



# Early career social science researchers: experiences and support needs

A short research study of the experiences of early career researchers:  
support for postdoctoral researchers from research organisations,  
funding bodies and career services

## METHODOLOGY APPENDIX

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## APPENDIX 1: Research design and methodology

The study drew on existing evidence as well as generating new quantitative and qualitative evidence. The new evidence was used to triangulate findings from previous studies.

### Evidence from similar studies

We considered relevant previous studies in designing the research (for the results, see Appendix 2). However, as well as being out of date, these studies have been relatively limited, as they have tended to focus on early-career researchers in general, treating them as a homogenous group, which is highly problematic. For example, it is unusual for doctoral students to be self-funded in the sciences, but far more common in the social sciences and the arts and humanities. The numbers of social scientists in the studies have also been relatively small.

### Sampling

One of the challenges of the study was that the data on the total population of early-career social scientists is incomplete and their profile can only be guessed. According to data from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), between 2006/07 and 2013/14, a total of 45,000 individuals gained a doctorate degree in a range of social science subjects from UK higher education institutions. This figure does not include those who might have graduated from non-UK HEIs during that period. Also, it does not tell us what the graduates have done since their doctorate was awarded. The Longitudinal survey of the Destination of Leavers from Higher Education in 2008 and 2010 reported that more than 60% of social science doctoral graduate respondents in UK employment were working in HE (Vitae 2013, HESA 2013, 2015). Furthermore, it was not possible to estimate the proportion of the total population of doctoral graduates in the UK working inside and outside HE that would describe themselves as early career researchers in the social sciences, and therefore would have been potential respondents. For these reasons, the study participants cannot be assumed to be representative of the total national population of early career social scientists, and so all findings reported here are necessarily qualified.

### Online survey questionnaire

An online survey was used to ascertain the experiences, aspirations, opportunities and support currently available, used and found useful by early career researchers in the social sciences. The Bristol Online Surveys (BOS) service was used to develop, deploy and analyse the survey via the Internet. The survey was devised in consultation with the ESRC and in the light of the previous AHRC survey (Renfrew and Green, 2014). The questionnaire included extensive multiple choice and free text questions (see Annex 1 at the end of this appendix). A definition of early career researchers was not prescribed and respondents were free to define themselves as such when deciding whether to respond to the survey. The survey was open for 12 weeks in total (between 24 August and 11 November 2015).

The online survey aimed to ascertain the following information from respondents:

- their motivations for doctoral study;
- their current employment and future aspirations;
- the availability of career advice and guidance – and what they used;
- their education and personal information.

### Promotion of the survey

Contact details were identified for professional and learned societies (e.g. British Psychological Society for psychology), including those with international memberships (e.g. the British Educational Research Association) and Graduate/Doctoral/Faculty Schools. The ESRC supplied the 21 ESRC DTC contact details. We also identified contact details for government, local authorities, health services, etc, that were likely employers of recent social science PhD graduates. The ESRC Bloomsbury DTC Cluster Leaders – and UCL pathway leaders – were consulted for advice and suggestions on non-HE employers. These organisations were then contacted and asked to promote the survey using their email and other social media channels (e.g. Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn). Vitae was asked to promote the survey through its Twitter feed and regular emails to researcher developers. We also contacted professional bodies to see if they could help us to access those not currently working in the HE sector. We identified relevant Twitter accounts, LinkedIn and Facebook groups (and other social networking groups) used by social science PhDs to enable periodic promotion during the survey window. We contacted the groups and tweeted to promote the survey and noted those retweeting, in order to identify further possible social networking possibilities. The ESRC provided pro-vice chancellors in universities and their DTCs with information that could be forwarded to early career social scientists in their institutions. The ESRC also promoted the survey to their investments too. The survey had a short URL link ([bit.ly/ESRC-survey](http://bit.ly/ESRC-survey)) to facilitate easy distribution. The survey was also publicised by the Times Higher Education magazine (Grove, 2015). In

the short time available, contacting those currently working outside academia and/or outside the UK proved more difficult than communicating with those working in UK HE.

We considered offering incentives to encourage participation in the survey, but decided against this. This was a survey about professional issues that would be of direct and immediate interest to most potential respondents. We expected the opportunity to influence national and institutional policy and practice would be more of an incentive than any kind of 'prize' we could offer. Indeed, the offer of a prize might have served to trivialise the survey and discourage potential participants from responding.

