Teaching Cultures Survey
2019 findings

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Contents

Terminology

The term 'university teaching' is used throughout this report to cover all activities relating to teaching and learning at universities. Examples could include: teaching students; curriculum development; pedagogical research in higher education; student supervision; and the development of university educational policy/strategy.

Introduction to the survey

Launched in 2019, the Teaching Cultures Survey shines a spotlight on the culture and status of teaching in higher education. Most universities participating in the survey are planning or already implementing systemic changes to academic career pathways and the ways in which achievements in university teaching are rewarded. The survey enables them to capture and track the culture and status of university teaching amongst their academic community and compare findings with global peers.

The report highlights consolidated findings from 15,659 academics who participated in the 2019 Teaching Cultures Survey, taken from 21 universities across 10 countries. The 2019 survey is the first of three cross-sectional surveys; the remaining two are planned for 2021-22 and 2023-25[1], each using the same questionnaire. The 2019 survey findings provide a baseline from which change can be tracked over time.

Evidence for the survey is gathered via a short anonymous questionnaire, comprising 21 questions and designed to take five minutes to complete. The questionnaire was designed in liaison with an academic advisory group, and interviews with a range of academics from the initial group of 13 participating universities (from eight countries) were used to ensure its comprehensibility, coverage, length and structure, as well as its applicability across different institutional contexts. The survey data is not shared with participating universities, only analysed findings from it. In addition to basic demographic information (for example, gender, post, academic discipline), the survey is designed to capture participants' perspectives across areas such as academics' attitudes to and aspirations in university teaching, and the status of university teaching in key institutional processes. The survey is open to all members of the university academic community who hold an institutional contract of employment: PhD students (if both employed and engaged in a teaching capacity) and post-docs, faculty (tenured and non-tenured), individuals employed in education-focused roles, and academic leaders (such as disciplinary deans, department heads and university leaders). Please note that the confidentiality of survey findings from each participating university is protected; only the amalgamated data taken from across all 21 universities is presented in this report.

Institutional survey response rates (the population responding to the survey compared to the full academic population) for the 2019 survey ranged between 14% and 50% across the 21 participating institutions. The average institutional response rate was 32%. For a number of institutions, it was possible to compare the sample survey profile with the academic community as a whole. These analyses confirm the representativeness of the participant sample, giving confidence that the 15,659 survey participants are broadly representative of the academic communities from which they are drawn.

Details of the participation in the 2019 survey are given in the Appendices: Appendix A (listing the universities that participated in the survey) and Appendix B (outlining the profile – for example by gender, length of employment and seniority – of the 15,659 survey participants). Further details of the survey – including its design and approach to data confidentiality – are provided on the project website[2].

The Teaching Cultures Survey is funded by participating universities and is undertaken as a collaboration between these institutions and R H Graham Consulting. The Teaching Cultures Survey forms one component of Advancing Teaching[3], an initiative focused on improving the recognition, reward and evaluation of university teaching that brings together university collaborators from across the world. Additional universities are welcome to join the group of participating universities for the second and third survey runs: please contact the project team at the project website for more details.

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1 The interval between surveys will be agreed by participating universities in late 2020
2 Teaching Cultures Survey: www.teachingcultures.com
3 Advancing Teaching: www.advancingteaching.com

Survey findings

The vast majority of universities participating in the Teaching Cultures Survey are planning (or are in the early stages of implementing) far-reaching changes to institutional systems for rewarding and recognising university teaching. Feedback from this group of institutions made clear that they are looking beyond cosmetic changes to institutional policies: they are instead seeking to nurture an academic environment where achievements in university teaching are supported, rewarded and respected across all levels of the academic community. Concurrent with the implementation of new academic career pathways at participating universities, the Teaching Cultures Survey is designed to track key markers of this environment through capturing the perspectives, experiences and aspirations of the academic community. Its design draws on both the organisational change literature and experiences of universities in the Advancing Teaching network.

The wider literature on organisational change in higher education points to the importance of three sets of factors in delivering successful and sustainable reform: (i) the strength, commitment and vision of institutional leaders; (ii) the impact of enabling institutional processes and structures; and (iii) the perceptions and values of the academic community, and their engagement with and support for change. Alignment between these three factors is crucial. These themes are mirrored in the experiences of universities collaborating in the global Advancing Teaching[3] initiative that have already engaged in efforts to reform academic career pathways. Their experiences suggest that successful change often rests on the academic community's trust in its institutional leaders and processes: trust that the new career pathways were informed by widespread consultation with academics, and trust that policies to improve the reward of teaching will be delivered in practice by university decision-makers at all levels.

Ten questions have been selected from the Teaching Cultures Survey for inclusion in this report. Together they offer a cross-sectional view of the institutional culture and, additionally, allow changes to be tracked over time. The ten questions are considered across four major themes, as listed below:

1. Trust in the system: perceived institutional commitment to rewarding university teaching

Three questions focus on academics' *perceptions* of current promotion priorities at their institution and the extent to which university leaders are understood to prioritise rewarding university teaching. These questions explore perceptions of: (i) the extent to which university teaching plays a role in academic career advancement; (ii) the career advancement prospects of those in education-focused roles; and (iii) the level of commitment to rewarding university teaching amongst departmental leaders, school leaders and university leaders.

2. The levers for change: the role of university teaching in key institutional processes

Three questions consider the extent to which key institutional *processes and structures* are understood to support the effective and appropriate reward for teaching, via the university's systems for: (i) pedagogical training and development; (ii) annual appraisal of academics; and (iii) measuring quality and impact in university teaching.

3. Promotion priorities: the role of university teaching in promotion to full professorship

Two questions focus on a critical rung in the academic career ladder – the promotion to full professorship – and explore academics' *perceptions* around the university's current priorities for advancement and their *values* around their desired priorities for advancement.

