CAMPAIGN for SOCIAL SCIENCE

A World of Talent II:

International Social Science Staff across the Higher Education Workforce

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Campaign for Social Science

CAMPAIGN for SOCIAL SCIENCE

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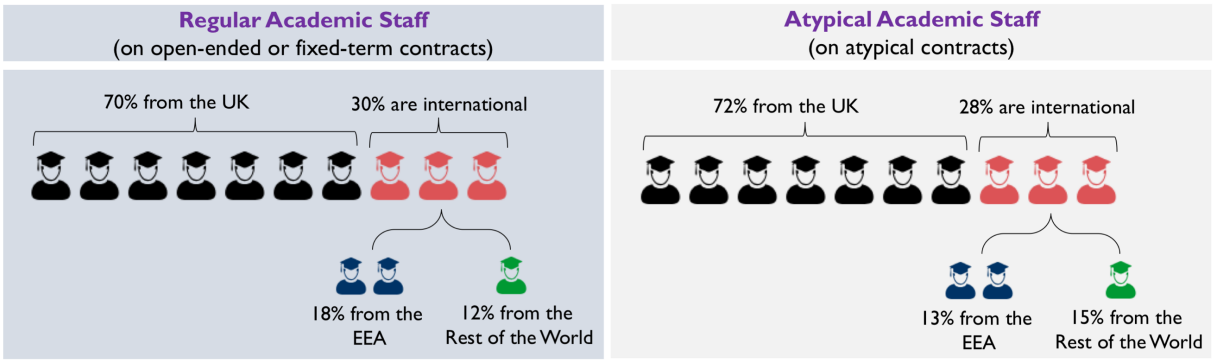
Introduction

In our first report, *A World of Talent*, we looked at international academic staff working in UK universities, focusing on what is often called typical or ***regular academic staff***: those on either open-ended / permanent or fixed-term contracts. Staff on open-ended contracts, for example, might be early career lecturers on the path to professorship, through to full professors themselves. Staff on fixed-term contracts might include, for example, those on multi-year teaching or research contracts, as well as lecturers hired for specific terms or courses. Data on academic staff by the *discipline* in which they currently research and teach are only available for staff on these regular contracts. In our first report we showed the geographical distribution and disciplines of global talent within UK social sciences in higher education.

In this second report of our project on issues relevant to visas after Brexit, we seek to broaden our examination of the data on global talent at UK universities by looking at categories of staff not covered in our previous report. In order to provide comparable evidence, we first show the distribution of regular (permanent and fixed term) academic staff by the *cost centre* UK universities use in their accounting (rather than the *discipline* academics work in). We are then able to show additional analysis of ***atypical academic staff***, focussing particularly on those in the social sciences.

According to HESA's definition, atypical academic staff include those for whom at least one of the following conditions apply: their contracts 'are for less than four consecutive weeks', they 'are for one-off / short-term tasks', they 'involve work away from the supervision of the normal work provider', or they 'involve a high degree of flexibility often in a contract to work as-and-when required'.[1] Universities themselves determine which staff members fall within this category, but atypical contracts might cover a variety of activities ranging from: 'visiting lecturers, expert consultants or industry professionals'[2] and academics 'organising a conference'[3] or collaborating on a standalone project, to hourly-paid teaching staff (such as some course tutors) and those on zero-hours contracts.[4] Atypical staff can thus range from early career researchers to senior visiting academics or practitioners, all of whom provide important services for UK universities.

Figure 1. Origin of Regular and Atypical Academic Staff at UK Universities in 2016/17[5]



It should be noted that the numbers of atypical staff cannot be added to the numbers of typical / regular staff in order to seek proportions across a unified UK university workforce. This is because though those on typical and atypical contracts are both reported as 'full-person equivalents' (FPE), differences in their data collection mean that they are not fully comparable populations.[6] But while data on atypicals may not be added to that of regular staff,[7] and we are careful not to do so, we still believe it important to provide a side-by-side picture of the make-up of this category of atypical

academic staff in the context of current debates, where little evidence about them has thus-far been made publicly available.

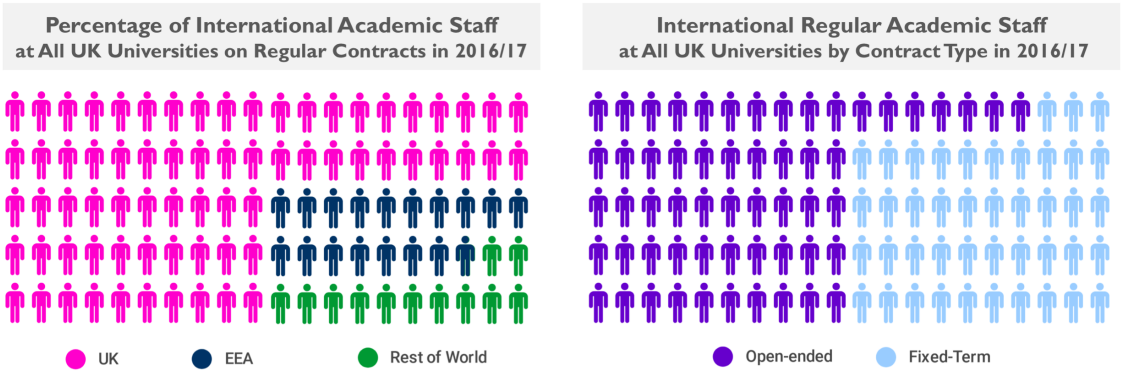
By expanding our analysis in this report to atypical staff, we are therefore able to provide important information about a different type of critically skilled migrants who are needed by our universities to fill critical roles but who may be affected differently by current proposals for a new immigration system. These 'atypical' staff are not usually on the types of contracts – and in some cases not earning the type of money – envisaged by the Migration Advisory Committee or the government in their recommendations, meaning that they may be caught out in the future by the post-Brexit immigration system currently indicated in the government's December 2018 White Paper. This analysis provides evidence to suggest that further thinking about the issue of international-origin talent and the proposed £30,000 salary threshold may be needed for UK universities, across all disciplines, not just STEM subjects.

