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# Sessional university teaching staff: on the academic border *or* belonging?

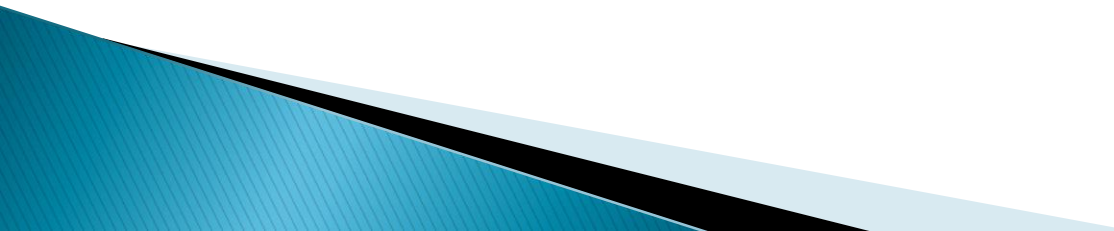
Issues of professionalism: a UK perspective

Fran Beaton, University of Kent, UK

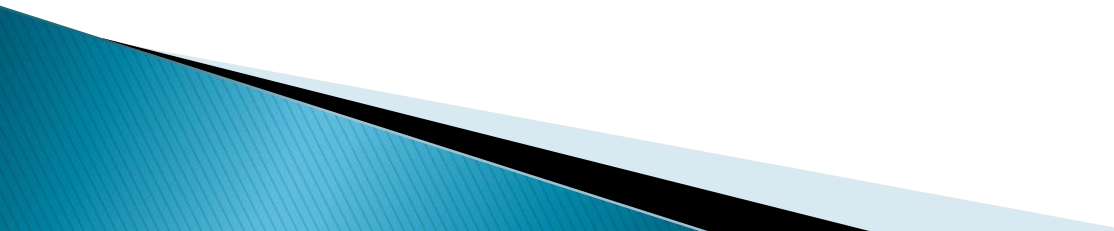
# Challenges of definition

- ▶ ‘Non – standard’?
  - different kinds of sessional staff
  - different employment expectations and patterns
  - different recruitment practices
  - different support needs
  - shifting identities

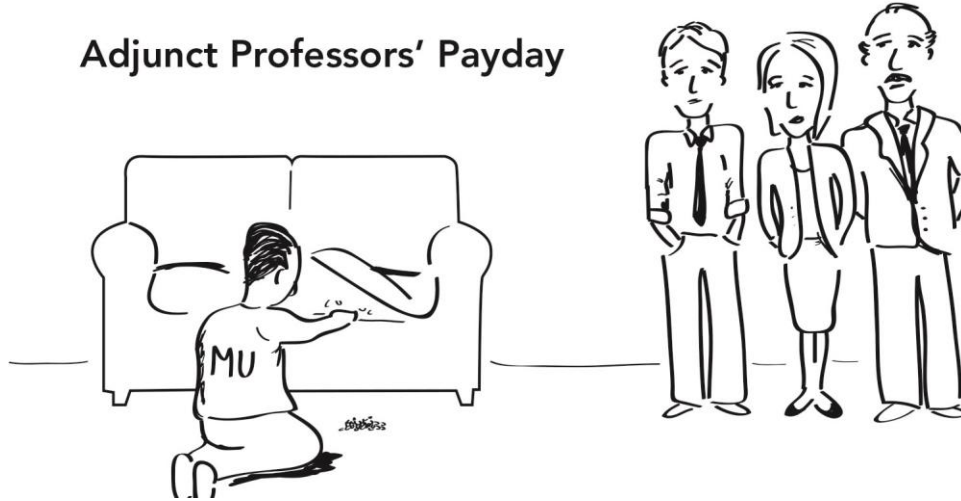
# Changing university curricula

- ▶ Degrees incorporating/embodying professional experience e.g. nursing, social work, engineering, business
  - ▶ Increasing emphasis on student employability
  - ▶ Professional practitioners as part-time teachers
- 

# Expanding universities

- ▶ Graduate Teaching Assistants
    - as aspiring academics: teaching as apprenticeship
    - as a flexible and cost-effective solution to larger numbers of undergraduate students
  - ▶ Experienced professional practitioners undertaking/combining practice and HE teaching
  - ▶ Sessional/hourly paid staff on multiple contracts
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## Adjunct Professors' Payday