### Survey responses and basic demographics

When the survey closed, there were 1,053 responses. Five of these had no data and so were excluded, giving 1,048 usable responses. Of these 1,048 respondents, 31% were male, 68% were female and 1% did not respond to this question. This suggests an over-representation of women compared to men among the respondents when compared with the HE sector as a whole: slightly over 52% of those obtaining a doctorate in the social sciences in 2014/15 were female (HESA, 2016) and this had been fairly consistent in the previous three years. With regard to nationality, 61% of respondents identified themselves as British Nationals, 24% as Other European and 15% as Non-European. The majority of respondents (78%) attended a state school. Of those that indicated their ethnicity (954), the overwhelming majority were white with 90 identifying as black or minority ethnic. Just ten respondents identified themselves as black, 14 as Chinese or Japanese, 26 as mixed, 32 as Asian, five as Latin American and three as Arab. Just 5% of our respondents declared they had a disability (compared with 7.2% of postgraduate research students in 2013/14 (ECU, 2015)) and one third (33%) stated they had caring responsibilities. Respondents ranged in age from 23 to 71. The mean age was 36 and the modal age was 35 with the majority of respondents (69%) in their thirties. Further characteristics are detailed below in Table 1.

**Table 1. Characteristics of Survey Respondents (N = 1048)**

Characteristic	Count
<i>Age (years)</i>	
Under 30	104
30-35	469
36-40	210
41-49	112
50+	57
<i>Time since doctoral completion (years)</i>	
0-1	248
2-3	256
4-5	237
6 or more	230
<i>PhD funding source</i>	
ESRC	321
Institutional – full scholarship	259
Self-funded	182
Other	162
Institutional – part-time work required	129
Other Research Council	119
Non-UK Government	66
Charity	48
Corporate	9
<i>PhD institution</i>	
Oxbridge	78
Other Russell Group	467
Other UK	282
International	156

  

<i>Student nationality</i>	
UK-British national	610
Other EU	236
Non-EU	154
<i>Doctoral subject</i>	
Sociology	163
Psychology	161
Geography	121
Politics and International Relations	99
Education	90
Business and management studies	72
Economics	70
Anthropology	51
Social policy & administration	38
Languages & Linguistics	35
History	28
Law	27
Town and country planning	14
Media studies	12
Social work	9
Accountancy	4

Our sample can be compared with Renfrew & Green's (2014) results, CROS 2015 and HESA 2014/15 (Table 2)

**Table 2. Early career researcher respondent characteristics**

	This survey	Renfrew & Green (2014)	CROS 2015	HESA 2014/15 (all academic staff)
Female	68%	63%	54%	45%
Male	31%	37%	46%	55%
<b>Ethnic group (UK)</b>				
White (all)	91%	93%	92%	86%
BAME (all)	9%	7%	8%	14%
<b>Nationality</b>				
UK	61%	65%	60%	72%
Other EU	24%	21%	26%	16%
Rest of World	15%	14%	15%	12%
<b>Disability</b>				
Disability	5%	3%	2.5%	4%

To enable comparison with Renfrew & Green's (2014) results, we divided respondents first into whether they were working in the HE sector or not. There were 934 working in HE, with 83 not in the HE sector and 21 who indicated they were unemployed (with ten not giving a response). We then divided those working in HE into those on fixed-term contracts (454) and those on open-ended/permanent contracts (480). Compared to Renfrew & Green (2014), our respondents working in HE were more likely to be on permanent contracts with  $\chi^2(1) = 74.99, p < .001$  (Table 3).

**Table 3. Comparison of ECRs in Arts & Humanities and Social Sciences on fixed term and permanent contracts**

	Arts & Humanities	Social Sciences
ECRs on fixed term contracts	544 (69.2%)	454 (48.6%)
ECRs on permanent contracts	241 (30.7%)	480 (51.4%)
Total	785	934

It is also important to note that, given that the majority of respondents had been awarded their doctorate two or more years previously, very few of them were likely to have had experience of doing their PhD in a Doctoral Training Centre (DTC). Indeed, DTCs were not mentioned by any survey respondents in any of their responses to open-ended survey questions. However, there was a belief among the experts interviewed that the DTCs could potentially play an important role in developing, training and supporting early career researchers. This study offers a baseline against which some aspects of the impact of the DTCs could be evaluated in the future.