Overview – Global Talent: All Academic Staff in the Higher Education Workforce

In this report, we use data on academic staff in UK higher education commissioned from the HESA Staff Record 2012/13-2016/17, this time broken down by the 'cost centre' universities use in their accounting of staff.[8] The headline figures confirm those found in our first report of *A World of Talent.*

Among regular academic staff at UK universities, 18% are of EEA origin[9] and a further 12% hail from the rest of the world, meaning that a total of 30% are of international origin.[10] Of these international-origin staff, 57% are on open-ended or permanent contracts, and 43% are on fixed-term contracts.

Figure 2. Regular Academic Staff at UK Universities by Origin and Contract Type, in 2016/17[11]



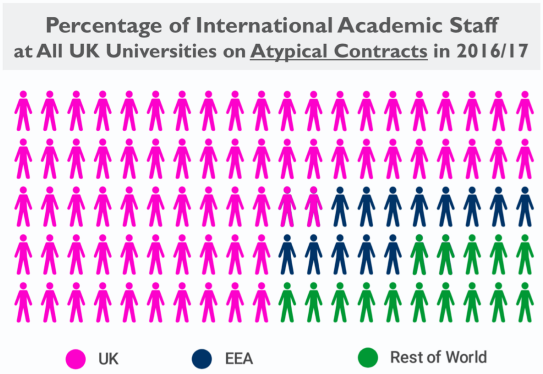
Source note: All figures in this report provide our analysis of data sourced from the HESA Staff Record 2012/13-2016/17. All facts and figures are reported in accordance with the HESA methodology for rounding and suppression to ensure individual data remains anonymous, and as a result the figures in some may not appear to sum perfectly. Analysis of atypical academic staff are shown separately in figures throughout.

Significantly, the trends shown in this report *confirm* those highlighted in *A World of Talent* while offering added evidence (by cost centre) and perspectives (on atypical staff). Though we naturally see some differences in the breakdown of staff by cost centre (this report) and the breakdown by their chosen disciplines (our previous report), the following pages show that no matter how we cut the data, and even when we add a side-by-side look at atypical staff, there *are* a few clear

trends that stand out at national level. For example, research-intensive universities capitalise and count on a high-level of international talent across *all* disciplines. The highest levels of international-origin staff are often among those on fixed-term contracts, but there remain high and significant levels of international-origin staff across all contract and university types. **Notably, there is also no clear STEM / non-STEM divide when it comes to levels of international-origin staff** and, in both STEM and non-STEM fields like social science, the greater variation is among the specific cost-centres within these broad camps (just as it was shown to be for disciplines in *A World of Talent*.)

Atypical Staff Snapshot

Figure 3. Atypical Academic Staff at UK Universities by Origin, in 2016/17[12]



The picture looks remarkably similar among staff on atypical academic contracts. Again, while atypical staff data are not collected in the same way as they are for regular staff, and thus not comparable on a like-for-like basis, it is interesting how similar their national make-up appears to be. Among atypical academic staff at UK universities, 13% are of EEA origin and a further 15% hail from the rest of the world, meaning that a total of 28% are of international origin.

Research-intensive Universities Capitalise on Global Talent

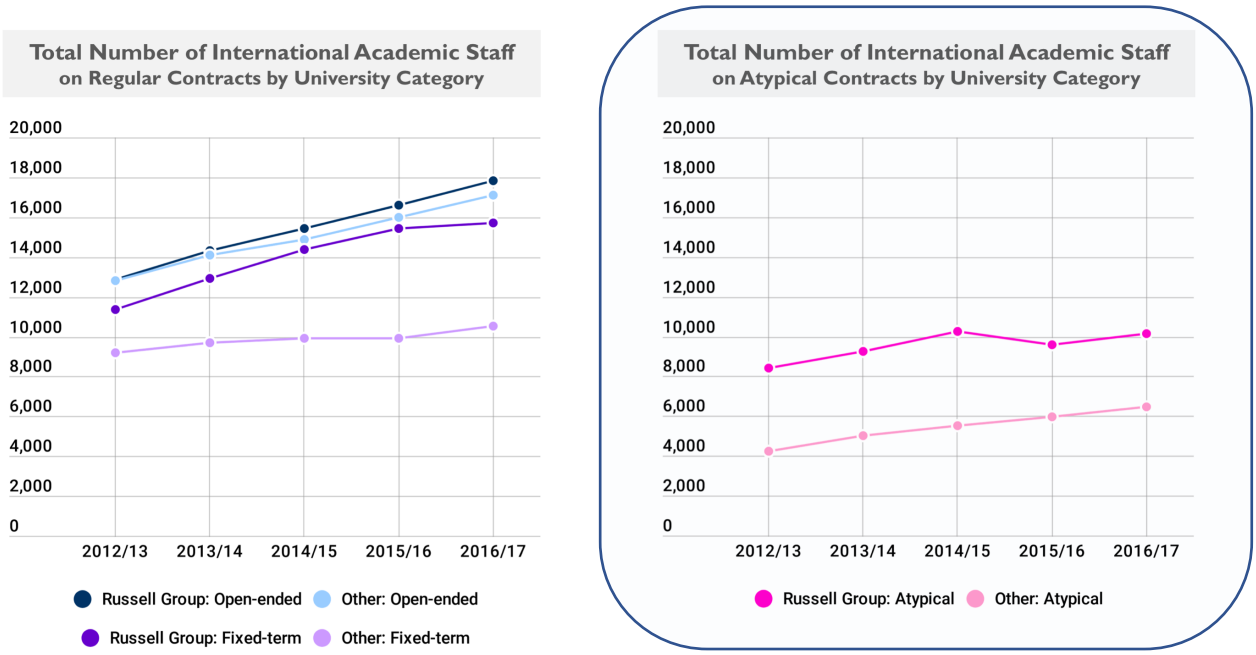
As in *A World of Talent*, we use the Russell Group universities in our analysis here as a proxy to represent research-intensive universities in the UK. While this is not perfect, it is readily available across the HESA data on staff in higher education being used here, and also helps us to conceptualise this idea in an accessible way.

