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The Gender Balance of Academic Economics in the UK

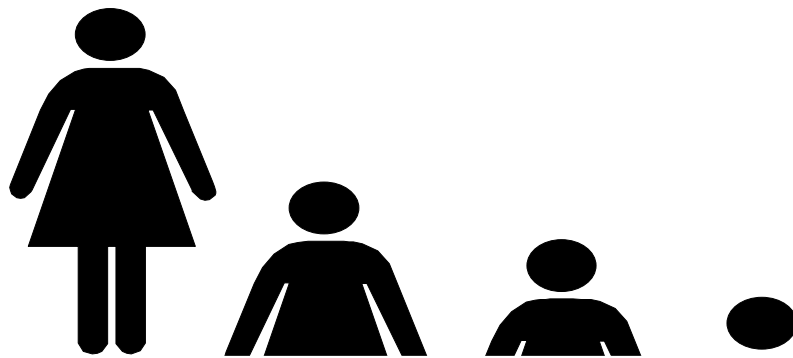
by

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Royal Economics Society  
Women's Committee Report

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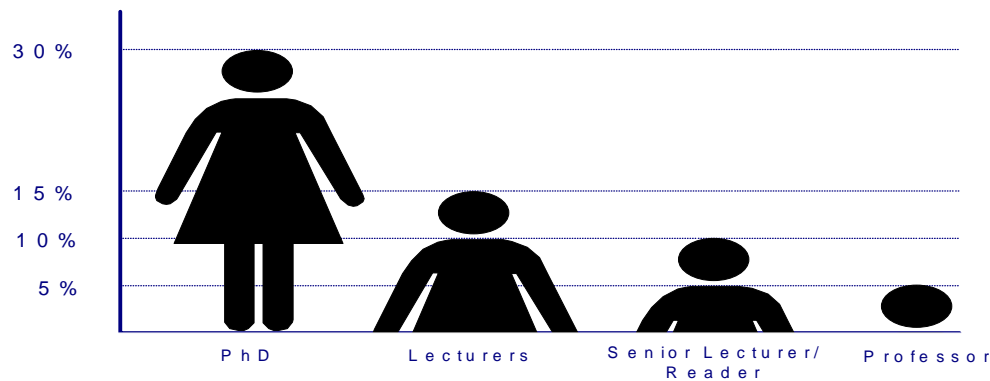
on behalf of the Royal Economic Society Women's Committee

**May 1997**

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Discussion Papers in Economics No. 97/21

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# THE GENDER BALANCE OF ACADEMIC ECONOMICS IN THE UK\*\*



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\*At its meeting in November 1996, the Council of the Royal Economic Society established a Women's Committee to promote the role of women in the UK economics profession. The current (interim) membership of the Women's Committee is Prof. Denise Osborn (Chair), Prof. Tony Atkinson, Prof. Stephen Hall, Prof. David Hendry, Dr Karen Mumford, Dr Maureen Pike, Prof. Carol Propper, and Ms Amanda Rowlatt

\*\*I am grateful for assistance from Inga Wagner, fellow members of the Women's Committee, Peter N. Smith, Alan Duncan, Alison Booth and participants at the RES Conference '97.

### **Executive Summary: relative position of female academic economists in the UK, 1996.**

- Women make up approximately 30% of the research/PhD students, 15% of the lecturers, 10% of the readers/senior lecturers and 5% of the professors.
- Males in standard full-time academic jobs are twice as likely to be at a senior level (above lecturer) than women (46% compared to 23%).
- There are few part-time jobs in standard academia and these jobs are dominated by men.
- It will take some 10 years for the relative stock of female permanent lecturers to equal the proportion (27%) of women in the inflows to that grade.
- Inflows via new hires into the senior grades were not high enough to have a significant impact on the relative stocks of females at the more senior level.
- Research-only jobs make up 15% of all full-time academic jobs, most are fixed-term.
- Research-only jobs are dominated by males although to a lesser extent than occurs in standard full-time academic jobs (some 70% male).
- Women make up the majority of the very few part-time research-only jobs (26 of 48 jobs).
- Men are twice as likely to occur in senior level research-only jobs than women.
- Both men and women are twice as likely to be at senior levels if they work in standard academic jobs than in research-only jobs.
- There is little difference in the relative position of female academics between new universities, old universities, departments with 4 and above RAE rankings, and those ranked 3 or below.
- There are 329 women currently enrolled in full-time research/PhD degrees, there are 312 women currently employed full-time in academia.
- 30% of the PhD students are from the UK; 27% of the females and 32% of the males.
- Some 80% of the PhD students are enrolled in the 4 or 5 RAE ranked departments: this proportion is the same for males and females.
- The majority of recent PhD graduates have not taken employment in standard academic jobs in the UK - more so for women than men.

