



A pilot project was undertaken earlier this academic year with Research Active Staff (RAS). RAS are staff on research, academic or teaching contracts. The RAS were interviewed by an external person, who had a set of questions that all RAS were asked. The purpose of the pilot project was to find out more about the career pathways of RAS at Warwick University and to find out about the learning & development support that they had received & that they need. We also asked them about top tips they would offer a 'younger' self and also advice they would give other RAS colleagues. The RAS showed eclectic career pathways prior to becoming a RAS at Warwick. The project interviewed 14 RAS. 3 males & 11 female staff. The staff were both from both an international or national backgrounds. The RAS were from a range of disciplines and represent 14 different departments. The job titles included; Research Fellow, Senior Research Fellow, Principal Research Fellow, Assistant & Associate professor.

#### Next steps

- To share their top tips on relation to careers, this being include in May's RAS e-newsletter
- To collate all the carers stories & share them on the RAS website & in the monthly RAS e-newsletter
- To showcase some few of the career stories of RAS.

Quotes (Jane – these will need to have bullet point & also quotes) Lee – you may want to select some a couple of quotes

## **Quotes from the RAS interviewed**

### **What would your top tips be to a “younger you”**

#### **Any other advice you have for RAS and any other suggestions or comments?**

- 1)
  - “One thing that counted heavily in my favour throughout the recruitment process was having plenty of industrial experience and... knowing what happens in the real world outside of textbooks and academia”.
  - The importance of international experience as people begin to work globally much more than in the past.
  
- 2)
  - Get as much research as possible and go for a research grant as soon as possible.
  - The importance of networking and talk about your work with others.
  - The importance of living with and accepting criticism against PhD. Build up case of defence and let this criticism move your career forward.
  - Learn from working closely with your colleagues and pick up new ideas from their (closely related) work and original research.
  - “One problem is time constraints, there is so much going on that is hard to attend all the events I would like, this is the events organised above departmental level”.
  
- 3)
  - “Don’t be so department-centric and look at what is occurring across the whole University (in relation to training)”
  - “The department provides lots of support in multiple ways including funding applications but..” It’s only when I looked outside of the department after 4 years of being at Warwick did I realise what additional training workshops are offered by the LDC.
  
- 4)
  - Pushed harder to publish early on (during the PhD).
  - Understand earlier the importance of female role models.
  - Keep in good contact with members of staff throughout career, even if this is only casual correspondence.
  
- 5)
  - “Be bolder and more confident”.
  - To the youth of today; don’t be overconfident on what you can deliver and protect your reputation by delivering quality and on time
  - Learning to say no to other people and prioritising your own workload is crucial.
  - There is little funding available for the part of career that sits between PhD/ PostDoc and the Professorial level ie mid-career.
  
- 6)
  - Teach more internationally
  - Don’t expect other people to be involved in your development as you should be.
  - Invest in your career. Be more proactive.
  - Look for links between the teaching and research staff rather than divisions.
  
- 7)
  - “Think career plan, not first job role, from the beginning”
  - Specifically for returning to academia - “Be aware of what counts in your work place in relation to promotion as it varies differently from outside of academia”

- “Network outside of your own department/ university”
- “Use PDR year to develop career pathway plans”
- “Start publishing research article early on, even in the first years of a PhD”

8)

- Be braver in the research topics that you choose, particularly early on.
- Be more coherent with a career plan early on.

9)

- “Have fun, act age and enjoy life more”
- “Have an idea of where you want to be in the long term, take the necessary action to improve chances of this”.
- “Force yourself out of your comfort zone”

10)

- Moving from schools to academia was the right move. If you’re thinking of an Academic career - have other experience as well across a broad range of experiences.
- Academic related jobs after a PhD can enable you keep up research while earning and gaining other experience.
- Working with colleagues if possible to form a unit, mentoring and learning from one another is very important at all stages of the career.
- Find a good work/life balance throughout career, to keep doing loves outside of work.
- Give your time to reflect on the learning you have done and continue to practice in everyday life. This can happen outside of formal spaces for example when taking the time to walk into work
- Careers are a marathon not a sprint, this is also true for writing outputs.
- Don’t behave instrumentally (to your department/ career) also behave true to yourself.

11)

- “Publish: early on and in good journals” “It influences everything after”
- “Build up resilience to rejection”

12)

- I would advise myself to focus on publications much earlier in my PhD so that I had a publication before finishing my PhD.
- Why is it important for career progression? What do I need to plan/think about in terms of REF?

13)

- Create / take opportunities
- Be innovative/ be different/ be brave
- Think ‘wiifm’ – be a bit selfish
- Be true & authentic - live by your values
- Show impact / measure outputs or achievement
- Work smart not hard
- Network – a ‘gift exchange’
- Continuous professional development