4. Aspirations: expectations and desires for change to how university teaching is rewarded

Two questions explore academics' *perceptions* around how the reward for teaching at their university will change in the future and academics' *values* around how they would like them to change.

1. Trust in the system: perceived institutional commitment to rewarding university teaching

Role of university teaching in academic career advancement

This question explored the extent to which participants considered university teaching to play a role in the career advancement of teaching-active academics (i.e. those with any university teaching responsibilities[4]) at their university. The findings suggested few saw a correlation between their university teaching activities and their promotion prospects. As illustrated in FIGURE 1, only a quarter (25%) of participants agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: *"Time spent on university teaching has a positive impact on the career progression of academics at my institution"*.
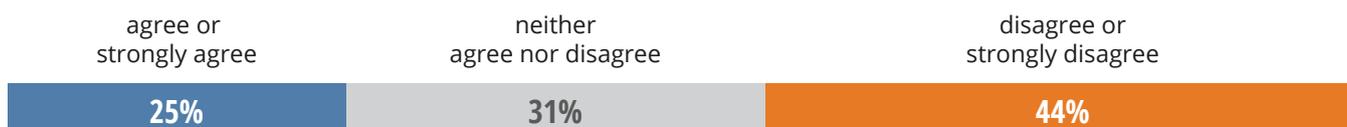
agree or strongly agree	neither agree nor disagree	disagree or strongly disagree
25%	31%	44%

FIGURE 1. Percentage agreeing/disagreeing with the statement: *"Time spent on university teaching has a positive impact on the career progression of academics at my institution"* (n=15,510)

Career advancement prospects of those in education-focused roles

This question explored participants' perspectives on the career prospects of those in academic roles that are mainly or exclusively focused on university teaching. Findings suggest that these roles were not associated with opportunities for career advancement, with more than half (57%) of participants agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement: *"Roles focused on university teaching are career-limiting at my university"* (FIGURE 2). Excluding the six universities with low population sizes or low response rates[5], the proportion of participants agreeing or strongly agreeing with this statement ranged considerably by participating university: from 44% at the lowest end to 70% at the highest.

agree or strongly agree	neither agree nor disagree	disagree or strongly disagree
57%	28%	15%

FIGURE 2. Percentage agreeing/disagreeing with the statement: *"Roles focused on university teaching are career-limiting at my institution"* (n=15,505)

Noteworthy differences by seniority were also apparent[6]. In a theme mirrored across many of the survey findings, mid-career academics were the group in the university hierarchy most likely to report that their university attached a low value and status to university teaching: 66% of mid-career academics identified education-focused roles as career-limiting, compared to 44% of early career academics, 48% of senior academics and 51% of university leaders. Similarly, only 20% of mid-career academics agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: *"Time spent on university teaching has a positive impact on the career progression of academics at my institution"* compared to 31% of participants at other seniority levels.

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4 It should be noted that 94% of survey participants would be considered 'teaching-active' – only 6% identified themselves as having *"no responsibilities in university teaching"* , as outlined in Appendix B

5 The six excluded institutions include two specialist universities with an academic population of less than 500 and four universities that achieved a survey response rate below 25%

6 The four 'levels' of career seniority have been defined as: (i) **early career**: PhD student (if included in the survey), post-doc and Research Fellow/ Research Associate); (ii) **mid-career**: Senior Research Fellow, Teacher/Lecturer/Teaching Fellow, Senior Lecturer/Senior Teaching Fellow, Assistant Professor and Associate Professor; (iii) **senior academic**: Professor, Professorial Research Fellow, Professorial Teaching Fellow; and (iv) **university leadership**: Head of Department, Associate/Assistant Dean, Dean, university senior management

Levels of commitment to rewarding university teaching amongst departmental leaders, school/faculty leaders and university leaders

The third question captured perceptions of the commitment of leaders at three levels – departmental leaders, school/faculty leaders and university leaders – to rewarding excellence in university teaching. As shown in FIGURE 3, less than a quarter of participants identified any level at their university as 'very committed': departmental leaders (20%); school/faculty leaders (13%); and university leaders (14%).
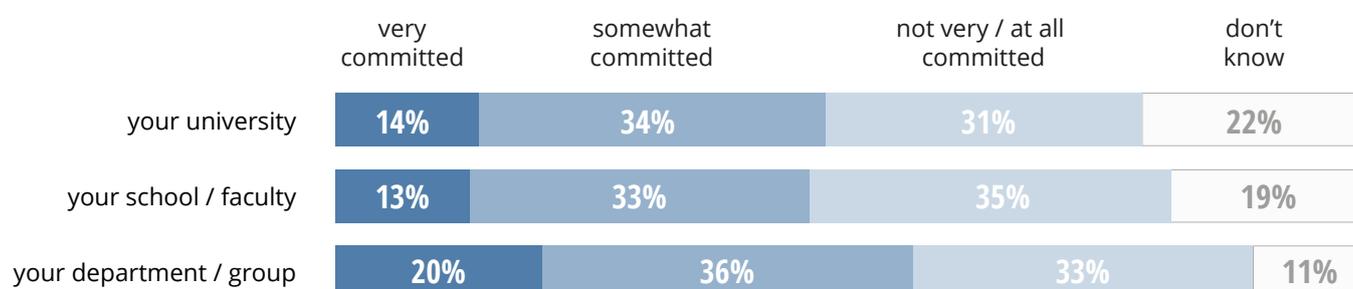
	very committed	somewhat committed	not very / at all committed	don't know
your university	14%	34%	31%	22%
your school / faculty	13%	33%	35%	19%
your department / group	20%	36%	33%	11%

FIGURE 3. Responses to the questions: *"How committed are the leaders at the following levels in your institution to rewarding excellence in university teaching?"* in relation to university, school/faculty and departmental leaders (n=15,527)

Differences by seniority were apparent. For example, the proportion of participants reporting that their university leaders were 'very' or 'somewhat committed' to rewarding excellence in university teaching increases progressively with seniority (FIGURE 4). In addition, almost two in five (39%) of early career academics – many of whom would be making decisions about their future academic careers – reported that they did not know how committed their institutional leaders were to rewarding university teaching.

