# "Academia is losing its appeal:" The role of heads of departments and senior colleagues in supporting early career academic staff retention, success and satisfaction

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# The early career project

1) Factors influencing the success, productivity and satisfaction of early career academics in NZ universities

2) Variations in organisational expectations and personal aspirations

3) Institutional and personal processes and support

4) Resources at a national and local level

# Research participants

- 82 interviewees from three countries (Canada, NZ & Sweden)

- 538 respondents to a national survey sent to all early career academics in all eight New Zealand universities

- 108 respondents to a national survey sent to a sample of academic managers (Heads of Departments, Deans, Deputy/Pro/Assistant Vice Chancellors, etc)

# Importance for success

*Rank the following according to which you think the early career faculty respondents said was* most important *to their success:*

___ A Head of Department who is committed to my success

___ Formal orientation programme for new academics

___ Formal mentoring programme for new academics

___ Senior colleagues interested in my progress & well-being

___ Opportunities to make decisions about the direction of my own research & teaching

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**6** Senior colleagues interested in my progress & well-being

**1** Opportunities to make decisions about the direction of my own research & teaching

# Importance for success

**2**   A Head of Department who is committed to my success

**27**  Formal orientation programme for new academics

**18**  Formal mentoring programme for new academics

**6**   Senior colleagues interested in my progress & well-being

**1**   Opportunities to make decisions about the direction of my own research & teaching

# Importance to success - ECAs

| Rank | Item |
|------|------|
| 1 | Opportunities to make decisions about the direction of my own research and teaching |
| 2 | An HOD who is committed to my success |
| 3 | Support from HOD to apply for promotion/tenure |
| 4 | Availability of resources for conducting research |
| 5 | Travels funds to present papers or conduct research |
| 6 | Senior colleagues interested in my progress and well-being |
| 7 | Informal mentoring relationships or opportunities |

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My experience here has been awesome. I was also employed for 18months at [an Australian uni]. I felt overwhelmed and lost because the place was so big, and my workload was huge with little support or mentoring, although the people I worked with were great people. I believe my experience here has been so good because of my Head of School and Head of Programme.

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The most effective thing for me has been a monthly scheduled meeting with my HOD to keep me on track and updated and supported in all ways.

# Importance to success - managers

| Rank | Item |
| --- | --- |
| 1  (9)* | Good communication between university management and other academics |
| 1= (12) | Feedback to early career academics from manager/s about their academic performance |
| 3  (2) | An HOD who is committed to early career academic success |
| 4  (3) | Support from HOD to apply for promotion/tenure |
| 5  (8) | Regular contact for early career academics with senior colleagues in same department |
| 6= (6) | Senior colleagues interested in early career academic progress and well being |
| 6= (27) | Formal orientation programme for new academics |

* The number in parentheses is the ranking given to the item by early career academics

# Effectiveness of career/professional development

| Item | ECAs | Managers |
|---|---|---|
| The right infrastructure exists in my university for me to make a career here | 3.12* | 2.20 |
| My university offers adequate professional development opportunities | 3.12 | 2.37 |
| The staff appraisal/review process at my university has been an effective aid to my career development | 3.49 | 2.31 |

*Scale of 1-5 where 1 = Strongly Agree and 5 = Strongly Disagree*

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# Managers' knowledge of resources/opportunities for early career academics

| Item | Not offered | I don't know |
|------|-------------|--------------|
| Formal mentoring programme for new academics | 16 | 10 |
| Professional assistance for early career academics in developing their teaching | 4 | 2 |
| Professional assistance for early career academics in obtaining external grants | 2 | 7 |
| Paid or unpaid research leave for early career academics | 10 | 16 |
| Teaching relief in the early years of academic appointment | 9 | 18 |
| Opportunity for early career academics to gain a tertiary teaching qualification | 0 | 9 |

Although many useful support and training opportunities may exist, it is very hard to find out about anything unless you are already familiar with the procedures and who to contact. Most of this information trickles through eventually, but sometimes this is too late. For example, I have just discovered that I should have applied for sabbatical more than a year ago, so now my sabbatical is only possible more than a year later than it should have been.

# Factors influencing ECA success

- Structural and organisational influences

- Prior experiences and qualifications

- Individual characteristics

# Recommendations

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- ## For everyone
  - Tell your own stories of 'success' (*Sharing Successes & Celebrating Achievements)*

# Academia is losing its appeal

A poetic finale

# Project funded by: