career. The scheme has funded over 1500 researchers since its first round in 1986.
- The British Academy's Rising Star Engagement Award (BARSEA; active 2015-19) was designed to enable established early-career academics to engage actively in the work of the Academy and enhance their own skills and career development through the organisation of events, training and mentoring activities for other researchers.

To understand longer-term outcomes of those who benefited from these early-career funding programmes, the Academy commissioned CRAC to design and implement a proof-of-concept 'Research Career Tracker' initiative to:

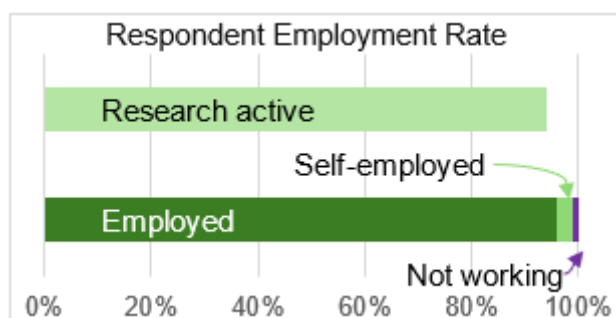
- Understand career pathways of past PDF and BARSEA awardees ("alumni") and determine the long-term impact of these awards upon their careers and research;
- Identify the contributions alumni have made and make now to the academic landscape;
- Understand more about the careers of researchers in these disciplines and what shapes their careers, how these have changed over time and vary for key sub-groups;
- Explore a means to track awardees' careers more systematically in future.

### The first Research Career Tracker project

In 2024, 1144 PDF and BARSEA alumni were invited to participate in online surveys. A highly representative response sample of 74% across the lifetime of the PDF was augmented with partial career data found in public data sources. BARSEA surveys, at 61% response rate, provided a useable dataset reflective of this population but with lower statistical robustness.

### Findings for PDF alumni

- Very high rate of research active employment across alumni.
- Greater than 80% working alumni currently employed in academia/HE.
- Indication that the PDF has a net positive retention effect, keeping funded researchers in the UK from all nationalities.
- PDF scheme meets aim: first position after award Lecturer or more senior, extensive career progression with most in Professor position before retirement. 91% have permanent post.
- Alumni hold very positive impact perceptions of the PDF, allowing focus on research, recognition through prestige of the award and enhanced self-confidence.
- PDF award retains researchers in academia, who in turn lead and train the next generation of researchers.



### **Findings for BARSEA alumni**

- Alumni reported the award has been valuable in helping to establish them in their career and discipline: 96% are currently in academia/HE and over 90% are in the UK.
- Strong evidence alumni had progressed substantially since the award, (~5-10 years ago):
  - when undertaking the award, half were in a Lecturer-level post but currently nearly 90% are at a level above Lecturer and nearly 40% at Professor.
- Perceptions of impact of the award were very positive, such as strong effects on
  - becoming recognised in their academic community,
  - becoming visible and established as an expert in their discipline,
  - gaining skills in networking and leadership and
  - enhanced self-confidence.

### **Conclusion**

The approach, design and implementation of this project were highly successful, engaging a high proportion of alumni that could be reached and resulting in a wide and rich response dataset, enabling deep insights into career progression and award impacts.

Overall, the results portray a highly positive picture of the impacts and effectiveness of the PDF award over its lifetime. The BARSEA award could be considered as having a catalytic effect upon the progression of alumni, and the results attest to the increasingly substantial contributions being made by these alumni now established in their disciplines. The prestige of being seen to win Academy funding, was considered invaluable, within institutions and disciplines alike.

### **Recommendations**

- The BARCT project continues, leveraging this strong start. Consents now obtained allow for most response data to be stored and most alumni re-contacted in future.
- Perform periodic future surveys, enabling previous respondents to review and update their responses and obtaining new responses from newly emerging or unreachable alumni.
- Augmentation of survey responses with key career information from public data sources for those outside the reach of the survey to increase coverage of alumni outside academia/HE, whom this first survey under-represented.
- Consider expanding this approach to other Academy schemes, using suitably customised survey instruments.

## Part 1 – The Research Career Tracker project

### 2. Supporting and career tracking of researchers

#### 2.1. Introduction

The British Academy (“the Academy”), the UK’s academy for humanities and social sciences, has a vision to put the humanities and social sciences at the heart of understanding the world and shaping a brighter future. It supports a variety of researchers in the SHAPE (Social sciences, Humanities and the Arts for People and the Economy) disciplines.<sup>1</sup> The Academy has objectives to inform people about these disciplines, to illustrate their value and relevance, and to inspire people to study them and follow related careers.

Currently, one of its core objectives is to invest in the very best researchers and research. Funding schemes for researchers are central to this role of facilitating research of the highest quality and sustaining a vibrant and innovative research culture. The Academy seeks to allow the most talented researchers to tackle pressing new issues, challenge mainstream thinking and bring fresh insights, perspectives and methodologies to research questions, generating knowledge that will benefit everyone.

Unlike many other research funders, most of its funding schemes focus on individual researchers, at different career stages, rather than providing research grant funding. It is a leading provider of fellowships and career-related funding in the humanities and social sciences. Its schemes aim to respond to the challenges that researchers face today, including fostering growth of a more diverse research culture and community, and support a wide range of researchers in the SHAPE disciplines in the UK and internationally. At the early-career stage, it has had two key schemes:

- The British Academy Postdoctoral Fellowship (PDF) which is a three-year award made to an annual cohort of outstanding early-career researchers in the humanities or social sciences, running since 1986. The PDF offers awardees the opportunity to strengthen their experience of research and teaching in an academic environment, enhancing their curriculum vitae, and boosting their prospects of obtaining a permanent academic post;
- The British Academy’s Rising Star Engagement Awards (BARSEAs) were designed to enable established early-career academics to engage actively in the work of the Academy and enhance their own skills and career development through the organisation of events, training and mentoring activities for a wide range of other early-career researchers. The BARSEA scheme was active for five years, 2015-2019 inclusive.

Recent UK Governments have recognised the importance of research and innovation to the economy, stating aims to increase investment in research and development (R&D) and in 2020 a ‘R&D Roadmap’ containing such a vision was published.<sup>2</sup> This was followed by a ‘People and Culture Strategy’ to attract, train and retain diverse talent across the UK research and innovation system to build on the UK’s strengths in research and to meet future challenges.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> SHAPE is a collective term for these disciplines which are critical to understanding the human world and interactions of people with the natural/physical world.

<sup>2</sup> Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT) & Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS) (2020). *UK research and development roadmap*. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-research-and-development-roadmap>

<sup>3</sup> DSIT & BEIS (2021). *Research and development (R&D) people and culture strategy*. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/research-and-development-rd-people-and-culture-strategy>

Currently the UK research funding landscape encompasses a range of sources supporting research in and across various disciplines and sectors. The Government allocates significant funding for research through agencies including UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), which distributes funds to the Research Councils and Research England, and the UK Academies including the British Academy. A significant portion of UKRI and Research Council funding is through competitive grant schemes, where researchers and institutions propose specific research projects, in addition to funding schemes focused on certain strategic priorities aligned with national objectives and societal needs. Many funders have fellowship and related schemes designed to support individuals to enhance their research capacity. In the humanities and arts, proportionally far more of the funding goes to support individuals, rather than through project-focused grants, compared with the sciences.

The UK research landscape is evolving, driven by shifts in Government policy, technological advancements and the changing challenges and needs of society. There is increasing emphasis on research that addresses societal ‘grand challenges’, such as climate change, health disparities and technological innovation, which in turn encourages interdisciplinary approaches to address these complex problems. Funding bodies are increasingly supporting collaborative projects that bring together researchers from diverse disciplines. There is also strong emphasis on impact and knowledge exchange, to demonstrate practical, societal and economic benefits from research, while advances in digital technology are transforming some research and analysis methods.

Meanwhile, there is an increased emphasis on researchers as people and the environment in which research is conducted (including research culture). Globally there is a trend towards more openness and transparency in science and research, with initiatives promoting open access to research outputs, data sharing and reproducibility. Aspirations for greater equity, diversity and inclusion in the research workforce have featured in the REF<sup>4</sup> for some time and REF 2029 will include measures relating to people and culture in research.

It is recognised that a strong R&D system needs to be able to attract and retain the widest possible range of talented researchers (and innovators) with the skills to pursue and build upon research, and to offer careers in research that are sustainable. Many research funders and organisations appreciate that there is currently a lack of knowledge about the career pathways of researchers in practice. The Researcher Development Concordat<sup>5</sup> recognises the need for more robust data about the career paths of researchers across all sectors. Tracking researcher careers better would facilitate increased understanding of the impact of many funding programmes but also enable those considering an academic or research career to make more informed career decisions. Better careers information was the most common response theme in the recent UKRI consultation on a ‘new deal for postgraduate researchers’.<sup>6</sup> A key area of interest is the extent of mobility of researchers between academia and other sectors, as this should enhance flows of knowledge and support innovation. It is particularly interesting in the SHAPE context, where careers are particularly diverse and non-linear, and where portfolio working is more common than in the sciences.

Researchers in the humanities and social sciences (considered here as SHAPE, for simplicity and brevity) tend to be more diverse in some respects than in STEM subjects. The career

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<sup>4</sup> Research Excellence Framework

<sup>5</sup> <https://researcherdevelopmentconcordat.ac.uk/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.ukri.org/publications/analysis-of-the-new-deal-for-postgraduate-research-call-for-input/>



trajectories of those undertaking research in SHAPE disciplines are more varied, including the timing of doctoral study, and researchers are found in a wide range of study/employment loci. Although two thirds of SHAPE doctoral graduates work in academia within three years of graduation,<sup>7</sup> many are employed in teaching roles rather than on research contracts despite the expectation that they will need to undertake research if they seek career progression. As academic career paths become less distinct, and differ with discipline, boundaries between research-active pathways in and outside academia are also becoming blurred. SHAPE doctoral graduates have the highest levels of portfolio working and researchers' identity and mobility have recently been investigated.<sup>8</sup>

With the current backdrop of a government focus on funding STEM research, the Academy has had to champion the value of SHAPE disciplines. Yet many current global challenges require multiple research perspectives, and multi-disciplinary teams that include SHAPE researchers will benefit from the more diverse and creative approaches, and mindsets, that they may uniquely bring. The balance of SHAPE research may need to pivot to play a fuller part in tackling these grand societal challenges and to ensure these researchers are not excluded; it is notable that the Arts & Humanities Research Council, for example, is placing increasing emphasis on interdisciplinary research and skills. There is also a recognition that SHAPE research needs to be seen as impactful, and the SHAPE research community needs to become better at demonstrating impact, engaging with society and research users.

In the current higher education environment in the UK, there are some concerns about whether the prospects for future academic careers in SHAPE disciplines will remain as positive. There are fears that SHAPE research may be allocated a decreasing proportion of overall research funding in future in favour of STEM subjects, while some university departments may not be sustainable due to a lack of undergraduate participation and income. These concerns all reinforce the need for better and up-to-date understanding of the career paths of those who undertake research in the SHAPE disciplines.

## 2.2. Background and 'Research Career Tracker' aims

The Academy would like to understand better the longer-term outcomes of its early-career researcher funding programmes. It has established the 'Research Career Tracker' initiative to:

- Understand the career pathways of past PDF and BARSEA awardees and determine the long-term impact of these early-career research fellowships and engagement awards upon their careers and research;
- Identify the contributions the awardees made (or have gone on to make) to the wider SHAPE landscape, such as through promotion to leadership roles, influencing policy and commercial success, including their role in training the next generation of researchers;
- Understand more about factors, support and trends which have influenced careers across the SHAPE disciplines and differences in these for researchers in different groups;

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<sup>7</sup> Vitae (2013). *What do researchers do? Early career progression of doctoral graduates*.  
<https://www.vitae.ac.uk/impact-and-evaluation/what-do-researchers-do>

<sup>8</sup> *A survey of SHAPE research careers*, The British Academy, 2024  
<https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/publications/a-survey-of-shape-research-careers>

- Identify current challenges and opportunities facing researchers and those in different groups (e.g., different disciplines, or in under-represented groups);
- Through this work, explore how tracking of awardees' careers could be established more systematically and potentially expanded to other funding schemes in future.

### **2.3. Scope, aims and methodology of study**

The Academy commissioned CRAC to undertake this first Research Career Tracker project, with two broad but linked aims. The first was to enable the Academy to investigate and capture longer-term outcomes and impacts of the PDF and BARSEA award programmes upon awardees, which would provide insights into the extent to which the objectives of these programmes have been achieved. To understand this, the project would identify career pathways and obtain insights into awardees' personal and professional contributions to the SHAPE disciplines, including research but also training and supporting other researchers. That information could shed light on challenges experienced in such career progression, and how these might vary for different groups of awardees. The research would also be an opportunity to explore awardees' perceptions about awards and their impacts and about how well the PDF scheme, in particular, has operated over several decades, which could identify potential enhancements that could be made in future. Such insights may also support the future case made to funders to sustain the funding that underpins such programmes.

Second, the Academy wished to explore one or more practical methods through which to track the careers of those who obtain its awards. Such tracking can allow investigation of impacts that only emerge over long periods, including effects on careers and research, that may be difficult to assess in regular evaluations. The Academy saw the project as a proof-of-concept study, aiming to establish a tracking mechanism that could be sustainable into the future but potentially expanded to cover other British Academy awards too.

In terms of scope, it was agreed that the project should seek to cover all 'alumni' of the two schemes, i.e. all those who had completed awards prior to commencement of the project. In practice this meant all awardees within the BARSEA programme (which ran during the period 2015-2019, so all awards have been completed) and all awardees in the PDF programme other than those known currently still to be undertaking their award.

The principal approach in this research was to design and implement an online survey, containing questions and response routes so that alumni of both schemes could respond. The Academy was the main source of contacts data for the targeted alumni, drawing upon its grants system data and other records for awardee names and certain award information. As the scope of the project reached back over many decades of operation of the PDF scheme, contact details for many awardees had naturally changed over time and the Academy had undertaken periodic work to update these data. Nonetheless, the initial alumni contact dataset lacked contact details for a substantial proportion of awardees (especially those from longer ago). As a first step in the project, the Academy emailed all known target contacts to ascertain whether current contact data was functional and identify alumni for whom that data was out of date or incorrect. CRAC then undertook a variety of web-based searches to identify the latter alumni and seek more up-to-date contact details for them. This augmented the list of email contacts available for use in the survey.

The online survey was deployed in mid-June 2024, with invitations sent to 1144 alumni with valid email addresses (comprising 129 who had received solely a BARSEA award, 993 who

had solely received a PDF award and 22 who had had both). The survey was open for responses for six weeks, closing at the end of July 2024. Once the survey had been launched, a further web-searching exercise was undertaken by CRAC (see section 2.4.2) which sought current or recent career data available via public data sources for the 240 PDF alumni for whom contacts data were lacking (i.e. whom the survey could not reach).

A further search exercise was subsequently undertaken to identify career data for unsuccessful applicants to the PDF scheme in recent years, as a potential method to provide some counterfactual insights (i.e. career pathway information for researchers eligible for a PDF and who had applied but not obtained one). This was modest in size as useable contacts data and consents obtained from unsuccessful applicants were only available from PDF application rounds from 2018 onwards.

## **2.4. Survey responses and other data**

### **2.4.1. PDF alumni survey response data, response rates and representativeness**

After data cleaning, 749 useable responses were obtained from alumni who had undertaken a PDF award. This included 17 who had undertaken a BARSEA following a PDF, who were asked to respond in relation to their PDF award (which was considered to be the more impactful for their career, due to its purpose and greater duration). These 749 responses reflected a response rate of 74% from the 1015 individuals who were targeted in the survey (i.e. for whom a current email address was known), or 60% of all known PDF alumni within scope (including those who were not contactable). A further 79 responses were obtained from BARSEA alumni, which are considered in a later section.

Comparative analysis of (PDF) fellowship start years provided by respondents in the survey with dates held in grant system data suggested that response rates were broadly similar across all periods of the scheme (in relation to contactable alumni, Table 2.1). The response rate for those who started a PDF prior to 1990, for example, was as high as 78%, although the number of contactable alumni from that early period was much smaller than for more recent periods. Slightly lower response rates were obtained for those starting an award from 2000 onwards, although these were still healthy at 70%. An overall response rate of 74% is considered exceptionally healthy for survey-based education or social research and the high number of responses enabled some analysis of respondents within particular sub-groups.

As an indication of representativeness, the confidence interval for a 95% confidence level for the overall response sample (749 responses, from 1015 targeted) was in the range of 1-2% depending on the result. This can be considered the size of the 'error bar' for particular results for the overall survey response sample, and is suggestive of very robust results overall, although confidence intervals for results from sub-groups within the sample were larger.

Another approach to consider representativeness is to compare key aspects of demographic profile of survey respondents with that of awardees, where known. This is reported on in the next chapter but was limited as an approach due to the available data. Demographic profile data has been collected over time through the grant management system but was only available in a form that could be disaggregated sufficiently since 2018. Nonetheless, based on the data available, the diversity profile of the response sample closely resembled that of all awardees in respect of characteristics including gender and disability, and there were respondents in all disciplinary categories. That comparison contributes to the view that the response sample was representative of the target alumni population.

Table 2.1 PDF alumni survey responses, by award start period

Alumni cohort	Survey responses	Contactable targets	Response rate
Before 1990	50	64	78%
1990-1999	162	210	77%
2000-2009	204	293	70%
2010 onwards	314	448	70%
<i>Total</i>	<i>749*</i>	<i>1015</i>	<i>74%</i>

\*A few respondents did not indicate their start year, hence numbers do not sum to the overall total

We chose to approach data analysis primarily by award scheme, and to produce certain results for PDF scheme respondents within broad periods of the scheme. These were defined based on award completion years, rather than start years, as the completion year data were slightly more complete and not all awards may have been of the same duration in practice. The three periods used for such analysis were awards completed before 2000 ( $N=182$ ), between 2000 and 2014 ( $N=334$ ) and in the last 10 years (since 2015,  $N=171$ ). In a few cases, results are presented for other periods or groups. This approach, primarily by scheme, was believed to produce the most meaningful results, rather than any derived across the entire response sample spanning the two schemes. However, results for particular period-based groups of PDF alumni should be regarded as illustrative rather than statistically representative, because of the smaller sub-sample sizes involved. The structure of this report also adopts that analytical strategy, i.e. presenting key results by scheme.

#### 2.4.2. Augmenting survey coverage

The Research Career Tracker project was conceived as a proof-of-concept study which was somewhat experimental, to test and devise a method to track careers and impacts as systematically as possible on a periodic basis. It was agreed that as part of this experimental approach, it could be valuable to include some activity which would augment the survey's coverage of PDF scheme alumni. As noted in section 2.2, online search activity of public data sources had been undertaken to seek current contact data for alumni for whom the Academy either held an incorrect or no email address. That process identified over 50 additional or updated emails that were incorporated into the survey invitation mailing, but a further 240 alumni remained 'unreachable' through the survey due to a lack of contact data (almost all of whom were PDF awardees, but including four BARSEA awardees).

A structured approach was adopted to search for current or other career data available about the 'missing' PDF alumni through public online sources, which could potentially augment the survey response data to obtain more complete coverage of PDF alumni. The Academy had undertaken a preliminary search exercise in 2023, but our approach was to search afresh for all of these PDF alumni in turn, other than those where pre-existing information suggested they had retired ( $N=18$ ). This was conducted initially through a name search using a major web search engine. This identified potential information sources for people with such a name, including LinkedIn records and/or other sources. Starting with the LinkedIn record, if one existed, these were checked to verify whether the individual was the PDF awardee sought. If so, the LinkedIn and other source data were retrieved and reviewed to harvest information about current employment and, where possible, prior employment steps following the PDF

award. Multiple sources were checked, where available, to confirm a match (with the PDF awardee sought) and to verify the age of the published information. If a LinkedIn profile was found but with no evidence of update within the last three years, and no other source found that could 'triangulate' the information, career data from that profile were not used. To make the process reasonably efficient, a maximum of 10 minutes of search and retrieval time was allowed for each targeted individual.

In practice, of 218 PDF alumni sought in this way, the Academy had shared some post-award information about 198, including some links to LinkedIn profiles, although for around one third that information was either old and/or of uncertain age (i.e. from before its 2023 search exercise). Our new searches identified new information or verified pre-existing information about 140 of the 198 targeted individuals (including two who were now deceased), while we were unable to find any confirmatory data nor confirm the age of pre-existing information about a further 18 individuals. We failed to find any valid information about the remaining 59 alumni. Sufficiently consistent career data was obtained from 132 of the 140 verified or updated cases to augment certain survey analyses, described in the sections that follow.

#### *2.4.3. BARSEA alumni survey responses and representativeness*

In total, 96 survey respondents had obtained a BARSEA, including 17 who had also undertaken a PDF. The latter responded largely to questions in relation to their PDF award, as requested. Thus, the BARSEA survey response sample for analysis comprised 79 responses from 129 'BARSEA-only' alumni with known contacts (a 61% response rate) containing BARSEA-specific questions and a further 17 which contained some relevant information. In total the 96 responses comprised a 64% response rate from the 151 alumni in scope (including those who had undertaken a PDF award too), while a further four alumni were unreachable due to a lack of current contact data.

As a broad indication of representativeness, the confidence interval for a 95% confidence level for such a sample (79 responses, from 129 targeted) was in the range of 4-7% depending on the result. Thus, the 'error bar' for BARSEA results was larger than for PDF responses, due to the much smaller sizes of both the BARSEA alumni population and the survey response sample. In practice, this meant that variances between results for the aggregate BARSEA respondent population that differed by less than about five percentage points were unlikely to be statistically significant, and many results should be considered as indicative rather than representative.

With this small response sample, but also the compact period during which these awards took place (2015-2019), analysis of results was undertaken almost exclusively for the entire BARSEA response sample, not for different sub-groups within it.

## Part B – British Academy Postdoctoral Fellowships

### 3. PDF alumni career tracking

#### 3.1. The PDF scheme

The British Academy's Postdoctoral Fellowship (PDF) is targeted at early-career researchers in SHAPE disciplines, with around 45 awards made currently per year and a cumulative total of 1470 awards since initiation of the scheme in 1986. Funded by the UK Government (now the Department for Science, Innovation & Technology, DSIT), the award contributes up to 80% of the recipient's salary costs, designed to free them from most teaching and administrative responsibilities so that they can focus on research that will enhance their prospects of gaining a permanent academic post and establishing themselves as a researcher or research leader.

The PDF offers early-career researchers time and support which together present an opportunity to strengthen their experience of research and teaching in an academic environment, thereby enhancing their prospects of obtaining a permanent academic post. The primary emphasis is on the completion of a significant piece of publishable research, and the integration of the award holder into the community of established scholars within their field, i.e. progression towards a position of research or academic leadership. The award provides three years of support and funding.

To be eligible for a PDF, researchers need to be at an early-career stage, specifically that they must apply within three years of the date of their successful doctoral viva examination. The applicant must already to be of postdoctoral status by the time the Academy's Research Awards Committee meets to select awardees. The applicant must be a researcher from the humanities and social sciences and be hosted at a university, higher education institution or recognised research organisation in the UK. British citizens and European Economic Area nationals are eligible, regardless of where the doctorate was obtained, as well as applicants of any nationality who have a doctorate from a UK university (although there is limited flexibility beyond this, on exception).

#### 3.2. PDF survey respondent demographics

The 749 survey responses from PDF alumni within scope were a large enough sample to report key personal demographic data, summarised in Table 3.1 for the entire response sample. Profile analysis was also undertaken in more detail for cohorts comprising different years of the scheme; this was based on reported start years (unlike the analysis in other sections) to allow for the possibility of comparison with grant system records.

*Table 3.1 Selected aspects of demographic profile of PDF alumni respondents*

Characteristic	Responses	Proportion*
UK nationality	473	69%
Female	306	45%
Ethnic minority (of UK nationals)	50	11%
Disability (current)	61	9%

\*As percentage of number who provided a response to the relevant question

While these are proportions of survey respondents not of all awardees, these data provided some evidence that the PDF awardee population has diversified in some respects over time. While 35% of respondents with awards prior to 2000 were female, this had grown to 48% of those starting awards since 2010. Amongst the UK nationals, while only 5% of awardees prior to 2000 had an ethnic minority background, this group comprised 17% of UK awardees since 2010 (and 19% if all nationalities were included).