### Qualitative follow-up to the survey

Once the interim findings from the online survey had been reported, the ESRC indicated that it would like UCL Institute of Education to undertake a qualitative follow-up to the survey, involving interviews with a selection of the survey respondents and representatives of relevant research and other organisations and individuals with expertise in the support and progression of early career researchers in the social sciences. This was necessary to provide more detailed and nuanced accounts of researchers' career trajectories before, during and since their doctoral studies that could not be obtained via a generic questionnaire. It also allowed an exploration with the research organisations' representatives of enhanced and new forms of support suggested by the interviews with early career researchers and via the online survey. This was essential in order to provide a full and rounded set of findings, analysis and discussion of these, together with conclusions and substantive recommendations.

The sample of survey respondents was selected from those responding to the survey who had indicated their interest in participating in follow-up interviews via telephone or Skype. By the close of the survey, 484 (46%) of the respondents had indicated their interest in participating in interviews. The sample was constructed to include a balanced selection of specific variables, namely type of institution for doctoral study, whether currently employed in HE or by a non-academic employer, subject, age, gender, ethnicity, source of funding, and time since completion of doctoral study. We aimed for a minimum of 35 interviews of survey respondents.

From those respondents that had indicated their interest in being interviewed as part of the second phase of the study, 70 were selected in order to cover the range of possible respondents, but not to be representative of the (unknown) characteristics of the total population. The interview sample included a balanced selection by age, ethnicity, nationality, time since completion of their PhD, type of institution and source of funding for their doctoral studies, discipline, and whether they were currently working in academia or outside. From these, 36 interviews were conducted and one was discarded on the grounds of limited value in answering the research questions. There were 18 female and 17 male interviewees; 14 had studied at Russell Group universities, nine were from other pre-1992 universities, eleven from post-1992 universities and one had studied abroad. Eight were working outside academia: six female and two male. Other characteristics are detailed in Table 4.

**Table 4. Subject characteristics of Interviewees (N = 35)**

Characteristic	Count
Age (years)	
Under 30	4
30-35	16
36-40	8
41-49	3
50+	4
Time since doctoral completion (years)	
0-2	15
3-5	11
6-8	6
8 or more	3
PhD funding source	
ESRC only	8
ESRC et al	6
Institutional	8
Self	3
Other	10
Ethnicity	
Black	2
Chinese	1
Arab	1
White	31
Student nationality	
UK-British national	25
Other EU	4
Non-EU	6
Doctoral subject	
Geography	7
Psychology	4
Business & Management	4
Sociology	4
Politics	4
History etc	3
International relations	2
Economics	2
Linguistics	1

Anthropology	1
Education	1
Law	1
Communications & culture	1

The following types of information were sought from the social science early career researchers in a semi-structured interview:

- Institution(s) of study
- Current place of employment
- ESRC-specific issues
- Ongoing support
- Studying and working abroad

The interview schedule for survey respondents is included as Annex 2 to this appendix.

In addition to these, nine interviews were undertaken with a sample of representatives of relevant research and other organisations and individuals with expertise in the support and progression of early career researchers in the social sciences. Organisations included Vitae, the major universities for social science ECRs and in receipt of ESRC funding and a representative of a post-1992 university. These interviews followed the completion of the majority of the interviews with survey respondents so that the main issues raised by respondents could be explored with these representatives and experts.

The following types of information were sought from the social science ECRs interviewed:

- Feedback on the key findings from the survey
- The needs and existing sources of support for social science ECRs from institutions, research funders and other HE organisations
- Possible solutions / ideas for improving support that have come from the survey and interviews with respondents
- Particular issues for women
- How the situation will develop in the next five years

The topic guide for interviews with representatives from research organisations and other experts is included as Annex 3 to this appendix.

### Statistical analysis

Quantitative and some qualitative data from the survey were subjected to a number of bivariate analyses, including by:

- type of doctoral institution (Oxbridge, other Russell Group, other UK HEI, and International)
- receipt of external funding and source (ESRC, other research council, institution, and other – including self-funded) during and after doctoral study
- type of support available (from doctoral institution during doctorate, from doctoral institution after doctorate, from current main employer)
- career aspirations (before doctoral study, during doctoral study, after doctoral study, and now)
- years since completing the doctorate (0-1, 2-3, 4-5, 6 and above)
- secured first paid post (before submitting, less than 3 months, 3-6 months, 6-12 months, 1-2 years, over 2 years, not yet secured a paid post)
- mode of current employment (fixed-term, permanent)
- nature of current role (primarily research, teaching and research, primarily teaching)
- gender

### References

CROS (2015) The Careers in Research Online Survey: [www.vitae.ac.uk/impact-and-evaluation/cros](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/impact-and-evaluation/cros)