Historically, both the total level (the absolute number) and the proportion of international-origin academic staff are higher at the research-intensive Russell Group universities than at other universities. This is true across all contract types, as shown in the figures below, including our 'snapshot' look at atypical academic staff. Generally, the overall *numbers* of international-origin staff across all universities are greatest amongst those on open-ended or permanent contracts, and appear to be lowest among those on atypical contracts.

In 2016/17 there were 17,805 academic staff of international origin on permanent or open-ended contracts at Russell Group universities (10,810 of whom were from the EEA) – figures closely followed by the 17,115 of such staff at other universities (10,270 of whom were from the EEA). These figures have tracked each other closely, and risen steadily, over the last five years.

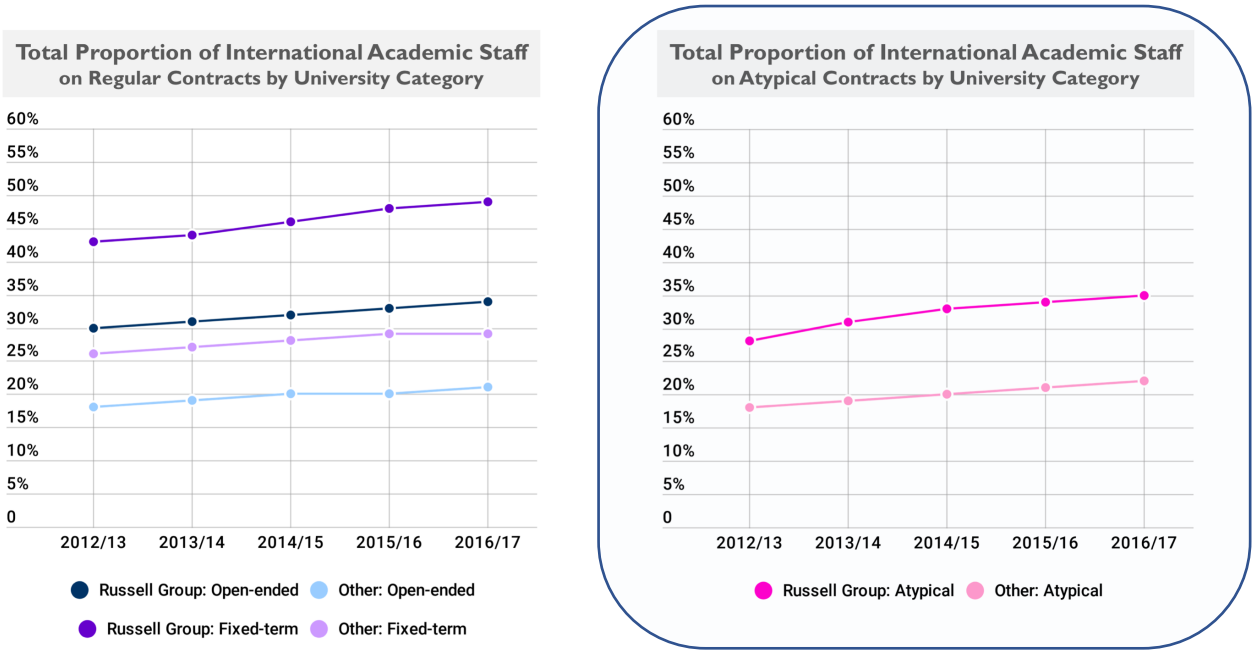
The *numbers* of fixed-term international staff are very near the levels of permanent staff at the research-intensive Russell Group universities. In 2016/17 there were 15,735 international-origin staff on fixed-term academic contracts (8,920 of whom were from the EEA). Interestingly, the steep growth in these figures between 2012/13 and 2015/16 seems to have tapered following the Brexit referendum.

Figure 4. Numbers of Academic Staff at UK HEIs by University and Contract Type, in 2016/17[13]



In contrast, when we look at international-origin staff as a *proportion* of all academic staff of a known origin, it is those on fixed-term contracts at Russell Group universities who stand out. Indeed, in 2016/17, nearly half (49%) of those on fixed-term contracts at these research-intensive universities in 2016/17 were of international origin, across all academic cost-centres, whereas this was true for only about a third (34%) of those on open-ended academic contracts at these higher education institutions. Notably, 35% of staff on atypical academic contracts were also of international origin at Russell Group universities in that same year, again showing that there is still a large proportion of international-origin staff on these more casual/flexible contacts providing services to our universities.