Differences by discipline[7] were also apparent, with 54% of participants based in *Medicine, Dentistry and Health* reporting that their university leaders were 'very committed' or 'somewhat committed' to rewarding excellence in university teaching, compared to 44% in both *Social Studies* and *Humanities, Language Based Studies and Archaeology*.
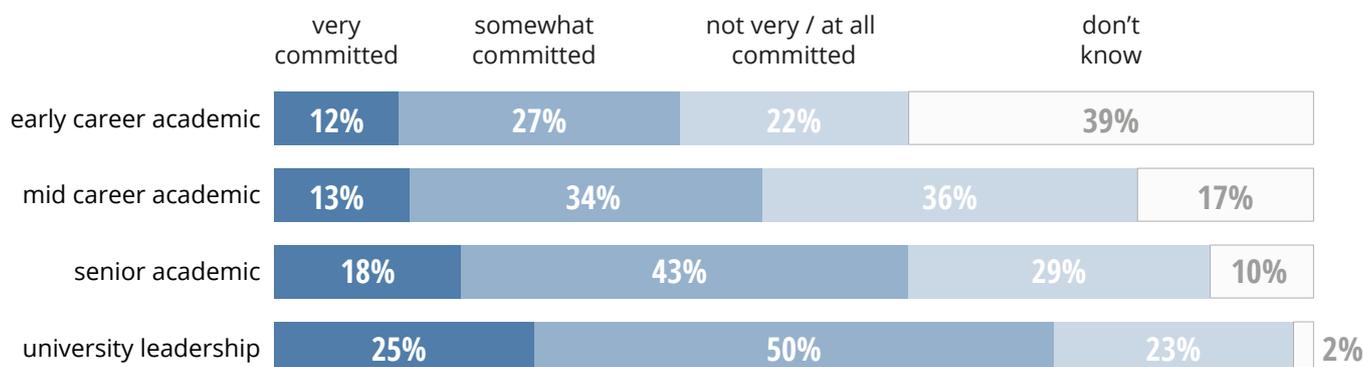
	very committed	somewhat committed	not very / at all committed	don't know
early career academic	12%	27%	22%	39%
mid career academic	13%	34%	36%	17%
senior academic	18%	43%	29%	10%
university leadership	25%	50%	23%	2%

FIGURE 4. Perceived commitment of university leaders to rewarding university teaching: responses to the questions: *"How committed are the leaders at the following levels in your institution to rewarding excellence in university teaching?"* in relation to university leaders, by participant seniority (n=15,527)

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7 Disciplines are grouped by HESA cost centre (for the 10 broad disciplines from codes 101 to 145), see https://www.hesa.ac.uk/support/documentation/cost-centres/2012-13-onwards

2. The levers for change: the role of university teaching in key institutional processes

Annual appraisal of academics

The focus of institutional processes – such as the annual appraisal of academics' performance or departmental funding allocation models – offer insight into the priority given to different academic activities by the university and its leaders. Without alignment of priorities and institutional processes, it may be difficult to successfully implement new reward systems. One survey question explored the extent to which university teaching was viewed as a priority area during the annual appraisals process. Overall, only a quarter (25%) of participants agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: *"My achievements, goals and ambitions in university teaching were explored in depth in my most recent Annual Appraisal",* with a further 37% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with this statement (FIGURE 5). It should be noted that almost one in six participants (15%) selected *'Not applicable (I am not involved in university teaching or have never had an Annual Performance Appraisal at this university)'.*

agree or strongly agree	neither agree nor disagree	disagree or strongly disagree	N/A
25%	**23%**	**37%**	**15%**

FIGURE 5. Percentage agreeing/disagreeing with the statement: *"My achievements, goals and ambitions in university teaching were explored in depth in my most recent Annual Appraisal"* (n=15,622)

Pedagogical training and development

Survey findings pointed to widespread confidence in the impact of pedagogical training. Most participants (83%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement: *"If you are an expert in your field, you don't need additional pedagogical training and development to teach well".*

Differences by university contract length were apparent. The proportion of participants that reported valuing pedagogical training and development decreased in line with years of employment at the university. Of those that had been employed at the university for two years or less, 88% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, compared to 72% of those employed at the university for more than 30 years (FIGURE 6). This suggests that more recent appointees are even more open to engaging with pedagogical training than their colleagues with long-standing university careers.
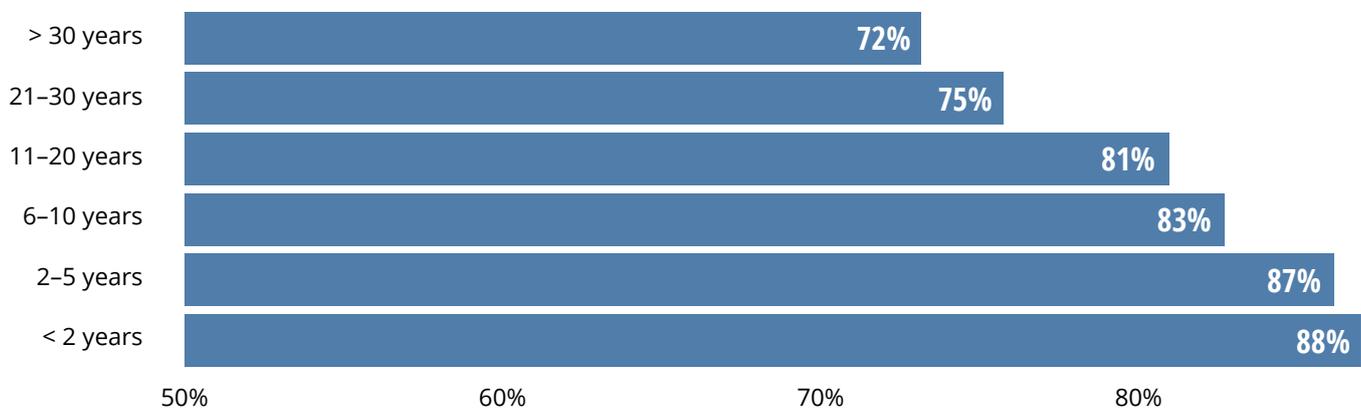