It was possible to compare the profile of survey respondents who started awards in 2018, 2019 and 2020 with demographic data derived from grant system records for those years. This was not possible for more recent years because the survey only targeted alumni, and more recent awardees had not yet completed their awards. That comparison revealed a good match between the profile of awardees and survey respondents in terms of gender (55% of awardees, 50% of survey respondents) and disability (8% of both), suggesting that the survey response sample was representative of all awardees in these respects. There was a less good match for ethnicity (16% of awardees, but 23% of respondents, reporting a minority background). However, it should be remembered that this analysis was only possible for this limited period of the scheme, which comprised only 7% of responses in the survey sample obtained.

As a further indication that the response sample encompassed a wide range of targeted PDF alumni, analysis of their reported award research disciplines showed respondents in all of the 22 disciplinary options listed in the survey, with the highest proportion being in history (18%).

Analysis of the nationality of respondents revealed that, overall, 69% were UK nationals, with the remainder from an EU nation (23%) or outside the EU (7%), with 1% preferring not to specify. While 86% of awardees prior to 2000 were of UK nationality, this proportion fell to 59% for those starting since 2010 (with 31% from Europe and 10% other nations), showing a more than doubling of the proportion of non-UK nationals obtaining awards. This could be regarded as an increase in the international diversity of awardees over time. The retrospective nature of this study (only alumni, who had completed awards) means that it offers no insight into any changes to nationality profile of awardees since the UK left the EU.

Overall, 91% of respondents undertook their award research on an entirely full-time basis, with 3% wholly part-time and 6% some of it part-time. Amongst awardees since 2010, 89% had been full-time throughout and again 3% wholly part-time, with a slightly higher proportion (8%) adopting full-time and part-time work at different periods in their award.

Another insight into awardee profile available through the survey results was a retrospective view on periods between doctorate and start of the award (i.e. length of prior postdoctoral experience), although this could have included career breaks. Analysis of these data – based on respondents' recollections of year of doctorate and year of award start – showed that this period ranged from zero (i.e. doctorate and award in the same year) to seven years, albeit with only 1% of cases over four years.<sup>9</sup> This gave a mean postdoctoral experience period of around 1.5 years. When this analysis was conducted for awards since 2010, the mean period was just under two years, with notably fewer awards given in the same year as the awardee completed their doctorate. This is some evidence to suggest that awards are going to those with slightly more experience, over time.

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<sup>9</sup> Four outlier cases were excluded, as it was thought these responses may have contained errors

The reported age at which alumni obtained their award ranged from 23 to 55 years<sup>10</sup> with a mean of just under 31 years of age (and median 30 years). Respondents obtaining awards since 2010 were slightly older than overall, with a mean of 32 years, median 31 years and no awards reported to have been made to individuals under 25 years of age.

### 3.3. Current employment

The ambitious scope of the Research Career Tracker survey – targeting alumni throughout the life of the PDF scheme since launch in the 1980s – inevitably meant that respondents encompassed a wide variety of career stages, from those who had just completed an award and were still early in their career to some who had retired ( $N=29$ ). Excluding the latter, 96% of respondents were mainly or wholly in employment and 3% mainly or wholly self-employed, with just over 1% not working (10 respondents, of whom six were unemployed). Thus, almost 99% of those we assume were of working age were in employment or self-employment when surveyed and, amongst these, 94% reported that they were currently research-active.

#### 3.3.1. Occupational sector

The large majority of survey respondents mainly or wholly employed or self-employed were currently working in academia/HE (almost 94%) with only 44 respondents (6.4%) stating other sectors.<sup>11</sup> Table 3.2 illustrates the sectors stated by three or more respondents, including certain sectors known to employ SHAPE researchers,<sup>12</sup> including Libraries/museums/archives and Creative and cultural. Respondents who selected 'Other' included individuals in seven other sector options offered in the survey.

*Table 3.2 PDF alumni respondents' sector of current work (respondents mainly or wholly employed or self-employed:  $N=704$ )*

Sector	Responses	Proportion
Academia/HE	660	93.6%
Government/public administration	10	1.4%
Education and training	7	1.0%
Media and publishing	5	0.7%
Libraries/museums/archives	4	0.6%
Creative and cultural	3	0.4%
Charity and development	3	0.4%
Other	12	1.7%

<sup>10</sup> Excluding two outlier cases

<sup>11</sup> Some response data were re-coded where a respondent stated an HE institution as their employer but did not select Academia/HE as their sector (Education and training had been intended to be outside HE)

<sup>12</sup> *A survey of SHAPE research careers*, The British Academy, 2024

<https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/publications/a-survey-of-shape-research-careers>



While female alumni comprised 45% of all working respondents, it was noteworthy that they made up a slightly higher proportion (56%) of those working outside academia/HE (with the caveat of the very small sample size). Viewed the other way around, 93% of currently working female survey respondents were in academia/HE and 95% of male respondents.

During preparatory work searching for contact data, it was evident that higher proportions of the 'missing' alumni, i.e. those not reached by the survey, were employed in sectors other than academia/HE than as shown in Table 3.2. This had been expected as our other career tracking studies revealed that individuals employed in academia/HE are more 'visible' in public data sources than those in other sectors. Employment sector results based purely on survey responses might therefore under-represent alumni working outside academia/HE. The high proportions of survey respondents reporting academia/HE as their current sector in such surveys could therefore reflect over-representation of this group in those the surveys reach.<sup>13</sup>

The data retrieved during search activities of public data sources described in section 2.4.2 were provided strong evidence of the under-representation of alumni working outside academia/HE amongst the survey responses. Of the 132 alumni outside the survey for whom we found sufficient recent career data and who were currently working, over half (57%) were working in sectors other than academia/HE (43%), see Table 3.3, a very different balance from the survey result (which suggested only 6% were in other sectors, as shown in Table 3.2). These two sets of results were aggregated in the final columns of the Table, suggesting that a better picture could be that just over 85% of alumni were working in academia/HE, while the remaining 14% worked in a variety of sectors.

*Table 3.3 Sector of current work of PDF alumni identified outside the survey, from survey responses and total results when aggregated*

	Survey results		Wider search results		Aggregated results	
Sector	N	%	N	%	N	%
Academia/HE	660	93.6%	57	43.2%	717	85.8%
Education and training	7	1.0%	16	12.1%	23	2.8%
Government/public administration	10	1.4%	8	6.1%	18	2.2%
Libraries/museums/archives	4	0.6%	11	8.3%	15	1.8%
Media and publishing	5	0.7%	8	6.1%	13	1.6%
Creative and cultural	3	0.4%	7	5.3%	10	1.2%
Charity and development	3	0.4%	7	5.3%	10	1.2%
Health and social care	0	-	5	3.8%	5	0.6%
Legal services	0	-	4	3.0%	4	0.5%
Accounting/business services	0	-	4	3.0%	4	0.5%
Other	12	1.7%	5	3.8%	17	2.0%
<i>Total</i>	<i>704</i>		<i>132</i>		<i>836</i>	

<sup>13</sup> Royal Society Early-career Research Fellowships Career Pathway Tracker 2024, CRAC, (in press)

Inclusion of results from the wider search activity identified alumni in sectors within which there were no survey respondents, hence giving a fuller picture of the range of careers entered. The resultant range of sectors emerging was closer to that recorded for employment of SHAPE research graduates elsewhere, with clusters of alumni in education, the 'GLAM' sector,<sup>14</sup> creative and cultural enterprises, and the media, as well as in the third and public sectors.<sup>15</sup>

### 3.3.2. Employers

Survey respondents working in academia/HE in the UK ( $N=497$ ) together reported a total of 73 different HE institutions<sup>16</sup> as their employers. In terms of type of UK HE institution, 77% were currently working in Russell Group member universities (all of which were represented), 22% in other types of university and 2% in specialist HE institutions. The  $N=153$  respondents in academia/HE outside the UK reported employment in a further 124 different institutions.

Almost half the survey respondents who worked in other sectors were self-employed, and this was the case for just under one third of the additional alumni based on public data sources. Amongst the latter, those who were self-employed comprised many of the alumni classified as working in the media or publishing, and in creative and cultural occupations, while there were also examples of alumni working in consultancy roles in museums, libraries and, to a lesser extent, in education. The employers cited by alumni employed in other sectors comprised a wide range of public, international, third sector and private sector bodies. Among these were well-known establishments – including the British Museum, V&A, British Library and Sotheby's, and Parliament – as well as schools, charities and specialist research bodies, but very few alumni were working in private sector enterprises.

### 3.3.3. Location of work

In total, PDF alumni survey respondents were currently working in 31 different countries, albeit with by far the largest proportion (76%) in the UK (Table 3.4). When analysed by nationality, 89% of UK nationals were working in the UK, whilst this was the case for about half (49%) of those of other nationalities. This presumably reflects that many of other nationalities have returned home or moved to a third country at some point after their award in the UK. Amongst the 132 other alumni analysed using data from other sources, two thirds were working in the UK (68%) and one third abroad. Combining these two results produced an aggregate figure of 75% working in the UK.

Focusing purely on those working in academia/HE, 77% of survey respondents were working in the UK, and 54% of those identified using public data, producing an aggregated proportion of 75% in the UK. By nationality, 89% of UK nationals working in academia/HE responding to the survey were working in the UK, and just over half of those of other nationalities.

While the survey sub-sample of those working in other sectors was small, 61% of them were working in the UK. This sample was too small to analyse by both nationality and location. Amongst alumni outside the survey who were working in other sectors, 77% were in the UK, leading to an aggregated proportion of 71% in the UK. That suggests that, once the aggregated

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<sup>14</sup> Galleries, libraries, archives, museums

<sup>15</sup> A survey of SHAPE research careers, The British Academy, 2024

<https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/publications/a-survey-of-shape-research-careers>

<sup>16</sup> Aggregating those reporting a college at Oxford or Cambridge to those universities

results were obtained, the proportions of alumni working in the UK were similar whether they were in academia/HE or other sectors.

*Table 3.4 Location of current employment or self-employment of alumni, with sector and nationality group, for survey respondents and others*

	Survey respondents							Other data		
Sector	All			Academia/HE			Other sectors	All	Acad/HE	Other sectors
Nationality	All	UK	Non-UK	All	UK	Non-UK	All	All	All	All
Location										
UK	76%	89%	49%	77%	89%	52%	61%	68%	56%	77%
EU or EEA	13%	3%	32%	12%	3%	30%	25%	14%	23%	8%
RoW	11%	7%	19%	12%	7%	19%	14%	18%	21%	15%
<i>N</i>	704	440	199	657	420	178	44	132	57	75

Analysis of current work location for alumni in different periods of the scheme was also undertaken (Table 3.5). While these results did not present strong trends, they suggest that many alumni of all nationalities remain in the UK for at least some time after their award, with progressive mobility or return of alumni who are non-UK nationals to other countries – especially outside Europe – over time, and a slight outward migration of UK nationals too over a long period of time. When this analysis was applied solely to those currently working in academia/HE, almost identical results were obtained.

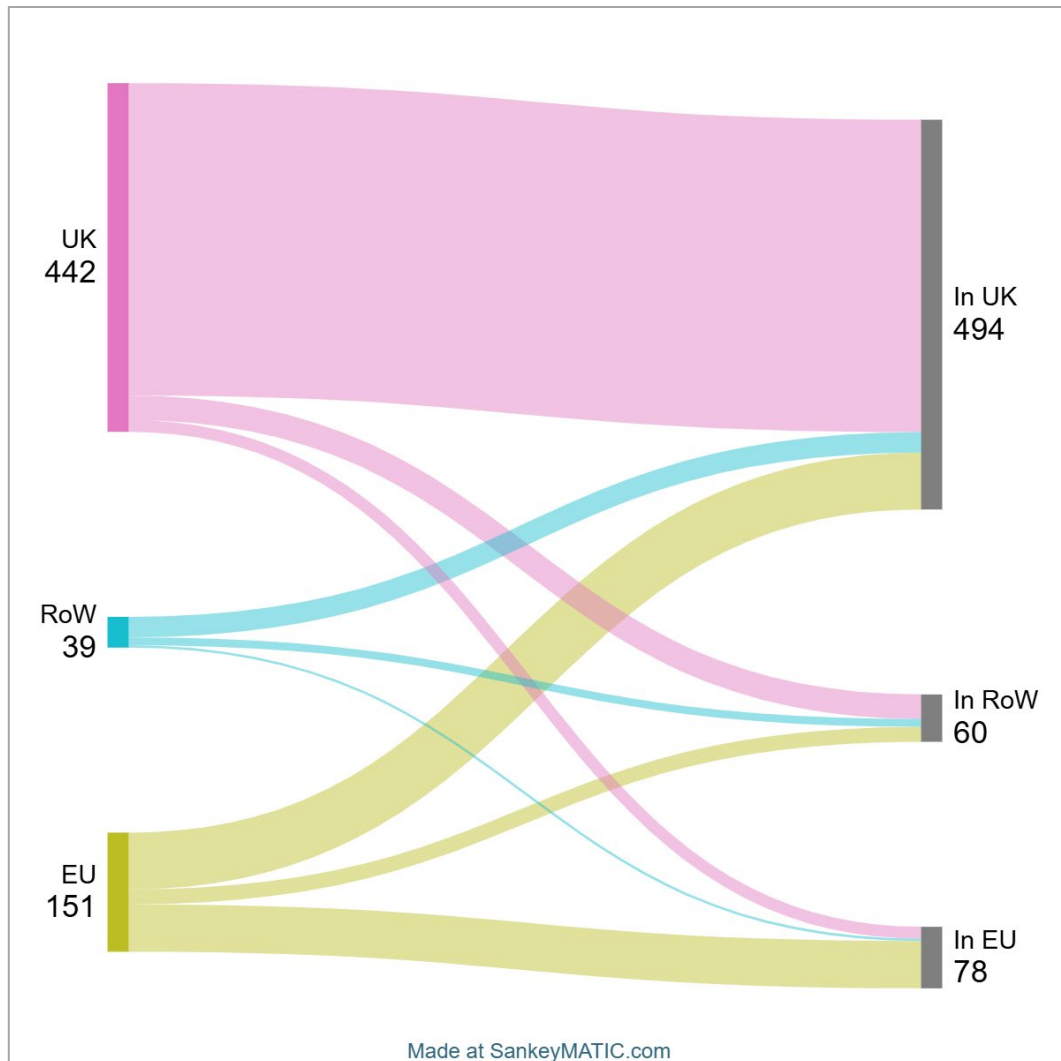
*Table 3.5 Location of current employment or self-employment of PDF alumni respondents, with period of scheme (based on award completion year) and nationality group*

	2015 onwards			2000-2014			Before 2000		
Nationality	All	UK	Non-UK	All	UK	Non-UK	All	UK	Non-UK
Location									
UK	75%	90%	54%	75%	91%	47%	79%	85%	-
EU or EEA	16%	4%	34%	11%	3%	26%	9%	4%	-
RoW	9%	6%	12%	14%	6%	26%	12%	10%	-
<i>N</i>	248	128	91	303	191	87	155	122	

Viewed overall, as 76% of all alumni were currently working in the UK, which was higher than the proportion of all alumni who were UK nationals (69%), this could be taken as some evidence for the scheme having a net retention effect, i.e. contributing to retention of researchers in the UK, although this could be a correlative rather than causative linkage. The overall retention position is neatly illustrated using a Sankey diagram (Figure 3.1).

The same applied for recent alumni, amongst whom 75% were working in the UK but only 59% were UK nationals. If this is reflective of a retention effect of the scheme, it held for both UK and non-UK nationals. As the career data obtained for alumni outside the survey did not consistently include nationality, a similar analysis could not be applied to those alumni.

Figure 3.1 Sankey diagram showing PDF alumni respondent nationality (left-hand axis) and current employment location (right-hand axis)



Employment locations within the UK were simplest to analyse for those currently working in academia/HE ( $N=497$ ), revealing that there were PDF alumni working in universities in all four UK nations and every English region (Figure 3.2). 82% were currently working in England including 21% in London, 16% in the South East and a further 10% in the East of England, thus almost half in these three regions. This distribution could be compared with where these survey respondents had held their PDF awards. 87% had held their award at an institution in England, based on grant system data. When considered regionally, 24% of survey respondents had held their awards at London institutions, 26% in the South East and 17% in the East of England (i.e. two thirds of all alumni respondents in these three English regions). This comparison suggested that the pattern of current employment locations of PDF alumni respondents was a wider distribution across the UK than the locations at which they had held their awards.

Figure 3.2 Location of university for PDF alumni respondents working in UK academia/HE: current employer (N=500) and where award was hosted (N=584)

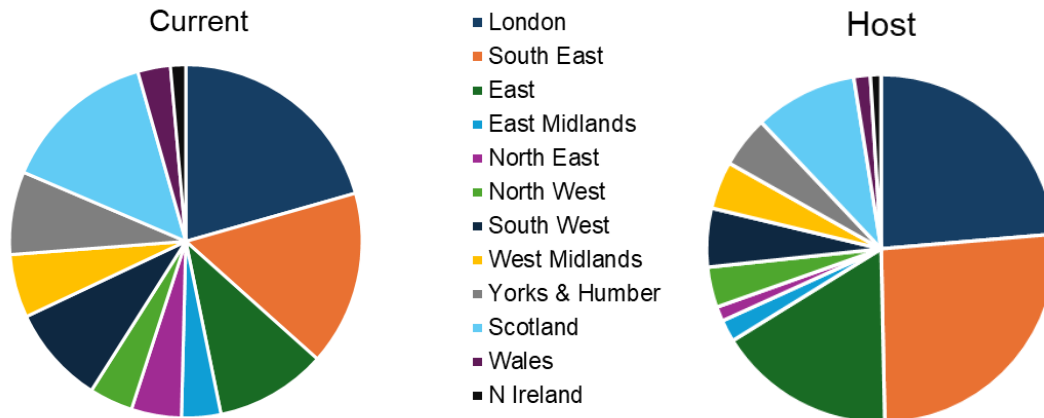


Table 3.6 Type of university for PDF alumni respondents working in UK academia/HE: current employer and where award hosted

	Current employment	Award host
Golden Triangle	30%	49%
Russell Group*	76%	86%
Post-92 institution	6%	1%
Other university	16%	9%
Specialist institution	2%	3%
<i>N</i>	495	580

\*Includes Golden Triangle institutions

When analysed by type of UK institution (Table 3.6), just over three quarters were now working at a Russell Group member institution (including 30% at a so-called Golden Triangle institution within this group) and the remaining 24% in other types of institution. However, 86% of them had held their award at a Russell Group institution (including 49% at Golden Triangle), with 10% at other types of university and 3% in specialist institutions (Table 3.6). In parallel with their geographical location, this suggests that PDF alumni were now more widely dispersed in terms of institution than was the case when they held their awards (awards were more concentrated in a narrower range of institutions).

Further analysis showed that 150 respondents were currently employed at the same institution at which they had undertaken their PDF award, which was 38% of those now working in UK academia/HE, or 28% of all respondents (for whom the award host institution was known).

### 3.3.4. Occupations

For alumni respondents who were employed within academia/HE, who were by far the largest sub-group, HESA's current academic contract level categorisation<sup>17</sup> was applied to the job titles that they gave in the survey. Table 3.7 summarises the levels relevant here, with descriptions and example roles, plus an abbreviated descriptor used in the charts that follow (to assist interpretation). The classification guidance suggests that research fellows (which presumably include staff currently holding a PDF) should be recorded at Level K.

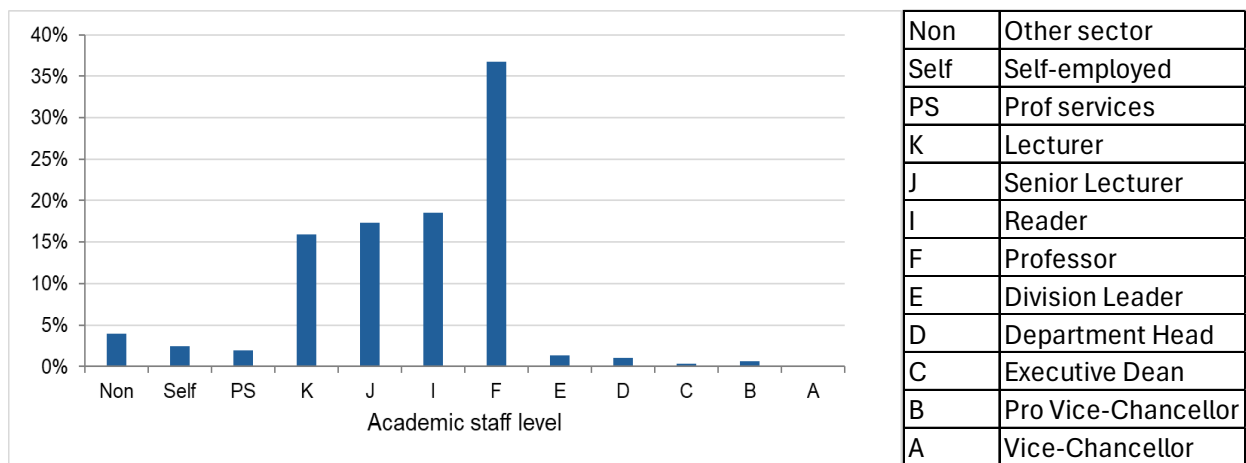
*Table 3.7 HESA academic staff contract level categorisation*

Level	Description	Example job title or descriptor	Abbreviated descriptor in charts
A	Head of institution	Vice-Chancellor	Vice Chancellor
B	Highest level of manager reporting to Head of institution	Deputy/Pro Vice-Chancellor	Pro Vice Chancellor
C	Head/Director of major academic area; Director of function/s	Executive Dean; Dean, Head of College; Finance Director; Director of Research	Executive Dean
D	Head of an academic centre	Head of Department; Associate Dean; Director	Department Head
E	Head of small centre; senior function head	Director; Division Leader; Head of Human Resources	Division Leader
F	Professor; function head	Professor; Functional Manager	Professor
I	Senior academic lead	Associate Professor; Reader; Principal Lecturer; Principal Research Fellow	Reader
J	Senior academic staff	Assistant Professor; Senior Lecturer; Senior Research Fellow	Senior Lecturer
K	Academic staff	Subject Lecturer; Postdoctoral Research Fellow; Research Fellow; Research Associate	Research Fellow

On this basis, the levels of current employment positions of PDF alumni survey respondents are illustrated in Figure 3.3. This shows that the most common current job level was that of Professor (Level F), for 37% of respondents (and 40% of those in academia/HE), while 40% of respondents had a current position at this level or higher (which was 44% of those currently in academia/HE). If the PDF position is considered as Level K, then 83% of the respondents currently working in academia/HE had progressed to a higher level at the time of the survey. It should be noted that this analysis excludes those who had retired, some of whom also had reached very senior positions (known from other sources of data).