Figure 5. Proportions of Academic Staff at UK HEIs by University and Contract Type, in 2016/17[14]

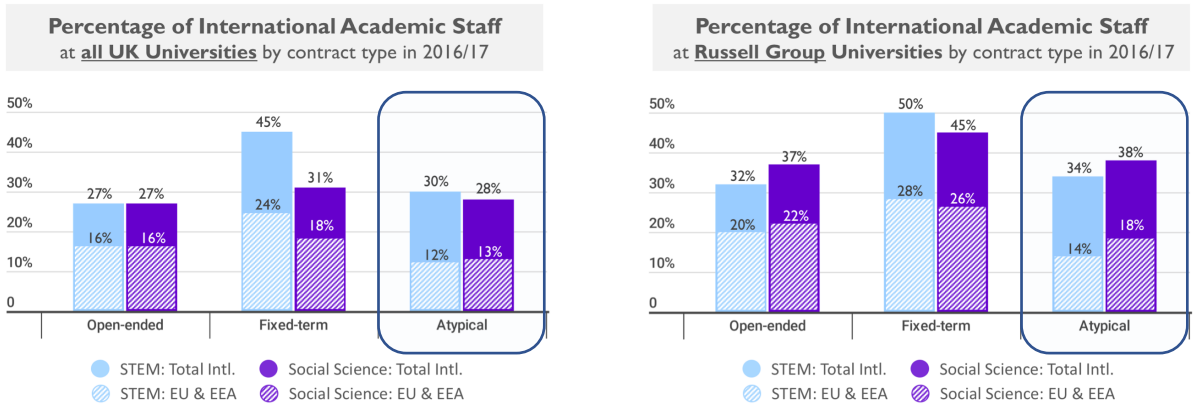


Global Talent in Social Science v. STEM

There is a common misperception that STEM subjects employ more international-origin academic staff than non-STEM subjects on a like for like basis. However, just comparing the *numbers* of international-origin staff in STEM versus those in science subjects does not paint a clear picture of their importance within these broad fields, because there are one and a half times as many total academic staff of a known origin associated with STEM cost-centres as there are with social science cost-centres.[15]

If we look at the total *proportion* of international-origin academic staff across contract types, we see plainly that there is no clear STEM / non-STEM divide. Indeed, looking across all higher education institutions in the UK, the proportion of international-origin academic staff in STEM versus the social sciences is *identical* for those on open-ended contracts, and within two percentage points among those on atypical contracts. Indeed, in 2016/17 in *both* STEM *and* the social sciences 27% of those on open-ended / permanent contracts – who arguably form the core backbone of our research community – were of international origin. Moreover, in *both* STEM *and* the social sciences, the proportion of those of those on open-ended / permanent contracts from the EU and EEA were also identical that year (at 16%). Those on fixed-term contracts are the exception, where the gap is wider with 45% of fixed-term staff being of international origin in STEM, but, given that about a third of fixed-term staff are of international origin in the social sciences, it is very clear that the retention and future recruitment of such global talent is an important issue for the social sciences too.

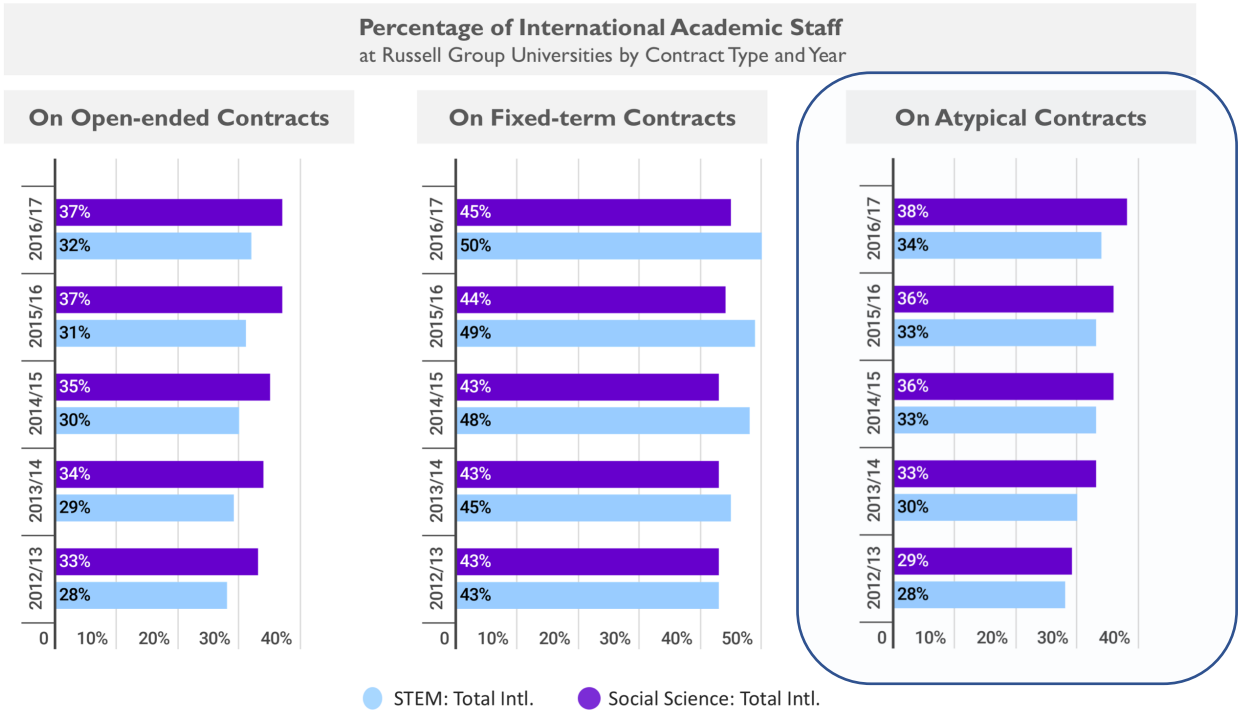
Figure 6. Origin of STEM v. Social Science Academic Staff at UK Universities, by University and Contract Type, in 2016/17[16]



If we look at the total proportion of international-origin academic staff within the *Russell Group* universities across contract types, we again see that there is no clear STEM / non-STEM divide. Almost one out of every two (or 45%) of social science staff on fixed-term contracts at Russell Group universities are of international origin (in STEM this figure is a straight 50%). Moreover, there is a *greater proportion* of international-origin staff on open-ended (and atypical) contracts within the *social sciences* as a whole at Russell Group universities, than there are within STEM. In 2016/17, for example, 37% of all social science staff on open-ended academic contracts were of international origin, while it was 32% in STEM. That year, 38% of social science staff on atypical academic contracts were also of international origin, while this figure was 34% for STEM.