ECU (2015) Equality in Higher Education: statistical report 2015: Part 2 students, London: Equality Challenge Unit: [www.ecu.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Equality-in-HE-statistical-report-2015-part-2-students.pdf](http://www.ecu.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Equality-in-HE-statistical-report-2015-part-2-students.pdf)

HESA (2013) Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education Longitudinal Survey, Cheltenham: Higher Education Statistics Agency: [www.hesa.ac.uk/index.php?option=com\\_pubs&task=show\\_pub\\_detail&pubid=1714&Itemid=286](http://www.hesa.ac.uk/index.php?option=com_pubs&task=show_pub_detail&pubid=1714&Itemid=286)

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HESA (2016) Students in Higher Education 2014/15, Cheltenham: Higher Education Statistics Agency.

Vitae (2013) What do researchers do? Early career progression of doctoral graduates, Cambridge: The Careers Research and Advisory Centre (CRAC) Limited

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# Annexes

1. Survey questionnaire
2. Interview schedule for survey respondents
3. Topic guide for interviews with representatives from research organisations and other experts

## Annex 1. Survey questionnaire

ESRC Survey: Experiences and issues faced by early career social scientists

### Top of Form

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#### Page 1: Overview

*Please note that your answers will be confidential with no identifying information passed on. Responses will be presented in aggregate form with text answers anonymised where necessary. You can withdraw from the study at any time. Your data will only be recorded if you complete the survey.*

The Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) are interested to discover the experiences and issues faced by early-career social scientists. Therefore, they have commissioned this survey from researchers at the UCL Institute of Education to see how improvements can be made to existing support for early-career social scientists before, during and after their doctoral studies.

Early-career social scientists can be described in a variety of ways, for example, as those within eight years of the award of a doctorate. However, we do not want to use such a prescriptive definition as some people might describe themselves as an early-career social scientist despite having been awarded their doctorate more than eight years ago. Please note, we are not targeting current doctoral students.

Following the analysis of this survey, it is hoped to conduct a follow-up study involving interviews with selected early-career social scientists who are interested in participating. On the final page of this survey we will ask you if you are interested in participating in that qualitative study.

We do hope that you will complete the survey as your answers will help to improve the support for all researchers. We also hope that you will encourage anyone you know who is an early-career researcher in the social sciences and therefore eligible to participate, so please feel free to pass on the URL: [bit.ly/ESRC-survey](https://bit.ly/ESRC-survey)

The survey asks you about:

- Your motivations for doctoral study
- Your current employment and future aspirations
- Availability of career advice and guidance – and what you used
- Your education and personal information

The survey should take no more than 20 minutes to complete. Not every question will be relevant to you. Where this is the case please leave blank.

### Bottom of Form

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#### Page 2: Defining an early career researcher (ECR)

1. Would you describe yourself as an Early Career Researcher?

Yes / No

1.a. Please outline the reasons for your answer [open]

#### Page 3: Your motivations and aspirations

2. What was your main motivation for deciding to study for a doctoral degree?

- My interest in the subject
  - Improving my career prospects for an academic/research career
  - Improving my career prospects outside of an academic/research career
  - I was encouraged by a former academic tutor/supervisor
-

- The funding was available
- It felt like a natural step for me
- I felt inspired to work with a particular academic
- Other

2.a. If you selected Other, please specify: [open]

3. What were your career aspirations for when you had completed your doctorate, **before** studying, **during** studying, **after** your award and **now**? (Select all that apply)

	Before study	During study	Immediately after award	Now
3.1. Career in higher education - primarily research and teaching				
3.2. Career in higher education - primarily research				
3.3. Career in higher education - primarily teaching				
3.4. Other role in higher education				
3.5. Research career outside higher education				
3.6. Self-employment/running your own business				
3.7. Teaching career outside higher education				
3.8. Other				

3.a. If you selected 'Other' to any of the above, please specify. [open]

#### Page 4: Your Employment

4. Did you do any teaching at higher education level during your doctoral studies?

Yes / No

5. Immediately following the completion of your doctorate, what did you do?

- Paid work in higher education
- Unpaid work in higher education
- Paid work outside higher education
- Unpaid work outside education
- Travelled
- Other

5.a. If you selected Other, please specify: [open]

6. How long did it take you to secure your first paid post after submitting your thesis?

- Less than 3 months
- 3-6 months
- 6-12 months
- 1-2 years
- Over 2 years
- I've not yet secured a paid post
- I secured my first paid post before submitting

