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Executive Summary

In 2006, AHRC commissioned a study to map the career destinations of AHRC funded PhD students 5-7 years after the end of their award. AHRC commissioned this 2012 study to update the 2006 work and to provide a detailed evidence base on outcomes from PhD training for the future.

The sample was drawn from students who started PhD awards in 2002, 2003 and 2004. On the basis of a typical PhD taking around three years, these students are approximately 5-7 years into their career (which is the same as for the 2006 study).

Current Status of Respondents

1 in 5 respondents had a previous career before starting their PhD. Thus, many AHRC PhD students are not moving straight from undergraduate to graduate studies. Instead, they are taking time out from employment to undertake a PhD to either further career prospects in the sector in which they are currently employed or to help them to move into another sector in the future.

The majority of respondents (72%) are in full-time employment (30 hours a week or more), 12% are in part-time employment (less than 30 hours a week), 8% are self employed, 5% are unemployed and 3% fall into other categories. In 2006, 78% of respondents were in full-time employment, 10% were in part-time employment, 6% were self employed, 1.5% were unemployed and 4.5% fell into other categories. Thus, there is no significant variation between the two cohorts but the current economic climate is perhaps reflected in the smaller proportion of 2012 respondents in full-time employment and the slightly larger proportions that are in part-time employment, self employment and unemployed compared to 2006.

Sectoral Analysis of Employment

The majority of those in employment and self employment work in the university sector (72%). The corresponding proportion for 2006 was 69%. The proportion of respondents employed in the private sector is 6% (7% in 2006), in the public sector it is 6.5% (10% in 2006), in the independent sector it is 6.5% (8% in 2006) and 8% are self employed (6% in 2012). Thus, the sectoral breakdown of employment is similar to 2006.

In the university sector 61% of respondents are employed in permanent academic roles – mainly as lecturers and senior lecturers. 27% are employed in fixed term academic
positions such as fixed term lecturer and postdoctoral research assistant. 8% are employed in non academic roles and 4% did not provide any information on their role. The findings are similar to those in 2006 when 59% of those employed in the university sector were in permanent academic positions, 33% in fixed term positions and 7% in non academic positions.

There is evidence from the study of a sharp fall in the proportion of respondents employed in fixed term teaching/research positions in universities over time and conversely a strong increase in the proportion of respondents employed in permanent teaching/research positions (see Section 6).

83% of respondents (in full-time employment and self employment) earn more than the average UK salary. 31% earn the equivalent or more of the average UK salary for professional workers, although it must be remembered that many respondents are still at a relatively early stage in their career compared to the average professional worker. The majority of respondents (51%) earn £25,000-£39,999 per annum. The highest levels of pay are in the private sector and the lowest levels of pay are among those who work on a freelance/self employed basis. When the sample is based only on respondents who are in full-time employment (excluding the self employed), it is found that 89% earn more than the average UK salary. The proportion that earn the equivalent or more of the average UK salary for professional workers is similar at 32%.

The majority of respondents are either very happy (53%) or quite happy (40%) in their job. The highest levels of job satisfaction are in the independent sector where 64% are very happy in their job, followed by the university and public sector at 57% respectively and the private sector at 43%.

**Value of PhD Training**

Respondents were asked to what extent their PhD had been useful in giving them skills to develop their career subsequently. Generally, respondents are positive about this with 79% saying the award has been ‘very useful’ in developing their career subsequently – rising to 93% and 90% in the independent and university sectors respectively.

In addition, 69% of respondents say their PhD has been essential to their career and a further 23% say it has been of some importance in either getting into their present job/career or progressing more quickly than would otherwise have been possible. Only 8% say it has been of little or no importance. This is similar to the position in 2006 when 67% said their PhD was essential for their career, 23% that it was of some importance, and 10% that it was of little or no importance.
Overall, 94% of respondents are either very satisfied or quite satisfied with the quality of PhD training they received. There is evidence of a perceived increase in the quality of PhD training from the students’ perspective from the 2006 study to the 2012 study. In 2006, 53% of respondents were very satisfied with the quality of their PhD training – this has increased to 70% in 2012.

The most frequently mentioned skills (cited by at least 75% of respondents) acquired from PhD training are: critical analysis skills; written communication skills; subject specific knowledge; independence/initiative; research methodology skills; self motivation; problem solving/creative thinking. In 2006, the main skills highlighted by respondents were: critical analysis skills, subject specific knowledge, written presentation skills, independence/initiative, self motivation and archival research skills. Thus, the findings are similar across the two study cohorts.

