

Is an academic career for you?



Are you interested in joining the world of academia?

Written in response to many requests from clinical radiographers, this article explores some of the roles held by university-based radiography academics and considers honorary appointments that clinical radiographers may be entitled to hold. By Peter Hogg, Former Head of Department and Professor; Sue Braid, Head of School and Senior Lecturer; and Brian Bentley MPhil, DSc, FCR, Retired Head of Department (University of Leeds) and Honorary Fellow; from the School of Healthcare Professions, University of Salford.

Introduction

The role of an academic in radiography has changed significantly in the past 15 years. It is reasonable to argue that a major catalyst from 'what was' to 'what is' is down to 'radiography education centres' offering degrees/higher degrees and moving location from hospital to university. Prior to being located in universities, most academic staff in radiography education centres were described as teachers,

which is not surprising given that their roles were focused predominantly around teaching activities. This is not to say that some of these teachers did not engage in other 'activities', as some clearly did. These radiography teachers were expected to hold particular professional qualifications, such as the Higher Diploma College of the Radiographers and Teachers Diploma of the College of Radiographers, but they were not required to hold first or

Chancellor
Vice Chancellor (VC)
Pro Vice Chancellors (PVC)
Deans
Vice or Associate Deans
Heads of Schools
Vice or Associate Heads of School
Heads of Departments/Directorate

Figure 1: Possible management structure

higher degrees. The move to universities brought with it academic and cultural changes. For instance, the academic role evolved significantly to include many more activities and there was a requirement for the teacher to hold a degree/higher degree. Interestingly, for many universities, there was no requirement for a teaching qualification. Not surprisingly, this anomaly has been redressed quite recently, with new academic appointees having to gain a teaching qualification if they do not already possess one.

The period of transition from a hospital-based/professional qualification-based teaching culture to a degree-based/university-based academic and professional culture was a long and difficult process. During the transition period, not only did the 'teachers' have to personally acquire BSc, MSc and in some cases PhD qualifications, they also had to create new undergraduate and postgraduate degree programmes for the radiographic profession. They had to adjust to the new culture and also continue with their teaching activities. It is hard to say if we have truly reached the end of the adjustment period, but even if we have, the process has taken some 15-20 years.

Structure 1: 'Red brick' university	Structure 2: 'New' university	Approximate pay scales
(Lecturer A)	(Lecturer)	(Up to £28K)
Lecturer B	Senior Lecturer	£28K-£38K
Senior Lecturer or Reader	Principal Lecturer or Reader	£38K-£44K
Professor	Professor	£44K-£75K

Figure 2: Two academic career structures and their approximate pay scales.

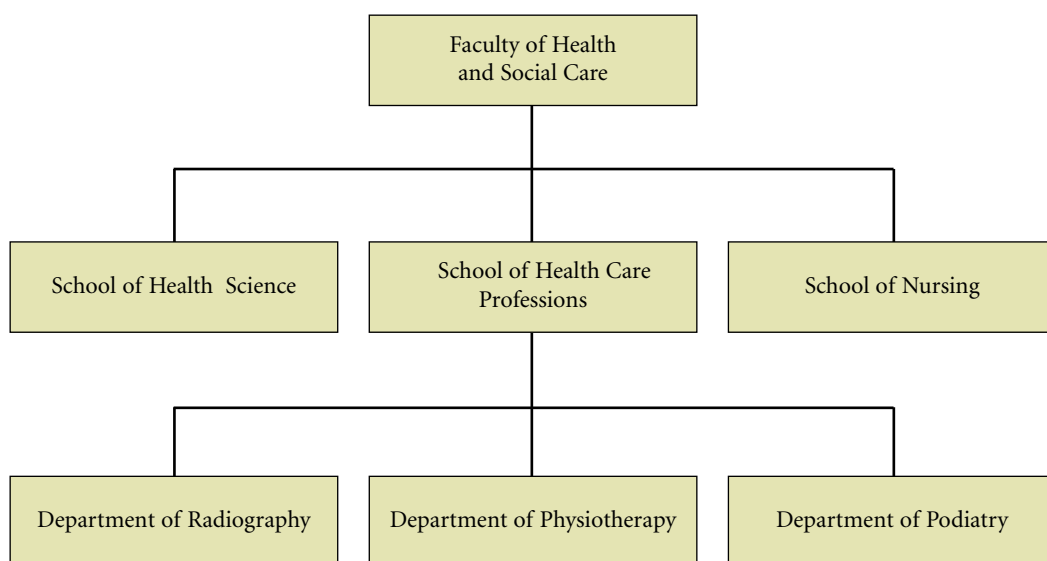


Figure 3: A hypothetical sub-faculty academic structure.