<sup>17</sup> See Appendix 1 of this report. Higher Education Statistics Agency:  
[https://www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c23025/combined\\_levels](https://www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c23025/combined_levels)

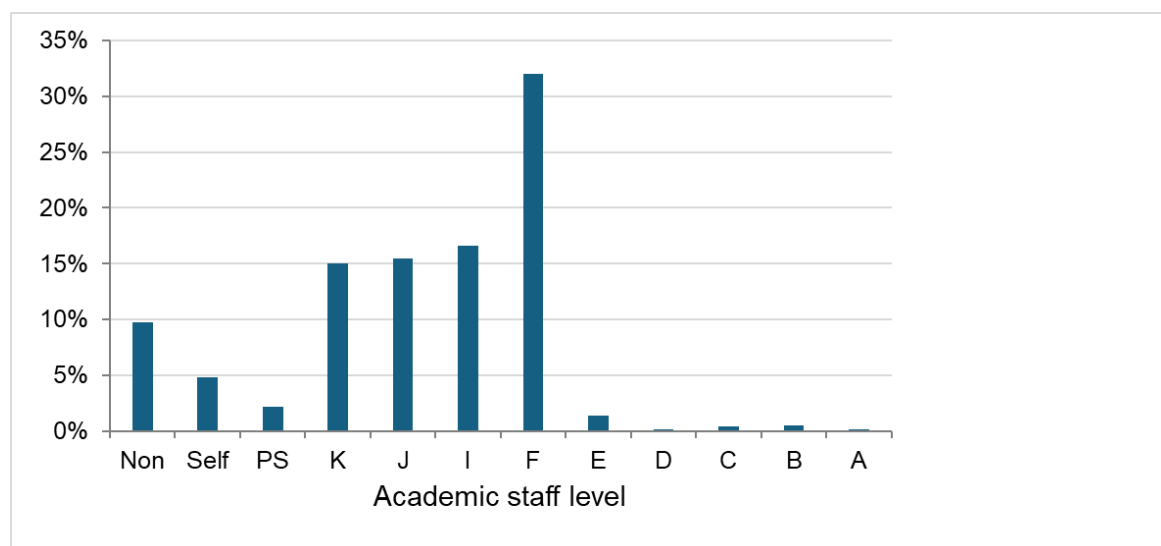
Figure 3.3 Level of current employment position of PDF alumni respondents (N=700)



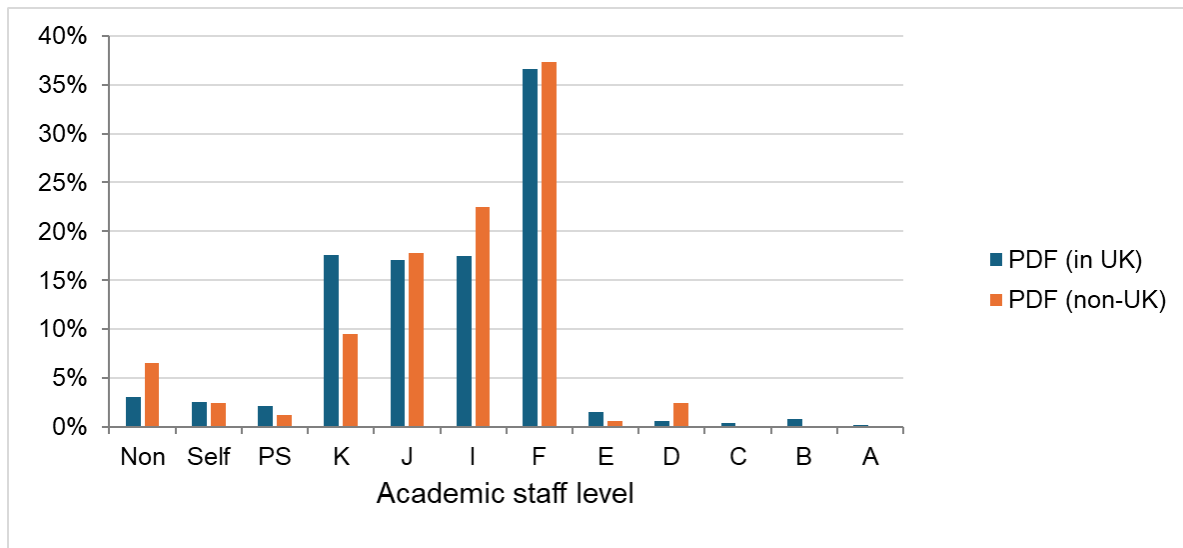
With such a large sample of respondents currently working in academia/HE, it was considered that the survey data alone were sufficiently representative of employment positions within academia/HE, and more detailed analysis of these positions and progression in later sections was on this basis, rather than attempting also to include additional alumni using results from public data sources.

However, we present one similar chart (Figure 3.4) which contains the aggregated results from survey respondents (i.e. as used in Figure 3.3) and from further alumni outside the survey's reach but with career data from public sources. While this chart superficially has much similarity to Figure 3.3, closer examination shows the higher proportion of alumni working outside academia/HE (15%) when the additional results from public data sources were included (see Table 3.3), than based on the survey alone (6%).

Figure 3.4 Level of current employment position of PDF alumni including both survey respondents and others (N=832)



**Figure 3.5** Level of current employment position of PDF alumni respondents with location of employment (in UK: N=529; non-UK: N=169)



Based on analysis of survey respondents, Figure 3.5 shows job levels for PDF alumni currently working in the UK and outside the UK were broadly very similar. It is unclear whether the lower proportion working at Level K outside the UK was a significant progression difference or simply related to inconsistency in the use of job titles at this level. The apparent differences at Level D and for non-academic roles were based on very small groups, and may not be significant (particularly noting the under-representation of non-academic roles in the survey results). However, bearing in mind the overall similarity, the more detailed analysis of academic-focused progression and related measures of achievement of some scheme impacts that follows ignores geographic location (as this maximised sub-group sizes).

**Figure 3.6** Level of current employment position of PDF alumni respondents, with grouped award completion year (prior to 2000: N=155; 2000-2014: N=299; 2015 onwards: N=246)

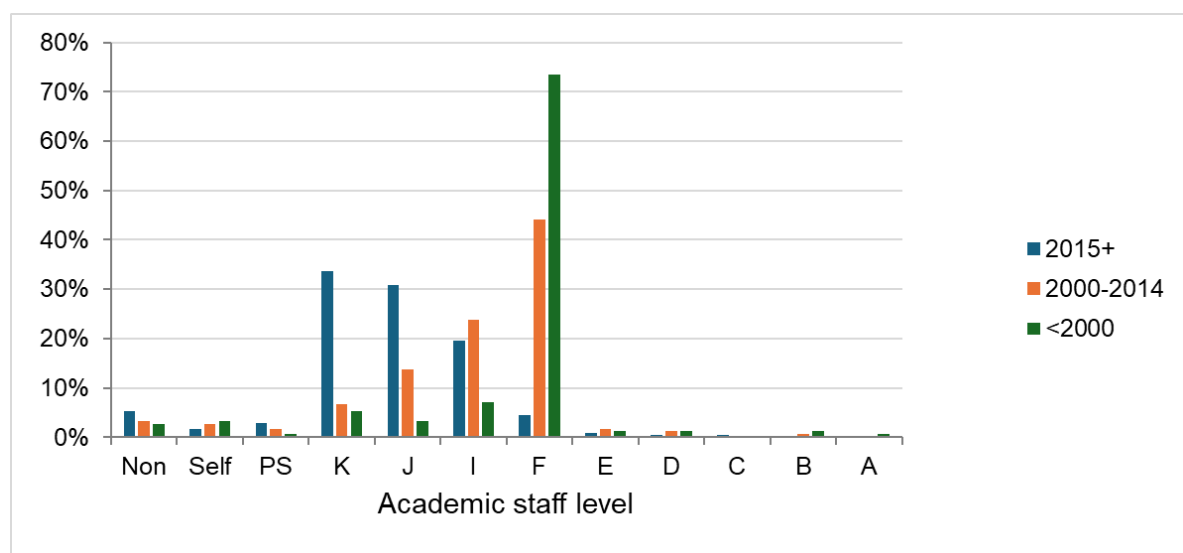




Figure 3.6 shows these results split by period of the scheme, which clearly illustrates progression in job levels with time. Amongst the most recently completing alumni (since 2015), the majority of respondents were in Level K or J posts when surveyed (with over 30% at each of these levels) while only 5% were at Professor level (F). On the other hand, amongst those who completed their award prior to 2000, almost three quarters were now at Professor level (and 83% of those currently in academic careers were at this level or higher).

It is also worth noting that the proportion reporting employment in non-academic sectors was higher for the most recent group (at just over 5%, double the proportion amongst the earliest alumni). This could reflect progressively greater under-representation of these alumni within the response sample in earlier periods, as more early alumni were “missing” and not reached by the survey, and/or it could reflect lower proportions of recent alumni progressing into academic careers, than the case for earlier periods.

*Figure 3.7 Proportions of PDF alumni respondents currently in academic career with posts at key progression levels, with period of award completion (N=382)*

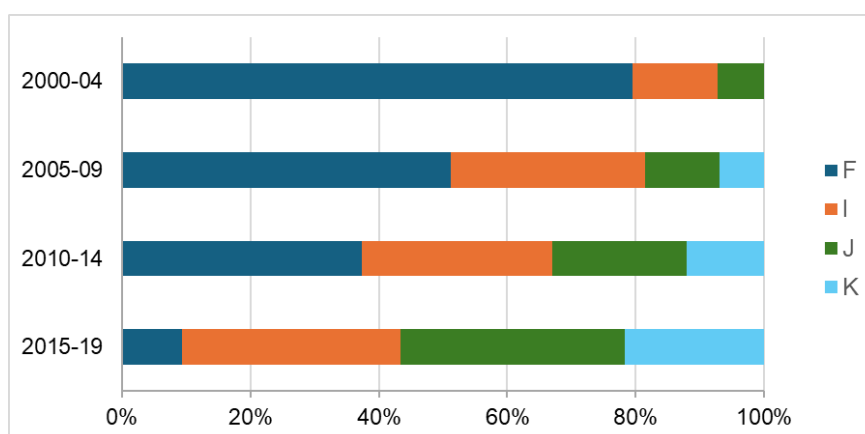


Figure 3.7 neatly shows this progression for solely those currently in academic careers, using a more granular view of award completion periods. Amongst this (large) sub-sample, almost 80% of alumni completing awards prior to 2000 were at Professor level, while this was the case for only around one in 10 of those completing an award since 2015.

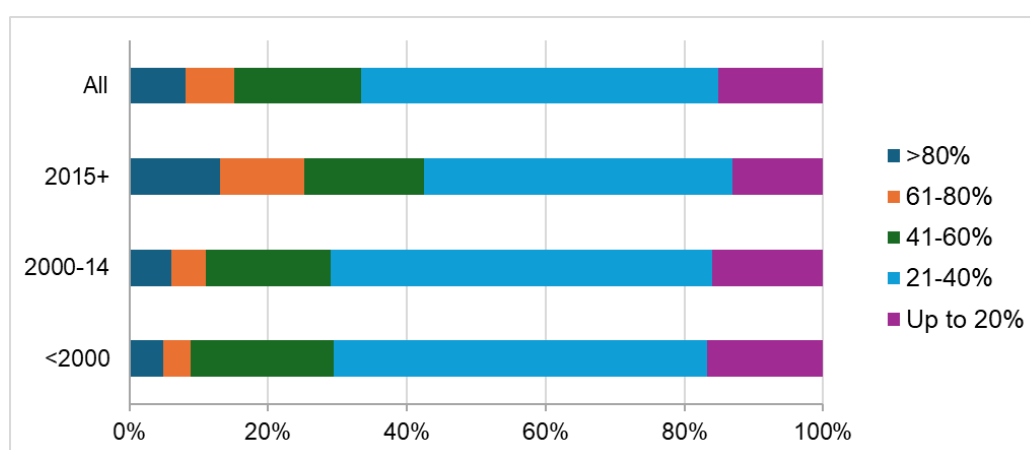
Turning now to those currently working outside academia/HE, interestingly almost two thirds (N=28) of the 44 survey respondents in those other sectors reported that they were currently research-active, including several of those who were self-employed. Unfortunately career data retrieved from public sources for alumni outside the survey did not reliably demonstrate whether such alumni were research-active and therefore was not directly comparable in this respect. However, analysis of the job titles stated in both survey responses and the wider data revealed that around one quarter of alumni outside academia/HE were in research or research leader roles, with about the same proportion in other technical roles (such as curator) or technical leadership roles (such as head of a collection), while there were somewhat smaller proportions in other managerial or educational roles, and the remainder in a very wide variety of types of role, some with no connection to research or their disciplinary background.

### 3.3.5. Research relevance of current employment

As stated earlier, 94% of all currently working PDF alumni survey respondents reported that they were research active, comprising 97% of those in academia/HE and nearly half of the small number currently working outside academia/HE.

Amongst those in academia/HE, 88% had a research and teaching contract, 7% a research-only contract and 2% a teaching-only contract (while a further 3% had other types of contract, including some in senior managerial positions). This balance was slightly different for recent alumni, with 13% of those completing awards since 2015 having a research-only contract (which was the case for only 4% in other periods) and 80% having a research and teaching contract (which over 90% of others currently had).

*Figure 3.8 Proportion of working time dedicated to research: research-active PDF alumni respondents in academia/HE, by grouped completion year (N=635)*



The survey also asked research-active respondents to report the average proportion of their working time spent on research. This showed the most common extent to be 21-40% (based on ranges they could select), with only 8% working on research more than 80% of their time, while for 15% it was 20% or less of their time. Amongst the very small sample outside academia, the pattern was broadly similar. When these results were analysed with period of the scheme, the differences were perhaps surprisingly slight (Figure 3.8), although there was evidence to suggest that somewhat more of the recent alumni were able to spend more than 40% of their time on research. Within this recent group, the proportion who were essentially only doing research (i.e. >80% of their time) was twice as large as in the earlier alumni groups, albeit it was still only one in eight of these respondents.

### 3.3.6. Secondary roles

Respondents were also asked if they had another position from which they obtained significant earnings, in addition to their main role (which was the basis for the results and analysis in this chapter). Around one in twenty (N=32) of those mainly employed in academia/HE reported that they had an additional remunerated position (excluding those who listed additional roles within the same institution). Secondary roles were most commonly academic or research posts at other academic/HE institutions, but small numbers had external consultancy or leadership

roles ( $N=5$ ) in organisations in other sectors or paid writing or editing roles ( $N=6$ ). Remunerated secondary positions appeared to be more popular amongst the admittedly small sample of respondents working principally in other sectors, of whom around one quarter reported such a secondary role. About half of these were partial or visiting academic positions, while the others included consultancy roles and directorships.

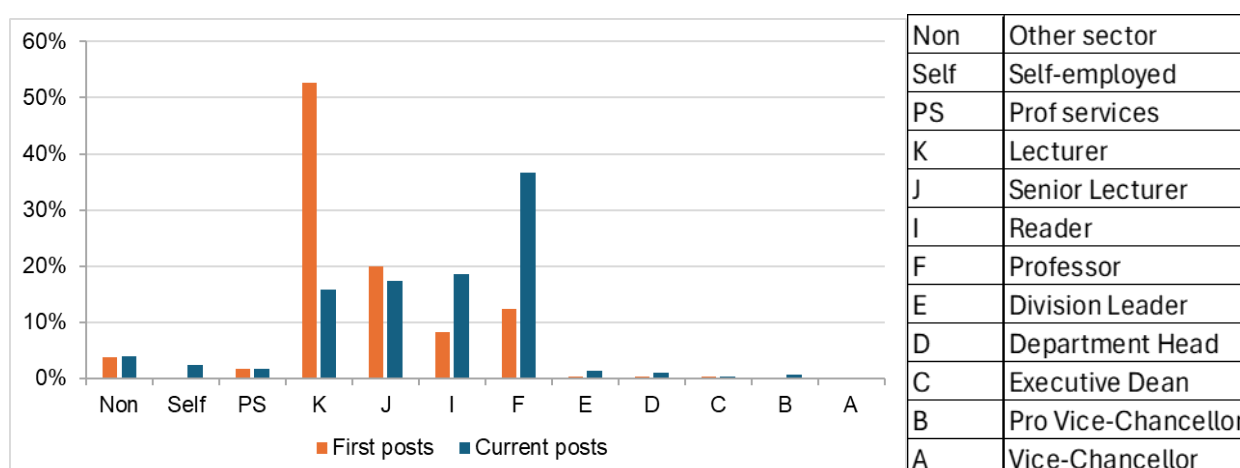
### 3.4. First career positions after award

The career positions that alumni took up after completing their award were of interest as part of tracking their careers but also as a potential impact indicator (considered in the next chapter). Analysis of survey respondents' first positions post-award is shown in Figure 3.9. Just over half obtained a Level K academic position (such as Lecturer or Research Fellow), although a further 40% achieved a more senior post – 20% at Level J, 8% at Level I and 12% at Level F (i.e. Professor). Only around 5% of survey respondents entered a job outside academia/HE immediately after their award.

Comparable data for alumni outside the reach of the survey (from public data sources) was limited, as it could only be drawn where a detailed career history was available in a profile or biography. Such sources did not provide sufficient data for alumni outside the survey to be included in the analysis of first positions post-award.

The levels of first jobs obtained were quite markedly different from current positions, with both shown in Figure 3.9 for comparison. This clearly illustrates the extensive career progression overall achieved by the alumni since their first post-award positions.

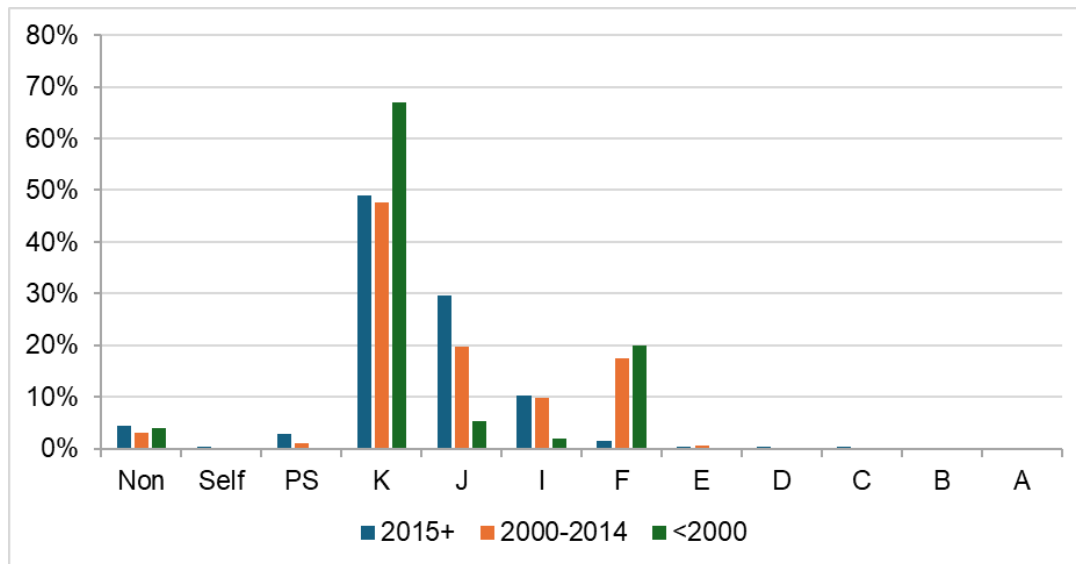
*Figure 3.9 PDF alumni respondents' level of first position following completion of award ( $N=686$ ), with current positions for comparison*



When this analysis was undertaken by period of award completion, a somewhat complex pattern was obtained (Figure 3.10). The chart suggests a number of trends. First, Level K positions have consistently been the most commonly achieved level immediately after award, in all three periods considered. Second, there has been a marked decline in the proportion of alumni gaining a first post at Professor level, with time. For example, while nearly 20% of those completing awards prior to 2015 immediately gained a Professor-level post, this had dropped to 2% for awardees completing since 2015. It is possible that this reflects greatly increased competition for such prestigious positions. On the other hand, the proportion of alumni who gained a Level J post straight after their award has risen, with time. These trends are somewhat

masked by the apparently bimodal distribution of first positions for the earliest awardees – of whom nearly two thirds gained a Level K post and one in five a Level F post (but with very few obtaining posts at levels in between these two).

*Figure 3.10 PDF alumni respondents' level of first position following completion of award, with grouped award completion year (alumni completions prior to 2000: N=151; 2000-2014: N=292; 2015 onwards: N=243)*



These results confirm that the vast majority of alumni survey respondents progressed into academic careers after their award, in positions in which they had the chance or requirement to undertake research, with only around 5% pursuing other career options at that time (although this was 8% of alumni completing awards since 2015). There was some evidence that a small number of alumni obtaining an academic position as their first post-award job subsequently entered another career sector; 7% of all alumni respondents were currently working in other sectors, slightly higher than the 5% who did so for their first job post-award. Notably, none reported entering self-employed immediately after their award. As the survey under-represented those working in other sectors, fuller evidence for this kind of career mobility and progression would require alternative data sources.

Further insights into whether and when a permanent academic position was achieved, and certain career-related yardsticks indicative of achieving research leadership, are addressed in the next chapter, about award impacts.

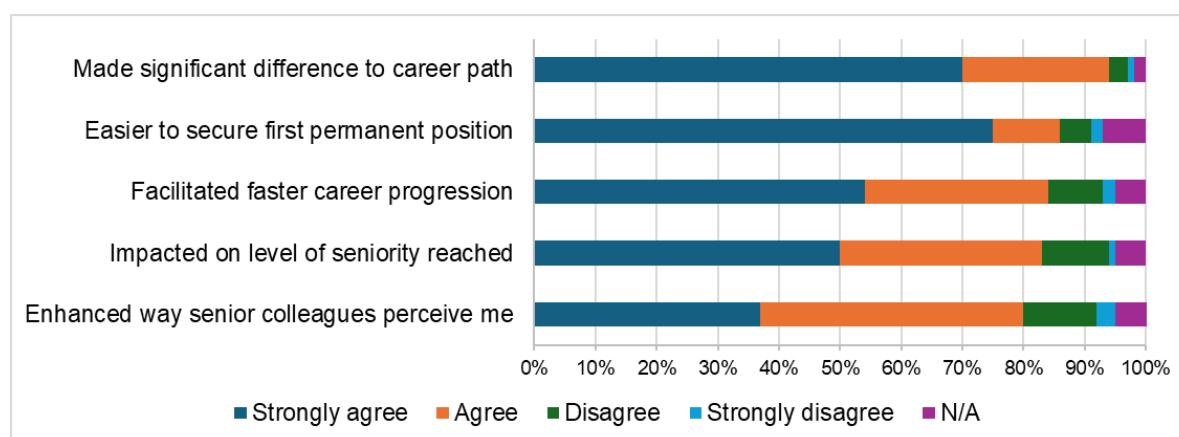
## 4. Impacts of the award

### 4.1. Perceptions of impact

#### 4.1.1. Impact upon career progression

PDF alumni survey respondents were asked how much they felt the award had impacted upon their career, in a variety of respects (Figure 4.1). Over 90% agreed it had made a significant difference to their career path (including 70% very strongly agreeing) and 85% that it had made it easier to secure their first permanent position afterwards (an aim of the award). Over 80% either agreed or strongly agreed that it had accelerated their progression, impacted on the level of seniority they had reached and enhanced how they were seen by colleagues, albeit with varying balances of strength of agreement.

*Figure 4.1 PDF alumni respondents' extent of agreement with a range of statements about impact of the fellowship upon their career (Ns=743-745)*



When results were analysed with period of award completion, very similar attitudes were reported by respondents in all the three broad periods (completions prior to 2000, 2000-2014, and 2015 onwards, respectively), although with some slight differences of emphasis. For example, slightly higher proportions of the most recent alumni group agreed – and more strongly – that their award had enhanced colleagues' perceptions, than those in the earliest group in particular. There were no substantive differences in these results by gender.

#### 4.1.2. Value to professional development

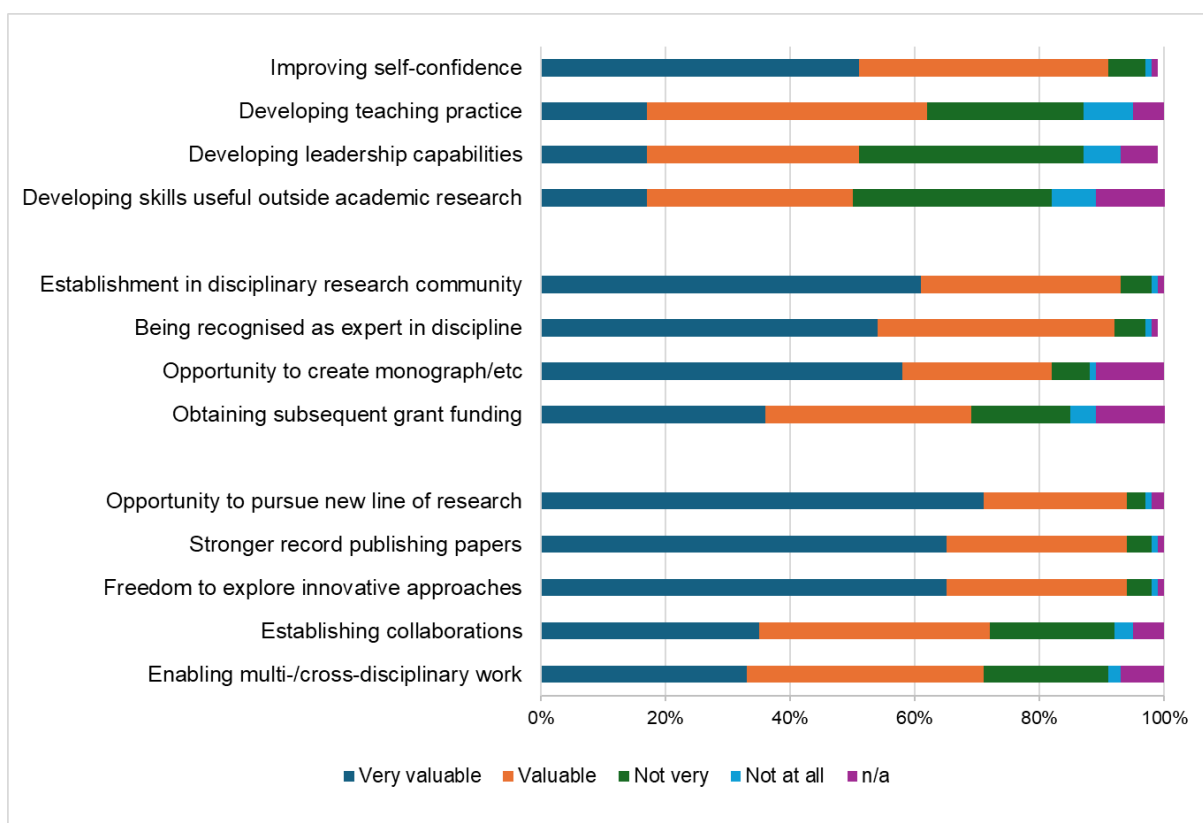
Figure 4.2 summarises respondents' perceptions of the extent of value of the award to different aspects of their professional development, within the themes of research, recognition or establishment, and skills/expertise. Very high proportions rated the fellowship as very valuable or valuable in offering opportunities to pursue a new line of research or explore innovative approaches, and to enhance their publication record of research papers (two thirds or more seeing it as very valuable in these ways). Approaching three quarters perceived its value in relation to setting up collaborations and enabling cross-disciplinary work. It should be noted that results are for all respondents, including those working outside academia/HE, so in some cases there were small proportions for whom the question was not applicable (n/a).