Contract length	Percentage
> 30 years	72%
21–30 years	75%
11–20 years	81%
6–10 years	83%
2–5 years	87%
< 2 years	88%

FIGURE 6. Percentage disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with the statement *"If you are an expert in your field, you don't need additional pedagogical training and development to teach well"* by length of university employment contract (n=15,617)

Measures used to evaluate quality and impact in university teaching

When identifying major barriers to improving how university teaching is rewarded through promotion and tenure systems, institutional leaders often point to the inadequacies in the measures of quality and impact of university teaching compared to those available for research. Some argue that a greater emphasis can only be placed on university teaching in appointments and promotions if the academic community trusts the ways in which it is measured. To explore academics' perceptions in this area, two linked questions were included in the survey, asking: (i) *"In your opinion, how robust are the sources of evidence used to assess the quality and impact of **research** at your university?"*; and (ii) *"In your opinion, how robust are the sources of evidence used to assess the quality and impact of **university teaching** at your university?"*

More than half (56%) of participants considered the sources of research evidence used at the university as 'very robust' or 'somewhat robust' (FIGURE 7). Sources of evidence used at the university to assess university teaching were seen as less robust overall; 34% reported them to be 'very robust' or 'somewhat robust', and more than half (52%) described them as 'less than robust' or 'not at all robust' (FIGURE 8).
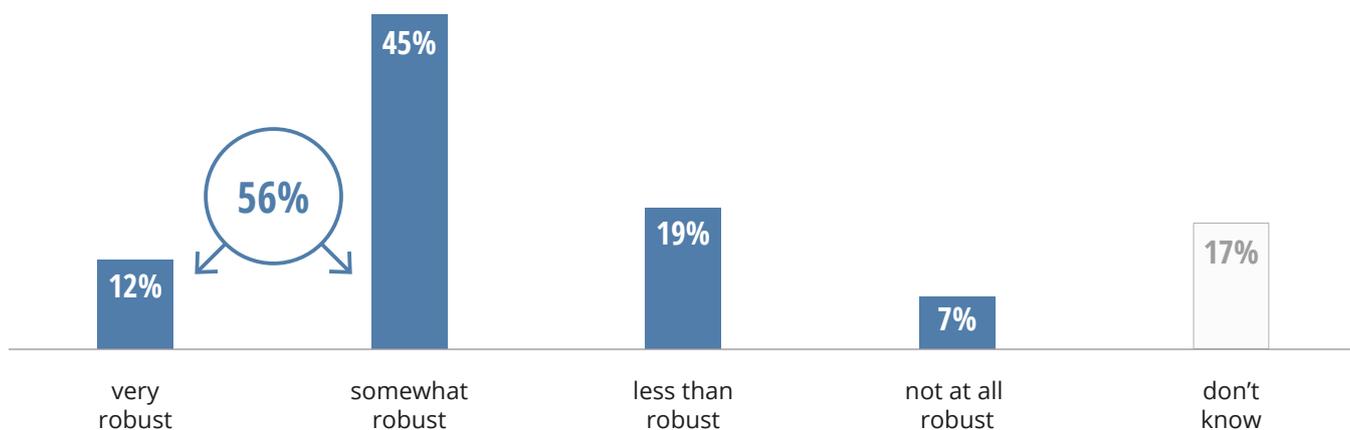

FIGURE 7. Responses to the question: *"In your opinion, how robust are the sources of evidence used to assess the quality and impact of **research** at your university?"* for all participants (n=15,592)
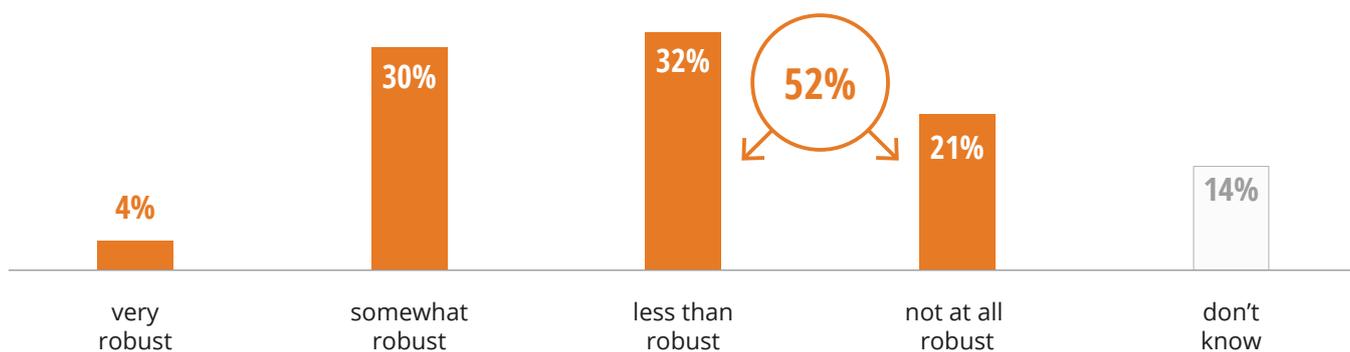