Generally, the skills respondents cite as being most important in their current job are those that a large proportion of respondents (>75%) developed from their PhD. The exception is verbal presentation skills – indicating the importance of allowing students as much opportunity as possible to present and teach during their PhD.

All respondents were asked to indicate which skills and competencies should have been given greater emphasis during the course of their PhD. More support with respect to career management and networking emerges as the main finding from this analysis. In 2006, this was not considered so important. The key skill areas that required more emphasis then were verbal presentation skills, people management skills, self confidence and IT systems. The increasing competition for jobs, especially academic jobs, means that PhD students need more help on how to position themselves for employment. Also it is well known that personal networks and contacts play an important role in securing employment, and opportunities that help PhD students to build networks both within and outside their institution should be encouraged.

**Research Preparation Masters Degree**

Close to 1 in 3 respondents (31%) had also undertaken a Research Preparation Masters (RPM) Degree funded by AHRC. When asked how useful it had been in preparing them for their PhD, the feedback is positive with 81% saying it had been very useful, 14% saying it had been quite useful and 6% that it had not been useful.
1.0 Introduction

Background

1.1 AHRC is the UK’s leading research funding agency for the arts and humanities. One of its objectives is to support the development of skilled people for academic, professional and other employment through a range of postgraduate training programmes.

1.2 In 2006, AHRC commissioned a study to map the career destinations of AHRC funded PhD students 5-7 years after the end of their award. That information is now becoming dated. AHRC commissioned this study to update the 2006 work and to provide a detailed evidence base on outcomes from PhD training for the future.

1.3 Many people view postgraduate training as a gateway to a career in academia. This is true but as the previous tracking study showed, a significant proportion of PhD students use their training to pursue careers outside academia in the private, public and independent sectors. The AHRC is interested to see the extent to which its former PhD students are working in these sectors and whether there has been any significant change in academic as opposed to non-academic employment since the 2006 study.

Study Objectives

1.4 This study was commissioned to update the information on career paths provided by the 2006 study. Its specific objectives are to:

- Update the 2006 information on career progression of AHRC funded PhD students
- Provide an accurate representation of the employment patterns of the 2012 student cohort and compare this to the 2006 employment pattern analysis
- Find out the extent to which PhD training prepares former students for their current employment
- Establish the subject-specific and generic skills developed through PhD training that are being used by former students in their current careers
- Discern any influences on the wider public realm.

1.5 A further objective of the study is to compile a series of case study profiles of former students who participated in the 2006 survey and who would now be 10+ years into their career. This is the subject of a separate report that has been submitted to AHRC.
Study Approach

1.6 The study was undertaken in the same manner as the 2006 study. DTZ would like to thank the university alumni offices that assisted with the study.

1.7 The sample was drawn from students who started PhD awards in 2002, 2003 and 2004. On the basis of a typical PhD taking around three years, these students are approximately 5-7 years into their career (which is the same as for the 2006 study).

1.8 Overall, 233 former PhD students responded to the survey. DTZ is confident this is a representative sample of former students who began awards between 2002 and 2004.

Report Structure

1.9 The rest of this report is structured as follows:

• **Section 2** provides information on the respondents and their PhD research
• **Section 3** provides an overview of the career paths of former PhD students
• **Section 4** gives further information on the types of jobs being undertaken by former PhD students in different sectors
• **Section 5** presents the views of former PhD students on the value of their PhD training
• **Section 6** uses time series data collected from the survey to analyse career paths over time.
2.0 The Respondents and their PhD Research

Gender and Age

2.1 Of the 233 respondents, 49% are men and 51% are women which is similar to the 2006 study (46% men and 54% women).

2.2 Figure 2.1 shows the age of the respondents. The majority are in their early thirties as was also the case for the 2006 study. The main difference is that the 2012 cohort has fewer respondents below 30 years and more respondents over 50 years.

Figure 2.1 Age of Respondents

Base: all respondents (233)
Nationalities

2.3 The vast majority of respondents are British (82%) which is similar to the 2006 cohort (85%). Further information on the nationality of non British respondents is provided below. It is clear that the majority are from EU countries and in particular – Germany, Ireland, Italy and Denmark which together account for 67% of respondents in this category. In the 2006 study, Germany, Ireland, Italy and Greece accounted for 60% of the non British respondents.

