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**Abstract**

The paper examines data on references to students made by manager-academics in 16 UK universities whilst giving accounts of their careers and practices, and reflecting on aspects of the current roles and priorities of higher education institutions. The issues raised are of wider interest than the UK, since the contradictory pressures of teaching and research and learning versus seeking new sources of funding are common to higher education in many countries. The focus and methodology of the Economic and Social Research Council funded project on which the paper is based are outlined, before discussing how the theoretical interests of the project relate to the student, the ways in which the student is a significant aspect of current higher education policies, and the contested status and identity of the student in higher education discourse and research. The changing nature of the student population, the relationship between manager-academics' concerns with the student and their institutional context, their major preoccupations in their roles, and how these preoccupations relate to

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level of seniority in management are also considered. We conclude that whilst current UK higher education policy emphasises the student, responses at institutional and individual levels focus on organisational, resource and time implications of the student body, rather than the student him/herself. Furthermore, it is noted that senior manager-academics roles tend to remove their incumbents from contact with students. It is suggested that manager-academics need both more contact with students and more understanding of their situation and concerns. (HRK / Abstract übernommen) Johnson, Rachel N., E-Mail: [rachel.johnson@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:rachel.johnson@nottingham.ac.uk)