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**Abstract**

The competition for top positions in university rankings has put a stronger emphasis on the quality of university staff. Recruitment of excellent scholars is a core activity for university HRM. In this study, we compare the careers of pairs of similar researchers that were considered as very talented in their early careers. Of every pair, one has a continued academic career, whereas the other does not. We investigate to what extent success in academic career is determined by cultural, social and intellectual capital, and organisational and contextual factors. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)