Table 2.1 Nationality of Non British Respondents (42)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU – not specified</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK/US dual citizenship</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Previous Career

2.4 20% of respondents said they had a previous career before starting their PhD. A previous career was defined as a job in which they had worked for at least three years. In the 2006 study, 25% of respondents said they had a previous career before starting their PhD, so the position is similar.

2.5 This is interesting since it shows that many AHRC PhD students are not moving straight from undergraduate to graduate studies. Instead, they are taking time out from employment to undertake a PhD to either further career prospects in the sector in which they are currently employed or to help them to move into another sector in the future. From the survey data, both seem to be equally important with roughly equal numbers saying they are still employed in the same sector after their PhD and that they now work in a different sector.
2.6 Figure 2.2 shows that those who had a previous career before their PhD were employed in a wide range of sectors and occupations. However, it is noticeable that many relate to the creative industries such as publishing, writing, art, music, design and advertising.

*Figure 2.2 Employment Sector before PhD*

Base: respondents who had a career prior to their PhD (46)
Subject of PhD

2.7 Figure 2.3 shows the subject area in which respondents undertook their research. There is broad representation of all the main areas of research supported by AHRC in the sample.

Figure 2.3 Subject of PhD

2.8 In the 2006 study, PhD subjects were classified into four categories: historical studies (43%), language/literature (35%), philosophy/religious studies/law (13%) and art/music (9%). Although the categories are not identical it is clear that there is greater representation of art/music in the 2012 cohort (defined as visual arts, design and media and music and performing arts in Figure 2.3) and slightly less representation in historical studies and language/literature (defined as English language and literature; medieval and modern history; classics, ancient history and archaeology; and modern languages and linguistics in Figure 2.3).
2.9 72 of the 233 respondents (31%) had also undertaken a Research Preparation Masters (RPM) Degree funded by AHRC.¹ Figure 2.4 shows the subject areas in which RPMs were undertaken.²

**Figure 2.4 Research Preparation Masters Degree Subject**

Base: all respondents who had undertaken a Research Preparation Masters Degree (72)

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¹ 5 respondents (2%) had undertaken a Professional Preparation Masters Degree funded by AHRC
² A range of factors will have influenced this subject spread relative to the PhD subject spread: the distribution of AHRC masters funding; differences in progression rates into PhDs between subject areas; availability of other funding for Masters programmes; and the competition for AHRC PhD funding from the wider pool of students.
3.0 Overview of Career Paths

Current Status of Respondents

3.1 Figure 3.1 shows the current status of respondents and compares the position with 2006.

Figure 3.1 Employment Status of Respondents in 2012 and 2006

Base: all respondents (233)

3.2 The majority of respondents (72%) are in full-time employment (30 hours a week or more), 12% are in part-time employment (less than 30 hours a week), 8% are self employed, 5% are unemployed and 3% fall into other categories. In 2006, 78% of respondents were in full-time employment, 10% were in part-time employment, 6% were self employed, 1.5% were unemployed and 4.5% fell into other categories. Thus, there is no significant variation between the two cohorts but the current economic climate is perhaps reflected in the smaller proportion of 2012 respondents in full-time employment and the slightly larger proportions that are in part-time employment, self employment and unemployed compared to 2006. However, the unemployment rate is still
considerably lower than the national average of 8% (International Labour Organisation rate August 2012).

3.3 Seven of the eleven respondents who are currently unemployed provided further information on their position. The majority have been unemployed for a relatively short period of time and worked previously in universities. They are seeking similar employment going forward which is challenging in the current public funding environment.

**Sectoral Analysis of Employment**

3.4 Figure 3.2 shows a sectoral breakdown of employment for those who are in employment and self-employment in 2012 and 2006. It is clear that the sectoral characteristics of employment are remarkably similar across both the 2012 and 2006 cohorts.

*Figure 3.2 Sectoral Analysis of Employment*

Base: all respondents in employment
Salary Levels

3.5 Salary information is helpful in assessing levels of remuneration across different types of job. It is useful to have some benchmarks against which to compare the salary information collected from the survey. The average gross full-time salary for all workers in the UK in 2011 was £26,200.3 The average salary for non manual workers and professional workers was £33,000 and £42,200 respectively.3 The latter is a better benchmarks for AHRC PhD students who would be expected to progress to professional occupations.