# Perspectives on belonging

**Socialisation/acclulturation into HE** e.g. Akerlind 2004; Knight & Trowler 1999:24

*'Good mentoring and induction routines.....are most potent within activity systems, such as departments, that constitute professional communities and which are sites of professional learning.'*

**Individual identity** e.g. Lave and Wenger 1998; Clegg 2008;Shreeve 2011:87

*'Where these different aspects of one's identity are not reconciled, there appears to be less than satisfactory engagement in academia.'*

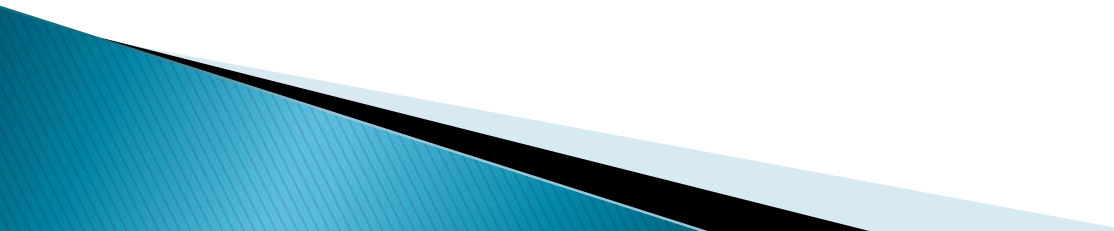
**Nature of the academic role**

Changing parameters (past, present, future)

Different expectations and understandings

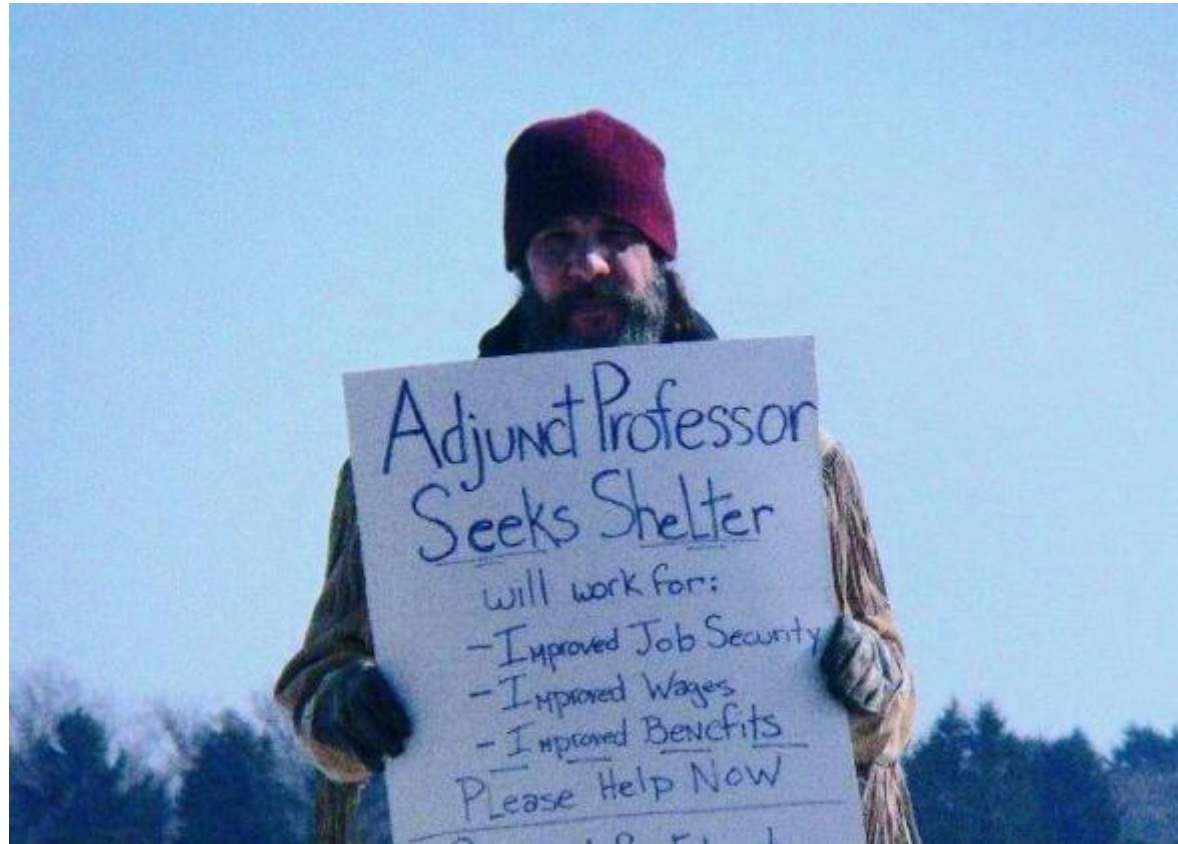
The 'pracademic'