The role of a contemporary academic in radiography

Before discussing possible academic roles and responsibilities it might be worth reminding ourselves of typical university career and management structures. Figure 1 illustrates one possible managerial structure; Figure 2 illustrates two academic career structures and their approximate pay scales; Figure 3 illustrates a hypothetical sub-faculty academic structure, illustrating the position of 'radiography' within that structure.

Consider Figure 1, the managerial structure. With the exception of the Chancellor, all the people appointed to these posts will be academic staff and as such will hold formal academic positions (eg, professor, senior lecturer). It is quite possible to be the VC and a professor or a Dean

and professor. As an example, note how co-author Sue Braid is described at the start of this article. Some universities have permanent tenure for managerial posts, others do not. For non-permanent tenure, every four or five years, the PVCs, Deans, Head of Schools and Head of Departments will change. The University of Salford uses this kind of system. For permanent and non-permanent tenure, the VC could be permanent or semi-permanent – in that they can be 'contracted' to a number of years, which can be extended on a mutually agreeable basis. The Chancellor is an honorary appointment made for around five years and they tend to be well known personalities. For example, Lord Melvyn Bragg (University of Leeds), The Princess Royal (University of London) and Imran Khan (University of Bradford).

From a radiographer viewpoint, if academic management interests you then there is nothing stopping you rising through the ranks to VC. Of course, the higher you get the more remote you tend to get from research and teaching, which may or may not be important to you. Another co-author, Peter Hogg, chose to stand down from a managerial post to concentrate more on teaching and research. As such, after five years, he is a former Head of Directorate.

Consider Figure 2, the academic structure. Note the two career structures that are placed side by side; structure 1 taken from a 'red brick' university, structure 2 from a 'new' university (former polytechnics mostly). You can see anomalies – Lecturer B in structure 1 is the same as Senior Lecturer in structure 2; Senior Lecturer (structure 1) is the same

as Principal Lecturer (structure 2). Professor and Reader are the same in both structures. This is most confusing, even in academic circles. The most important point for radiography is that academic career entry-level for radiographers tends to be Lecturer B/senior lecturer, but in both cases the pay scales are similar. A simple way to differentiate between the two systems is whether or not academic staff hold Principal Lectureships, which tend not to be found in red brick universities. Consider a real example of how translation between system 1 and 2 worked in Salford. Until 1996, 'radiography' was located in University College Salford (UCS), a 'new' university, before merging that year with the 'red brick' University of Salford. During assimilation, UCS Senior Lecturers became Lecturer B grade because that was the nearest to their pay and responsibility band. Principal Lecturers in UCS became Senior Lecturers in the University of Salford.

In the past few years, academic staff have been involved with Higher Education Role Analysis, a process that produces a total points score which is used to assess the relative value of the roles in a consistent and equitable manner. This score can be used to assign roles to appropriate grades or bands in a salary structure. Familiar? It should be, because it is quite similar to Agenda for Change and job analysis!

Career progression

Academic career progression can be achieved in one of two ways: applying for a different job or through internal promotion. Most universities operate an internal promotion mechanism and once a year the personnel department invites staff to apply. Every post below professor is handled as an internal matter and committees are set up to judge applications. Professorial appointments are subject to academic and peer scrutiny,

which can take up to one year to make. Peer scrutiny is rigorous and involves the university sending the candidate's application to well-known and well-respected professors who are eminent in the same field (or similar) as the applicant.

When radiography education centres were located in hospitals, often the only way to gain promotion, beyond a certain grade, was to become a manager, just like clinical used to be. You might be surprised to hear that within a university it is not uncommon for a professor to have never held an academic management position. From a radiographer viewpoint, there is nothing stopping a radiographer from aspiring to hold a professorship. We estimate that there are currently six radiographer professors in the UK.