3.6 Figure 3.3 shows the salary of respondents in full-time employment and self employment across different sectors. Information is presented on the proportion of respondents with salaries of less than £25,000 so that comparisons can be drawn with the average salary in the UK. Information is also presented on the proportion of respondents with salaries of at least £40,000 so approximate comparisons can be made with the average salary of professional workers in the UK.

Figure 3.3 Analysis of Salary Levels by Employment Sector

Base: all respondents in full-time and self employment providing salary information (183)

3 Office for National Statistics
3.7 The main findings are as follows:

- 83% of AHRC PhD students earn more than the average UK salary. 31% earn the equivalent or more of the average UK salary for professional workers. However, it must be remembered that many respondents are still at a relatively early stage in their career compared to the average professional worker.

- The majority of respondents earn between £25-39,999 per annum with 51% falling into this category.

- The lowest levels of pay are among those who are self employed which probably reflects the variable hours worked in this sector with many respondents perhaps not in full-time employment.

3.8 When the sample is based only on former PhD students who are in full-time employment (excluding the self employed), it is found that 89% earn more than the average UK salary which is greater than above. However, the proportion that earn the equivalent or more of the average UK salary for professional workers is similar to above at 32%. The overall breakdown for former PhD students who are in full-time employment is:

- <£25,000: 11%
- £25,000-£39,999: 57%
- £40,000-£59,000: 30%
- £60,000-£99,999: 1%
- £100,000+: 1%

3.9 Figure 3.4 shows salary levels for male and female respondents to the survey (based on those in full-time employment and self employment). Pay levels are similar but there are slightly more women than men on lower salaries and vice versa for higher salaries.
Figure 3.4 Salary Level by Gender

Geographical Location of Respondents

3.10 87% of respondents (who are employed or self employed) work in the UK. This is the same proportion as in the 2006 study. The USA is the most common place of employment for those employed outside the UK as shown below.
3.11 Respondents were asked where in the world they intended to live and work in the long term. The response was that 89% expect to live and work in the UK, with 11% intending to live and work overseas. The USA is again the most popular destination outside the UK. Other countries mentioned include Switzerland, Denmark, Germany, Australia and Ireland (reflecting the nationality of some respondents). Figure 3.6 shows the reasons for choosing to live/work outside the UK in the future.
The main reasons for wishing to work outside the UK in the future are better job/salary prospects and personal reasons. Of those citing better job/salary prospects, a significant proportion are academics, with a number highlighting the difficulty of finding academic work in the UK at the present time.
4.0 Sectoral Analysis of Career Paths

The University Sector

4.1 Respondents were asked about the nature of their job and whether they were employed on a permanent/open ended contract or a fixed term contract. A breakdown of employment is provided below in Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1 Roles of Respondents in the University Sector

The findings are similar to those in 2006 when 59% of those employed in the university sector were in permanent academic positions, 33% in fixed term positions and 7% in non academic positions (see Figure 4.2).
The majority of those employed in academic positions in the university sector say their job involves both teaching and research. However, a number have roles that involve mainly research or mainly teaching as shown in Figure 4.3.
Figure 4.3 University Employment – Teaching and Research Responsibilities

Employees in universities were asked how happy they are in their current role. The responses are shown below benchmarked with the sample as a whole. It is clear that job satisfaction levels are generally high.

Table 4.1 Job Satisfaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All sectors</th>
<th>University</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Happy</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quite Happy</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Happy</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents were also asked if they intended to stay in their current field in the future. Overwhelmingly, those employed in the university sector intend to continue to pursue a career in academia in the future.
Table 4.2 Future Intentions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All sectors</th>
<th>University</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I enjoy this work and intend to stay in this area and seek progression in the future</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am only doing this type of work because of a lack of other employment opportunities. I intend to pursue a different career path in the future</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Private Sector Employment

4.5 A relatively small proportion of former PhD students (6%) are employed in the private sector. The sectors in which the 12 respondents in this category are employed are listed below. The range of sectors is broad but there is a cluster of jobs related to the business and professional services sector.