In terms of establishment or recognition, again, very high proportions appreciated the award's value in helping them become established in their disciplinary research community and recognised as an expert in their discipline, and three quarters in giving them the space to

create a monograph or similar output. Perceptions of value in relation to their subsequent funding applications were slightly less positive, but over two thirds saw this aspect as valuable.

When it came to expertise and skills, the greatest value was seen as improved self-confidence, stated by over 90% of respondents as valuable or very valuable, while over half also saw value in relation to developing leadership or teaching, or skills useful in other career contexts.

*Figure 4.2 PDF alumni respondents' perceived extent of value of fellowship on aspects of professional development (Ns=733-742)*



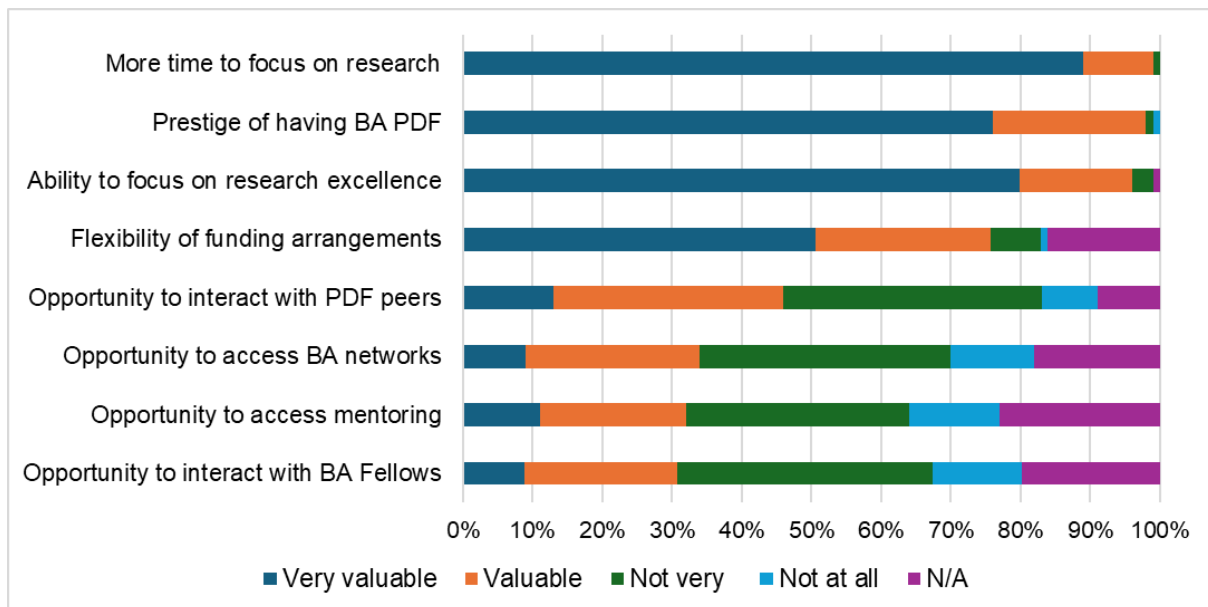
Again, these results were analysed by award completion period and by gender. For most aspects of development, results for those in different scheme periods were very similar, although perceptions of value were slightly higher for the most recent alumni in relation to establishing collaborations and enabling cross-disciplinary work. By gender, slightly higher proportions of female respondents placed greater value on the award in relation to improving self-confidence, establishing collaborations and developing leadership skills, than amongst their male counterparts. However, for most results there were no substantive differences in perceptions of value, only slight differences in emphasis.

#### 4.1.3. Different benefits of the fellowship

Respondents were also asked about the perceived value of a range of possible benefits of having a PDF award (Figure 4.3). Almost every respondent valued having more time to focus on research (almost 90% saying this was very valuable) as well as the prestige of having this BA award, while a very high proportion also saw great value in it enabling them to focus on the excellence of their research endeavour. The flexibility of the funding was seen as valuable by three quarters (and by around one half as very valuable). Other potential benefits were

reported in a less unequivocal way. For example, over half of respondents valued interactions with their PDF peer researchers as an award benefit, while smaller but significant minorities valued the opportunities the award gave to access mentoring, the BA's networks and interact with BA Fellows. Substantial minorities of respondents (around one quarter) rated those potential benefits as not applicable, which arguably could be regarded as negative ratings.

*Figure 4.3 PDF alumni respondents' perceived extent of value of different benefits of a PDF award (Ns=731-737)*



When analysis of these perceptions about award benefits was conducted by period of scheme and by gender, again, results were mostly extremely similar from alumni in different scheme periods, or male and female. However, a few more substantive differences did emerge, including that slightly higher proportions of recent alumni rated the funding's flexibility as valuable (85%, including 61% very valuable) compared with 75% (and 50% very valuable) overall. In addition, 43% of the most recent group valued the access to BA networks, compared with around 30% of earlier alumni, and a similar difference was seen in relation to value of access to mentoring afforded by the award. By gender, higher proportions of female respondents valued the award's flexibility (including 56% rating this as very valuable), its prestige and the access to PDF scheme peers, than of male respondents. However, most perceptions of aspects of award value were very similar irrespective of gender.

Overall, we considered these to be very positive perceptions of the impact and value of the award on PDF alumni respondents' career progression and professional development, including establishment as a researcher and disciplinary expert.

#### 4.1.4. Articulating career impacts

In addition to the perceptions reported above from closed questions, respondents were invited to summarise the difference that they felt the PDF had made to their career in a brief open response. *N*=633 did so and coding of these responses – some of which were quite detailed



and mentioned multiple impacts<sup>18</sup> – revealed the themes listed in Table 4.1 to be the most commonly mentioned. A range of other benefits were mentioned but less commonly; those that were cited by fewer than 10 respondents were not included in the Table.

*Table 4.1 Proportion of responses describing difference made to career by award (N=633)*

Theme	Proportion
Establishment in career	35%
Freedom/time enabling research	16%
Retention in academia/research	15%
Recognition or prestige	10%
Enabling research outputs	9%
Transformation in career/research	8%

Together, these responses provided powerful testimony of the pivotal difference that the award had made to the careers of respondents in a range of ways, including the following examples. It should be emphasised that these examples are only a tiny selection, offered to exemplify a range of types of responses, presented on the basis of the most common themes.

#### Establishment in career

*“The PDF made a huge difference to my career as a researcher in highly ranked universities. It enabled me to have a wealth of rich data for future publications. I have also used the data collected to strengthen my teaching and make it more practice focused. The PDF enabled me to focus on research at the beginning of my career as it freed me from teaching. It enabled me to develop my knowledge, my networks and leadership in my research area. It played a big role in enabling me to secure my first lectureship position at a highly ranked university.”*

*“It gave me the opportunity to expand and consolidate my research, allowing me to become more established in the research community in my area of study. This proved highly beneficial to my career, as it gave me a significant advantage when applying for academic positions.”*

*“My PDF was fundamental in enabling me to pursue an academic career. The opportunity to work in a new institution, to gain substantial independent teaching experience, and to be fully integrated into an academic department gave me the confidence to pursue an academic career in the knowledge that it was right for me and I was right for it. I had not emerged from my PhD with that confidence.”*

#### Freedom and time

*“My BA fellowship allowed me to devote extensive time to research, which has resulted in multiple publications, and to be more integrated in my research field at an international*

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<sup>18</sup> Coding was based on the first and/or most important impact mentioned, where several were cited



level. It has also given me the opportunity to devote extensive time, shortly after receiving my doctorate, to explore new research areas; this has been particularly beneficial, because it has prompted me to look in a different and more alerted way to my previous research.”

“In short, it gave me the time to convert my DPhil dissertation into a published monograph. It was thus essential to my academic career. In other words, without it, my career would almost certainly have been in a non-academic field.”

### Retention

“Without it I guess I wouldn’t have been able to go on with an academic career through a time where there were no academic jobs available. And I probably wouldn’t have secured the permanent job that I was able to secure at the end of it. It enabled me to move from a Classics department to a philosophy environment, and also to a new institution where I would have struggled to get noticed or accepted coming from a different university.”

“The PDF was the crucial bridge keeping me in academia between my doctorate and my permanent employment. To rank its impacts on my career, I would say: 1) time in academia; 2) time to research (produced first monograph); 3) enabled a full-time fellowship in [university] (increased prestige and recognition).”

“It stopped me going abroad to develop my career, and allowed me to concentrate on research while other peers of my age either took teaching jobs where teaching prevented them from researching or struggled to stay in academia. Because I had progressed my research more than my peers, the PDF also stood me in good stead to obtain a full-time academic post.”

“The PDF was instrumental in me being able to stay in the UK after the end of the Fellowship. Because of it, I was eligible to apply for (and obtained) a [...] visa which ... provided the crucial bridge [to] my Indefinite Leave to Remain application. Without this, it would have been basically impossible for me to stay in the UK. Since then I have had a further postdoctoral position which led to a successful AHRC research grant application for the project on which I am now a full-time Co-Investigator.”

### Recognition/prestige

“The prestige of the PDF was also crucial in allowing me to secure a permanent post. I had never been shortlisted for a permanent job before taking up the PDF. I was shortlisted for the first two lectureships I applied for as a BA PDF and was appointed to one of these.”

“It did a great deal for my self-confidence at a very difficult personal time. It also meant that colleagues / prospective colleagues take me more seriously (my academic CV and personal circumstances are atypical).”

“The association [with] the British Academy also changed how my profile is viewed by my peers and colleagues, as the PDF is a mark of excellence. This award also means other fellowships for outstanding scholars are easier for me to reach. As a woman from a minority background, the BA PDF has greatly improved my opportunities and my self-confidence, and I am immensely grateful to the BA.”

### Outputs

“It made it possible for me to publish a [...] book based on archival research which won a major British Academy prize and gained excellent reviews. That book would not have been

*written without the PDF because it's multidisciplinary, based on a wide range of non-digitised archives and not immediately relevant to a career in English. It also facilitated my teaching jobs at [universities]."*

*"It gave me the opportunity after completing my PhD to publish a monograph (and related papers) AND to develop a new large research project and do another period of long-term in-depth fieldwork, which became the basis of my second monograph (and related papers)."*

*"Without a BA PDF I would not have gained a place on the career ladder at all. It gave me the opportunity to turn my doctoral thesis into a monograph, to bring a second book near to completion, and to gain teaching experience in two disciplines. These things helped me in due course to gain the first lecturing position of my career."*

### Transformation

*"The BA Fellowship at [...] gave me the most amazing, wonderful opportunities to develop my research, teaching, networking and event organisation/grant application skills and experience for three years, some of the happiest times of my life. It was [...] immeasurably inspiring, liberating, and enriching for my development as a researcher and lecturer and on a personal level. I shall remain eternally grateful for having been granted this extreme privilege and for the excellent research posts, extensive publishing, networking, and other career opportunities this opened up for me subsequently."*

*"It was transformative. It freed me from having to constantly apply for jobs and having to maximise lines on my CV over the short term. It enabled me to pursue a new research programme and to dedicate myself to it completely and focusing on maximal depth and rigour. It also enabled me to be at the very best possible institution for the kind of research I was undertaking. I benefitted hugely from being able to immerse myself completely in research and the pay-off over the subsequent 10 years has been colossal in terms of the quality and quantity of research I was able to produce as compared with the relevant alternative ways my career could have gone."*

*"Enabled me to develop a new area of research which is the foundation of my academic career."*

## **4.2. Career impact metrics**

### *4.2.1. First career position after award*

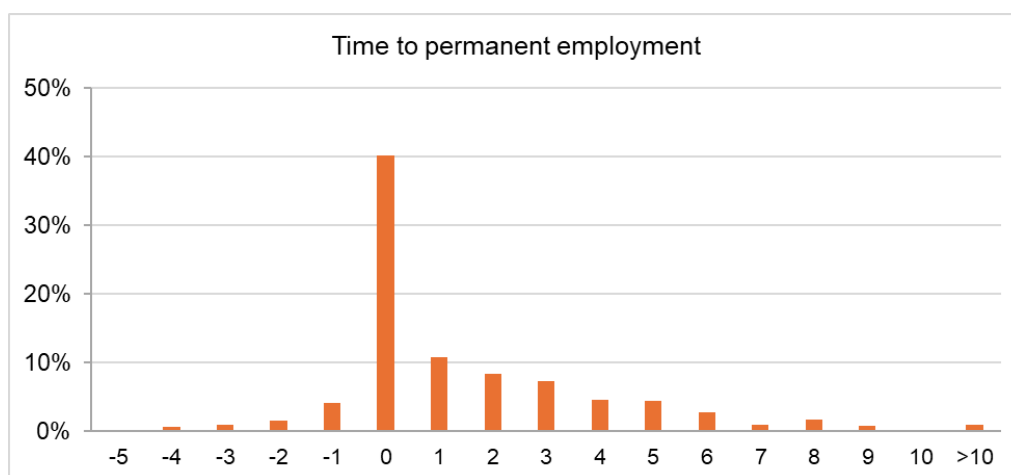
An aim of the PDF scheme is to enhance the prospects of awardees establishing themselves in an academic career. Understanding the first position they took up following completion of their award provided an indication of such establishment; results were shown in Figure 3.8 in the last chapter. Most commonly respondents achieved a Level K academic post (just over half, such as a Lecturer or Research Fellow), with a further 40% achieving a more senior post than this (20% at Level J, 8% at Level I and 12% at Level F, i.e. Professor). Figure 3.8 also shows current positions by level, demonstrating how many alumni have established academic careers since their award with the largest proportion, overall, now at Professor level. The analysis was also undertaken by period of award completion (see Figure 3.9), with results discussed in the previous chapter.

We do not suggest that a particular level of academic post should be regarded as a specific scheme impact measure, but these results demonstrate that the vast majority of awardees did progress into academic careers (within which they had the opportunity or requirement to undertake research), with only around 5% pursuing other directions (8% of recent awardees).

#### 4.2.2. Obtaining a permanent position

Another key aspect of establishment in an academic or research career is achievement of sustained employment, which in the context of this scheme was regarded as obtaining a permanent contract of employment or tenure. Analysis was applied to PDF alumni survey respondents currently in an academic career. The survey recorded the year in which this was achieved, which we compared with the year of award completion, producing the results in Figure 4.4. In all, 91% of PDF alumni now in academic careers had a permanent post (and 80% of alumni completing awards since 2015). 48% had obtained a permanent position by or in the year they completed their award, and the most common outcome was to achieve such a position that year, illustrated by the strong peak in the chart.<sup>19</sup>

*Figure 4.4 Time between year a permanent/tenured position was achieved and year of award completion, in years (PDF alumni respondents currently in academia: N=645)*



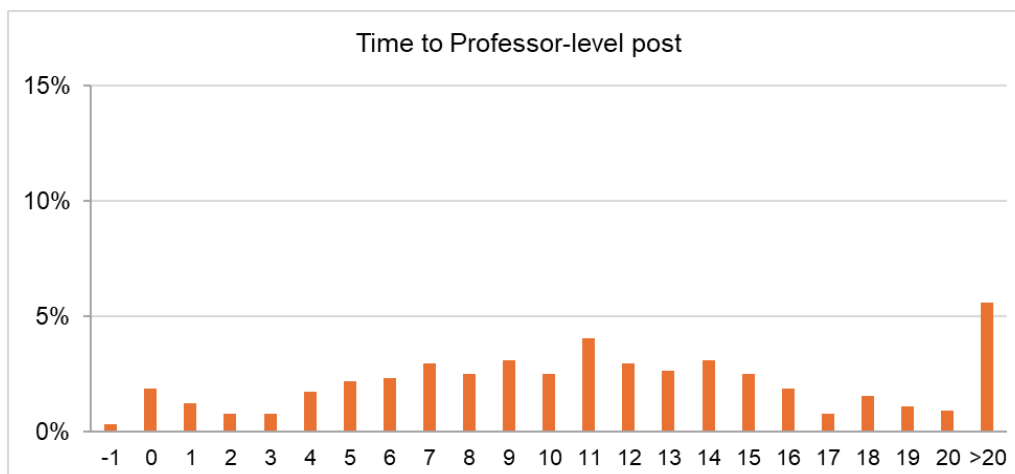
#### 4.2.3. Obtaining a senior position

While level of current employment positions was addressed in section 3.3.4, a more specific analysis was conducted of those currently in academic careers about whether and when they reached a Professorial position or equivalent. Such a senior position would be regarded as considerable success in progression in an academic career. This had been achieved by half of respondents currently in academia/HE ( $N=319$ , 50%) but this proportion differed strongly with period in the scheme. As noted in chapter 3, over 80% of such respondents completing their award prior to 2000 were now in a professor-level position, while this was 60% for respondents completing awards in the period 2000-2014, but only around 10% of those completing since 2015. Figure 4.5 shows the distribution of years between award completion and obtaining a professor-level post, expressed as a proportion of all respondents currently in

<sup>19</sup> This analysis was not applied to those in other sectors, where the use of fixed-term or permanent employment contracts is not comparable with academic employment (where it is regarded as a measure of progression).

academic positions. The chart shows that such progression took place at very different rates for different individuals. While it was quickly achieved by a small number of alumni, for most it had taken a significant number of years, with a broad peak at around 11-12 years (i.e. the time at which it was most common) and some taking over 20 years.

*Figure 4.5 Time in years between completion of award and gaining a professor-level position, in years (all PDF alumni respondents currently in academia: N=638)*



### 4.3. Counterfactual career outcome analysis

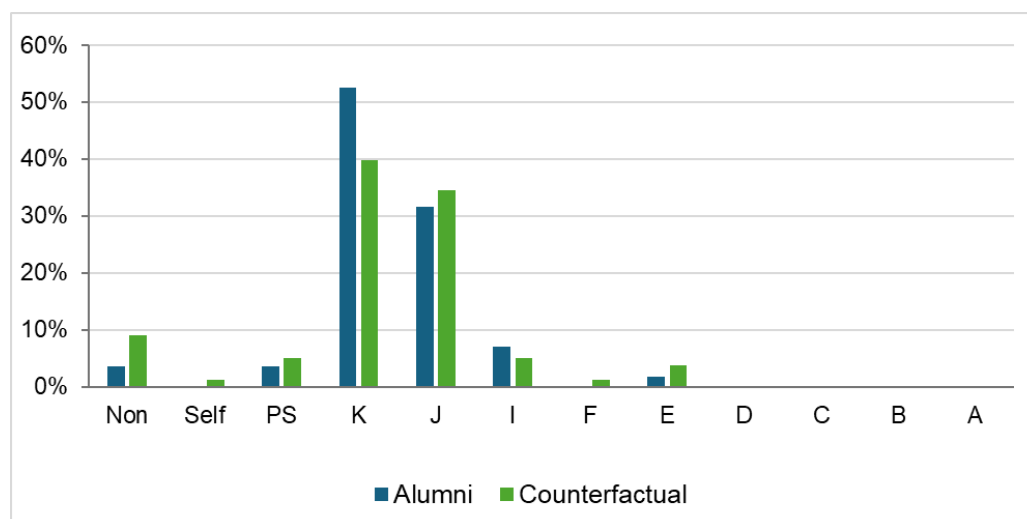
A potential counterfactual group in recent years of the scheme was available, namely applicants to the scheme whose application was successful in the first selection stage but was not selected for funding at the second stage. Their contact details had been retained along with consent for limited re-contact. These data were available for application rounds since 2018. It was hoped that if current career data could be collected for such unsuccessful applicants, it could be compared with data for contemporaneous awardees from the survey in a counterfactual comparison. In practice, as the survey covered alumni (not current awardees), this restricted such an exercise to applicants for awards starting in the years 2018 to 2020.

Limited career data was obtained from searches of public data sources for 78 out of 82 of these unsuccessful applicants, focusing on current or most recently known employment. This was compared with similar data drawn from the survey for awardees starting in the same years ( $N=57$ ). In terms of sector of employment, 90% of the counterfactual group were currently employed in academia/HE, compared with 95% of the awardees. 73% of the counterfactual group were currently working in the UK, while this was the case for 80% of the comparable awardee group. Figure 4.6 illustrates the current job levels for both groups, suggesting a broadly similar profile for those in academia/HE, although with a somewhat higher proportion of award alumni at the lowest level (K) compared with the proportion of the counterfactual group. The larger proportions of the counterfactual group in non-academic positions and other sectors are also evident in the chart.

The sample sizes were too small for any firm conclusions about award impact to be made at this point. However, there was some evidence of slightly more of the awardees being employed in academia/HE and in the UK, compared with the counterfactual. The different distributions of awardees and counterfactual in relation to job level could be affected by the period of data

available, however. Many awardees in this analysis will have spent the majority of the time since the year they started their award (2018-2020) undertaking the three-year fellowship itself, whereas those in the counterfactual group may have had more opportunity since their application year to seek other positions or progression, in the absence of the fellowship. A more revealing comparison might emerge a few more years into their respective careers (which could be possible in a future iteration of this tracking project).

*Figure 4.6 Level of position of current employment, for PDF alumni respondents who started awards in 2018-2020 (N=57) and contemporaneous unsuccessful applicants (N=78)*



For a short period, additional funding was available to the BA for the PDF scheme through the Global Talent Fund, enabling a greater number of awards starting in 2017. It was possible to identify both the 45 'regular' PDF awardees that year and the 40 additional 'GTF' awardees, in the survey responses. Analysis and comparison of their respective outcomes was undertaken (N=35 regular and N=26 GTF respondents). Such a comparison was hoped to be of interest, i.e. investigating possible effects of a temporary doubling of the scale of award-making.

All GTF respondents and all but one of that year's regular respondents were in full-time employment at the time of the survey, with similar proportions of each (about nine out of 10) employed in the UK. Similar proportions of both groups (again, nine in 10, roughly) worked in academia/HE. The profiles by current job level were slightly different; the regular group included more positions at higher levels of academic position than in the GTF group, and the GTF group were more tightly clustered by level with over half at Level K). On the other hand, the regular group contained three alumni in non-academic roles in universities, whereas there were none amongst the GTF alumni. With such small sub-samples, these differences in profile were not statistically significant so it is hard to draw firm conclusions. However, the evidence did not suggest that expansion of the scheme that year led to significantly weaker outcomes for the additional awardees and that the Academy's process for selecting awardees remained equally effective.

#### 4.4. Research-related metrics

A range of potential impact metrics relating to progression in a research career – and which could indicate establishment of research leadership – were also investigated through the

survey. This included asking respondents to indicate in which year they had first published a significant paper/publication as lead author, supervised a doctoral student to successful completion, recruited a researcher, and successfully obtained significant research funding (i.e. beyond the PDF award) – or if they had not yet achieved these measures.

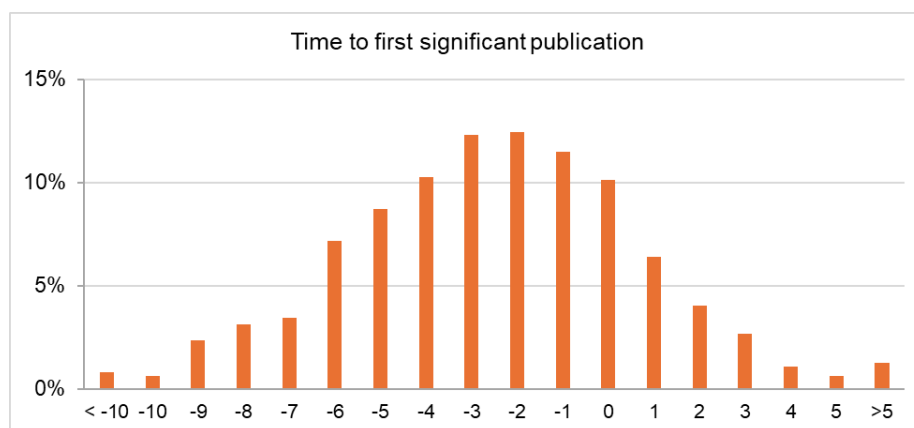
The proportions of PDF alumni currently working in academic careers who had achieved these metrics to date, and by the time they completed their award, are shown in Table 4.2, which also highlights similar results solely for those completing awards since 2015. The charts that follow illustrate when these measures were achieved in relation to the year of award completion; proportions are of PDF alumni respondents currently employed in academia/HE. As previously, the horizontal axis shows years from year of award completion (denoted as 0).

