



The University of Manchester

Submission

The University of Manchester's new online resource aims to encourage honest self-appraisal by aspiring academics – and it received nearly 17,000 hits in its first three months.

The website, An Academic Career, was devised after a survey of more than 1,5000 early career researchers at Manchester revealed that 70% aimed to stay in academia – despite the evidence that only a minority of doctoral students attain permanent research positions.

The site contains practical information about obtaining an academic job, but also describes the realities of academic life and career paths. It encourages users – in separate sections for master's students, doctoral students and postdoctoral researchers – to ask themselves searching questions about what they want from a career and whether they have what it takes to be an academic.

The messages are reinforced by interviews with current academics at different stages in their careers.

Developed with extensive feedback from academic, potential users and the research councils, the site received more than 16,500 visits in its first three months, with the self-assessment sections proving the most popular. Most users were from outside Manchester, fulfilling the site's aim to be a resource for aspiring academics across the UK and beyond.

Judge Janet Metcalfe, chair and head of Vitae, said the website “reaches the parts of an academic career that others fear to tread. It suggests that existing researchers take a hard-headed look at their career potential and ask ‘Have you got what it takes?’ It is not about being very good, but about being better than all the other very good people trying to succeed in academia – on a global scale.”