# Common ground

- ▶ Part-timers' semi-detached relationships: the university, fulltime and other part-time staff
  - ▶ Responsibility for teaching students with limited access to space and resources
  - ▶ May not know about, have access to or time to undertake appropriate professional development
- 



# The 'Precariat' (Standing, 2014)





# The UK HE environment: Key Information Sets

Universities are required to make publicly available information (<http://www.hefce.ac.uk/lt/unikis/>)

which includes

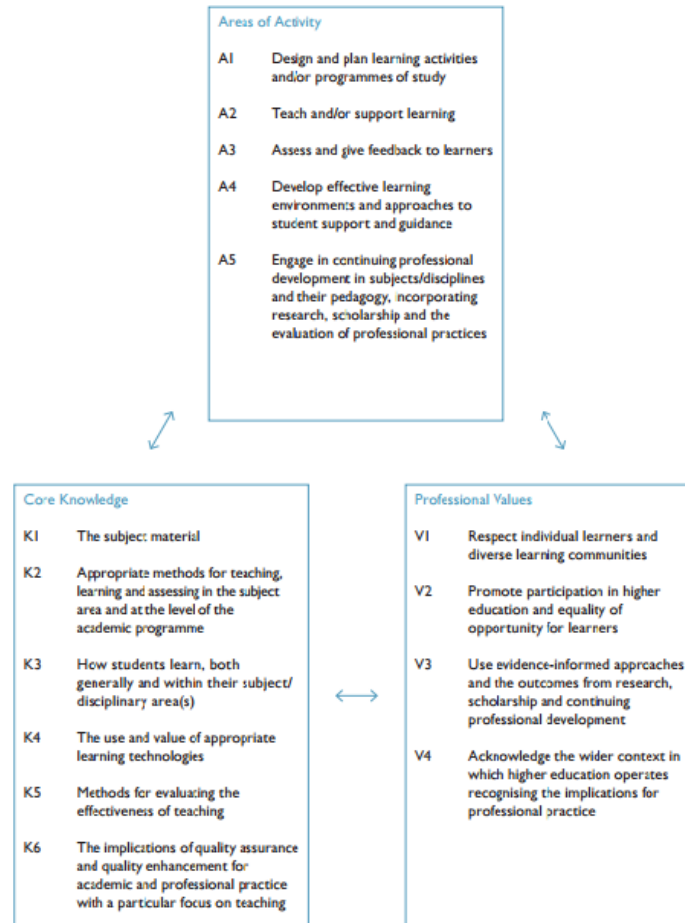
- ▶ Course fees (typically £9,000/€12,000 per year), payback begins once graduated and in work
- ▶ Other associated costs e.g. accommodation
- ▶ Amount of contact time by course and contact type e.g. seminars, lectures, workshops
- ▶ Graduate employment data

# And.....

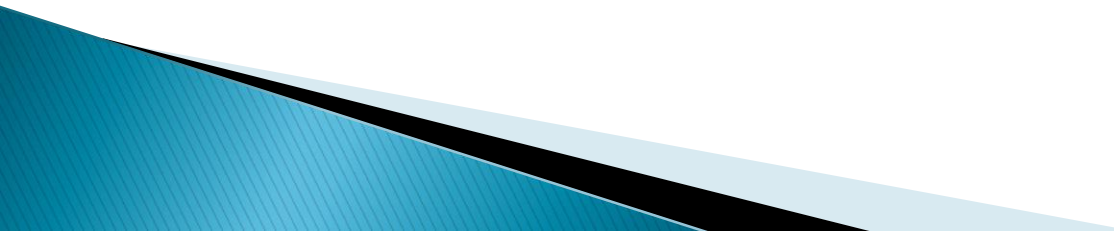
- ▶ Student satisfaction with the **quality** of teaching; feedback on assessment; study support and resources; personal development (National Student Survey)
- ▶ The proportion of staff who are **qualified** to teach e.g. have Higher Education Academy Fellowship