Table 4.3 Breakdown of Employment in Private Sector

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publishing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail x 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management Consultancy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV/Film</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Business Services</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business process outsourcing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.6 Job satisfaction is reasonably high in the sector and the majority of respondents intend to remain in their current field in the future as shown in the tables below.
Table 4.4 Job Satisfaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All sectors</th>
<th>Private Sector</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Happy</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quite Happy</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Happy</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.5 Future Intentions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All sectors</th>
<th>Private Sector</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I enjoy this work and intend to stay in this area and seek progression in the future</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am only doing this type of work because of a lack of other employment opportunities. I intend to pursue a different career path in the future</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Public Sector (Outside Universities)

4.7 A relatively small proportion of former PhD students (6.5%) are employed in the public sector. Of the 14 respondents in this category, 12 provided information on their employment and the types of organisations in which they are employed are shown below.

Table 4.6 Employment in the Public Sector

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Organisation</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Government department/agency</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local authority</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FE college</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary school</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.8 Job satisfaction is reasonably high in the sector and the majority of respondents intend to remain in their current field in the future as shown in the tables below.

**Table 4.7 Job Satisfaction**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All sectors</th>
<th>Public Sector</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Happy</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quite Happy</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Happy</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 4.8 Future Intentions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All sectors</th>
<th>Public Sector</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I enjoy this work and intend to stay in this area and seek progression in the future</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am only doing this type of work because of a lack of other employment opportunities. I intend to pursue a different career path in the future</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**The Independent Sector**

4.9 6.5% of respondents are employed in the independent or ‘third’ sector. A breakdown of those employed in the independent/voluntary sector is provided below. Of the 14 respondents in this category, 11 provided information on their employment. The dominant feature of employment in this sector is independent schools with 5 of the 11 respondents who provided information working in this type of organisation. Independent schools are in a position to offer more attractive pay to people with higher level qualifications and this is perhaps why a number of former PhD students have chosen employment in this area.

4.10 Other employers in this sector include organisations such as the National Trust, a children's charity and the Church of England.
4.11 Job satisfaction is reasonably high in the sector and the majority of respondents intend to remain in their current field in the future as shown in the tables below.

Table 4.9 Job Satisfaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All sectors</th>
<th>Independent Sector</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Happy</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quite Happy</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Happy</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.10 Future Intentions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All sectors</th>
<th>Independent Sector</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I enjoy this work and intend to stay in this area and seek progression in the future</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am only doing this type of work because of a lack of other employment opportunities. I intend to pursue a different career path in the future</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Self Employment

4.12 Of the 17 respondents that stated that they were self-employed and provided further information on what they were doing (15), 10 work on a freelance basis and 5 run their own business.

4.13 Of those running their own business, one is a partner in a publishing company; one works in a number of areas, including music and language as the owner of several small limited companies; one runs an internet business; one is a barrister; and one offered no further information.

4.14 Those respondents who work on a freelance basis operate in a variety of areas including:

- Writer (6)
- Publishing
- Lecture course designer
- Lecturing and reviewing
- Translator and examiner
5.0 Respondent Perspectives on the Value of a PhD

5.1 Respondents were asked to what extent their PhD had been useful in giving them skills to develop their career subsequently. The findings are presented in Figure 5.1.

Figure 5.1 Usefulness of PhD Training

Base: all respondents (233)

5.2 Generally, respondents are very positive about how their PhD training has supported them in their career, with 79% of respondents believing that the award had been ‘very useful’ in developing their career subsequently – rising to 90% in the university sector.

Importance of Having a PhD

5.3 As can be seen from Figure 5.2, 69% of respondents say their PhD has been essential to their career and a further 23% say it has been of some importance in either getting into their job/career or progressing more quickly than would otherwise have been possible. This is similar to the position in 2006 (see Figure 5.3), when 67% said their PhD was essential for their career, 23% said it was of some importance, with 10% stating it was of little or no importance.
5.4 As expected, there is variation across sectors with regard to the importance of PhD training. Not surprisingly, those in the university sector are most likely to regard a PhD as essential to their career (91%) as shown in Figure 5.4.