7. Which of the following best describes your first paid post?

- Role in higher education - primarily research and teaching

- Role in higher education - primarily research
- Role in higher education - primarily teaching
- Other role in higher education
- Research role outside higher education
- Self-employment / Running your own business
- Teaching career outside higher education
- Other occupation (please specify)
- I've not yet been able to secure a paid post

7.a. If you selected Other, please specify:

**Page 5: More employment**

8. Which of the following have you done since **completing** your doctorate? (Select all that apply)

- Role in higher education - primarily research and teaching
- Role in higher education - primarily research
- Role in higher education - primarily teaching
- Other role in higher education
- Research role outside higher education
- Self-employment/running your own business
- Teaching career outside higher education
- Private sector employment
- Public sector employment
- Voluntary sector employment
- Employment in higher education outside the UK
- Employment outside higher education and outside the UK
- Other occupation (please specify)
- Further study for a qualification
- Been unemployed

8.a. If you selected Other, please specify: [open]

9. How would you best describe what you are primarily doing **now**?

- Role in higher education - primarily research and teaching
- Role in higher education - primarily research
- Role in higher education - primarily teaching
- Other role in higher education
- Research role outside higher education
- Self-employment/running your own business
- Teaching career outside higher education
- Private sector employment
- Public sector employment
- Voluntary sector employment
- Employment in higher education outside the UK
- Employment outside higher education and outside the UK
- Other occupation (please specify)
- Further study for a qualification
- Don't know
- Been unemployed

9.a. If you selected Other, please specify: [open]

10. How would you describe the nature of your **current main** employment status?

- Permanent or open-ended contract
- Fixed-term contract (12 months or more)

- Fixed-term contract (less than 12 months)
- Other

10.a. If you selected Other, please specify: [open]

11. What best describes your main employment or role?

- full-time
- part-time
- hourly-paid (fixed hours)
- hourly-paid (ad hoc hours, i.e. zero hours contract)
- unpaid
- other

11.a. If you selected Other, please specify:

11.b. If you answered part-time above, what is the percentage of a full-time post? [open]

12. How long have you been in your current main employment?

- Less than 6 months
- 6-12 months
- 1-2 years
- 2-4 years
- 4 years or more

#### Page 6: More employment

13. How many **fixed term contracts** have you had since completing your doctorate?

0/ 1/ 2/ 3/ 4/ 5/ 6/ 7/ 8 or more

14. If you **are** working in higher education, how many contracts do you **currently** hold (including different roles at the same institution)

1/ 2/ 3/ 4/ 5 or more

15. If you are currently not working in Higher Education, what motivated you to seek employment elsewhere? [open]

15.a. If you are currently not working in Higher Education, would you like to move back into a higher education role at some point in your career?

Yes / No / Don't know

16. What is the job title of your **current main** employment? [open]

16.a. Who is the funder of your **current main** employment? (Please select all that apply)

- Education institution
- ESRC
- Other Research Council
- British Academy
- Government (central or local)
- NHS
- Research Institution
- Business
- Charity
- Other

16.a.i. If you selected 'Other' or 'Other Research Council' please specify the funder, type(s) of award(s) and the nature of your role(s) [open]

16.b. If **ESRC**, what is the nature of the award?

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- Future Research Leaders
- Research Fellow on grant
- Co-investigator on grant
- More than one award
- Other

16.b.i. If you selected 'Other', or selected more than one award, please specify the type(s) of award(s) and the nature of your role(s): [open]

16.c. If British Academy, what is the nature of the award?

- Post-doctoral Fellow
- Small Grants
- British Academy Rising Star Engagement Awards
- Newton International Fellowship (NIF)
- More than one award
- Other

16.c.i. If you selected Other, please specify or selected more than one award, please specify the type(s) of award(s) and the nature of your role(s):

### Page 7: A bit more employment

17. Please list any other current employment (providing details of employer, job title and fraction of a full-time post and funding source if known). [open]

18. If you have more than one contract, please give the reasons why. [open]

19. On average how many hours a week do you spend on the following research activities (even if you are not currently working in higher education)?

19.1.a. Reading academic articles

19.2.a. Data collection

19.3.a. Writing up research

19.4.a. Writing bids / applying for research funding

19.5.a. Knowledge exchange (e.g. consultancy; collaboration with business, public and voluntary sectors, etc)

20. Are you expected to teach at higher education level in any of your current roles?

Yes / No

20.a. If yes, what percentage of your contracted time?