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/information-on-staff-teaching.pdf>

# Qualified? UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF)



# Implications for professional development

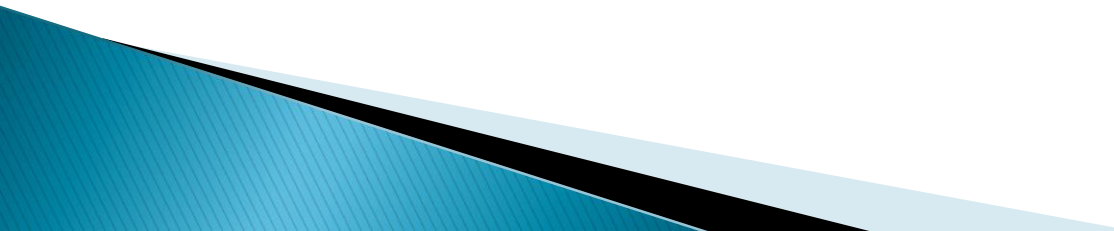
- ▶ Potentially helpful, as nationally reported data requires
    - Increased institutional thoroughness to identify **all** relevant staff
    - Structures and practices to assist integration within (at least) the discipline and programme team
    - Nuanced, appropriate, accessible professional development to develop teaching
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## Furthermore....

- ▶ Encourages an institution-wide approach to professional development
- ▶ Perceived as affecting individual universities' prestige in teaching-related league tables

However, may underscore relative prestige of teaching and research; teaching development may be perceived as distracting from other work

## To conclude

- ▶ System of national recognition/credentials in relation to teaching may assist the visibility, and access to professional development, of part-time teachers
  - ▶ Integration of part-timers is best practically effected day-to-day at 'local level' and more broadly at institutional level
  - ▶ Professional development as future-proofing, combining disciplinary, current career-stage and career aspirations
- 



# Reading and resources

## Books

Beaton F and Gilbert A (eds) 2013 *Developing Effective Part-Time Teachers in Higher Education* Routledge

Becher T & Trowler P (2001) *Academic tribes and territories* Milton Keynes, SRHE /Open University Press

Henkel M (2000) *Academic identities and policy change in higher education* London and Philadelphia, Jessica Kingsley

Lave J & Wenger E (1991) *Situated learning: legitimate peripheral participation* Cambridge University Press

## Journal articles

Akerlind G (2004) A new dimension to understanding university teaching in *Teaching in Higher Education* 9 pp 363-375

Clegg S (2008) Academic identities under threat? *British Educational Research Journal* 34: pp 329- 345

Jawitz J (2009) Academic identities and communities of practice in a professional discipline *Teaching in Higher Education* 14:3 pp 241- 251 DOI 10.1080/13562510902898817

Knight P, Tait J & Yorke M (2006) The professional learning of teachers in higher education *Studies in Higher Education* 31:03 pp 319- 339 DOI 10.1080/03075070600680786

Santoro N & Snead S (2012) "I'm not a real academic": a career from industry to academe *Journal of Further and Higher Education* 37:3 pp384- 396 DOI:10.1080/0309877X.2011.645-457

Shreeve A (2011) Being in two camps: conflicting experiences for practice-based academics *Studies in Continuing Education* 33:1 pp71-91 DOI 10.1080/0158037X.2011.521681

## Websites

Quality Assurance Agency <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/information-on-staff-teaching.pdf>

Higher Education Academy (The UK Professional Standards Framework)

[https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/sites/default/files/downloads/UKPSF\\_2011\\_English.pdf](https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/sites/default/files/downloads/UKPSF_2011_English.pdf)

Higher Education Funding Council (Key Information Sets) <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/lt/unikis/>