*Figure 5.2 Importance of PhD to Job/Career*

Base: all respondents (233)
Figure 5.3 Importance Of PhD to Job/Career – 2012 and 2006 Cohorts

Base: all respondents

Figure 5.4 Importance of PhD to Job/Career – Sectoral Analysis

Base: all respondents (233)
Skills Gained from PhD Training

5.5 Respondents were asked to indicate which of the skills listed below in Figure 5.5 they had gained from their PhD.

Figure 5.5 Skills Acquired Through PhD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Critical analysis skills</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written communication skills</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject specific knowledge</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence/Initiative</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research methodology skills</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self motivation</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem solving/creative thinking</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time management</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral communication skills</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archival research skills</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project management</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills in another language</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data analysis and interpretation</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transcription/translating</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networking</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevant practical skills</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital/media technology skills</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT systems</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career management</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working as part of a team</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People management</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership skills</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: all respondents (233)
5.6 The skills that were mentioned by at least 75% of respondents were:

- Critical analysis skills
- Written communication skills
- Subject specific knowledge
- Independence/initiative
- Research methodology skills
- Self motivation
- Problem solving/creative thinking

5.7 In 2006, the main skills highlighted by respondents were: critical analysis skills, subject specific knowledge, written presentation skills, independence/initiative, self motivation and archival research skills. Thus, the findings are similar across the two study cohorts.

5.8 Those respondents currently in employment were asked to indicate the skills and competencies that are most important in their current job. The results are shown in Figure 5.6.
Figure 5.6 Most Important Skills and Competencies in Current Job

Base: all respondents in employment or self-employment (215)
5.9 The top skill areas mentioned by at least 40% of respondents as being important in their current job are:

- Critical analysis skills
- Subject specific knowledge
- Written communication skills
- Oral communication skills
- Independence/initiative.

5.10 Generally, the skills respondents cite as being most important in their current job are those that a large proportion of respondents (>75%) feel they gained from their PhD. The exception is oral communication skills – indicating the importance of giving students as much opportunity as possible to present and teach during their PhD.

5.11 Finally, all respondents were asked to indicate which skills and competencies should have been given greater emphasis during the course of their PhD.
More support with respect to career management and networking emerges as the main finding from this. In 2006, these were not considered so important. The key skill areas where more support was highlighted as necessary in 2006 were verbal presentation skills, people management skills, self confidence and IT systems. Perhaps the greater competition for jobs, particularly academic jobs, means that PhD students need more help on how to position themselves for particular jobs—especially in the academic sector. Also it is well known that personal networks and contacts play an important role in getting jobs, and opportunities that help PhD students to build networks both within and outside their institution should be encouraged.
Satisfaction with Quality of PhD Training

5.13 As can be seen from Figure 5.8, it is clear that respondents are highly satisfied for the most part with the training they received during their PhD.

Figure 5.8 Satisfaction with Quality of PhD Training

Base: all respondents (233)

5.14 There is evidence of an increase in the quality of PhD training from the student’s perspective from the 2006 study to this 2012 study. In 2006, 53% of respondents were very satisfied with the quality of their PhD training – this has increased to 70% in 2012.
Respondents provided a range of comments on their PhD training with some themes emerging as follows:

The satisfaction of undertaking a PhD and how it sometimes transforms a respondent’s life:

“I have found the skills I developed have been used in ways I could not have anticipated.”

“As I come from a working class background, the AHRC Award allowed me to complete my education to PhD level and was the most significant and important award I have ever received in my life. It made me feel endorsed and supported as a professional.”

“Excellent resources and support within the university department, plus the opportunity to develop my own ideas and skills. Invaluable training.”

“Prepared me as well as possible for an academic career.”

“Excellent springboard for an academic career.”

“Thank you, it was superb.”
5.17 The importance of the supervisor to the quality of the PhD experience and various suggestions on how this could be improved:

“My PhD supervisory team was the most caring and supporting team I have ever had the good fortune to work with.”

“Everything excellent, but would have desired more contact with a second supervisor.”

“I only had one supervisor, who went on leave, so was generally left to my own devices. Could have done with more mentoring and support.”

“Lack of a supervision arrangement – I only had one supervisor. However, this did teach me to take ownership of my own project.”

“Only one supervisor, no introduction /communication with other PG researchers, no pre-viva training, lack of support by supervisor.”

5.18 A desire for more opportunity to acquire teaching experience as part of PhD training and more support with career management planning particularly for those wishing to pursue academic careers:

“My PhD training has provided me with excellent support and training for producing good research and outputs, and also an interdisciplinary environment that has inspired further research and obtained me a couple of post-doctoral positions. It has been less effective in gaining teaching and people management experience.”

“Inadequate teacher training.”

“Lack of teaching experience opportunities provided to PhD students was absolutely shocking and a big problem later on when looking for a job as a lecturer.”

“The PhD was good preparation for being a subject expert but it did not prepare me for applying for HE teaching posts well.”