20.b. If yes, are you paid for an appropriate number of hours (including preparation and marking time)?

Yes / No

### Page 8: Employment ready

21. To what extent do you agree that your doctoral studies proved an effective preparation for your 'Current' employment and your 'Desired' employment (if different)? Please select only ONE answer in each column

	Current	Desired
21.1. Strongly agree		
21.2. Agree		
21.3. Disagree		
21.4. Strongly disagree		

21.a. What could have improved your doctoral studies to make them a more effective preparation for employment? [open]

22. What do you consider to be the biggest barrier to achieving your chosen career (if applicable)? [open]

23. Postdoctoral funding applications

23.1.a. How many applications for funding for postdoctoral work have you made?

0/1/2/3/4/5/6/7/8 or more

23.2.a. How many of your applications for funding for postdoctoral work were approved for submission by your institution?

0/1/2/3/4/5/6/7/8 or more

23.3.a. How many of your applications for funding for postdoctoral work were funded?

0/1/2/3/4/5/6/7/8 or more

24. Are there any institutional barriers to postdoctoral researchers applying for funding?

Yes / No

24.a. If you answered **yes**, please outline those barriers [open]

25. If you have been employed **outside** the United Kingdom, please indicate country, employer, employment type and source of funding. [open]

#### Page 9: Career breaks

26. Since completing your doctorate, have you taken a career break (i.e. caring, parental leave, volunteering opportunity, travelling abroad, long-term illness etc)?

Yes / No

27. If you have taken a career break(s), how many years was it for in total?

1 year or less / 2 years / 3 years / 4 years / 5 years or more

28. If you have taken a career break(s), how long ago was the most recent?

Less than 1 year / 1-2 years / 2-4 years / 4 years or more

29. If you have taken a career break(s), please state your reasons why.[open]

#### Page 10. Career support, advice and guidance

30. Where have you sought career advice and guidance **before**, **during** and **after** doctoral study? (Select all that apply)

Before                      During                      After

30.1. Colleagues

30.2. Doctoral supervisor

30.3. Line manager

30.4. Careers service

30.5. Vitae

30.6. Research funders

30.7. Other

30.a. If you answered 'other' to any of the above please specify [open]

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	Your doctoral institution during doctorate	Your doctoral institution after doctorate	Your current main employer
31.1. Careers service			
31.2. Mentor			
31.3. Supervisor			
31.4. Access to the library			
31.5. Access to academic publications			
31.6. Institutional email address			
31.7. Access to training			
31.8. Office space			
31.9. Funding for conferences			
31.10. Funding for publication fees			
31.11. Support for funding applications			
31.12. Honorary affiliation with institution			
31.13. Other			
31.a. If you answered 'Other' to any of the above please specify [open]			

**Page 11: Available support**

32. What support is available to you that is targeted at those who have a doctorate? (Please select the **most appropriate** column for your situation)

	Working in Higher Education	Working outside Higher Education
32.1. Career development		
32.2. Careers outside academia		
32.3. Career within academia		
32.4. Publishing		
32.5. Mentoring		
32.6. Research management		
32.7. Writing funding proposal		
32.8. Writing job applications/covering letters/CVs		
32.9. Presenting at conferences		
32.10. Public engagement/knowledge exchange/media relations		
32.11. Networking		
32.12. Leadership		
32.13. Teaching (training)		
32.14. Teaching (qualification)		
32.15. Time management		
32.16. Other		
32.a. If you selected Other, please specify: [open]		

33. What support would you like to have access to?

- Career development
- Careers outside academia
- Publishing
- Mentoring
- Research management
- Writing funding proposal
- Writing job applications/covering letters/CVs
- Presenting at conferences
- Public engagement/knowledge exchange/media relations
- Networking
- Leadership
- Teaching (training)
- Teaching (qualification)
- Time management
- Other

33.a. If you selected Other, please specify: [open]

34. Which support has been the **most** helpful / valuable and why? [open]

35. Which support has been the **least** helpful / valuable and why? [open]

36. Please detail any difficulties you have encountered accessing support, advice and guidance.

#### **Page 12: Recommendations and future support**

37. What specific training during doctoral study would you recommend to someone else undertaking a similar doctoral path to you? (You may select more than one)

- Career development
- Careers outside academia
- Publishing
- Mentoring
- Research management
- Writing funding proposal
- Writing job applications/covering letters/CVs
- Job interviewing
- Presenting at conferences
- Public engagement/knowledge exchange/media relations
- Networking
- Leadership
- Teaching
- Time management
- Other

37.a. If you selected Other, please specify: [open]

#### **Page 13. Your education**

38. What type of school did you attend?

Fee-paid or Private / State

39. At what institution did you study for your **first** degree-level qualification? [open]

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40. What was the subject area? (You may select more than one if multi-disciplinary) If none are appropriate please select 'Other' and specify the subject area.