More than a quarter of fixed-term staff, and around 1 in 5 open-ended staff, in both STEM and the social sciences at the Russell Group universities, come from the EU and the EEA – representing individuals that have thus far enjoyed freedom of movement. The figures below show that these trends have been consistent at research-intensive universities over the last five years. Both STEM and non-STEM subjects thus have a clear stake in the success of the future skills-based migration regime, and ease of movement will be an important issue in recruiting new staff.

Figure 7. Proportion of International STEM v. Social Science Academic Staff at Russell Group Universities by Contract Type, in 2016/17[17]



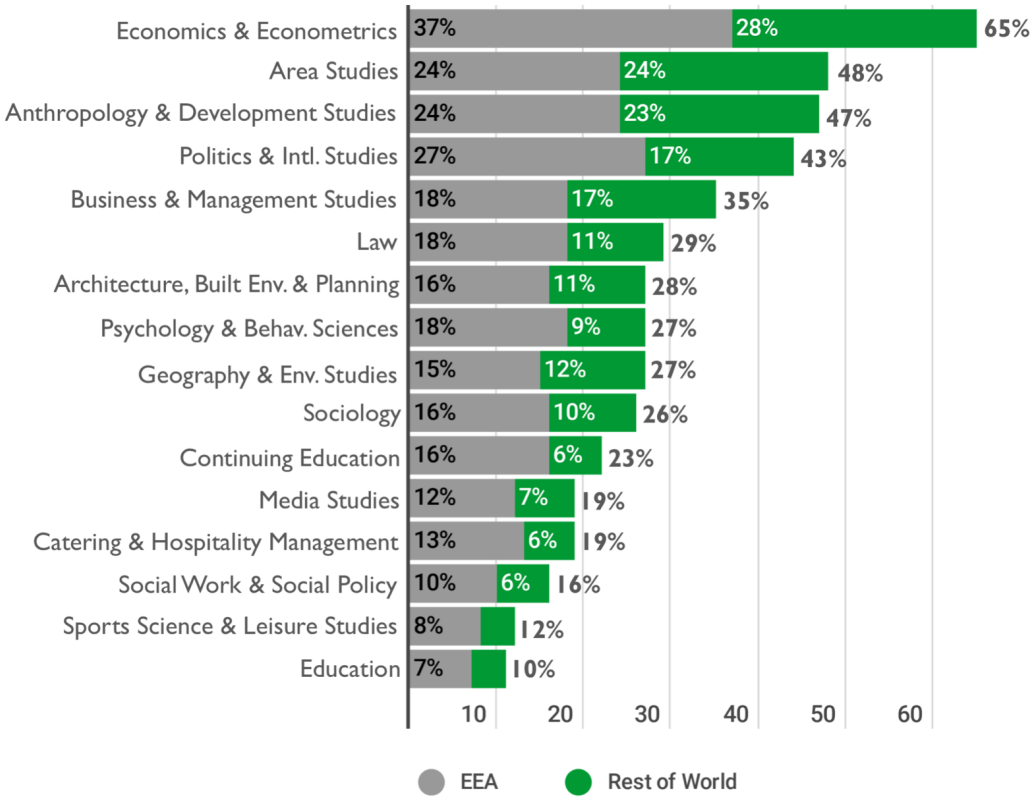
Global Talent in Specific Social Science Cost Centres

There is, of course, variation *within* the social sciences in the levels of international-origin staff they recruit. This is clear whether we look at particular social science subjects through the lens of the disciplines with which academic staff self-identify (as we did in *A World of Talent)* or through the lens of the cost-centres universities use to account for their staff.

Looking at all UK higher education institutions in 2016/17, we see that Economics & Econometrics is the cost centre with the highest proportion of total international staff on regular academic contracts not only across the social sciences, but also across *all* academic cost centres. Only Modern Languages reaches the same proportion of EU and EEA-origin staff as Economics & Econometrics (at 37% of the total academic staff on regular contracts). International-origin staff account for at least 4 out of 10 academics on regular contracts in a quarter of social science subjects denoted by cost-centre across all UK universities. And they account for more than a quarter of such academic staff in more than half of social science subjects.

Significantly, the disciplinary patterns of international staff that we found in our first report of *A World of Talent* are consistent with the patterns by cost centre shown in our analysis here – even though cost-centres are a very different method of 'counting' staff and are not as fine-grained as disciplinary breakdowns. For example, we found in our previous report that the top five social science *disciplines* in terms of the number of international-origin academic staff are those of Economics, Finance, Development Studies, Politics, and Anthropology. In this report, we found that the top five social science *cost centres* are Economics & Econometrics, Area Studies, Anthropology & Development, Politics & International Studies, and Business & Management Studies. This shows the importance of global talent, because each of these disciplines and cost centres has an important and substantive interest in international issues, and require specific skills to address those issues.