FIGURE 8. Responses to the question: *"In your opinion, how robust are the sources of evidence used to assess the quality and impact of **university teaching** at your university?"* for all participants (n=15,604)

3. Promotion priorities: the role of university teaching in promotion to full professorship

Perceptions around current priorities for advancement and values around desired priorities for advancement

A number of survey questions explored perceptions of the extent to which achievement and impact in university teaching was, or should be, an important factor driving career advancement at their university. Promotion to full professorship is a key step in the career ladder; it is often seen as a major milestone in an academic's career and is the point at which tenure is conferred in a number of countries/institutions. Participants were asked two linked questions:

- *"In your view, how important **are** each of the following activities for promotion to full professor (for a typical academic on a teaching/research contract) at your university?"*

- *"How important **would you like** each of the following activities to be for promotion to full professor at your university (for a typical academic on a teaching/research contract)?"*

Participants were invited to indicate the importance given by their institution to four major categories of academic activity: (i) research; (ii) university teaching; (iii) entrepreneurship, enterprise and/or external engagement; and (iv) service to the university/administration[8]. They were able to select from four levels of importance: 'very important'; 'somewhat important'; 'not important'; and 'it depends on the academic'.

Focusing only on the responses where an activity was reported to be 'very important' provides an interesting insight into the perspectives of participants (FIGURE 9).
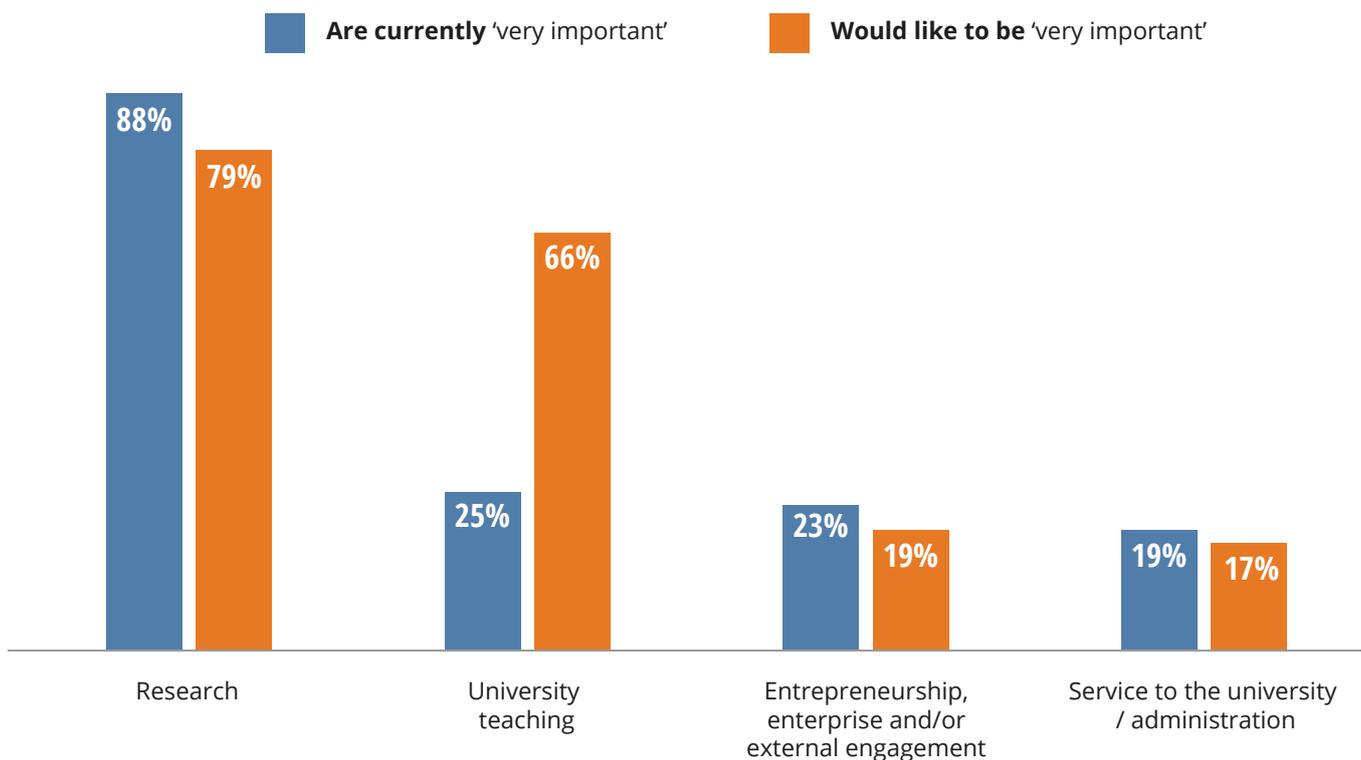

FIGURE 9. Responses in the category of 'very important' to the questions: *"In your view, how important are each of the following activities for promotion to full professor (for a typical academic on a teaching/research contract) at your university?"* and *"How important would you like each of the following activities to be for promotion to full professor at your university (for a typical academic on a teaching/research contract)?"* – represented by *"are currently 'very important' "* and *"would like to be 'very important' "* respectively (n=15,502)

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8 Please note: these four categories were presented in a randomised order in the live survey

While a quarter (25%) reported that university teaching was currently 'very important' in promotion to full professorship at their university, two thirds (66%) reported that they would like it to be 'very important'. University leaders were the group most likely to report that university teaching should be 'very important', with 80% selecting this response. Some differences by disciplinary group[7] were also apparent. For example, 70% of participants in *Humanities, Language Based Studies and Archaeology* reported that university teaching should be 'very important' compared to 62% of those based in *Engineering and Technology*.