- Accountancy
- Anthropology
- Business and management studies
- Economics
- Education
- Geography
- History
- Law
- Linguistics
- Media studies
- Politics and International Relations
- Psychology
- Sociology
- Social policy & administration
- Social work
- Town and country planning
- Other

40.a. If you selected Other, please specify, or enter the title here if none of the above are appropriate:

41. What was your overall classification?

1st / Upper second / Lower second / Third / Pass / Other

41.a. If you selected Other, please specify:

42. If you studied for any subsequent academic or non-academic qualification(s), please give the title(s) here, e.g. MSc Research Methods, PGCE. [open]

#### **Page 14: Your doctorate**

43. At what institution did you study for your doctorate? [open]

44. What type of doctorate do you have?

Research doctorate (i.e. PhD) / Professional doctorate /Practice-based doctorate

45. In what subject area did you study? (You may select more than one if multi-disciplinary)

- Accountancy
  - Anthropology
  - Business and management studies
  - Economics
  - Education
  - Geography
  - History
  - Law
  - Linguistics
  - Media studies
  - Politics and International Relations
  - Psychology
  - Sociology
  - Social policy & administration
  - Social work
-

- Town and country planning
- Other

45.a. If you selected Other, please specify:

46. How did you study for your doctorate?

Full-time / Part-time / A mix of full and part-time

47. Did you suspend your studies at any point?

Yes / No

47.a. If yes, please tell us why

48. How did you fund your doctoral studies? (You may select more than one response)

- ESRC
- BA
- Other Research Council (please specify below)
- Non-UK Government
- Charity (please specify below)
- Corporate
- Institution – full scholarship
- Institution – part-time work required (e.g. Graduate Teaching Assistant)
- Self-funded
- Other

48.a. If you selected Other, Other Research Council or Charity, please specify: [open]

49. In what year did you begin your doctorate? [open]

50. In what year was your doctorate awarded? [open]

### **Page 15: Your biographical details**

*Finally, we'd like to know some basic information about you. You are not required to answer these questions, but it will be very helpful if you do so that we can explore the relevance of these factors.*

51. What is your gender?

Male / Female / Other

52. How would you describe your ethnicity? [open]

53. In what year were you born? [open]

54. Do you consider yourself to be disabled?

Yes / No

55. Which category best describes you?

UK-British national / Other European Union / Non-European Union

56. Do you have any significant caring responsibilities (e.g. children, aged/ill relatives, etc.)?

Yes / No

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57. If you have any final thoughts or comments, please enter them here.[open]

**Page 16: Next phase**

Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this survey.

58. In the next phase of this study, we will be interviewing a number of respondents via telephone or Skype. If you are interested in participating, please enter your email address in the box below. [open]

59. In addition, the ESRC - and probably the British Academy - are keen to follow up with respondent's in future longitudinal research. To do so, they would like contact details for those willing to provide them. If you are happy to do so, please provide your **personal email** address and/or mobile phone number (since these are less likely to change than an institutional email) in the box below. [open]

Finally, if you know of anyone else who might like to complete the survey, please do pass on the web address: **[bit.ly/ESRC-survey](http://bit.ly/ESRC-survey)**

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## Annex 2. Interview schedule for survey respondents

### Interview topics / questions (survey respondents):

#### *Preamble*

Thank you agreeing to take part in follow-up interviews and for signing and returning the consent form. By signing the form you have agreed to the interview being recorded. The research team would like to reiterate that all your answers will be confidential and that you have the right to withdraw at any time.

The purpose of the interview is to explore further some of the issues raised in the survey. The ESRC are particularly interested in your views and experiences around the support, advice and training available to early career social scientists and how this offer might be improved in the future. They are interested in those employed both inside and outside of academia and those that were ESRC funded as well as those that were not.

The interview should take no more than 30 minutes (**check interviewee understands and Switch on recorder**).

- 1) Please briefly outline how you got to this point after completing your doctorate, including what helped and what didn't.
- 2) Why do you consider yourself to be an early career researcher?
- 3) When will you stop considering yourself to be an early career researcher?