*Table 4.2 Proportions of respondents achieving measures of establishment of research leadership (all PDF alumni respondents: N=634; alumni completing 2015 onwards: N=226)*

	PDF alumni		PDF alumni since 2015	
	By year of completion	To date	By year of completion	To date
Published significant paper	83%	99%	90%	98%
Supervised doctorate to completion	3%	72%	6%	37%
Recruited research staff	11%	49%	14%	36%
Won significant research grant	18%	71%	23%	51%

This shows that, essentially, all respondents currently in an academic career had published a significant paper or other publication as lead author, 83% having done so by or in the year they completed their award. Figure 4.7 shows that most commonly this had occurred during their award (i.e. 2-3 years prior to completion) although around one third of respondents had done so prior to the start of their award.

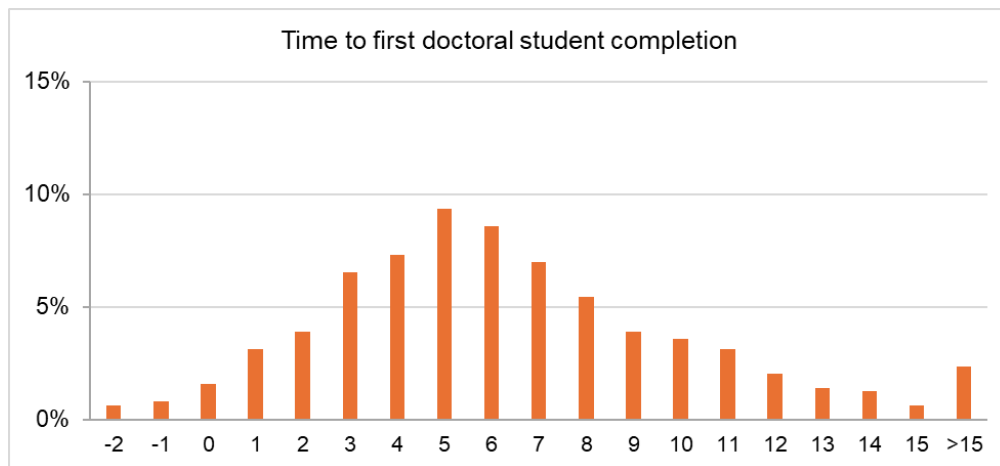
*Figure 4.7 Time in years between completion of award and year of first significant publication as lead author, in years (PDF alumni respondents currently in academia: N=649)*



By contrast, only 3% of these alumni had reached the point where one of their doctoral students had graduated successfully by the time they completed their award. Most commonly this first occurred around five years later (Figure 4.8). Although 72% of all alumni currently in academic careers had achieved this to date, this was lower amongst those completing their award since

2015 (37%), presumably reflecting that for many alumni it took several years before they recruited such a student and for them, in turn, to complete their doctoral research and thesis.

*Figure 4.8 Time in years between completion of award and year the first doctoral student they supervised defended thesis, in years (PDF alumni respondents currently in academia: N=643)*



A similar type of metric was recruitment of their first researcher within their team or with whom they worked. Just under half of all alumni respondents in academic careers had done this to date, and those who had not done so were spread across all periods of the scheme. Just 11% had done so by the year in which they completed their award. There was some evidence that recruiting such a research staff member was slightly more common and quicker amongst more recent alumni, with slightly more of them having done so during or around the time they completed their award. Figure 4.9 illustrates the timing of achievement of this metric, showing a very broad distribution with a slight peak around three years after completion.

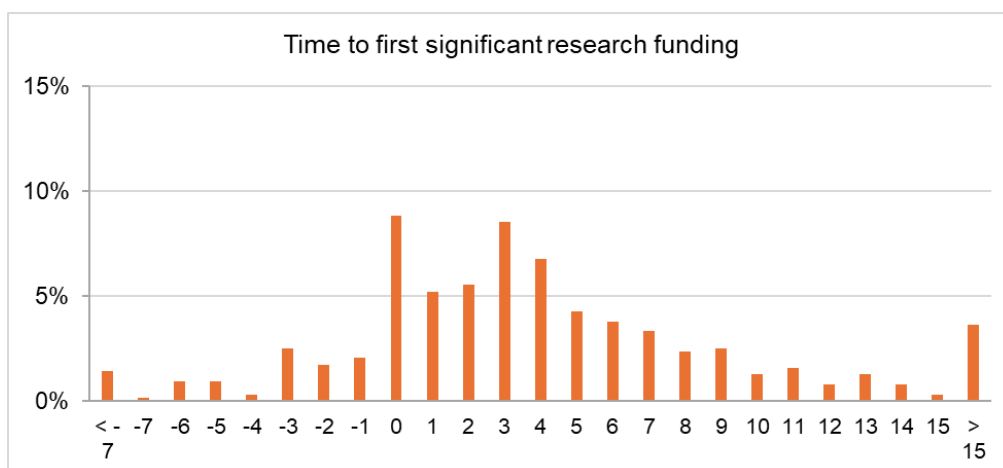
*Figure 4.9 Time between year completed award and year they first recruited a researcher (staff) to work with, in years (PDF alumni respondents currently in academia: N=634)*



However, this very widely distributed profile – and the observation that only half the alumni have ever recruited such a staff member – suggests this may not be a good indicator of research career progress in SHAPE disciplines. Many have progressed according to the other

metrics here without recruiting such researchers, which presumably reflects an extent of research in these disciplines taking place without a research group. Some further insights into the leadership and training of researchers are considered in the next chapter.

*Figure 4.10 Time between year of completion of award and year of first winning significant grant funding, in years (PDF alumni respondents currently in academia: N=634)*



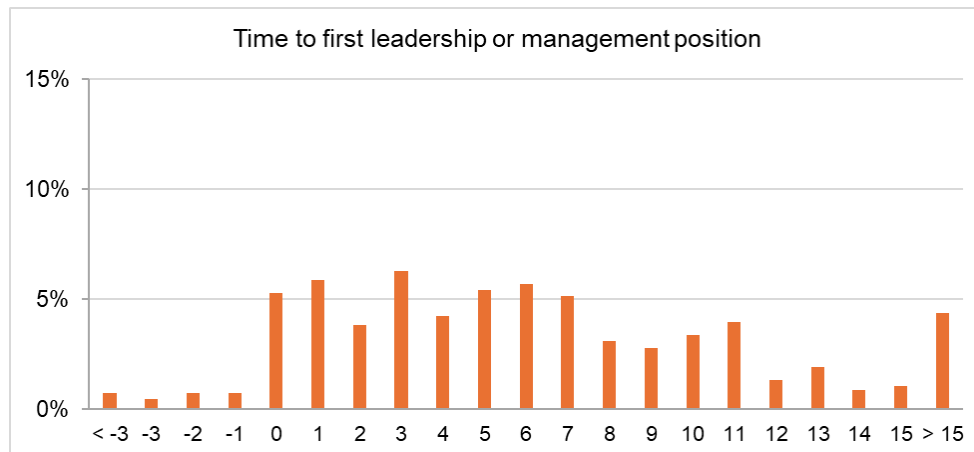
Finally, the survey investigated whether and when alumni first successfully obtained research funding or a grant (other than their PDF award). In all, 71% of PDF alumni respondents currently in academic careers, and 51% of those completing an award since 2015, had successfully done this by the time of the survey, while 18% (and 23%, respectively) had done so by the year of their award completion. Figure 4.10 illustrates these results, showing that very few obtained other funding prior to completing their award, and for some this did not occur until many years afterwards. Although the distribution profile was not simple, it provided some evidence to suggest that such funding was most commonly first obtained around three years after award completion.

#### 4.5. Other developmental measures

To allow a wider conception of career progression, that could apply irrespective of sector, a metric was devised based on attaining a position of leadership or management (rather than specifying recruitment or management of academic researchers). Just over two thirds (68%) of all working alumni respondents reported that they had progressed to such a position at the time of survey, although only 8% had done so by or in the year they completed their award. Amongst more recent alumni (since 2015), 46% had reached such a position (and 14% by the year they completed their award, suggesting this has may have been occurring more quickly for recent awardees). Figure 4.11 presents these results, demonstrating the very low proportion who reached such a position prior to or during the award – as is perhaps expected given the award is designed to free the awardee of commitments such as people management. On the other hand, the distribution profile also shows that for many alumni it took many years to progress to such a leadership or management position (and a substantial proportion appeared never to have done so).



*Figure 4.11 Time in years between completion of award and gaining position of leadership or management, in years (all currently working PDF alumni respondents: N=684)*



One further potential metric was included in the survey, specifically designed to indicate progression of alumni working in sectors other than academia/HE to a point where they are regarded as having independent expertise. Amongst the small sample of respondents currently working outside academia/HE, just over half (21/40) believed they had reached such a position, although only 3/40 felt they had done so immediately after completing their award. With such a modest sample, a full time-distribution analysis was not attempted but scanning the results available suggested the mean time elapsed to reaching such a position was seven years from award completion (and on a median basis five years).

## 5. Achievements and contributions

### 5.1. Personal achievements

#### 5.1.1. Personal and professional recognition

Survey respondents were invited to list any significant national or international prizes, awards or other public or academic recognition during or since their fellowship. Almost 390 respondents (i.e. just over half of PDF alumni respondents) provided a response. Between them they listed various types of prizes (most commonly book prizes), being elected to a learned society fellowship or similar disciplinary recognition, being awarded further funding (which included funded fellowships and other grants), and a variety of other forms of recognition. Textual analysis of the terms they used revealed the most common themes to be those in Table 5.1, which shows the frequency of each and also the proportion expressed as percentage of all PDF alumni respondents. Themes comprising under 20 citations have been excluded. Where a respondent listed multiple types of recognition or award, some judgement had to be applied to record a single type (i.e. attempting to identify the most significant), so these frequencies are minimal. Unsuccessful nominations for prizes were not included.

Due to the subjectivity within this analysis, these results are potentially most useful in illustrating simply that significant numbers of PDF alumni have obtained a wide variety of forms of academic or disciplinary recognition in their careers, including some very prestigious awards and medals. It is worth noting, for example, that while 35 respondents mentioned obtaining a grant (which was 5% of all respondents) as an example of significant recognition, this contrasts with the 71% of respondents who reported that they had won a grant at some point during or since their award (Table 4.2). This underlines the illustrative rather than representative nature of these particular results, based on responses when respondents were considering recognition.

*Table 5.1 Frequency of most common themes amongst awards or other recognition listed by PDF alumni (N=388)*

Term	Responses	Proportion of all PDF responses
Academic or book prize	117	16%
Learned society fellowship	84	12%
Further funded fellowship	58	8%
Significant grant as PI/Co-I	35	5%
Elected board/group/council position	30	4%
Fellow of British Academy	22	3%

#### 5.1.2. Research-related outputs

Respondents were also asked to list up to two research-related outputs (which the question specified could include publications, events or other media outputs) of which they were particularly proud. The intention of this question was to elicit a database of outputs which would be available for subsequent analysis, and which would require disciplinary expertise beyond the capability of our research team. That said, of the N=586 alumni who provided a response

to this question, 407 identified a monograph they had written or similar publication they had edited as the output of which they were most proud, 162 a paper in an academic journals or chapter in an edited publication, and 30 some other form of output including exhibitions, engagement events or other dissemination activities. As their second output, 268 listed a monograph and 230 a paper/chapter, while a somewhat larger number ( $N=72$ ) listed some other type of media or activity than was the case amongst the first-reported outputs. The latter again included exhibitions, public engagement activities, major lectures, films and events that they had convened, for either public or academic audiences.

### 5.1.3. Other career achievements

Finally in this section, respondents were also invited to describe briefly up to two achievements or contributions of other kinds (i.e. not directly research related) of which they were particularly proud during their career to date. Thematic analysis of these responses, provided by over 500 alumni, revealed the most common types of achievement cited to be those in Table 5.2, shown in order of popularity. Proportions of respondents are not shown as some respondents cited two achievements of the same type, which were only counted as a single instance, while not all gave two achievements. Although the two most common types of achievement cited were essentially research-related, despite the formulation of the question, the remainder attested to a variety of types of achievements by alumni in addition to activities within their primary research. Thus, a large number felt proud of the career-related progression they had achieved, with substantial proportions citing senior administrative or leadership roles unrelated to their research, public engagement activities, teaching and training other researchers (including the doctoral students they had supervised and their subsequent achievements). Establishment of a new research topic, a research group, centre for research or another facility were listed, most of which were research-related achievements. Only 25 respondents related achievements that were not within these main themes, and nearly half of their citations related to their resilience in the face of various challenges (including not giving up their research career).

*Table 5.2 Frequency of most common themes amongst other achievements listed by PDF alumni (N=525)\**

Theme	Responses
Academic/research-related outputs	151
Recognition/award/grant	125
Career progression/position	123
Non-research leadership role	92
Public engagement	89
Establishing group/topic/centre	88
Teaching	77
Training other researchers	75
Equality, diversity and inclusion	20

\*Respondents were invited to name two achievements, hence response totals sum to over 525

The following is a small selection of respondents' statements about these achievements, although space restricts the number that can be included here. Collectively they demonstrate powerfully a wide range and footprint of achievements and substantive ongoing roles of the PDF alumni respondents. This selection focuses on achievements that were not directly related to their research outputs or career achievements of the alumni, as these have been well exemplified as impacts in other sections of this report:

#### Establishment of topics/groups

*"I have been working towards creating and developing a new field of research in Economics, which uses economic theory and statistical tools to evaluate the role of religion in society. My publications and research activities to date have centred around this goal, largely initiated by the BA PDF which I was very fortunate to receive, and for which I have always been most grateful. Twenty years on I am glad to have been able to work and to develop this new area of research."*

*"Establishing an inter-disciplinary and international research hub on Global Experiences of Gender in an Age of Care Crisis."*

*"Establishing the first dedicated fieldwork project across a West African transect (involving 5 countries) exploring human evolution in this region. My results have led to a huge amount of excitement about this historically overlooked region for the field of human origins, and has become one of the most exciting areas in the field to work in."*

#### Equality, diversity and inclusion

*"Changing the student demographic from which my department recruits. I am passionate about widening participation, being from a disadvantaged background myself. Through numerous initiatives I was able to make a statistically significant difference to our student body."*

*"As Head of department, I initiated the effort to become the first Politics department in the UK to win an Athena Swan bronze award. The Department went on to make a successful subsequent application for a silver award. The culture of EDI has become deeply embedded in the department, which has also more than doubled in size since I developed an expansion and restructuring plan when I was Head. I believe my time as Head of School was marked by real progress for the department in a number of ways and this has been most evidence in the collegial, progressive and mutually supportive department culture."*

#### Public engagement

*"I am very proud to have shaped the UK government's flagship educational programme for the centennial commemorations of the First World War, and ran from 2016-18. I designed the content in the first series of these debates, which linked scholars, media and other experts with teachers and A-Level students to raise knowledge of the First World War. Surveys proved a tangible impact on pupil participants: 89% confirmed the debates had broadened their knowledge of World War I and 75% reported increased motivation to study history in the future. Typical testimony affirmed the debates "brought the subject to life [and] left me wanting to find out more about the war". I was thrilled that my work contributed to this impact on young people across the UK."*

*"I have always been interested in making academic research accessible and relevant whilst maintaining its integrity and complexity. As a result I have chosen to publish my last two books with mainstream trade publishers. I am proud of having been able to make the transition from academic writing to non-fiction writing whilst maintaining academic integrity. Both of these books are examples of anthropology written for anyone who might be interested in reading it."*

*"A series of resources and events for supporting schoolteachers, especially for the teaching of Buddhism. School teachers are badly under-supported, and expected to be experts in far too many things. Using my subject expertise to help has been very rewarding."*

### Polycymaking

*"In 2017 I was invited by the International Criminal Court to a meeting of experts to advise on how the Court should approach the destruction of cultural heritage. Following my participation in this, in 2018 the Trust Fund for Victims of the ICC asked my advice on how to implement the Reparations Order issues in relation to the [...] case and the destruction of heritage in [...]. We have been in regular contact ever since, including my being able to sit in (virtually) on reparations meetings with government officials and community groups. This has been an extraordinary experience as I have felt that my research actually could be useful, that someone was listening, and I felt enormously privileged to be able to participate in these conversations and learn from affected communities how they understand the process of repair."*

*"My influence in the World Health Organisation and Council of Europe at the highest level. Acting for many other organisations (World Bank, ILO and many others, governments, civil society groups)."*

### Teaching and administrative roles

*"I led the University of [...] successful application for Research Degree Awarding Powers in 2009/10."*

*"In 2012, I was presented with a Vice Chancellor's Teaching Award by the University in recognition of inspirational teaching. Since then, I have received five other prizes and awards for the excellence of my teaching, on the basis of student nominations. Nothing gives me more pleasure than knowing that my students are enjoying my teaching, and that it is helping to reinforce and inspire their own love of history."*

*"Winning my university's excellence in teaching award in 2020 may be my proudest accomplishment. It is obviously crucial to be able to communicate the kinds of things we research clearly to students, and to help them develop their critical thinking skills."*

### Training the next generation of researchers

*"I have now been first supervisor to 39 PhD students to successful completion, and many of these students have developed academic careers, some obtaining senior professorships in the UK, US, Canada, Australia, Germany, Italy, Poland, China, Korea, and Taiwan."*

*"I have supervised over 30 PhD students to completion, from across the world. (More non-UK than UK nationals). To see them achieving so much and leaving a mark on scholarship and policy and practice is a real pleasure."*

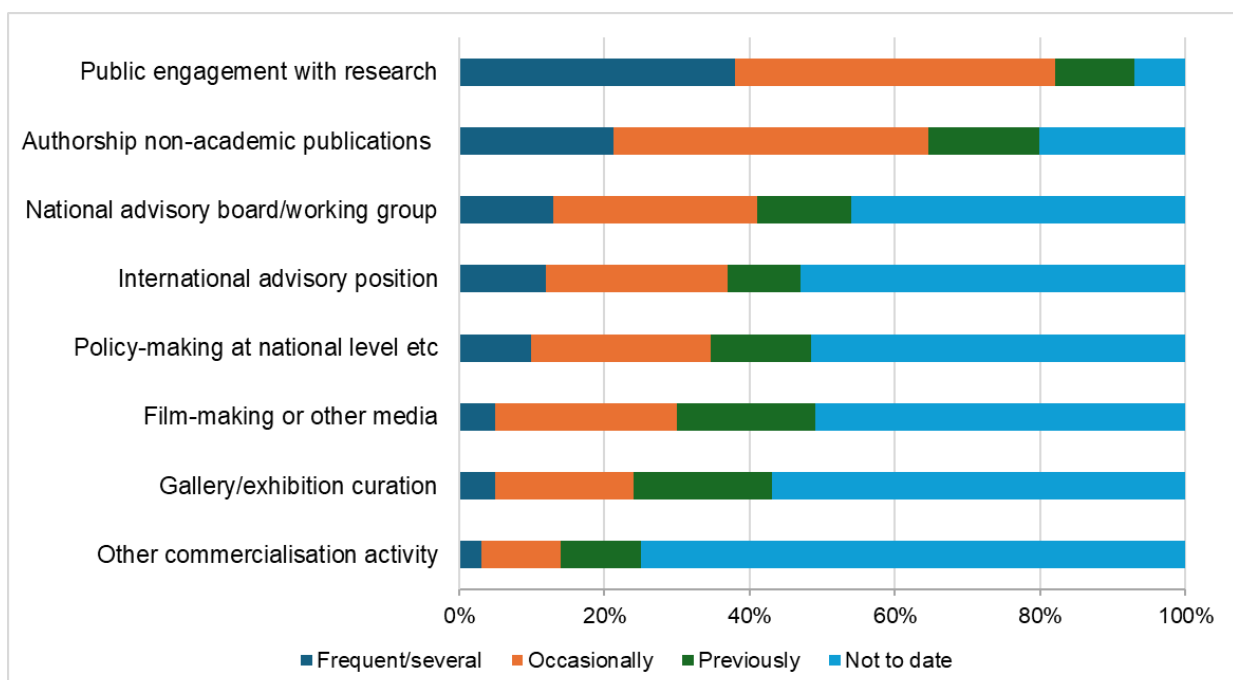
*"I have been pleased to be in a position to support the careers of junior colleagues and act as a mentor. I now have several PhD students, and collaborators, who I've specifically helped develop their careers, and who have established themselves as really fine historians (with far more impressive publication records than me). More broadly, though, I've been pleased with how I've been able to create opportunities for colleagues across my institutions/s, to maximise the impact of their work and connect with foreign collaborators."*

*"My most important achievement is helping countless students through their studies. Many students taking my MA modules have gone on to pursue PhDs in the same fields. I am also thrilled and honoured to have supervised numerous students through their PhDs, almost all of whom have published their first monographs (with some having completed their second). Some of these are already in permanent employment as academics. This is why the British Academy is so important. It doesn't simply enable individuals to progress in their own careers; it empowers them to help others in their own education, training and career paths. For every individual the British Academy supports, it lights a torch which is passed on to others."*

## 5.2. Other contributions to discipline or field

Many of the PDF alumni respondents reported making a variety of contributions to their discipline or area (Figure 5.1). For example, 82% were undertaking public engagement activities currently (only 7% had never done so), and almost 80% had at some point written publications that were neither academic papers or monographs (hence, likely to be publications for policy or wider audiences) while two thirds were currently doing so.

*Figure 5.1 Frequency of sector contributions by PDF alumni currently in employment or self-employment (Ns=650-661)*



Around 40% currently contributed through membership of a national advisory board or working group or an international advisory position (and around one half had done so at some point). Nearly half had contributed to national-level policymaking or other research impact-related activities to date, with about one third doing this currently. The proportions who made films or other media outputs, or who curated gallery or other exhibitions, were smaller but still significant, although only a quarter said they had ever undertaken other commercialisation activities.

Analysis of these results amongst recent alumni revealed some differences that were to be expected but similar results for many aspects. For example, the proportion of alumni completing awards since 2015 undertaking public engagement or writing for non-academic audiences were just as high as for all alumni overall. On the other hand, unsurprisingly, slightly lower proportions of recent alumni were currently active on a national or international advisory board or group, or had undertaken commercialisation activities to date. However, the differences in proportion of those currently undertaking these activities between recent alumni and overall were relatively small.

Analysis by gender revealed mostly extremely similar results for female and male respondents, although there was some evidence that an even higher proportion of female than male respondents had undertaken public engagement at some point, and slightly more of them had undertaken curations or were active in national policy-making or impact-related work. Conversely, the proportion of female respondents who had not undertaken other commercialisation activities was higher than for male respondents (80% vs. 71%, respectively).

Analysis of reported activities by those who worked in other sectors could not robustly be compared with those currently working in academia/HE because of the small sample size of the former group. However, within that small sample, there was some evidence to suggest far more of them undertook commercialisation activities, perhaps unsurprisingly, and the proportion undertaking national advisory activities frequently was double that amongst current academics (although rather more of the academics were doing so occasionally). However, again, the extent of differences between the two groups was not large for many activities.

### **5.3. Leadership and training of researchers**

Whether and when PDF alumni respondents supervised doctoral students and/or recruited fellow researchers were reported upon earlier as potential indicators of the establishment of an academic or research career. In this section, results to a range of survey questions are reported through which we aim to give more insights into the extent to which PDF alumni undertake research/team leadership roles and train the next generation of researchers.

#### **5.3.1. Current leadership of researchers**

At the time of the survey, 78% of PDF alumni respondents currently working in academia/HE were currently supervising at least one doctoral student. Together they were supervising a total of 1541 doctoral students (Table 5.3). This gave a mean of just over three doctoral students being supervised per respondents (by those currently doing so) and median of three. The largest number given by any respondent was 24 current doctoral students.<sup>20</sup> Amongst alumni who completed their award since 2015, the proportion currently supervising doctoral students

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<sup>20</sup> This could be considered as an outlier, as the next largest was 14 students

was lower at 37%.<sup>21</sup> Only three respondents now working outside academia/HE reported that they were currently supervising doctoral students (a total of 11), but as noted before the survey under-represents alumni in those other sectors so this is a partial picture.