If you were considering a change in direction in your career, from hospital to university, then it is worthwhile discussing the matter with a managerial head of department/directorate (of radiography). One question that is often asked surrounds the minimum qualifications needed to become a lecturer. As it happens there is no fixed rule, though a national (unpublished) survey revealed the following current minimum requirements for all academic radiography departments in the UK:

- ◆ 58% BSc
- ◆ 27% MSc
- ◆ 5% PhD (one centre) – they expected all their staff to be research active

All academic departments commented that, as time passes, the percentage of MScs and PhDs will increase. Please do not be put off applying for an academic position if you do not hold a degree, as niche clinical skills are often highly valued. Notwithstanding this, if you are appointed as a lecturer and you do not hold a degree/higher

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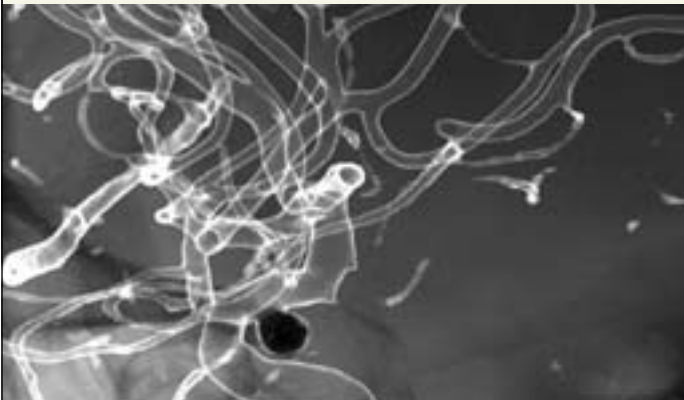
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Siemens highlighted advanced interventional technology at ECR 2006

Amongst the range of products and systems showcased by Siemens at the European Congress of Radiology in Vienna in March was the Syngo iPilot.

The system supports the physician in guiding the catheter as smoothly as possible through the arteries during interventional procedures. The software visualises the two-dimensional fluoro image, which appears in real time on the monitor, and superimposes three-dimensional reconstructions of the data displayed. The additional information supports the physician in their interpretation of vascular structures and allows them to navigate the catheter faster and with greater accuracy. This is of special advantage during neurological invasions of the brain known for its tortuous and irregular intracranial vessels.



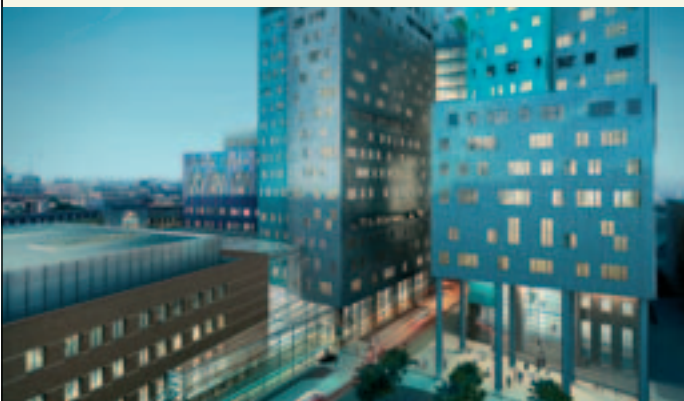
Syngo iPilot advanced visualisation for neuro and abdominal interventions.

Latest technology for Barts and the London new hospitals

Barts and the London NHS trust will soon be benefiting from some of the most up-to-date imaging equipment in the country as the Trust undergoes Britain's biggest hospital redevelopment.

Siemens Medical Solutions has a new £300 million plus contract as part of the scheme and will provide a managed equipment service (MES), encompassing diagnostic and treatment equipment as well as state-of-the-art technology for the radiology, cardiology and oncology practitioners.

Gunter Dombrowe, group managing director, indicated, "Developments in technology applicable to healthcare can deliver wide-ranging benefits, clinical and financial, by driving the improvements required to meet government targets."



The London hospital of the future benefits from a Siemens MES solution.

degree then it is likely to be an expectation of employment that you will acquire one. Similarly, if you do not hold a teaching qualification you may be expected to gain one. It is common for academic appointments to have probationary periods of up to three years, and as such the university can set requirements that must be met within this timeframe, with appointment to a permanent academic position reliant on the requirements being met.

Academic roles and responsibilities

Consistent with clinical management posts (eg, radiology business manager), academic management focuses around human, physical and financial resource. Depending on seniority, the responsibilities could include strategic management, which would be in addition to or instead of traditional academic responsibilities (teaching/learning, research, enterprise and so on).

Lecturer, Senior/Principal Lecturer, Reader and Professor can hold, concurrently, many roles and responsibilities inside and outside a university. There is an expectation that those in senior academic positions (eg, professor) have a national, and preferably international, 'presence'. This can be defined in many ways:

- ◆ regularly contributing to conference papers, journal and professional magazine publications;
- ◆ national/international academic leadership in their professional area;
- ◆ professional activity, such as undertaking work on behalf of a professional body).

Academic roles and responsibilities in teaching and learning include many activities, including course and module leadership, teaching, student support (academic and welfare)

and facilitation. Research is more complex to define and account for, as such research activity tends to be related to 'output' – eg, the number of papers published per year and the quality of the publication they appear in; the number of conference papers presented per year and the quality of the conference. Income generated for research activity can be important too.