#### *Institutions of study:*

- 4) How would you describe the continuing support from the institution where you studied for your doctorate?
  - a. If you have received continuing support - what was its quality and usefulness? How easy was it to access – how did you know about it? How long will it be offered to you?
  - b. If you have not received continuing support why not? – Prompt: was it offered? Did you feel you didn't need it? – Can you explain why?
- 5) What support would you like to see such institutions offer early career social scientists and how long do you think it should last?
- 6) What one change would you recommend that such institutions make to support early career social scientists, working inside or outside of academia, in developing their careers?
- 7) Have you heard of the ESRC Doctoral Training Centres (DTCs)?
  - a. **For those who have or have been attached to a DTC** - What advice and support have you received from the Doctoral Training Centres (DTCs)? – Prompt: If so what was the quality, access and usefulness?
  - b. **For those who have not heard of DTCs** - In common with other research councils the ESRC now uses Doctoral Training Centres (DTC) to host and manage their doctoral studentships. What do you think DTCs should focus on to help doctoral students with their career development both during and after their studies and why?

#### *Current place of employment:*

- 8) Is there a specific service offered by your current employer which provides support for early career social scientists? Prompt: If so, what is it, what is its quality, accessibility and usefulness?
- 9) How long after being awarded your doctorate do you think it is reasonable for your current employer to continue to provide advice, support, training and why?
- 10) Have you applied for funding at your current place of employment? If yes, how did it go? If not, why not?

#### **ESRC specific:**

- 11) What is your experience of ESRC funding for ECR; what worked or didn't; did it meet your needs?
- 12) What ESRC funding scheme do you think would provide the greatest support to early-career social scientists and why?
  - i.e. Future Research leaders / Early career researcher / Postdoc fellowship scheme / 1 year postdoc funding for publications / Small grants / or something else
- 13) What one change / piece of advice / 'thing' - support or training - would you recommend the ESRC put in place to better support early career social scientists in developing their careers?
- 14) How long after being awarded your doctorate do you think it is reasonable for the ESRC to provide continuing advice, support, training and why?
- 15) What support, advice and training would you like to see in place from employing institutions for early career social scientists and why?
- 16) How would you describe where you are now in relation to your career aspirations when you initially started your doctorate? Prompt: why they are or are not where they wanted / expected to be.

**Studying and working abroad:**

- 17) Have you ever studied or worked abroad? If yes, what was the experience like / how did it compare to the UK?
- 18) If no why not? What have been the barriers – personal or professional? Would you have liked the opportunity to work or study abroad and why?
- 19) Is there anything else you would like to add

## Annex 3. Topic guide for interviews with representatives from research organisations and other experts

**Feedback on key points from the survey (focus depends on interviewee):**

- The challenge of securing permanent research / lectureship posts in relation to funding applications and publications particularly.
- Defining ECR
- Too many graduates not enough posts; lack of preparation for non-HE careers (but recognition that non-HE careers are not motivator for doctoral study)
- Patchwork careers – low pay, post docs, multiple contracts etc
- Doctoral institution support – needed earlier, i.e. during the PhD. Also reality of the job market situation
- Experiences of applying for ESRC funding specifically.
- DTC awareness and use

**Topics.** Response to the above namely:

1. What do you think are the needs of doctoral graduates in the social sciences?
2. What support, if any, does your organisation currently offer doctoral graduates in the social sciences?
3. How could your organisation better support doctoral graduates in the social sciences and how long should that provision last?
4. Where else – and in what form - do you think support for doctoral graduates in the social sciences should come from?
5. How could any such support for doctoral graduates in the social sciences be funded? Are there low cost solutions?
6. How do you see the situation of doctoral graduates in the social sciences progressing / developing in the next five years?
7. Do you think there are any particular issues for women?

**Test possible solutions / some ideas that have come out of the research findings for improving support:**

- 1-year post-PhD completion funding (for converting thesis into publications, learning about research funding and bid-writing, etc)
- Should there be a National careers service – run regionally – established or an improvement to institutional career services for doctoral students and ECRs working inside and outside of academia, to access, employability skills, ongoing discipline / academic training and support?
- ESRC to provide more support training or guidance centrally or via DTCs, e.g. guidance on applying for funding
- Continuing access to academic libraries and email accounts after leaving doctoral institution.
- Academic mentor.
- Training for supervisors on how to best support their PhD students in terms of career development - inside and outside of academia – during and for a defined period after completion.
- Greater clarification on who / what constitutes an ECR in what context (i.e. for funders, for HEIs etc etc)