Around 36% of respondents currently working in academia/HE were currently managing other researchers (that is to say staff doing research, rather than doctoral students) and together these comprised almost 900 researchers.<sup>22</sup> This suggested a mean of just over four researchers being managed per respondent (although a lower median at two), amongst those who were currently managing such researchers. Amongst respondents who completed their PDF since 2015, the proportion currently managing research staff was almost as high at 33%. Five respondents working in other sectors reported that they were managing a total 21 researchers, although the survey did not collect any evidence about what sort of roles these people played.

Responses to a question about the total number of people being managed by respondents suggested that 56% of currently employed respondents managed at least one person, and together this comprised nearly 5800 staff. Notably, around half of this total were being managed by just 12 respondents who were in very senior roles. Due to that imbalanced pattern, calculation of a mean number of people being managed was not thought meaningful and the median number (four people being managed) was potentially more insightful.

*Table 5.3 Number of researchers currently managed or supervised by working respondents, with sector. Percentages are of alumni managing or supervising at least one such researcher*

	<i>N</i>	Doctoral students supervised	Researchers managed	Total staff managed
All currently employed	639	1541 (74%)	913 (35%)	5796 (56%)
In academia/HE	601	1530 (78%)	892 (36%)	5735 (54%)
In academia/HE, 2015 onward	220	164 (37%)	255 (33%)	722 (49%)
In other sectors	38	11 (8%)	21 (16%)	61 (27%)

The survey also sought data from respondents about the total numbers of researchers they had managed or supervised during their career to date. This produced a total figure of just over 4300 doctoral students that they had collectively supervised and nearly 2200 other researchers they had managed. While these cumulative totals do not represent the total collective role of all PDF alumni to date, on the basis of a survey response rate of around 70% this could be extrapolated to potential total estimates of over 6000 doctoral students supervised and over 3000 researchers recruited/managed, respectively. Certainly, these results show that PDF scheme alumni have played, and continue to play, a substantial role in currently leading and training other researchers in the SHAPE disciplines.

<sup>21</sup> Note that these percentages are higher than those reported as a metric in relation to establishment of research leadership as those indicated number of completed doctorates, not those currently being supervised

<sup>22</sup> Excluding a large number cited by one respondent who was in a leadership position but whom we judged did not have direct management responsibility for these staff



## 6. Mobility and career breaks

### 6.1. International mobility

In section 3.3, results about current employment locations of PDF alumni were presented. In summary, this showed that over three quarters of working respondents were currently in the UK, which was higher than the proportion of UK nationality leading to the assumption that some of the non-UK nationals were also remaining in the UK after their award. Results of analysis of current locations with period of the scheme suggested some progressive outflow of some non-UK nationals over time, as well as a very slight outward migration of UK nationals too over the longer period. Thus, viewed overall, these results were consistent with the scheme having a slight net retention effect, i.e. contributing to retention of SHAPE researchers in the UK. As the BA has significant interest in the mobility of SHAPE researchers, and has recently published some insights on this,<sup>23</sup> we included further questions in the survey to probe mobility within the career trajectories of PDF alumni in greater detail.

A question about international mobility sought responses detailing instances of period/s spent in a country (or more) other than the respondent's normal residence, of at least three months in duration. On this basis, 41% of all PDF respondents had spent at least three months in another country. As results for those currently working in academia/HE or in other sectors were essentially the same at around 40%, further analysis was conducted irrespective of current sector (Table 6.1). This indicated that, overall, 22% of respondents had spent such time abroad prior to their award, with a mean total period abroad of just under two years. 15% had spent time working abroad during their award (for an average of 11 months duration), and just over one quarter (28%) had done so since completing their award (with a mean period of four years). Results for recent alumni were similar for mobility overall and during awards, but somewhat more of these alumni had spent time abroad prior to their award, than of earlier alumni. Unsurprisingly, as less time had elapsed since their award, fewer of them had spent time abroad since their award, than their earlier counterparts had done.

By gender, there was some evidence that such mobility was slightly more common amongst male respondents than female; 41% of male respondents had spent time abroad at some stage compared with 36% of female respondents. However, differences by gender were more prominent during awards (especially, during which the proportion of male respondents spending time abroad was double that of female respondents) and since completing their awards (and these were also longer on average for male respondents, at five years rather than three).

Similar analysis by nationality suggested that more of those of a non-UK nationality had spent more time abroad, with 51% overall doing so (compared with 36% of UK respondents), with differences at all three career stages studied. It has been acknowledged in other HE studies that those who have undertaken some international mobility, such as migration to the UK to study are subsequently more likely to undertake further mobility, compared with UK-nationals who study in the UK. These results are consistent with the same trend applying for non-UK nationals who come to the UK for a fellowship, i.e. they are more likely to undertake further mobility at some point than UK nationals, including during the fellowship itself.

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<sup>23</sup> A survey of SHAPE research careers, The British Academy, 2024  
<https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/publications/a-survey-of-shape-research-careers>

*Table 6.1 Experiences of significant periods of work in country/countries other than normal residence, amongst PDF alumni respondents (with mean duration, where known)*

	<i>N</i>	Total mobility	Mobility prior to award	Mobility during award	Mobility since completion
All PDF alumni	719	41%	22% (21 mths)	15% (11 mths)	28% (4 yrs)
UK nationality	464	36%	19% (2 yrs)	13% (10 mths)	27% (4 yrs)
Non-UK nationality	201	53%	26% (2 yrs)	18% (16 mths)	31% (5.5 yrs)
Completing since 2015	176	41%	30% (2 yrs)	14% (11 mths)	18% (2.5 yrs)
Male	358	42%	23% (29 mths)	20% (10 mths)	33% (5 yrs)
Female	301	36%	20% (23 mths)	9% (20 mths)	21% (3 yrs)

## 6.2. Intersectoral mobility

The BA and other stakeholders in the UK R&D eco-system have considerable current interest in the mobility of researchers between academia/HE and other occupational sectors (in either direction, known as ‘intersectoral’ mobility) and the ‘porosity’ within the eco-system that enables such movement to occur. Attempts to detail sectoral mobility amongst SHAPE researchers were reported in the recent survey by the BA (cited on the previous page). It was therefore logical to address this in the career tracking survey of PDF alumni, in addition to any international mobility. Respondents were asked whether they had spent significant periods working in a sector other than academia/HE, and the extent of such periods, in parallel with the questions about international mobility. Here, results from those currently working in academia/HE were analysed separately from others, in order to obtain a clear picture especially of temporary mobility between sectors, as opposed to permanent shifts (such as alumni who ‘left’ academia to work in another sector for the long term).

Table 6.2 summarises the results on periods of time spent in sectors other than academia/HE, for the two key groups of interest, noting that the size of the sample now working in other sectors was small and its results can only be seen as indicative. Amongst those currently working in academia/HE, just 10% of respondents reported that they had spent at least three months working in another sector at any stage. 7% had worked in another sector prior to their PDF award, which was mostly for under two years (although a few alumni had worked long-term in such a sector before ‘returning’ to academia/HE as a researcher with their fellowship). Only two respondents spent time in another sector during their award. Since their awards, 5% of respondents currently in academia/HE reported that they had worked for a period in another sector, with a mean duration again of about two years.

More detailed investigation of these results suggested that a somewhat higher proportion of female respondents than male had undertaken such sectoral mobility – both before their award (two thirds of the cases being female) and afterwards (three quarters of all cases).

Amongst the small group of respondents currently working in other sectors, interestingly, a much higher proportion (one third) had worked outside academia/HE before their award, although only one respondent had done so during their award. Subsequent to their awards, all

these respondents had worked outside academia/HE (which had to be the case as they were doing so currently) and the range of durations for which they had done so was large, with a mean of 6.5 years. Open-ended comments that many added demonstrated that this group included about half who had 'left' academia for the long term and a similar number who retained simultaneous positions in academia/HE and another sector. Although the sample size was too small for robust analysis, there was again some suggestion that much of this mobility was by female respondents. They comprised two thirds of those spending time in another sector before their award and, notably, half of all those currently working outside academia/HE.

*Table 6.2 Experiences of significant periods of work in sectors other than academia by survey respondents currently in employment (with mean duration, where known)*

	<i>N</i>	Total mobility	Mobility prior to award	Mobility during award	Mobility since completion
Currently in academia/HE	611	10%	7% (1.5 yrs)	<1% *	5% (2 yrs)
Currently in another sector	34	100%	33% (2 yrs)	3% *	100% (6.5 yrs)

\*Too few for meaningful analysis of duration

### 6.3. Career breaks

Another issue within career trajectories that the PDF alumni survey was able to probe – given its coverage of alumni from the entire period of the scheme – was the extent to which they had taken breaks in their career for personal reasons before, during or after their award. This was investigated in some detail, considering breaks due to unemployment or looking for work, for maternity or paternity, or for caring responsibilities (for children or others) separately.

Overall, just over half of all PDF respondents (55%) had taken some kind of break – defined as being of three months or more duration – within their career to date (Table 6.3). This was significantly higher amongst female respondents (73%) than male (46%). Interestingly, a higher proportion of recent alumni (63%) than overall had taken some kind of break, despite the shorter period of their post-award careers to date.

*Table 6.3 Proportion of PDF alumni respondents reporting some kind of career break for personal reasons*

	<i>N</i>	At least one career break
All PDF alumni	730	55%
Completing since 2015	175	63%
Female alumni	303	73%
Male alumni	367	46%

Detailed questions about when significant breaks had taken place (i.e. before, during or after the award), how many breaks and for how long a duration in total, were posed, for each type of break. Analysis of these data enabled insights into these career breaks from two angles.

First, the analysis revealed that across the period of the scheme, 21% of respondents had taken a break of at least three months prior to their award – and such breaks are of interest given the eligibility requirement of applying within three years of a doctoral viva. Further analysis of pre-award breaks suggested that they had been taken by 27% of female alumni and 16% of male (Table 6.4). There was also evidence for this type of break being more common amongst more recent alumni: 35% of alumni completing their award since 2015 had taken some kind of break prior to their award, compared with just 14% of alumni completing prior to 2000. Amongst the former group (completing since 2015), half of female respondents had taken such a break and nearly one third of male respondents. This increasing trend may have implications for how eligibility requirements should be imposed and/or the extent of flexibility that may be needed in this respect for the scheme to remain inclusive.

*Table 6.4 Proportion of PDF alumni respondents who took a significant career break prior to their PDF award (N is size of sub-group who responded to this question, not number of cases)*

	Total		Female		Male	
	N		N		N	
All PDF alumni	730	21%	303	27%	367	16%
Completing since 2015	176	35%	82	50%	70	31%
Completing prior to 2000	212	14%	70	21%	128	10%

Turning to breaks taken during the PDF award itself, in general these were less common. 11% of all respondents reported that they had taken some kind of break, although this was 20% of female respondents and just 5% of male. When considered by broad period of scheme, the analysis was limited because of the small numbers who had taken a break within a particular scheme period. However, overall, these results gave some indication that somewhat more of the recent alumni (16% of those completing since 2015) had taken a break during the award, than of earlier alumni (5%). For both these groups, the large majority of breaks had been taken by female respondents, although not all. When considering implications of these results, it is worth remembering also that around 9% of alumni undertook at least part of their award on a part-time basis.

Although perhaps of less direct interest for the scheme, similar analysis was possible for breaks taken during careers post-award, which could be useful context when considering how quickly career-related impacts of the award might be expected to arise. This revealed that 44% of all respondents had taken a break for personal reasons since their award, comprising 55% of female respondents and 34% of male. In this case, it might be expected that the proportion taking a break would be higher amongst earlier alumni, who had had a longer post-award career to date, than for recent alumni. However, such a difference was not seen in the results. This seems to suggest that such breaks have become increasingly common for more recent researchers. When analysed by gender too, the proportions of male and female respondents completing since 2015 who took breaks were quite similar, whereas the proportion of female respondents completing prior to 2000 who had taken a break (60%) was over twice that of their male counterparts (25%, Table 6.5).

*Table 6.5 Proportion of PDF alumni respondents who took a significant career break during career at some point after their PDF award (N is size of sub-group, as in Table 6.4)*

	Total		Female		Male	
	N		N		N	
All PDF alumni	730	44%	303	55%	366	34%
Completing since 2015	176	40%	82	43%	68	38%
Completing prior to 2000	212	37%	70	60%	128	25%

The other perspective from which to consider career breaks was by type of break, analysis of which follows. Considering breaks due to unemployment or looking for work first, the results suggested that 22% of respondents had experienced at least three months of unemployment at some time when surveyed, and this was slightly higher for female respondents (24%) than male (19%). It was higher amongst recent alumni, being reported by 34% of those completing their award since 2015. More detailed examination of when these breaks took place and their duration suggested that around 15% of alumni had a period of unemployment prior to their award (mostly of up to a year), and about 12% since their award (again, up to a year on average, with a minority of alumni experiencing more than one such period). Amongst recent alumni, these results were slightly higher, and results for female respondents were consistently slightly higher than for male.

In all, 38% of PDF alumni respondents reported taking at least one break for maternity/paternity leave at some point, and this was substantially higher amongst female respondents (55%) than male (24%). Just over one third of all those completing an award since 2015 had done so. Table 6.6 shows some more detailed results, suggesting that 6% took such a break prior to their award, 11% during their award, with 28% taking one or more breaks subsequently during their career. While sample sizes were small for robust analysis by gender, it was interesting to note that almost all the pre-award breaks of this type were taken by female respondents, around three quarters of such breaks during the award, and about two thirds of breaks post-award. Perhaps more interesting still was that the average length of time for (cumulative) maternity/paternity breaks by female respondents was 10 months during an award and 12 months post-award, whereas for both types it was three months for male respondents.

*Table 6.6 Proportions of alumni in survey reporting break/s for maternity/paternity and caring responsibilities with total duration of such breaks (in months) where known*

	N	Pre-award		During award		Since award	
		%	Duration	%	Duration	%	Duration
Maternity/paternity	730	6%	12	11%	9	28%	9
Caring responsibilities	725	-		-		5%	16

Similar analysis of breaks for caring responsibilities (for either children or others) was limited due to their rarity at some stages. For example, there were too few cases to analyse either prior to or during awards – which may just reflect that most respondents had not reached a life

stage when they undertook their PDF. Subsequently, still only around 5% of respondents took a career break for these purposes, and these cases were split roughly evenly by gender. However, while for male respondents the average length of such a break was 7 months, for female respondents it was over two years. This analysis could be enhanced in future if it could be combined with insights into whether alumni were at that point working full-time or part-time, as it could be that few had to take a complete break for caring responsibilities because they were able to have sufficient flexibility within their employment. However, such detail on mode of employment at particular career stages was not probed in this survey.

Nearly one in ten alumni respondents reported that they had taken a career break of three months or more for other reasons, which we assume could include personal ill health. These cases were not analysed in the same detail as the other types of break above, but did appear to be more common for female respondents (11%) than male (6%).

## Part C – British Academy Rising Star Engagement Awards

### 7. BARSEA alumni career tracking

#### 7.1. The BARSEA scheme

The BA's Rising Star Engagement Awards were established to support early-career academics in SHAPE disciplines to engage in the work of the Academy by undertaking certain activities which would also enhance their skills and career development. Activities within scope were expected broadly to be organisation of events or developmental activities for other early-career researchers. Approximately 25 awards made annually in the years 2015 to 2019, with a total of 151 awards recorded. Awards had a value of up to £15,000 and duration of up to 12 months.

Eligible candidates for a BARSEA were early-career academics within 10 years of their doctorate, who were able to demonstrate sufficient academic credentials suggesting that they could be progressing towards research leadership. Applicants required the support of a Fellow of the BA to champion their candidacy, endorsing the applicant and their proposed project or activities under the award.

Unlike the PDF, the BARSEA did not provide funding to free the awardee from their duties within their academic employment, but rather was additional funding through which they could undertake additional activities for the purposes above. As such, potential measures of the success and impact of a BARSEA are not the same as for PDF awards, and the results reported in this chapter need to be considered in that light (underlining that survey responses from alumni of the two schemes were analysed separately and comparisons between them largely avoided).

#### 7.2. BARSEA survey respondent demographics

Although some of the analysis that follows is based on the 79 survey responses from those who had obtained solely a BARSEA award, demographic profile data is presented here for the wider sample that includes those who had also undertaken a PDF award (Table 7.1).<sup>24</sup>

*Table 7.1 Selected aspects of demographic profile of BARSEA alumni respondents*

Characteristic	Respondents	Proportion*
UK nationality	58	65%
Female	53	60%
Ethnic minority (of UK nationals)	5	9%
Disability (current)	5	6%

\*As percentage of number who provided a response to the relevant question

The mean age of BARSEA alumni survey respondents at the start of their award was 35 years (and median 34 years). On the basis of other reported information, this was most commonly

<sup>24</sup> During inception it was agreed that where an individual had obtained both awards, responses in relation to their PDF award should be collected (due to the potentially greater intended impact of that award on their career)

(and on average) around five years after completing their doctorate, although periods between reported doctorate completion and start of award ranged from zero to 12 years.

In terms of subject area, collectively BARSEA alumni survey respondents identified with 18 of the subject area options offered in the survey, with the most common area being history ( $N=25$ ). The response sample also contained a good balance across the years of the scheme, with at least 12 respondents starting their award in each of the five years the scheme existed.

### **7.3. Current employment**

While PDF alumni survey respondents were at a very wide range of career stages due to the longevity of the scheme and respondents throughout that time, BARSEA alumni survey respondents were on average at an earlier career stage, as in all cases their awards took place between 5 and 10 years prior to the survey. Bearing this in mind and the relatively small response sample size, results for the aggregate response sample were most meaningful (unlike many results for PDF alumni which were most valuable for a particular scheme period).

#### **7.3.1. Sectors and employers**

All but one of the BARSEA alumni respondents were currently employed (i.e. almost 99%), including all of those who reported also having undertaken a PDF. 96% of those employed were in academic careers. Three respondents currently worked in other sectors, while the only respondent not currently working was significantly older than all the others and late in their career (during which they had been employed in a related but non-academic occupation). In total, 96% reported they were research active at the time of the survey (including all but one of those in academic careers).

In terms of current employment location, 91% were working in the UK (including the three respondents working in other sectors), 6% in EU countries and 3% in other countries. Amongst those working in academia/HE, 93% were working in the UK. When the nationality of respondents was factored in, over 90% of the UK nationals and over 80% of other nationalities were working in the UK at the time of the survey.

Amongst BARSEA survey respondents currently working in academia/HE in the UK ( $N=82$ ), 62% were employed at Russell Group member institutions (of which all were represented), 34% in other types of university and 4% in specialist HE institutions. This appeared to be a somewhat less focused distribution than for PDF alumni, of whom 77% of comparable respondents were currently at Russell Group institutions. Geographically, BARSEA alumni were present in every English region (86% in England) and the other UK nations, when surveyed, with one third in London or the South East.

Further analysis using a combination of grant system data (showing the institution at which the BARSEA application was made) and survey data about current institution showed that 49 of the 68 respondents (72%) for whom both were known were still at the same institution. This perhaps reflects the nature and scale of the award, i.e. that it supported career development rather than aiming to transform it in the way that a PDF award might be expected to.

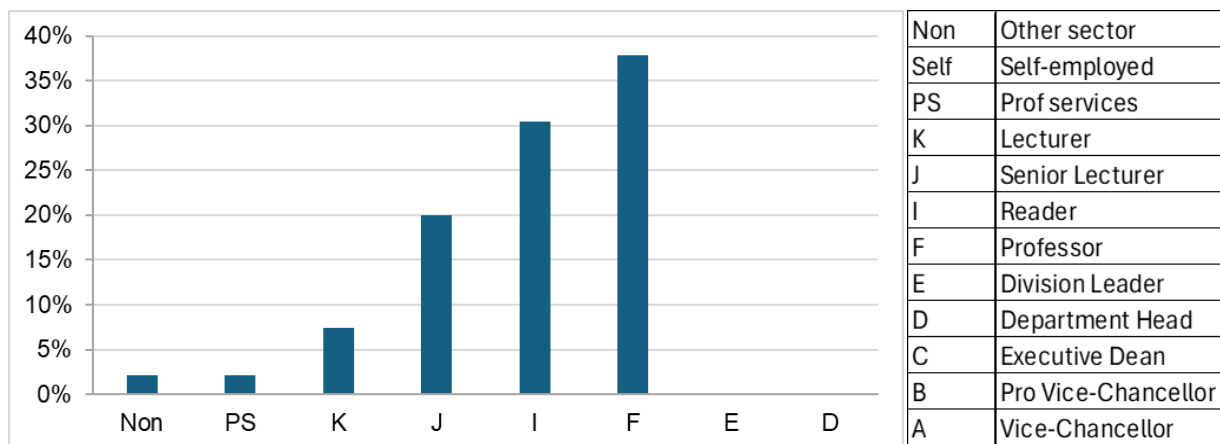
#### **7.3.2. Occupations**

Analysis of the level of current employment revealed that the most common level of current position was level F (Professor level), held by 38% of the respondents (and 40% of those currently in academia/HE). Interestingly, this was very similar to the situation for PDF alumni



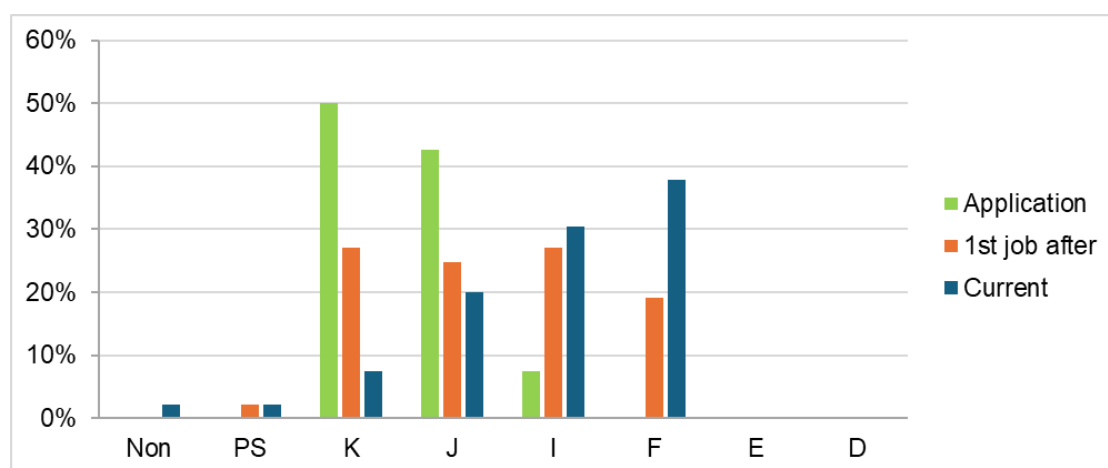
respondents, although this is not to suggest that the BARSEA will have played the same role as a PDF in career progression to such a position.

*Figure 7.1 Level of current employment position of BARSEA alumni survey respondents (N=78)*



For BARSEA alumni respondents, it was possible to compare current employment positions not only with the first positions obtained following completion of their award, but also with their positions when they applied for the award (the latter using grant system data). Plotting those three together (Figure 7.2) showed very significant progression from positions held when they applied for the award onwards. For example, at the time of application, around half held a Level K position (such as postdoctoral researcher or Lecturer) and the most senior at that time were in a Level I position (Reader or Associate Professor). When they obtained their next job after the award, the profile of roles was quite widely distributed, with over a quarter still at Level K, similar proportions at Levels J and I but also nearly one in five at Level F (Professor). As noted, current roles were most commonly Level F, shown in both Figure 7.1 and 7.2.

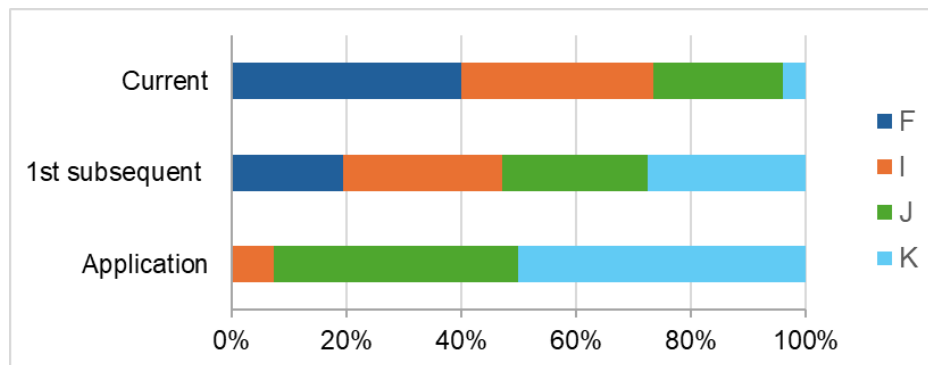
*Figure 7.2 Level of employment position of BARSEA alumni survey respondents at: application (N=68), first position after award (N=78) and current position (N=78)*



The strong progression of BARSEA alumni respondents over time is also neatly illustrated in the simple stacked bar chart in Figure 7.3, which focuses on key academic post levels.