“More guidance in career development planning and publication skills would have been invaluable for the competitive job market.”

“I feel that project management and career management skills would be incredibly helpful to allow us to enter the world of work successfully.”

“The supervisors were quite hands-off about a lot of things, particularly when it came to advice about publishing, networking, teaching etc.”

“The only thing I lacked guidance on was a strategy for my publications.”
5.19 The need for more language training and support for particular types of PhD training:

“No language training was provided and this has proved a considerable setback to my career.”

“More language training could have been provided during my PhD. It was compulsory where I did my MA, but optional during my Doctoral studies.”

“Greater provision for learning foreign languages would have been helpful.”

“Funding for language training would have been very helpful.”

Respondent Perspectives on Value of Research Preparation Masters Degree

5.20 As mentioned earlier, 72 respondents (31% of AHRC PhD students) had also undertaken a Research Preparation Masters (RPM) Degree funded by AHRC. When asked how useful it had been in preparing them for their PhD, the feedback is positive with 94% saying it had been either very, or quite, useful (see Figure 5.10). Figure 5.11 shows the difference in response between the 2012 and 2006 cohorts on this matter.

Figure 5.10 Importance of RPM in preparing for PhD

Base: all respondents who had undertaken RPM (72)
Figure 5.11 Importance of RPM in preparing for PhD: 2012 and 2006 Cohorts

5.21 A range of positive comments were made by respondents on their RPM as shown below:

“It provided subject specific knowledge and access to relevant conferences/people that could help with research and my career.”

“It gave me training in critical theory and methodology; it gave me the confidence to envisage further study and ability to choose a research topic.”

“Enabled me to develop vital skills for higher research.”

“Enabled me to develop essential skills before my PhD.”

“The Master’s degree eventually became the start of my PhD.”

“Absolutely fundamental in providing a foundation for PhD study in terms of knowledge and skills.”

“It provided the research skills and language training I needed to proceed at doctoral level.”

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4 It should be noted that actually writing part of a PhD thesis is not allowed under the terms and conditions of RPM funding
“It provided useful training in several practical areas that were relevant to my doctoral research, and also gave me the opportunity to explore several possible research areas.”

5.22 Occasionally, some negative feedback was also received. For example:

“I didn’t feel that it gave me a meaningful skill set that I hadn’t already acquired from undergraduate study. The centrally taught core elements of the programme were very poorly delivered and a waste of my time.”

“Course needed much more focus on research methodologies and research management.”

5.23 Finally, respondents were also asked about ways in which their RPM experience could have been improved. A selection of comments from respondents on this is presented below:

“Perhaps more specific advice and guidance on developing an academic career.”

“More advice about career management.”

“More support and encouragement to get involved in research dissemination and career building activities at earliest possible stage.”

“More emphasis on academic networking seminars and collaborative projects.”

“Guidance needed on how to publish and present papers”

“Greater emphasis on immersive foreign language learning abroad – career guidance and preparation.”

“It was an excellent course – though perhaps greater emphasis could have been placed on relevant language learning/acquisition.”

“Nothing – it was, without question, the most formative year in my education. Excellent teaching, challenging content and incredibly useful for my current career.”

“Needed a proper induction and research methodology throughout, not just at the start.”

“Tougher regulations – progress reviews etc.”

“Maintaining funding for RPMs is crucially important as I was not in a position to self-fund so without RPM funding I would have been unable to undertake a PhD.”
6.0 Job History

6.1 All respondents were asked to complete a ‘diary’ providing details of the jobs they had undertaken since the end of their PhD award. Data is only presented for up to six years after the end of a PhD award because after this point the sample base becomes smaller and less reliable.

6.2 Figure 6.1 shows the proportion of respondents employed in different sectors over time. The following sector categories have been used:

- A permanent or open ended contract teaching/research position in a HEI
- A fixed term teaching/research position in a HEI
- A non-academic position in a HEI
- Private sector
- Public sector
- Independent sector
- Other employment (which includes self employment).
Figure 6.1 Time Series Analysis of Employment Patterns for PhD Students

Base: all respondents providing ‘diary’ information on their career path

6.3 Figure 6.1 shows that there is an inverse relationship between employment in fixed-term/research positions in HEIs and permanent teaching/research positions in HEIs over time. It is interesting to note the steady proportional increase year-on-year of those securing permanent teaching and research positions. It is clear that the proportion of respondents working in other sectors is relatively stable over time.