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**Abstract**

In the changing context of universities, organisational structures for teaching and research problematise academic roles. This paper draws on a critical realist analysis of surveys and interviews with academics from universities in England and Australia. It identifies important academic work, not captured simply in descriptions of teaching or research. It shows that many academics, who are not research high flyers nor award-winning teachers, carry out this essential work which contributes to the effective functioning of their universities. That work is referred to as academic artisanal work and the people who do it as academic artisans. Characteristics and examples of academic artisans are presented, and the nature of artisanal work is explored. Implications for higher education management and for future studies are discussed. The paper points to an urgent need to better understand the complex nature of academic work. (HRK / Abstract übernommen) Brew, Angela, E-Mail: [angela.brew@mq.edu.au](mailto:angela.brew@mq.edu.au)