Across participating institutions (excluding data from universities with small populations or low response rates[5]), the views expressed in relation to whether university teaching **was currently** 'very important' in promotion to full professorship were relatively consistent across the participating institutions. As illustrated in FIGURE 10, with the exception of one outlier institution at 42%, the proportion selecting this response ranged between 17% and 31%. The proportion reporting that they **would like** university teaching to be 'very important' ranged between 60% and 71%. This points to a relatively consistent level of support, across participating institutions for university teaching to play a prominent role in professorial appointments and promotions.
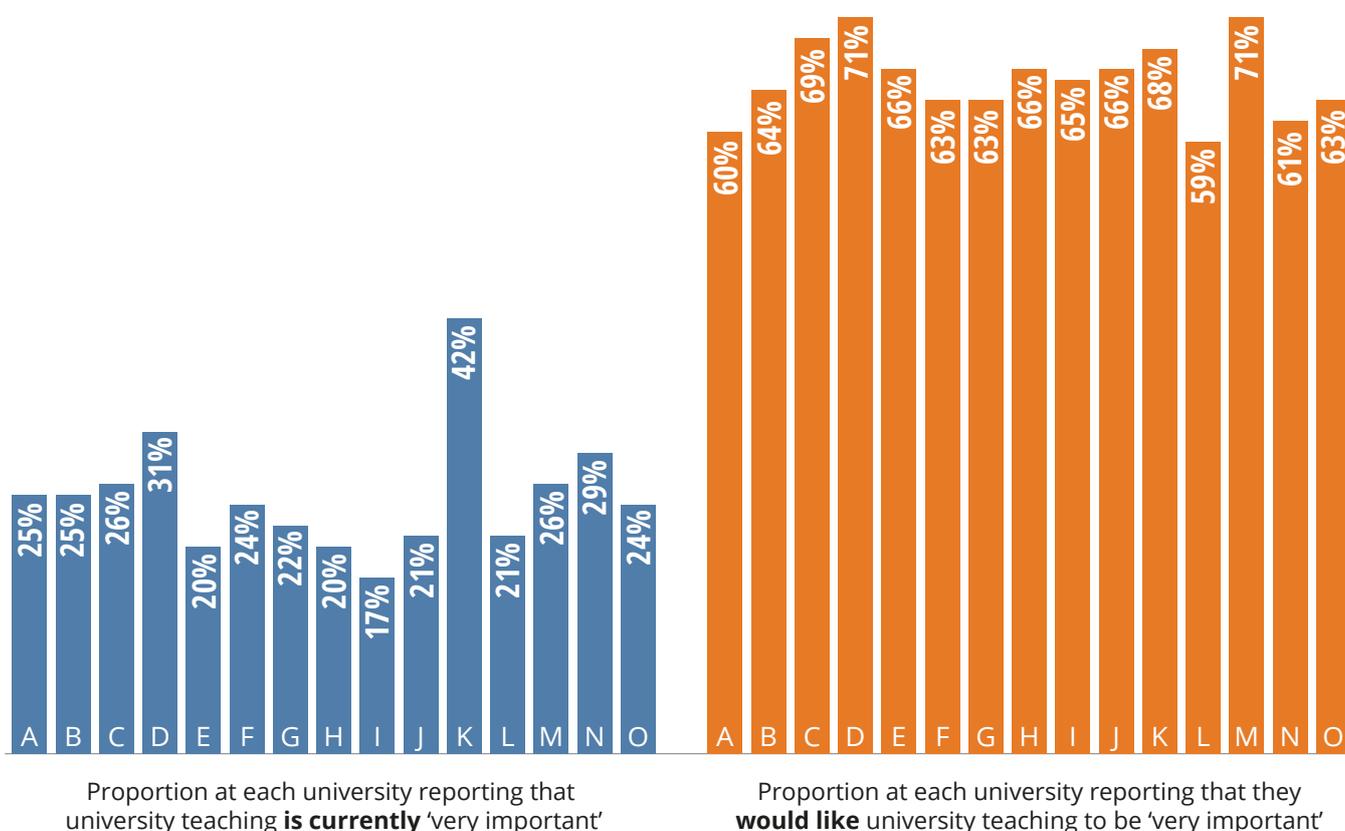

Proportion at each university reporting that university teaching **is currently** 'very important'

Proportion at each university reporting that they **would like** university teaching to be 'very important'

FIGURE 10. Participants identifying university teaching as 'very important' in response to the questions: *"In your view, how important **are** each of the following activities for promotion to full professor (for a typical academic on a teaching/research contract) at your university?"* and *"How important **would you like** each of the following activities to be for promotion to full professor at your university (for a typical academic on a teaching/research contract)?"* by anonymised participating university (n=12,690). Note: the six universities with low population sizes or low response rates have been excluded from this data[5]; anonymised findings from the remaining 15 universities are shown here

4. Aspirations: expectations and desires for change to how university teaching is rewarded

How the reward for university teaching will change in the future

Participants were asked two linked questions: (i) *"Do **you think** the priority given to university teaching in academic promotions will change at your institution in the next five years?"* and; (ii) *"Would **you like** the priority given to university teaching in academic promotions at your institution to change in the next five years?".*