A particularly tricky aspect of the academic's responsibility is their own time management. A problematic area for managers of academics is to assure equitable workloads across staff of similar grades. A consequence of this is that universities have introduced a system called workload balancing. This is a system whereby 'units' (and therefore time) are allocated to academic activities and the academic must deliver required 'outcomes' for all their roles and responsibilities within that unit/time allocation.

Not surprisingly, appraisal plays a critical role in supporting staff in attaining their outcomes; department team meetings are also critical in agreeing strategic and operational targets and also who is expected to do what over the coming year.

It is easy to over-commit yourself and your academic team, a problem that is confounded by most academics not having formal contracted hours of work. Of course, this could work to your advantage, but generally speaking this is not the case. Many academics we know work in excess of 50 hours a week, and whether you work 40 hours or 100 hours there is no difference in remuneration. Overtime pay, in most universities, does not exist.

Honorary appointments for radiographers

Though teaching and research comprise a major component of an academic's responsibility they are not, of course, in their exclusive domain. Clinical radiographers teach, and a

growing number are employed solely to manage and conduct research. BSc radiography degrees and many of our MScs make effective use of clinical radiographers with specialist skills, and rightly so, because they possess up-to-date skills and knowledge. As such, many clinical radiographers have ad hoc teaching relationships with universities, perhaps contributing between one and 10 hours a year. Some clinical radiographers are involved with academic management, contributing to management of the course, including team membership and its design/re-design.

On occasion, clinical radiographers have such an involvement with a university that an honorary appointment is considered – our Directorate of Radiography has almost 30. Included in this are four professors and two fellows (including co-author Brian Bentley) with the remainder being lecturers. Activities undertaken by these honorary appointees include:

- ◆ Post- and undergraduate teaching;
- ◆ Curriculum development;
- ◆ Research;
- ◆ 'Co-supervision' of MSc and PhD thesis/dissertations;
- ◆ Profile raising;
- ◆ Co-marking of academic work;
- ◆ Clinical assessment.

In general, a person would be put forward for an honorary appointment if they were making (or were intending to make) an active contribution to the academic development of the directorate/university. We make no distinction for academic qualifications held by the individual, but their professional standing and capability are taken into account. Notwithstanding this, most of our honorary appointments have an MSc and some have PhDs; however some have DCR, HND DMU and so on. The majority have had research published in

publications, journals or at conferences.

How to acquire an honorary appointment

Usually, the university would invite you to become an honorary appointee, but if you feel that you are making a substantial contribution to a university then you might consider asking. Some universities have information on their websites about the appointment process and the criteria associated with the post. Failing this, the personnel department should have paper-based information available, or be able to point you towards a university employee who can advise you. One thing to bear in mind is that honorary appointees are not paid, so if you currently get paid for university-related activities then you might want to explore this matter carefully before proceeding.

Whilst the process for appointment varies from university to university, there are similarities. For instance, an argument for the honorary appointment would be constructed about the individual and their contribution/proposed contribution. This would be articulated, in writing, to the required committees. As with university-employed professors, potential honorary professors are usually subject to peer scrutiny from a national/international academic/professional community. They can therefore take several months to be appointed.

If successful, the individual would be written to, and the terms of the honorary appointment and the tenure sent in the letter. This varies between grades and universities, but generally honorary professors would be appointed for five years and honorary lectures for between one and two years. Extensions to tenure are usually available on a mutually agreeable basis.

It is recognised that people put forward for an honorary appointment would not demonstrate the spectrum of

activity of an employed member of staff at the proposed grade. This is quite reasonable because the honorary appointee also has a full time job.

Why bother...?

As indicated above, there is no financial reward, but there are other benefits. Most universities offer access to their resources on an equal basis to employed-staff members. As such, in-house training programmes are usually freely available and some universities actually offer their degree programmes free to honorary appointees. Obviously, honorary appointees will have full access to computing and library facilities. Also, as noted by our honorary appointees, it:

- ◆ recognises academic worth;
- ◆ recognises contribution to a university;
- ◆ can help with promotion;
- ◆ can help in getting discretionary payscale points;

- ◆ can give additional credibility;
- ◆ may help in further developing teaching, learning and research skills.

An academic career?

We hope this article has given some insight into an academic career as a clinical professional. As you can see, there are various ways in which you may get involved, even when still working as a clinical radiographer. If interested in furthering your academic interests why not consider approaching a local university and speaking to their radiography directorate/department/school.

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