Figure 8. Total Percentage of International Academic Staff at All UK Universities on Regular Contracts by Social Science Cost Centre, in 2016/17[18]

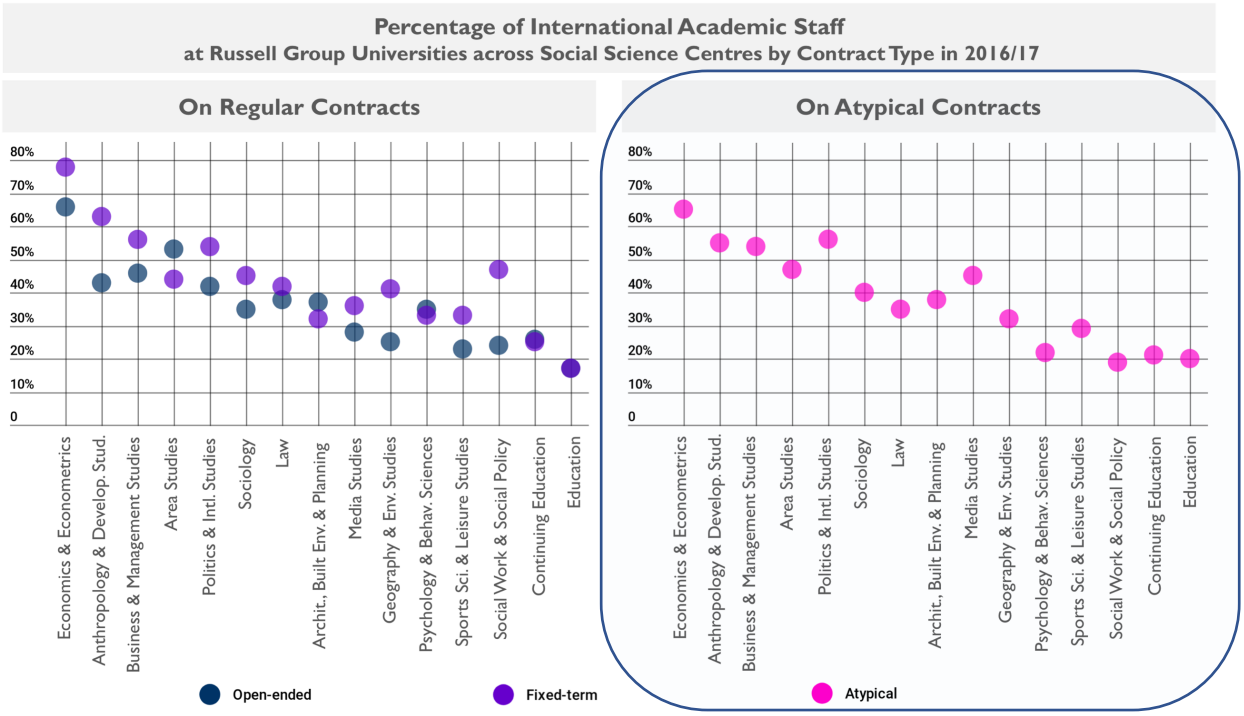


In our first report, we also found that EEA nationals make up half or more of the total international-origin staff in most of social science *disciplines*. In this report, we again see that this pattern holds, with EEA nationals making up half or more of the total international-origin staff in *every* social science *cost centre*. In fact, Area Studies is the only cost centre in which they *only* make up half of international staff.

Global Social Science Talent at Research-intensive Universities

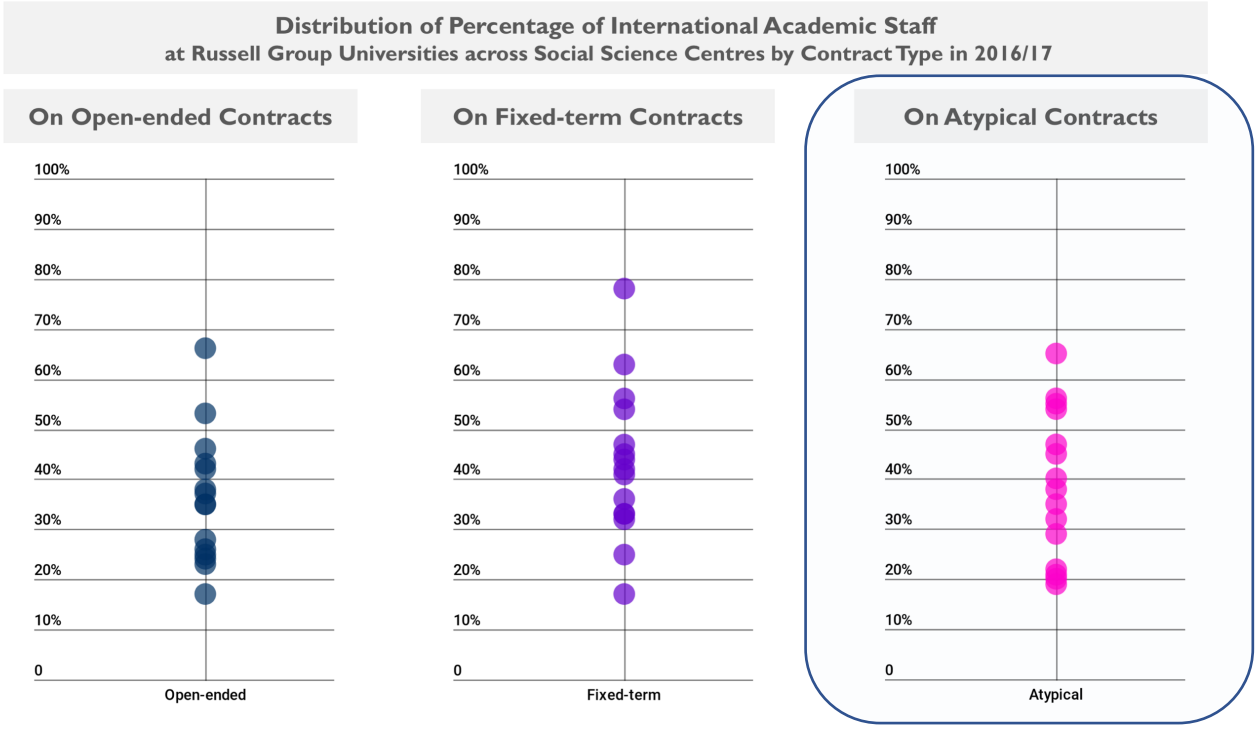
If we focus on the Russell Group universities, we again see both the variation among social science subjects and, with a few exceptions, the trend for overall higher proportions of international staff across all contract types at these research-intensive universities in most social sciences. The three social science subject cost-centres with the highest proportion of total international staff on open-ended contracts are: Economics & Econometrics (at 66%), Area Studies (at 53%), and Business & Management Studies at (46%). For those on fixed-term academic contracts, where the proportions of international-origin staff are somewhat higher, the highest proportion of international-origin staff are in: Economics & Econometrics (at 78%), Anthropology & Development Studies (at 63%), and Business & Management Studies (at 56%). The pattern across subject-cost centres also generally holds for international-origin staff on atypical academic contracts, where the highest proportions are in Economics & Econometrics (at 65%), Politics & International Studies (at 56%), and Anthropology & Development Studies (at 55%)