While less than a third (28%) anticipated that the priority given to university teaching in academic promotions at their university would increase in the next five years, more than three in five (61%) would like it to do so (FIGURE 11). Given the size of the survey (over 15,600 academics) and the consistency of the findings across 21 universities in 10 countries, this finding provides support for positive changes in the ways university teaching is rewarded at the participating universities.
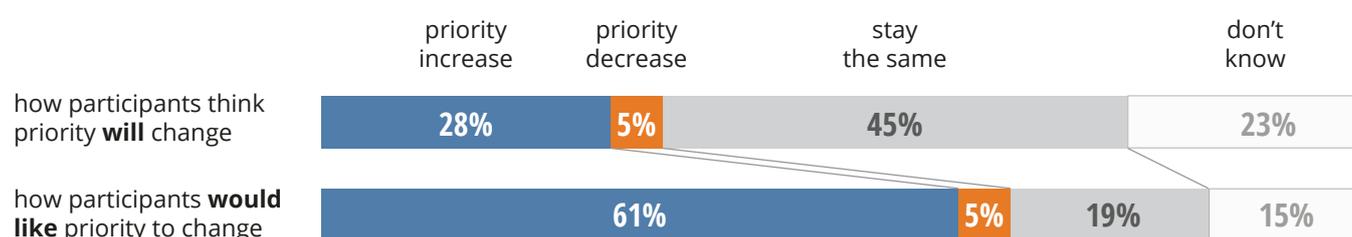
	priority increase	priority decrease	stay the same	don't know
how participants think priority **will** change	28%	5%	45%	23%
how participants **would like** priority to change	61%	5%	19%	15%

FIGURE 11. Responses to the two questions: *"Do **you think** the priority given to university teaching in academic promotions will change at your institution in the next five years?"* and *"Would **you like** the priority given to university teaching in academic promotions at your institution to change in the next five years?"* for all participants (n=15,597)

The proportion of those anticipating an increased priority given to university teaching increases with seniority (FIGURE 12), from 22% of early career academic to 57% of university leaders. The two groups most likely to call for an increase in priority were mid-career academics (68%) and university leaders (77%). In addition, participants from *Medicine, Dentistry and Health* were more likely to call for an increase in priority than those from the *Biological, Mathematical and Physical Sciences* (68% compared to 56% respectively).
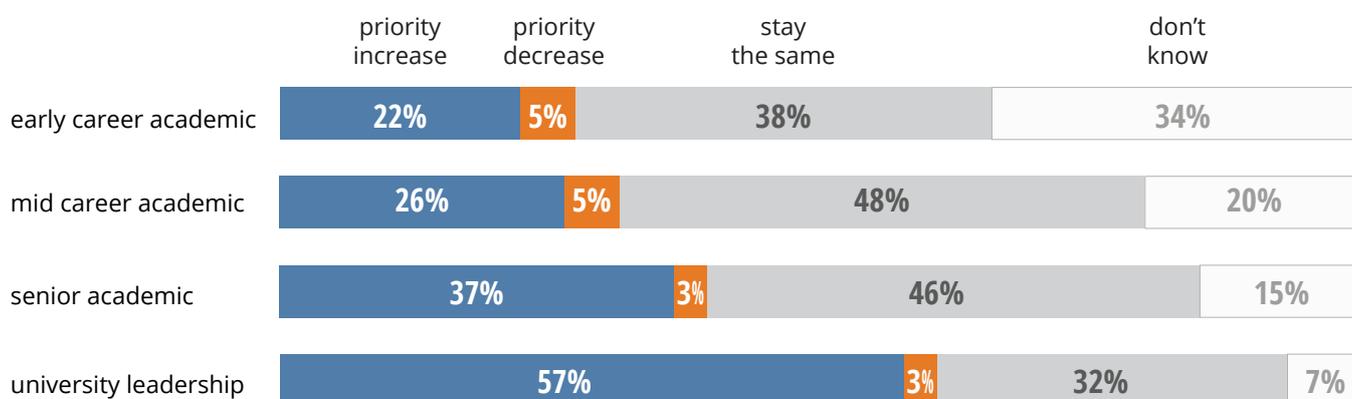
	priority increase	priority decrease	stay the same	don't know
early career academic	22%	5%	38%	34%
mid career academic	26%	5%	48%	20%
senior academic	37%	3%	46%	15%
university leadership	57%	3%	32%	7%

FIGURE 12. Responses to the question *"Do **you think** the priority given to university teaching in academic promotions will change at your institution in the next five years?"* by participant seniority (n=15,597)

Conclusions

The 2019 Teaching Cultures Survey reports the first findings of three consecutive surveys designed to capture and track key markers of the academic culture and status of university teaching. Most universities participating in the survey are engaged in systemic reforms to academic career pathways; the 2019 survey findings provide them with baseline data from which to evaluate change in the culture and status of university teaching over time. Twenty-one universities from 10 countries participated in the 2019 survey. Funded by participating universities, the survey forms one element of the Advancing Teaching initiative, focused on improving the reward, recognition and evaluation of university teaching.

Overall, three broad themes emerge from the 2019 survey findings:

1. university teaching is widely regarded to be undervalued:

only a quarter (25%) of survey participants reported that time spent on teaching positively impacted career advancement and almost three in five (57%) identified education roles as 'career-limiting' at their institution. In addition, only 25% reported that university teaching was 'very important' in promotion to full professorship at their university.

2. barriers to changing academic career pathways and reward systems exist:

the academic community has limited confidence in the systems used by their university to measure quality and impact in university teaching. In addition, university teaching was typically not regarded as being a priority area of discussion during annual appraisals, and less than one in five perceived any levels of leadership at their institution – at departmental, school/faculty or university level – to be committed to rewarding excellence in university teaching.

3. however, there is widespread support for positive change:

two thirds of participants (66%) would like university teaching to be a 'very important' consideration in promotion to full professorship and three in five (61%) would like a greater priority to be given to university teaching in academic promotions at their institution. University leaders – department heads, deans and university administration – appear particularly committed to change.

The 2019 survey findings and early feedback from participating universities suggest that certain survey questions may be particularly important to track over time. For example, the extent to which discussions around university teaching represent a meaningful component of annual appraisal, in particular, offers a barometer of an institution's culture: the emphasis given to university teaching in appraisals provides an insight into the priorities and expectations of both the appraiser – typically a line manager or department head – and the appraisee. Some university leaders recognised the lack of prominence of university teaching in the appraisals at their institutions and indicated that this would be a priority area for development in the coming months and years.