## 1. Introduction

A fundamental role for the newly established Royal Economic Society Women's Committee<sup>1</sup> is to monitor and, where necessary, collect data on the position of female economists in academic appointments in the UK. In response to a shortage of available data suitable to its needs, the Committee Chair sent a questionnaire (appendix A) to all Heads of Departments listed as members of CHUDE in December 1996. The questionnaire sought information about staff appointments and students enrolments as of November 30, 1996. The survey response rate was very high (some 92% of the CHUDE list, appendix B). In addition, Departments were asked to nominate other groups of academic economists who are working in their Institution, this led to the questionnaire being sent to another 22 clusters of economists. The survey does not provide full coverage of all academic economists in the UK<sup>2</sup> but it is a good representation of those academic economists employed in Universities with CHUDE membership.

Table 1 shows the numbers of economists employed in academia in the UK from the total survey return. In total, there are 2346 people working as economists in academic appointments in the UK, 410 (or 17.5%) of these are women. The vast majority of these people (85.7%) are working in standard academic appointments (ie., mixed teaching and research jobs as opposed to research-only appointments), although this figure is less for women than for men (71.2% and 88.7% respectively). Similarly, the majority of people are working full-time (84.3%) and this figure is lower for women (76.1%) than men (86%).

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<sup>2</sup>The survey was sent to some 90 institutions, however, there may be an extra 40 or so tertiary institutions housing economists in the UK. Economists in these extra institutions are typically not organised into obvious groupings and the ability of individuals within the organisation to complete the survey return for these academics was not clear.

## T1. Academic Staff: Grade and Gender

Total return

<b>Primary Employment Function</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>% fem</b>
<b>All Staff : full-time</b>				
Professors	14	320	334	4.19
Readers & Senior Lecturers	37	350	387	9.56
Lecturers - permanent	134	704	838	15.99
Lecturers - fixed term	23	75	98	23.47
Senior Researchers	8	42	50	16.00
Researchers - permanent	5	17	22	22.73
Researchers - fixed term	79	137	216	36.57
Other - permanent	0	1	1	0.00
Other - fixed term	12	19	31	38.71
<b>Totals</b>	<b>312</b>	<b>1665</b>	<b>1977</b>	<b>15.78</b>
<b>All Staff : part-time</b>				
Academic - permanent	11	53	64	17.19
Academic - fixed term	17	59	76	22.37
Senior Researchers	3	5	8	37.50
Researchers - permanent	0	0	0	0.00
Researchers - fixed term	23	17	40	57.50
Other - permanent	2	11	13	15.38
Other - fixed term	42	126	168	25.00
<b>Totals</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>271</b>	<b>369</b>	<b>26.56</b>
<b>New Staff : full-time</b>				
Professors	1	21	22	4.55
Other Senior	2	10	12	16.67
Lecturers - permanent	13	36	49	26.53
Lecturer - fixed term	10	26	36	27.78
<b>Totals</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>21.85</b>
<b>New Staff : part-time</b>				
Academic - permanent	0	2	2	0.00
Academic - fixed term	5	11	16	31.25
<b>Totals</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>27.78</b>
<b>Grand totals</b>	<b>410</b>	<b>1936</b>	<b>2346</b>	<b>17.48</b>

Source: RES Survey April 1997 Data Return

In order to more fully appreciate the relative employment situation of male and female economists in UK academia, however, it is necessary to consider subdividing the data. Obviously an array of possible divisions is possible (the major results tables are provided in the appendices if the reader would like to consider different alternatives to those selected here). This report adopts the following divisions and structure: section 2 addresses standard academic appointments, both full and part-time; research-only employment is discussed in section 3; relative student numbers, new hires and inflow rates are analysed in section 4; and conclusions are presented in section 5.

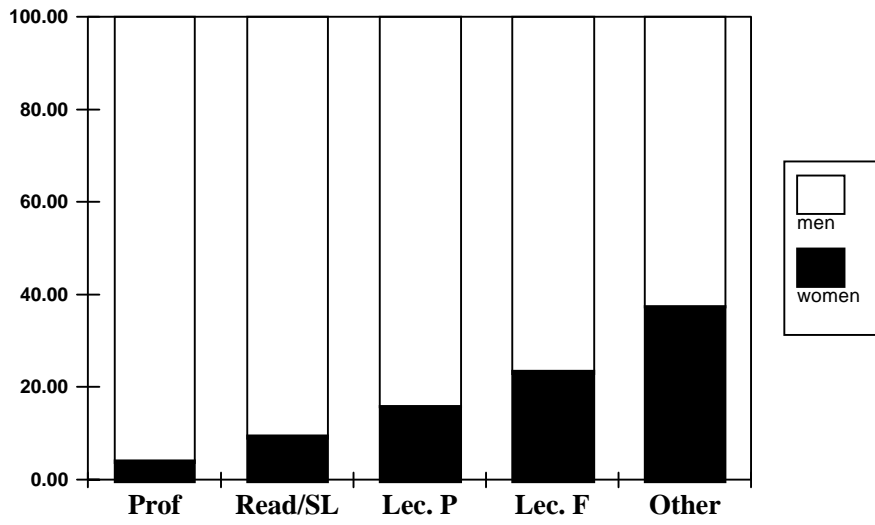
## **2. Standard academic appointments**