Figure 9. Percentage of International Academic Staff at Russell Group Universities by Social Science Cost Centre and Contract Type, in 2016/17[19]



Finally, the graphs below show the distribution of the proportions of total international staff among social-science subject cost-centres. If we break this out by contract type, we see that while the distribution of international staff is generally higher for those on fixed-term contracts, the *patterns* of distributions are overall pretty similar, and at levels that are difficult to ignore, across all contract types.

Figure 10. Distribution of Percentages of International Academic Staff at Russell Group Universities across Social Science Cost Centre, by Contract Type, in 2016/17[20]



Key Findings

The above analysis shows that a significant proportion of the social science staff on open-ended and permanent academic contracts – who form the core of our university departments – are of international origin. This is true across all UK universities, but rates are even higher at the research-intensive Russell Group universities, whose research power and knowledge exchange capabilities are of the type that the government wishes to capitalise on through the industrial strategy.

As we showed in *A World of Talent*, EU and EEA nationals often make up a half or more of these international-origin staff in many social science disciplines, suggesting that retention of this current work-force, and the continued ability to recruit from this talent pool in the future, is a key issue for the social sciences.

The analysis also shows that the highest levels of international-origin staff in the social sciences (as a whole) are on fixed-term contracts across all UK universities, but that these levels are again even higher at the research-intensive Russell Group departments – confirming our findings across all regions and disciplines in *A World of Talent*. This pattern also holds true for STEM and the Arts & Humanities as a whole, as shown in the *Technical Annexes* to this report. Fixed-term academic staff usually fill critical gaps in research and teaching, as shown in the case studies from our forthcoming report *Migration Matters*. Yet, while fixed-term staff play a critical role in many research departments, they are often early-career researchers, and are not necessarily on the highest pay-bands. Retention and future recruitment in this category will again be a key issue for universities and policy-makers to address in any future skills-based immigration system.

While we cannot add the numbers of staff in 'atypical' positions to the population of regular (fixed-term and open-ended) staff to provide a complete picture of the UK higher education workforce, it is useful to look at these populations side-by-side, to try to get a more comprehensive understanding of the composition of different elements within this workforce as a whole. This report has showed that, across many disciplines, a high proportion of atypical staff are of international origin. These staff are varied in their roles, but give universities access to a range of skills and a flexible workforce. It is clear that this may pose a challenge for universities, who may find it far more difficult to retain and recruit this category of worker in the face of the pending changes to the UK's immigration system.

Implications

The UK government's White Paper on a future skills-based immigration system recognises the need for a flexible and useable system that meets the needs of the UK for high-, medium-, and even to a certain extent low-skilled workers. It sets out a number of positive developments, such as improving the offer to students seeking to work in the UK after their studies – a key point for early career researchers who may require more time to find the right post. In view of this, we particularly welcome the proposal that there should be no cap on the number of skilled workers using the Tier-2 visa route.

There are, however, some points which remain of concern, given the findings in our two *World of Talent* reports, and our forthcoming report based on case studies of social science centres of excellence, *Migration Matters*. Here we particularly concentrate on those relating to academic staff on fixed-term and atypical contracts.

- The proposed £30,000 annual pay threshold, suggested in the White Paper as a requirement to qualify for highly-skilled work, may prove an issue for early-career researchers who are not 'new entrants' to the workforce, but who are on atypical contracts or the lower bands of pay in fixed-term contracts. The White Paper is also unclear how the threshold will affect those working part-time on pro-rata fixed-term contracts, which is not an uncommon arrangement for many early career researchers.

- For these same reasons, the sponsorship requirement may prove an issue for those on atypical or pro-rata fixed-term contracts, where individuals (likely to be in their early careers, but not always) may be working for more than one university. For both atypical and even fixed-term staff, it is unclear whether universities will be willing to sponsor them, and pay the associated sponsorship fees, as currently proposed in the future immigration system. It may be more likely that Universities will sponsor fixed-term staff, but even this could still pose a challenge for those on *part-time* fixed-term contracts. Yet as *Migration Matters* suggests, many of these staff are likely to be working on important subjects, with needed skills (number or data skills, language skills for area studies, or substantive interests in areas such as international law).

NOTES

[1] The complete definition may be found on HESA's 'Definitions' page for the HESA Staff Record from 2007/08 to 2017/18, under the 'Terms of Employment' section, available at: https://www.hesa.ac.uk/support/definitions/staff#terms-employment.

[2] For example, see the Russell Group's statement from 17 November 2016 on 'Staff Contracts', available at: https://www.russellgroup.ac.uk/news/russell-group-staff-contracts/.

[3] For example, see HESA's 17 November 2016 'Statement on the use of HESA staff data', available at: https://www.hesa.ac.uk/news/17-11-2016/statement-use-hesa-staff-data.