The commitment of participating universities to enhancing the recognition and reward of university teaching is very much in step with wider developments in university cultures and processes across the higher education sector. Indeed, over half of the 21 universities participating in the 2019 survey are part of national consortia – for example from the Netherlands, Malaysia, Norway and Denmark – that are driving collective reform to academic career pathways. Taken together, these initiatives and others are poised to mark a step-change in the design of academic career pathways and in the ways in which university teaching is evaluated and rewarded. Further information about the Advancing Teaching initiative is available at the project website[3].

Appendices

Appendix A. University participation in the survey

Data for the 2019 Teaching Cultures Survey was collected from 21 universities. The survey engaged:

15,659	**21**	**10**
participants	universities	countries

Survey responses were collected over a two- to three-week period between January and March 2019 (for the first group of 13 universities participating in the survey) and between October and December 2019 (for the second group of eight participating universities).

Twenty-one institutions participated in the 2019 survey, of which one is a specialist in Oriental and African studies, eight are specialist science and technology institutions, and the remaining 12 are 'comprehensive' universities, covering a broad base of academic disciplines. The participating universities are:

AALBORG UNIVERSITY (DENMARK), CHALMERS UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY (SWEDEN), DTU (DENMARK), EINDHOVEN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY (NETHERLANDS), LEIDEN UNIVERSITY (NETHERLANDS), NORWEGIAN UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (NORWAY), PONTIFICAL CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF CHILE (CHILE), RADBOUD UNIVERSITY[9] (NETHERLANDS), SKOLTECH (RUSSIA), SOAS UNIVERSITY OF LONDON (UK), TU DELFT (NETHERLANDS), UNIVERSITY OF AMSTERDAM (NETHERLANDS), UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND (NEW ZEALAND), UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH (UK), UNIVERSITY OF ICELAND (ICELAND), UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MALAYSIA (MALAYSIA), UNIVERSITY OF TWENTE (NETHERLANDS), UTRECHT UNIVERSITY[9] (NETHERLANDS), VRIJE UNIVERSITY AMSTERDAM (NETHERLANDS), WAGENINGEN UNIVERSITY & RESEARCH (NETHERLANDS), WESTERN SYDNEY UNIVERSITY (AUSTRALIA)


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[9] Please note that participants from the medical schools at Utrecht University and Radboud University were not included in the combined survey data

Appendix B. Participant profile

Outlined below is the profile of the 15,659 survey participants, presented by gender, number of years employed at their university, discipline, seniority and focus on university teaching.
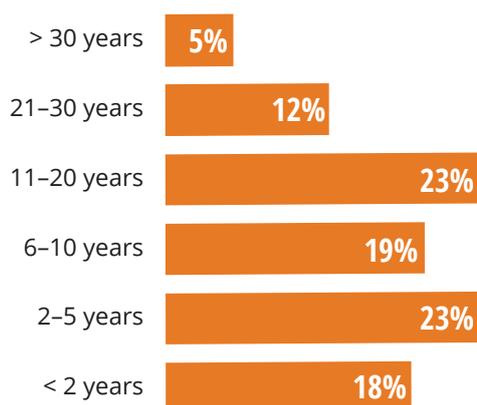
Gender

54% male

43% female
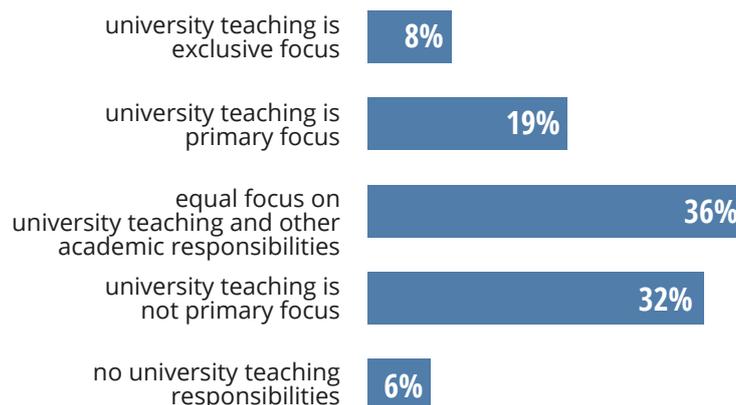
4% self-describe / prefer not to say
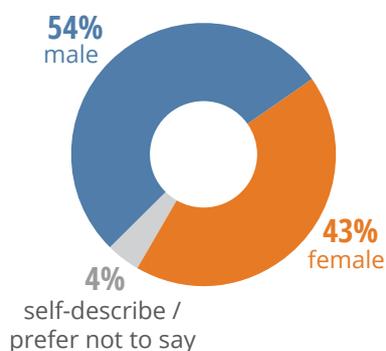
Academic discipline[7]

A mix of academic disciplines was represented by survey participants, with *Biological, Mathematical and Physical Sciences* as the largest single disciplinary group (23%), followed by *Engineering and Technology* (19%), *Social Studies* (19%), *Humanities, Language Based Studies and Archaeology* (12%) and *Medicine, Dentistry and Health* (10%). Other disciplines were represented by remaining participants (17%).

Length of employment[10]

> 30 years	5%
21–30 years	12%
11–20 years	23%
6–10 years	19%
2–5 years	23%
< 2 years	18%

Focus on university teaching[11]

university teaching is exclusive focus	8%
university teaching is primary focus	19%
equal focus on university teaching and other academic responsibilities	36%
university teaching is not primary focus	32%
no university teaching responsibilities	6%

Seniority[6]

early career academic	mid career academic	senior academic	university leadership
25%	57%	14%	2%

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10 Length of contract of employment with the university
11 Focus on university teaching in past year as compared to other academic activities (such as research, entrepreneurship or professional practice)

Further information on this project

Teaching Cultures Survey
www.teachingcultures.com

Advancing Teaching initiative
www.advancingteaching.com

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