Examination of the current job titles given in the survey with those recorded at application in the grant system data suggested that all but four (of those for whom both positions were known,  $N=68$ ) had progressed to a more senior level role since their award started. This notable result will be returned to in the next chapter which considers award impacts.

*Figure 7.3 Proportions of BARSEA alumni currently in academic careers with posts at key progression levels, at key career stages in relation to award (Ns=68-78)*

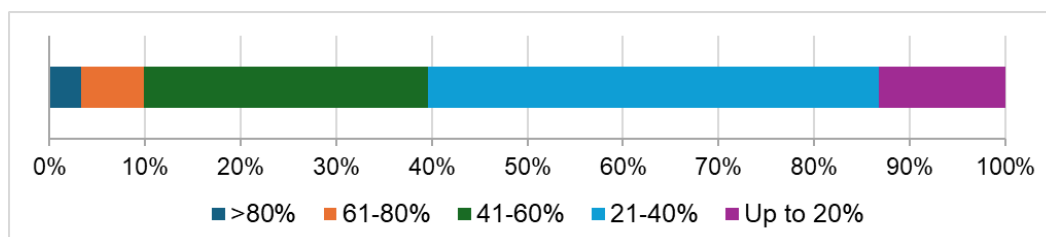


### 7.3.3. Research within current role

As noted, 96% of BARSEA alumni respondents reported they were research-active at the time of the survey, including all but one of those currently working in academia/HE. Amongst the latter, 97% had a research and teaching contract, two individuals a research-only contract and one each a teaching-only and another form of contract.

The survey asked research-active respondents in academia/HE to report the average proportion of their working time spent on research (Figure 7.4). This showed the most common extent (of the ranges they could select) to be 21-40%, with only 4% working on research more than 80% of their time, while for 13% it was one fifth or less of their time.

*Figure 7.4 BARSEA alumni survey respondents' proportion of working time dedicated to research (N=75)*



## 8. Impact of the BARSEA awards

In the context of this report that places a large focus upon PDF awards and their impact, it may be useful to remember some key differences between the PDF and BARSEA awards when considering impacts of the latter. A PDF provides funding that essentially liberates the awardee from most of their teaching, administrative and other academic duties for a period of three years, so that they are freed to focus upon research. The BARSEA, on the other hand, provided modest funding over a shorter period to support specific activities to be undertaken in addition to the awardee's existing research, teaching and administrative duties. Its potential for impact should be seen in that light and not be expected to be comparable to career impacts reported for PDF awards. This was recognised by some respondents in their comments:

*"The BARSEA [...] was shorter-term and lower value than other funding, so was useful in addition to those things rather than being individually critical."*

*"Whilst the amount of funding I received from the BARSEA was really relatively small..."*

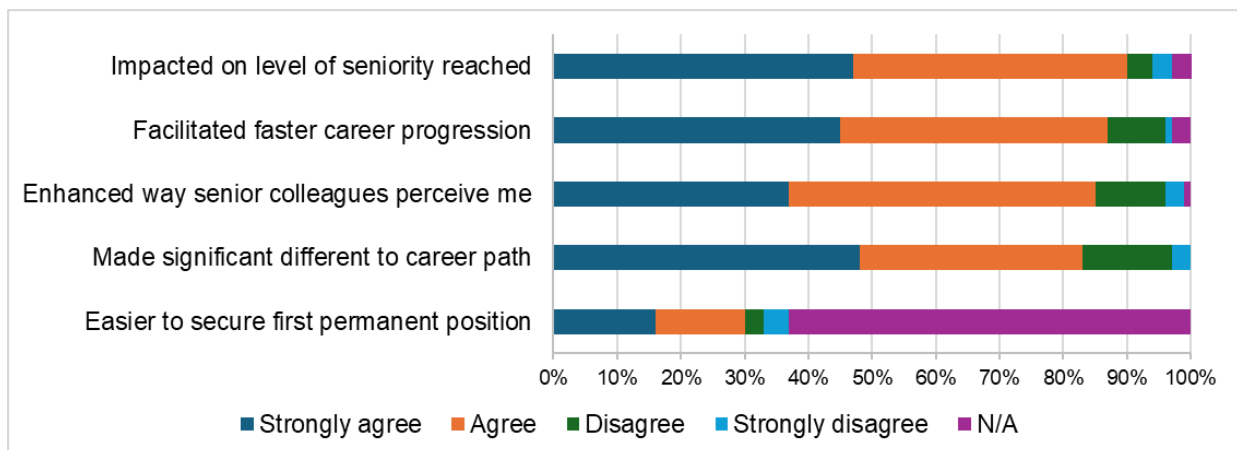
*"The BARSEA award is a drop of water in the vast ocean of things that a postdoctoral researcher is expected to achieve."*

Despite these comments, a variety of results reported in this chapter provide substantive evidence of additionality in relation to the career progression of BARSEA alumni.

### 8.1. Perceptions of impact

Respondents were invited to indicate the extent they felt having the BARSEA award had impacted upon their career, in a range of possible ways. As Figure 8.1 illustrates, 90% agreed it had impacted on the level to which they had progressed and nearly as large a proportion that it had accelerated that progression. Over 80% felt it had made a significant difference to their career path (nearly half very strongly agreeing with this) and that it had enhanced how they were perceived by senior colleagues. On the other hand, and in contrast to the comparable result for PDF alumni, only 30% felt it had made it easier to secure their first permanent position, with nearly two thirds saying this was not relevant – presumably because many already had such a position by the time they obtained the award.

*Figure 8.1 BARSEA alumni respondents' extent of agreement with a range of statements about impact of the fellowship upon their career (N=78)*

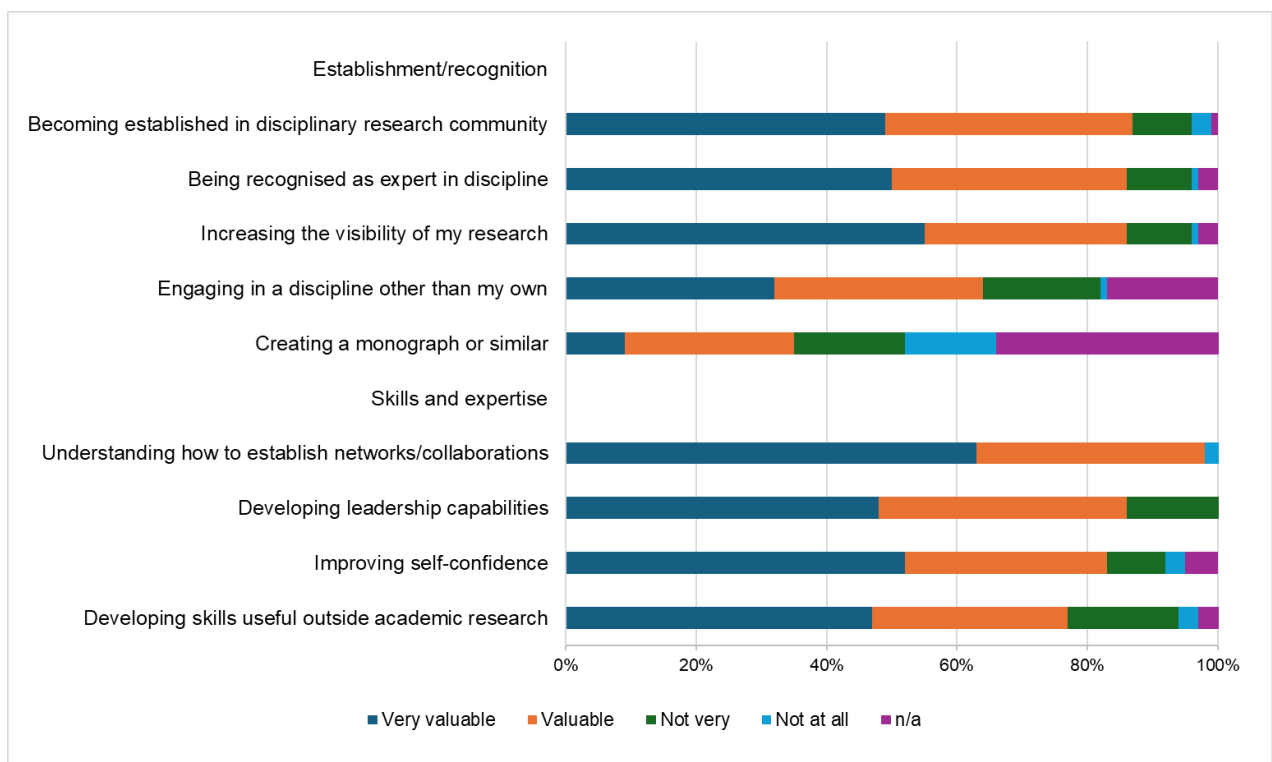


Although the sizes of the respondent sub-samples were too small for differences in results by gender to be reported robustly, higher proportions of female BARSEA respondents placed high value on the award in relation to the level and speed of their career progression and the difference it had made to their career, than their male counterparts.

Figure 8.2 summarises respondents' perceptions of how valuable they thought the award had been to certain aspects of their professional development, in relation to establishing their career and their skills/expertise. Over 85% valued the award in helping them become established in the research community in their discipline, in becoming recognised as an expert in the discipline and also increasing the visibility of their research. Nearly two thirds appreciated the value of engaging in another discipline, while a smaller proportion (around one third) felt it helped them to create a monograph or similar output.

When it came to skills and expertise, results to similar questions to those posed to PDF alumni revealed that the greatest relative value was seen in improving self-confidence. For BARSEA alumni, although over 80% of respondents valued this effect, but higher proportions still saw its high value in understanding how to establish collaborations or networks, presumably because for many the funded activity had been event- or network-related, and in relation to developing leadership skills. Nearly three quarters also saw its value in relation to developing skills that would be useful if transferred to a career outside academia, again presumably due to the type of activity they had undertaken and the skills involved.

*Figure 8.2 BARSEA alumni respondents' perceived extent of value of award on aspects of professional development (Ns=77-79)*

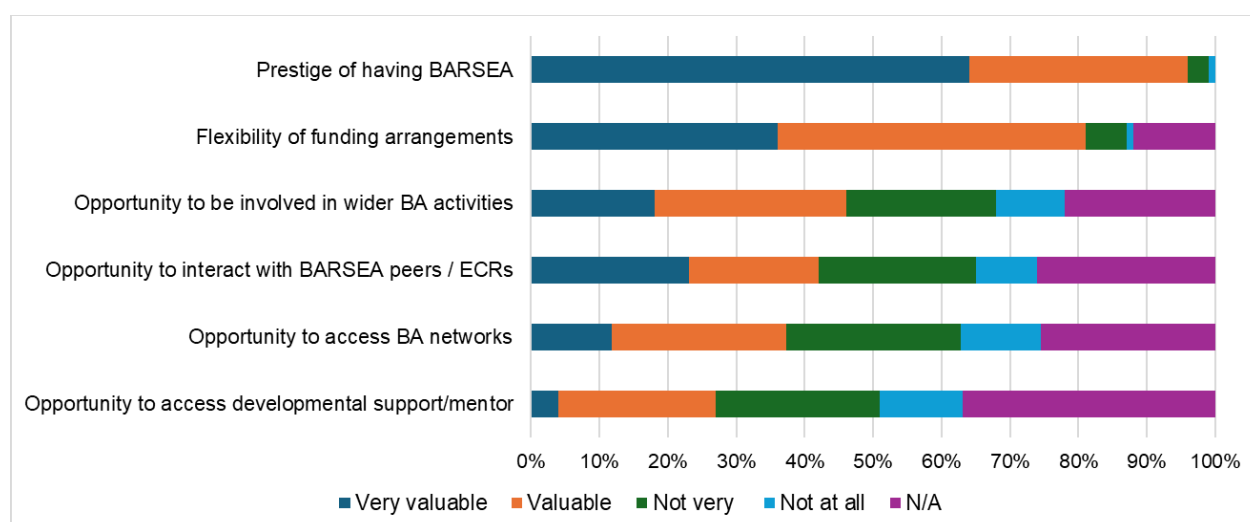


Again, there was a consistent trend observed between male and female BARSEA alumni in almost all these results. Higher proportions of female respondents than male rated the award as valuable in most of the respects questioned, with the largest differences in relation to becoming established in their research community, developing leadership qualities and,

especially, enhancing their self-confidence. For example, over 90% of female respondents perceived value in the BARSEA award for the latter, compared with 60% of male respondents.

BARSEA alumni respondents were also asked about perceptions of the value they experienced of a range of potential benefits of having one of these awards (Figure 8.3). The highest proportion perceived value through the prestige of having this BA award (well over 90%), with a large proportion also appreciating the range of activities the award could support. Smaller but significant proportions valued the opportunity to be involved in the BA's wider activities (about half), with somewhat smaller proportions valuing interactions with their peers or accessing the BA's networks. One quarter rated the option to access developmental support, such as a mentor, as valuable, although a larger proportion than this indicated this was not applicable for them. Based on the substantial minorities indicating that some of these benefits were not applicable, we assume that they either did not have access to such opportunities or did not partake in them.

*Figure 8.3 BARSEA alumni respondents' perceived extent of value of different benefits of the award (Ns=78-79)*



In parallel with the earlier results, higher proportions of female respondents valued several potential benefits more highly than their male counterparts. In particular, substantially higher proportions of female respondents valued opportunities to interact with their peers, to take part in wider activities and to access the BA's networks, than amongst male respondents. On the other hand, the award's value in terms of the prestige of having a BA award was rated highly by almost all male and female respondents alike. One comment from a respondent illustrated this type of positive perception:

*"The support of the BA was the significant part of this grant. It's always good to get funding, and early in your career, it gives you a real boost. However, I will cherish the way the BA engaged with me, published my work, and remembered me long after the project finished. HE institutions don't value their staff very well, but with the BA, I felt incredibly valued and I would like to thank everyone involved for that."*

## 8.2. Impacts described by alumni

The majority ( $N=66$ ) of BARSEA alumni respondents provided comments in response to an open-ended question about the impact the award had on their career. The vast majority of these were positive perceptions of a range of impacts, building upon the evidence from closed questions in the last section, with just two respondents suggesting there had been little or no impact. A number of these comments mentioned some of the activities they had undertaken through the award, which were most commonly events held, network-building or public engagement activities.

Analysed by theme, the most commonly reported types of impact perceived by these alumni related to their establishment as an academic/researcher and related recognition. Around one quarter of comments ( $N=18$ ) described the contribution it made to the awardee becoming established within a network/community of researchers (i.e. disciplinary), including developing a new network or sub-community. However, slightly more still ( $N=20$ ) referred to its impact on their recognition personally and progression within their institution (university). Interestingly, several specifically mentioned the benefit in terms of recognising certain skills beyond research and teaching that they were required to evidence within a progression framework. A substantial minority ( $N=9$ ) identified the prestige of the award and funder as impactful, including some citing particular benefit from the name of the award in recognition, i.e. that a prestigious body had identified them personally as a “rising star”.

In terms of more developmental benefits, around one in six respondents identified enhancements to their confidence ( $N=10$ ), several indicating that it was the first external/grant funding that they had won and gave them the confidence to pursue and obtain subsequent grant funding. Others perceived benefits in terms of developing their leadership skills ( $N=6$ ), while a handful mentioned developing organisational skills and the benefit of new interactions with policy-makers in particular. Again, some respondents perceived the award was unusual in highlighting skills that are valued in academic citizenship but rarely recognised overtly.

More broadly, small numbers of respondents ( $N=5$ ) believed the award had helped them to initiate new research collaborations and a few others pursue new lines of research, despite the modest extent of funding and nature of the activities under the award.

The following quotations are included as examples of these perceptions, but also demonstrate that many alumni identified multiple types of benefit or impact. Overall, a high proportion believed the award had contributed substantially to their establishment in their academic or research community and/or career.

### Establishment/recognition in disciplinary community

*“It gave me the opportunity to organise five high-profile events with high-powered speakers and to put them in conversation with peers at my own early career stage. It therefore gave me an opportunity to guide the critical and intellectual conversation in the field of [...], which helped to establish myself and some of the early career people who participated, as well as gave me organisational and public speaking experience. I really believe that this experience gave me the experience, confidence and network that eventually helped me secure a permanent position.”*

*“It enabled me to develop policy networks, and also to leverage these to provide training to earlier-career researchers. The financial flexibility supported intellectual exploration, and*

*I am still writing papers that draw indirectly - and sometimes directly - on the work I conducted during the BARSEA. It was a wonderful opportunity to me - thank you!"*

*"It enabled me to develop a network with other early career researchers working on similar research issues to me (and I'm still in close contact with some of the early career researchers that participated in the events I organised). It enabled me to establish contacts and co-organise an event with policymakers. I believe it has led to greater exposure of my work in this area and more opportunities to collaborate on research."*

*"The award was an important stepping stone in the interdisciplinary work I am carrying out at the moment. BARSEA has led to the creation of a cross-disciplinary network [title] which has more than 70 members and has inspired other projects."*

#### Recognition/progression within institution

*"The award was a prestigious mark of recognition at an early stage of my career. Although basic, the language of 'rising star' suggested that the BA saw potential in my academic research career and this had clear positive effects, both internally at [univ] (e.g., when making the case for promotion) and externally (e.g., with the award mentioned when being introduced at invited talks). Without the award, I don't think I'd have progressed as quickly as I have, nor would I have the reputation I (think I) have."*

*"It played a key role as part of a portfolio of 'esteem indicators' in demonstrating my standing in my field while working in an interdisciplinary environment where managers were less familiar with what 'counts' in [discipline]."*

*"It allowed me to dedicate a significant chunk of time to widening participation, networking, and engaging with groups beyond academia. It also provided the funding to make sure that these activities could be done to a high standard. It would have been very hard for me to achieve these aims within the scope of my employment contract at that time. This hugely enhanced my CV, and I believe gave me an edge beyond the conventional 'research and teaching' profile I already had. I believe it was an important factor in my gaining the post I now hold."*

*"The BARSEA award was incredibly valuable - it helped me get over a funding threshold for promotion, it increased my confidence and leadership experience, and it made me (and my discipline) more visible to senior leaders within my institution."*

*"My BARSEA materialised the label of 'rising star' and applied it unequivocally to me and my career trajectory. No other funding award does that: one is required to interpret and contextualise the label of, for instance, post-doc, or fellow, whereas there is no ambiguity about 'rising star'. The clarity and provenance of that label has undoubtedly been hugely beneficial to my career. I was a lecturer when I completed my BARSEA event in 2018 and was a professor by 2022. I will never know what was said in the promotions committee that awarded me my chair, but it is reasonable to assume that its members took the BARSEA into account."*

#### Fostering new research/community/collaborations

*"My BARSEA enabled me to develop a web-based platform that has facilitated global networking and which has allowed me to entrench my research project in a wider community which includes many non-academic partners. This network is still growing."*

*"I took up a BARSEA when heavily pregnant. It enabled me to keep the momentum of my career going and continue to build connections. I organised a number of events that brought scholars together. I was able to keep this network alive and build a years-long collaboration with other scholars in my field that led to a significant publication output. I am now known in my field for leading in collaborative, field-defining work."*

*"Having come from the museum sector into academia I have always been committed to public engagement. The award gave me the time and funding to work more formally on engagement projects - it forced my employer to recognise and allocate space for this kind of work. With cuts to funding for networking activities the funding made it possible to run major events on an equitable footing including paying for speaker fees and accessibility costs. It led to the development of long-term partnerships, follow on funded projects and the co-authoring of a book which is due for publication in 2025. It has positioned me as a leading voice in the area of [discipline]."*

*"The BARSEA enabled me to put together a special journal issue and a forthcoming edited volume in an area outside of my home discipline. It gave me the confidence and resources to pursue different directions, and to really allow myself to be led by research questions first, and disciplinary positionings second. These publications have changed the course of my career because they've been pivoting me towards other fields and disciplines."*

## Skills

*"It has been crucial for my confidence, for establishing networks and thinking about the wider applicability of my work outside academia. It has also been important for the way that management staff in universities see me, although less relevant to the way my academic peers see me in terms of research."*

*"Whilst the amount of funding I received was really relatively small, in terms of visibility, leadership, networking, getting away from being a scholar who sat in a back bedroom writing on my own, it made all the difference and I think these aspects were what enabled me to secure further university funding to progress my research and then national and international external funding."*

*"The BARSEA helped me and my collaborators to support a network of early career scholars in their own public engagement activities. The award has been perceived to be marker of excellence for skills which are rarely recognised in this way in academia, knowledge exchange, collaboration, and mentorship, and not just for me as a PI but also for those that participated in the network's activities. It has helped me to evidence my leadership capacity beyond the traditional for the purposes of applying for larger funded projects and for promotion to Associate Professor."*

*"The BARSEA also offered tangible evidence of skills and ways of working that I'd long deployed but previously grappled with being able to point to: synthesising opportunities and networks for greater effect, leadership, interdisciplinary innovation. It was (in relative terms) a small investment but at the right time with significant impact."*

*"Working with the development company and designer allowed me to develop project management skills that I would otherwise not have had the opportunity to develop given the scope of my academic job. I consider that this is likely to help my career progression as I now have skills that can also meaningful be used in mentoring others to develop engagement strategies for their research."*

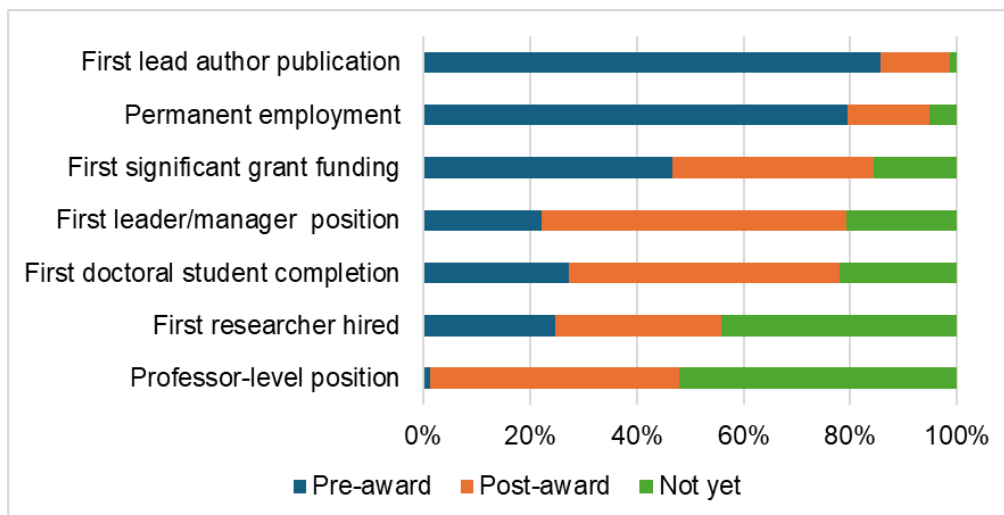


### 8.3. Potential measures of impact

BARSEAs were open to academics at a wide range of career stages, including those who had already obtained a permanent academic contract, and not designed to be transformational in terms of establishment early in an academic career. The impact measures in the survey were not designed specifically to signal outcomes from a BARSEA award and so the results presented here are included more to illustrate the career progression of these alumni than as evidence for specific impacts of the award. Nonetheless, for each of these potential yardsticks, Figure 8.4 illustrates the proportions of BARSEA alumni respondents who had achieved it before or after their award, and who had not done so by the time of the survey.

Thus, almost all had published a paper as lead author and a high proportion had done so prior to their BARSEA, and likewise all but a handful had achieved a permanent employment, again mostly prior to their award. On the other hand, while under half had obtained their first significant external funding prior to their BARSEA, over 80% had now done so. Significantly more of those who had achieved a position of leadership/management and had successfully supervised a doctoral student to completion had done this following the award, than beforehand. In all, only around half had recruited a researcher into their team, roughly evenly split between before and post the award. Perhaps predictably, only one respondent reported having a Professor-level position prior to their BARSEA, while nearly half of these respondents had such a position by the time of the survey.