[4] In 2019, HESA published the first official data on hourly paid and zero-hours academic contracts, for the year 2017/18. According to THE analysis, this shows that among typical (regular) academic staff at UK HEIs, 3% were employed on zero-hours contracts; among *atypical* staff these numbers were higher, with 23% reportedly on zero-hours contracts. See: Simon Baker (2019) 'Official zero-hours figures unlikely to stem 'casualisation' row,' *THE (Times Higher Education)*, January 24, available at: https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/official-zero-hours-figures-unlikely-stem-casualisation-row. It should be noted that the extent of atypical staff on zero-hours contracts has been the subject of much debate over recent years. See, e.g.: https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/zero-hour-numbers-still-unclear-despite-year-long-study, https://www.researchprofessional.com/0/rr/news/uk/universities/2016/11/Zero-hours-contract-claims-misleading-says-Russell-Group.html, and https://wonkhe.com/blogs/analysis-atypical-academics-and-precarious-work/. The debate even led to a consultation by HESA on introducing the new measurements of such contracts. See, e.g.: https://www.hesa.ac.uk/files/C17025%20Staff%20Annual%20Update.pdf.

[5] Please note that for both regular and atypical staff, we use the total academic staff (on the appropriate contract) that are 'of a known nationality' as the base when calculating our proportions (in other words, the 'total' less those of an 'unknown' nationality). It should be noted that the number of those for whom nationality is 'not known' is very low for regular staff (just 1% of the total of all reported staff in 2016/17), but higher for atypical staff as may be expected (at 11%). However, analysing the proportion of staff of a known nationality provides us with a more accurate picture of known national origins, and this method is therefore used throughout this report, and in the sister report in this project, *A World of Talent*. (Source: HESA Staff Record 2012/13-2016/17.) We should also note that this report adheres to HESA's Standard Rounding Methodology and reporting requirements in order to ensure that personal data is protected and all statistics are anonymized. HESA's methodology requirements include three important aspects when dealing with data about people, like international staff: A) "Counts of people are rounded to the nearest multiple of 5."; B) Percentages … are not published if they are fractions of a small group of people (fewer than 22.5)."; and C) "Averages (like average age or average salary) are not published if they are averages of a small group of people (7 or fewer)." (For more information, see: https://www.hesa.ac.uk/about/regulation/data-protection/rounding-and-suppression-anonymise-statistics).

[6] In other words, for regular 'staff FPE counts are calculated on the basis of contract activities that were active on 1 December of the reporting period (using the HESA staff contract population)', whereas 'atypical staff FPE counts are calculated on the basis of those individuals who have only atypical contracts that were active during the reporting period (using the HESA atypical staff population).' See: https://www.hesa.ac.uk/support/definitions/staff#terms-employment.

[7] https://www.hesa.ac.uk/news/17-11-2016/statement-use-hesa-staff-data.

[8] In this report, we consider 'academic staff' to be those reported in the HESA Staff record as working on academic contracts – whether they are regular (i.e. open-ended / permanent & fixed-term) or atypical contracts – and to be those who are attributed in the HESA Staff Record to academic cost centres 101 through 145. We do not include staff linked to the following costs centres in the analysis in this report: Academic Services (201), Central Administration & Services (202), Staff & Student Facilities (204), Premises (205), or Residences & Catering (206). For more information on the cost centres used in the HESA Staff Record, see: https://www.hesa.ac.uk/support/documentation/cost-centres/2012-13-onwards.

[9] This figure represents the total number of EEA (in other words, 'other EU' plus 'other EEA') regular academic staff (in other words, those on open-ended / permanent and fixed-term contracts) as a proportion of the total regular academic staff of a known nationality (in other words, the 'total' less those of an 'unknown' nationality) at UK Higher Education Institutions, excluding atypicals. Source: HESA Staff Record 2012/13-2016/17.

[10] Throughout this report, total international staff refers to 'other EU' plus 'other EEA' plus 'other international' staff. Source: HESA Staff Record 2012/13-2016/17.

[11] Our analysis of data sourced from the HESA Staff Record 2012/13-2016/17.

[12] Our analysis of data sourced from the HESA Staff Record 2012/13-2016/17.

[13] Our analysis of data sourced from the HESA Staff Record 2012/13-2016/17.

[14] Our analysis of data sourced from the HESA Staff Record 2012/13-2016/17.

[15] In this report, we consider the following to be STEM cost centres: Clinical medicine (101), Clinical dentistry (102), Nursing & allied health professions (103), Health & community studies (105), Anatomy & physiology (106), Pharmacy & pharmacology (107), Veterinary science (109), Agriculture, forestry & food science (110), Biological, mathematical & physical sciences, Earth, marine & environmental sciences (111), Biosciences (112), Chemistry (113), Physics (114), General engineering (115), Chemical engineering (116), Mineral, metallurgy & materials engineering (117), Civil engineering (118), Electrical, electronic & computer engineering (119), Mechanical, aero & production engineering (120), IT, systems sciences & computer software engineering (121), Mathematics (122). We also consider the following to be Social Science cost centres: Psychology & behavioural Sciences (104), Sports science & leisure studies (108), Architecture, built environment & planning (123), Geography & environmental studies (124), Area studies (125), Anthropology & development studies (127), Politics & international studies (128), Economics & econometrics (129), Law (130), Social work & social policy (131), Sociology (132), Business & management studies (133), Catering & hospitality management (134), Education (135), Continuing education (136), Media studies (145).

[16] Our analysis of data sourced from the HESA Staff Record 2012/13-2016/17.

[17] Our analysis of data sourced from the HESA Staff Record 2012/13-2016/17.

[18] Our analysis of data sourced from the HESA Staff Record 2012/13-2016/17.

[19] Our analysis of data sourced from the HESA Staff Record 2012/13-2016/17.

[20] Our analysis of data sourced from the HESA Staff Record 2012/13-2016/17.