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Academics on non-standard contracts in UK universities : portfolio work, choice and compulsion /

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Abstract

This paper analyses the profile and motivation of over 1,300 academics employed on part-time, fixed term or temporary contracts at 10 post-1992 UK universities, whom it categorises as 'non-standard academics'. Based on a questionnaire survey, it investigates their demographic background, including age, gender and ethnic background, as well as the factors behind acceptance of their current employment status. It reveals that six out of ten chose their status and correspond in some ways to the profile of 'portfolio worker' (high level of qualifications, multiple job holding and sense of independence). This tends to correct the perception of them as mainly 'casual'. However, commitment to their current employment status is less clear, with over one-third stating that they would accept a permanent job on their current hours. There are, therefore, signs of adaptation to certain forms of non-standard status (hours) but not to others (impermanence). Such uncertainty illustrates the hazy boundaries between casual and portfolio status. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)