*Figure 8.4 Proportions of BARSEA alumni survey respondents achieving various measures of progression, in relation to year of completion of their award (N=77)*



For clarity, we consider that where these achievements had taken place following the award, this should be seen as a correlative relationship rather than causative, due to the nature and scale of the award and its positioning as only one of many potential factors supporting career progression.

## 9. Achievements and contributions

To add some further colour to findings in this tracking study of the careers of BARSEA alumni, this chapter presents brief insights of their achievements and contributions to their disciplines since their awards.

### 9.1. Personal recognition and achievements

Respondents were invited to list significant national/international prizes, awards or other forms of public or academic recognition they had achieved during or since their BARSEA. In response, 48 respondents provided details of such recognition, which we then analysed thematically. One third of them ( $N=17$ ) indicated that they had subsequently won some kind of fellowship from a research funder, including a few gaining a Future Leaders Fellowship from UKRI, and others from Wellcome, Leverhulme and the BA itself. A significant minority had won some form of prize or medal, including disciplinary/scholarly prizes ( $N=13$ ) and prizes for publications of various kinds ( $N=10$ ). Almost one third cited election to fellowship of a learned society ( $N=15$ ), such as the Royal Historical Society, while five had been selected as editorial board or significant advisory panel or expert/policy panel members.

When asked to list the two research outputs of which they were most proud, 45 of the  $N=60$  responding BARSEA alumni listed one or more academic papers, while over half ( $N=37$ ) cited a monograph or similar publication. As was the case for those listed by PDF alumni, analysis of the scope or quality of these publications was beyond the remit of this career-focused study. Smaller but significant numbers were particularly proud of one or more events resulting directly from their award, while others indicated alternative types of output including digital media or courses, exhibitions and films, with  $N=5$  referring to either public engagement or policy-related outcomes or outputs.

*Table 9.1 Frequency of most common themes amongst other achievements listed by BARSEA alumni ( $N=61$ )\**

Theme	Responses
Recognition/award/grant	23
Personal career progression/position	20
Academic/research-related outputs	18
Establishing group/topic/centre	12
Public engagement	10
Non-research leadership role	8
Teaching	8
Training other researchers	5

\*Respondents were invited to name two achievements, hence response totals sum to over 61

Invited to nominate other types of achievement of which they were proud, during or since their award, the most common themes were personal recognition (such as winning some kind of award or grant), progression within their career, and further outputs from their research or

BARSEA activity (Table 9.1). Other achievements cited by significant proportions of responding alumni included establishment of a disciplinary/research network or centre, public engagement and policy-related activities. Undertaking a senior institutional role, development of teaching and training other researchers or doctoral students were also cited by at least five respondents each. Collectively these nominations demonstrate that BARSEA alumni are playing a wide range of key roles in the academic and research eco-system.

The following quotations are BARSEA alumni responses to the request for 'other achievements', or extracts from them in some cases, as illustrative examples. As for the PDF alumni, these examples focus on types of achievement rather than recognition, career progression or research-related outputs, all of which have been focused upon already.

#### Establishing a research network or group

*"I was Co-Director of this 10 year interdisciplinary project. It did amazing things for voice-hearers, for participating researchers, and for generating new knowledge in a variety of spheres."*

*"Another strand of my research is connected to local government and their financial distress. [I want to cite] co-founding a research network on this topic, with colleagues from the UK, USA, South Africa and both lawyers and economists."*

#### Serving the discipline

*"Serving as Managing Editor of [key journal] in my field, and therefore having the opportunity to nurture new researchers and showcase innovative new work."*

*"Special Advisor to the House of Lords [...] Committee. I acted as special advisor and helped to substantively shape their inquiry - offering evidence-based insight and producing a set of recommendations of which I'm particularly proud."*

#### Public engagement

*"[...] project podcast. The podcast started as an output of my BARSEA grant but has continued since."*

*"As a result of the collaboration with theatre practitioners funded by my BARSEA award, we received Arts Council Funding to develop a full production (co-written by me). This pushed me well outside my comfort zone, and built on the skills I'd developed in bringing creative and academic approaches together. I was very proud of the finished production as a testimony to how research ideas can influence and be part of artistic work speaking to those outside the discipline."*

*"I am quite proud of my academic blogging contributions. They led me to be interviewed by the Financial Times and go on the record that [...] type of] contracts - in particular those tendered via [a certain way] - were illegal. Just last year I wrote four blogposts about a [...] tender and why it was illegal. Those blogposts took me to the front page of the top economic newspaper in my home country."*

#### Institutional leadership roles

*"Successful leadership of department as Director of Education and Student Experience, 2020-present. Hugely time-consuming, complex, and demanding."*

*"I'm also particularly proud of the work I carry out within my current and recent administrative roles. I am currently REF Lead for my Department and served as Research Director for 3 years before that. My main contribution is in the form of cultivating a healthy research environment, and mentoring of more junior colleagues."*

*"Establishing the Centre for Digital Humanities. There is so much we can do with the CDH in the years ahead. I am looking forward to leading it in the years ahead and to the challenges of keeping up and staying ahead of changes relevant to history."*

*"Director of the Centre of Literacy and Multilingualism (CeLM), an interdisciplinary research centre which conducts and disseminates research to academic and non-academic researchers, and trains the next generation of researchers in the field."*

### Teaching

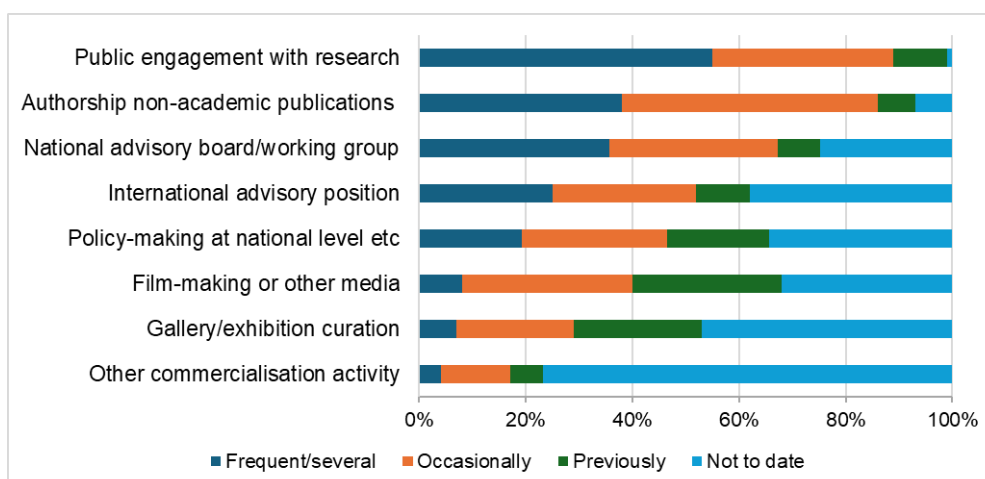
*"I have built a pioneering, cross-disciplinary co-curricular programme that is now recognised nationally and internationally as an exemplar of progressive, future-ready education. It is regularly cited as a model of what Universities can and should offer in the context of complexity and uncertainty; and is considered to be a best in class example of whole-person, wrap-around education. [Programme] weaves the work students do in strictly academic contexts with attributes, mindsets, skills and networks necessary for individual and collective thriving. We have [...] taught 1800 students and built a network of 200+ world class experts who gift their time to support the programme."*

*"Drawing on my own experience as a researcher, I developed an undergraduate optional study programme called 'Languages for Historians' to support undergraduate history students with their language-learning and multilingual research, and this has been extremely rewarding and something I hope to build on in future years."*

## 9.2. Other contributions to discipline and field

Results from questions probing whether and when BARSEA alumni respondents undertook a range of other contributory activities to the SHAPE disciplines and wider related sectors were broadly very similar to those from PDF respondents. Almost every respondent had contributed through public engagement activities, with 90% currently doing so, and nearly as many had written non-academic publications (Figure 9.1).

Figure 9.1 Frequency of BARSEA alumni respondents' contributions to sector (Ns: 71-72)



The majority also reported having current or previous positions in which they played advisory or policymaking roles, perhaps reflecting that many of these alumni were by now in mid-career positions. Half or more had developed outputs in other media or curated exhibitions or galleries at some point in their career.

### 9.3. Leadership and training of researchers

Insights into the extent to which BARSEA alumni were undertaking leadership roles in terms of managing and training other researchers are also included here for illustrative purposes. Such results potentially help to demonstrate sustained establishment of BARSEA alumni within academia/HE, although they are not presented as a direct measure of such an impact.

#### 9.3.1. Current leadership of researchers

At the time of the survey, 84% of BARSEA alumni (out of 70 replying to this question) reported that they were currently supervising at least one doctoral student (including one who was currently working outside academia/HE). Together they were supervising a total of 201 doctoral students (Table 9.2), suggesting a mean and median of three doctoral students each (when calculated for those who were currently doing so). The largest number given by any respondent was 12 current doctoral students.

In total,  $N=30$  (43%) of the BARSEA alumni respondents indicated that they were currently managing other researchers (i.e. staff, rather than doctoral students), while the majority ( $N=43$ ) were not. Together these 30 respondents said they managed 316 researchers. However, this was a very uneven profile with just five alumni managing two thirds of this total, while the majority only managed one or two such researchers. Thus, while this resulted in a mean of 10 researchers managed each, the more meaningful statistic was the median of two researchers, which was broadly similar to the position for PDF alumni.

When asked about any staff that they managed (which would include these research staff and other types of staff, but not doctoral students), the total number of people currently managed by BARSEA respondents was 719. 64% of respondents ( $N=44$ ) indicated that they did manage at least one person. However, notably, again, over half of this total were managed by just five alumni in professorial or other senior roles, and most were managing far fewer people. With that imbalanced pattern, the median number of five people managed was more valuable than the mean result. Comparison of the results for individual alumni revealed that half of those who were currently managing staff ( $N=22$ ) managed both researchers and other (potentially administrative) staff, while amongst the remaining half most were managing only administrative staff ( $N=14$ ) rather than only researchers ( $N=8$ ).

*Table 9.2 Researchers and staff managed or supervised by BARSEA alumni respondents, currently and cumulatively: proportions managing or supervising at least one such researcher*

	Doctoral students supervised	Researchers managed	Total staff managed
Current			
Number	201	316	719
Proportion doing so	84%	43%	64%
Cumulative to date			
Number	243	419	-
Proportion doing so	79%	71%	-

The survey also sought data from BARSEA alumni respondents about the total numbers of researchers they had recruited or managed, and how many doctoral students they had supervised to completion, during their career to date. This produced a total figure of 243 doctoral students that they had collectively supervised, with 79% having contributed to this total.<sup>25</sup> Similarly, between them they had recruited or managed 419 other researchers as staff, with 71% of the alumni having done this at some point. Thus, overall, the majority of BARSEA alumni respondents have played a role in training others including the next generation of researchers.

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<sup>25</sup> This is being slightly lower than the proportion currently supervising doctoral students because some alumni had not yet reached the point where their first supervisee had completed their doctorate

## **Part D – Overall findings and future career tracking**

### **10. Overall and evaluative findings**

#### **10.1. Postdoctoral Fellowship alumni**

These findings are based on analysis of responses from PDF alumni responding to the 2024 career tracker survey and, for certain topics, triangulation of responses with grant system data and/or augmentation with career information from public data sources for alumni outside the survey's reach.

Survey responses were obtained from a highly representative proportion of PDF alumni from all periods of the scheme (a response rate over 70%). Excluding the small proportion who had retired, 99% were wholly or partially employed (96%) or self-employed (3%), with just 1% not working (10 respondents, of whom six were unemployed). 94% of those working said they were currently research-active.

94% of the working alumni survey respondents were currently employed in academia/HE, although this proportion fell to 86% when the survey data were augmented with career data from public sources (about alumni for whom the BA no longer held contacts data). Overall, over three quarters were working in the UK, including half of those of a non-UK nationality.

As the proportion working in the UK was higher than the proportion of alumni of UK nationality, we presume that the PDF scheme has had a small positive overall retention effect in keeping funded researchers in the UK. Alumni in academic careers had flowed outwards to a wide range of UK HE institutions, currently being more widely distributed than when they undertook the award.

Survey results suggest alumni pursuing an academic career most commonly obtained a post at Lecturer level after their award although around 40% won more senior positions including, rarely, at Professor level. However, there is strong evidence for extensive career progression since the award, with the most common current level of position being that of Professor. This is highly consistent with the aim of the award to assist in establishing an academic career.

Amongst the minority of alumni who shifted their direction to work in other sectors, many were undertaking research or research-related work, in environments such as libraries, museums, creative and cultural organisations, as well as in the public and third sectors.

A counterfactual exercise was attempted for recent alumni, comparing their outcomes with those (obtained from public data sources) for contemporaneous applicants whose applications fell short at the final selection stage. While sample sizes were very modest, there was some evidence that slightly more of the awardees were retained in academia/HE, than of the unsuccessful applicants, but no evidence yet of greater academic progression. This exercise might produce clearer results if repeated when more time has elapsed for career progression, as many of these alumni only completed their awards in the last two years.

Further measures indicating intended award impacts have been achieved by alumni included that 91% of those pursuing an academic career had obtained a permanent post, including 80% of recent alumni. 88% had a research and teaching contract currently and the vast majority are undertaking research as a significant part of their contracted role.

Almost all alumni reported positive perceptions of the impact of the award on their career, research and personal development, attributing great value to the award especially in giving

them time to focus on research, recognition through the prestige of the award and enhanced self-confidence. A minority cited strong benefits from ancillary aspects of the award, including mentoring or networking opportunities. A significant number reflected that without the award they would not be in an academic career now.

The survey collected a substantive dataset about the academic and research achievements and contributions of alumni, including numerous prizes and other recognition in addition to their research outputs. Many wider achievements and contributions in the academic/research ecosystem attest to the substantive role played by these alumni within the SHAPE disciplines, including many leading and training the next generation of researchers.

Other career-related findings from the survey indicated that while many alumni undertook periods of international mobility, there has been low mobility between different sectors (aside from some permanent shifts in the longer term). Data about career breaks for personal reasons, including maternity/paternity and caring responsibilities, give insights into the context in which awards are held and suggest awards could beneficially offer greater flexibility in future.

Overall, this is a highly positive picture of the impacts and effectiveness of the PDF award over its lifetime, with widespread gratitude to BA expressed for the award itself, but also for the BA's management role including its light-touch requirements for reporting.

*"My career would probably not have been possible without being awarded a PDF. I'm extremely grateful to the British Academy for defending independent scholarship and advocating for innovative, groundbreaking research."*

*"I think my story may be useful for others - from a position of having poor A level results and being rejected from University the first time around, to now being a University professor. The PDF played a significant role in my journey, including an experience on a PDF training event which helped shape my commitment to making research relevant to communities today."*

## 10.2. BARSEA alumni

The survey obtained a healthy response rate of just over 60% although the smaller size of the alumni pool and hence response sample (compared with PDF awardees) inevitably meant the results are reflective of outcomes rather than statistically representative of all. Despite the modest award funding (£15,000), which facilitated certain activities to be undertaken in addition to awardees' academic roles, the award was widely reflected upon as a valuable contribution to them in establishment in their career and discipline.

Survey results about current employment were consistent with the positioning and intention of the award, i.e. to enhance certain skills and development of SHAPE early-career academics who were beginning to become established. 96% of BARSEA alumni respondents were currently working in academia/HE, over 90% in the UK, at a wide variety of HE institutions. Almost three quarters were still at the same institution where they had obtained the award.

There is strong evidence that BARSEA alumni have progressed substantially since their award (which was 5-10 years ago, typically). When they undertook the award, half were in a Lecturer-level post (and half above, but with very few at a senior level such as Reader/Associate Professor); currently, nearly 90% were at a level above Lecturer and nearly 40% were a Professor or held an equivalent position.



Perceptions of impact of the award were very positive, albeit couched in understanding of the context of the award and realistic expectations of its potential impact, i.e. that it could contribute to their progression rather than transform it. Mostly they perceived strong effects in relation to becoming recognised in their academic community, becoming visible and established as an expert in their discipline, and to gaining skills in networking and leadership as well as enhanced self-confidence. The prestige of being seen to win BA funding and selected by it as a 'Rising Star' was considered invaluable, within their institutions and their disciplines.

Other survey results attest to the increasingly substantial contributions being made by these alumni now they are established in the SHAPE disciplines and academic system, albeit with no attempt to connect all these outcomes causally to the award. It might therefore be best considered as having a catalytic effect, but with a distinctiveness about the particular type of activities it funded:

*"The BARSEA was a fantastic award that was really pivotal for me in my career, giving me a badge of recognition that catalysed a whole cascade of other prizes and opportunities. My career wouldn't be where it is today without it. Thank you!"*

*"I confess I was disappointed at the discontinuation of the BARSEA awards. The ones I was familiar with seemed to me to provide a very good return on investment, often funding work that went on to secure other funding (mine led to an AHRC leadership award) and generally supporting initiatives it was hard to otherwise fund."*

## 11. Future career tracking

To some extent, this project was experimental, conceived by the BA as a potential proof-of-concept study of a method to track the careers of individuals who obtained the two BA early-career awards within its scope. We believe it was successful in that ambition and encourage the BA to consider expanding the reach of the project to other award schemes, although the instruments used would need some customisation if used for other award alumni.

The approach and methodology adopted – an online survey of alumni which built upon data already held by the BA about awardees – were effective. A high proportion of the alumni that could be reached were engaged, through pre-survey communications and implementation of a survey that obtained a very healthy response rate from alumni across all periods of the lifetime of the award schemes. The majority of respondents completed all or almost all the questions, resulting in a wide and rich response dataset, from which deep insights into career progression and the impact of these awards could be understood.

We therefore strongly recommend the project continues, leveraging this strong start. The survey obtained consents from the great majority of respondents for the Academy to be permitted to retain their response data ( $N=745$ , including  $N=675$  PDF alumni) and for potential re-contact with them in future for similar purposes ( $N=732$ , including  $N=662$  PDF alumni). Based on these consents and following curation, the survey response dataset – which has been integrated with pre-existing grant system data – is being returned to the BA for secure storage. The consents will enable future tracking survey exercises to be undertaken, which we recommend are implemented using the following approach:

1. At an agreed future point, re-contact with and re-survey of respondents to the 2024 survey who gave relevant consents;
2. At the same time, engagement with and survey of alumni who were not in scope of the 2024 survey (i.e. 'new' alumni), to bring them into the tracking project.

Thereafter, this pattern could continue at agreed intervals, which we suggest could be every five years (and which could be integrated with the current five-yearly evaluation schedule, which could reduce overall respondent burden). Through such a process, for the long-established PDF scheme, at each survey point recent alumni will join the awardee community and tracking system and some early alumni will drop out (through retirement, or individual choice not to continue). This will offer a consistently large sample of alumni whose progression can be tracked throughout the substantive part of their career.

Based on our experience with another funder of implementing a first survey such as this one and a second one as envisaged here five years later, we recommend certain practical aspects of implementation.<sup>26</sup> In that recent project we experimented by 'piping' responses made by survey 1 respondents (i.e. response data held by the funder) back to these participants five years later in a survey for them to review and update, in addition to posing certain new questions in that survey. This substantially reduced the response burden for these participants and, carefully implemented, was highly successful as an approach and welcomed by respondents, i.e. avoiding the requirement to them to re-provide data they had previously submitted. In parallel, a second survey instrument was deployed to 'new' alumni to collect their responses in the traditional way, as they had not previously responded. In that project we also targeted the latter 'new respondent' survey to known alumni in scope of the first survey five

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<sup>26</sup> *Royal Society Early-career Research Fellowships Career Pathway Tracker 2024*, CRAC, (in press)

years earlier but who had not then responded, which drew a surprisingly large number of additional responses, thereby increasing the total coverage of the project and sub-sample sizes. Care was needed to differentiate the data obtained from the different response samples, prior to integrating them and analysis.

In this new project for the BA, we experimented with searching public data sources in order to identify career data about alumni outside the reach of the survey, because current contacts data for them were not held. This was partially successful in obtaining some career data that were comparable with data obtained within the survey, and could be integrated in certain aspects of analysis to expand overall coverage of alumni. This revealed that the survey – based on the contacts data held by the BA – had under-represented alumni who had left academia/HE and worked in other sectors.

Based on that experience, we recommend that selected data obtained for those additional alumni are integrated with the survey response dataset and grant system data. Where new contact data have been identified these should be incorporated into alumni contact records. This should enable enhanced coverage in future surveys. In principle, similar search of public data sources could in future be implemented also for alumni targeted in the survey but who do not respond. This could further enhance overall coverage of some aspects of career data within the tracking system.

Finally, it may also be valuable to record some respondents' comments on their experience of this first survey in the career tracking project. Such feedback was not specifically sought in this survey, so fewer than 10 respondents gave such comments. However, their comments fell into three themes. Some simply indicated they found the experience of taking part to be positive:

*"This was a really interesting opportunity to reflect on my career in a way that I hadn't done before -- thank you!"*

*"I found this survey extremely helpful as it highlighted to me the important role my postdoctoral research experience has played in my career so far."*

The second theme was from respondents who felt the survey questions did not fully enable them to record their experiences and perceptions. We had anticipated this might be the case for alumni working outside academia/HE, because many of the impact-related questions were designed to indicate progression in an academic career. Inevitably, during survey design, a balance has to be struck between greater complexity/length to cater for such variances and a compact survey to minimise response burden. A few academic respondents also felt greater nuance would have been beneficial, but we stress that this type of feedback was only from a handful of individuals amidst the many hundreds of alumni who took part:

*"Given the increased pressure on teaching quality across the humanities, it may be helpful to ask how research conducted during PDF has contributed to teaching innovation, especially in those organisations where teaching is meant to be research-led. The same may be said about interdisciplinarity, which also a key driver at the moment. My PDF was important for both these ends."*

*"I would have found it helpful if the questions in the survey regarding the current career stage were a little bit more nuanced to accommodate a more varied career pathway after the BA PDF. I thought the questions were too focused on the typical academic career trajectory (e.g. how many doctoral students you supervised to completion) and*

*didn't allow space for people to contribute other indicators of achievement/success in their current roles."*

*"The survey is good at tracking impacts of those who go onto research / academic careers but I would not underestimate the value of the fellowships for supporting research / understanding of research in other sectors."*

Interestingly, the third theme related to aspirations of alumni for greater engagement with their awardee community, and is highlighted as encouragement to the BA in considering how best to engage with its awardees and award alumni in future:

*"I would also find helpful a way to connect with other BA alumni, compare pathways, and perhaps find opportunities to reconnect with research."*

*"Other than meeting a BA [PD] Fellow 20 years ago at the end of fellowship event the [alumni] were invisible to me and still are... There must be a wealth of skills and experience amongst the [alumni community] so perhaps their work could be made more visible to the wider research community, and they could act as advocates/bridges/pathways between BA and the wider research community."*

## Appendix 1. Classification of employment level of academic staff

Job titles provided by respondents working in academia/HE were coded to the occupational stratification developed by the Universities and Colleges Employers Association (UCEA) and XperthR used by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) when recording contract level data about academic staff.<sup>27</sup> For academic staff of interest in this project, the stratification runs from Level L (which includes junior lectureship positions and post-doctoral researchers/assistants) through to Level A which is Vice-Chancellors (a simplified version of which is shown below. Levels G and H are not currently used. Several of the Levels are of particular interest here, especially F (Professor), I (Reader, which also includes Associate Professor and Principal Research Fellow) and J (Assistant Professor, Senior Lecturer, Senior Research Fellow). Lectureship positions are classified either as Level K (subject lecturer) or L (junior lecturer), depending on the seniority of the post.

Level	Description	Example job title or descriptor
A	Head of institution	Vice-Chancellor
B	Highest level of manager reporting to Head of institution	Deputy/Pro Vice-Chancellor
C	Head/Director of major academic area; Director of function/s	Executive Dean; Dean, Head of College; Finance Director; Director of Research
D	Head of an academic centre	Head of Department; Associate Dean; Director
E	Head of small centre; senior function head	Director; Division Leader; Head of Human Resources
F	Professor; function head	Professor; Functional Manager
I	Senior academic lead	Associate Professor; Reader; Principal Lecturer; Principal Research Fellow
J	Senior academic staff	Assistant Professor; Senior Lecturer; Senior Research Fellow; Royal Society Research Fellow
K	Academic staff	Subject Lecturer; Postdoctoral Research Fellow; Research Fellow; Research Associate
L	Academic staff	Lecturer; Researcher; Postdoctoral Research Fellow/Associate/Assistant; Research Officer

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c23025/a/levels>