Most jobs in academia are of the standard mixed (teaching and research) academic type (as opposed to research-only jobs). Indeed, 85.7% of academic jobs in the UK in 1996 were of this type, furthermore, 81.4% of these jobs are permanent. There is also a very clear seniority path in this profession: through lecturer to senior lecturer/reader and on to professor. Whilst not all professors have spent many years being promoted through these grades, many other academics will not be promoted beyond lecturer. The slowly evolving nature of academia places limits on how illustrative a survey which only captures a cross section at one point of time can be, since the current stock of academics reflects the outcome of 20 to 30 years of flows. Nevertheless, the relative numbers of women currently employed in academic economics, the nature of their jobs and their comparative seniority levels are important facts to know. A description of the current stock in standard academic jobs is provided in this section, beginning with full-time jobs and followed by part-time employment. Perhaps the more interesting issue of the recent changes in these stocks will be considered in section 4 when the numbers of graduate students and new hires into academia are addressed.

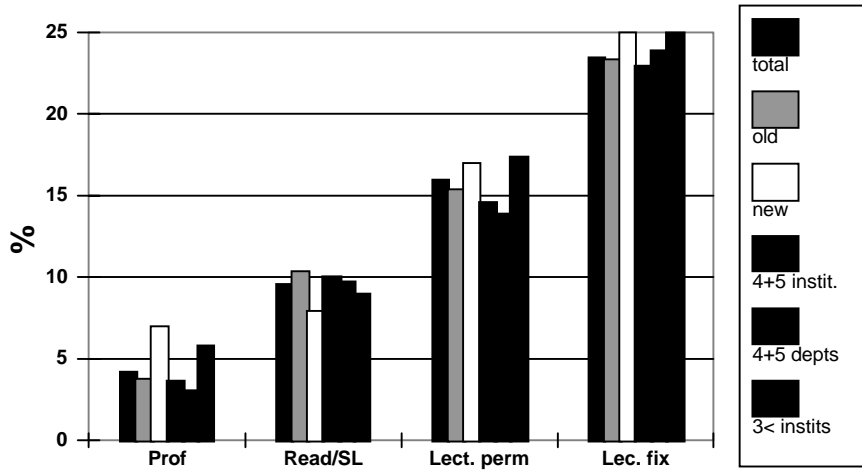
### **2.1 Full-time employment**

Of the 1977 full-time academic economists, there are 312 women constituting 15.8% of this workforce. If the research-only categories are excluded, women make up 13.% of the

**F1. Grade by gender: full-time academ**



**F2. Grade by gender by institution ty**





standard full-time academic workforce (or 220 out of 1689 employees). Women are much more likely to be employed at the lower seniority levels. Figure 1 shows that across the standard academic grades the female proportion falls away from 23.5% of fixed term lecturers, 16% permanent lecturers, 9.6% readers/senior lecturers, to 4.2% of professors<sup>3</sup>. Figure 2 shows that the proportions of women in the total number in these grades show little change across different types of institutions and that there is not a clear tendency for any type of institution to have a larger proportion of females across the grades<sup>4</sup>.

Comparing economics with the major subject areas taught in UK universities (for full-time employment), Figure 3 (data from HESA, 1996) shows that for the standard academic jobs economics has similar proportions of women to biology, maths and physical sciences. It sits well below the other major subject groupings of arts (excluding languages); administration, business studies and social studies; and medicine, dental and health studies

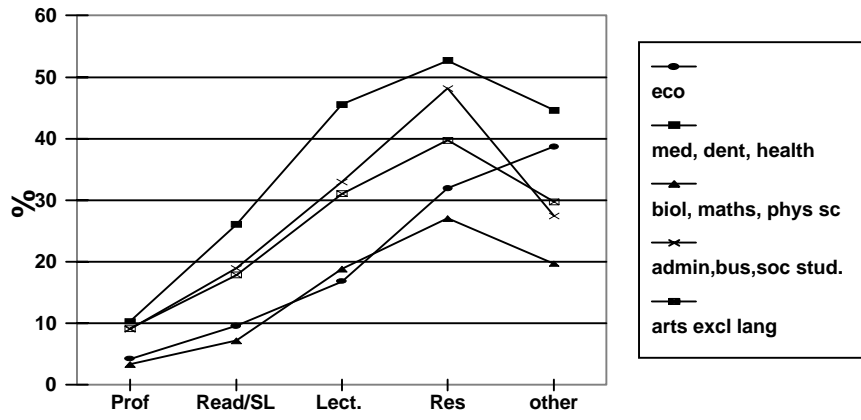
Returning to the total survey return, consider the grade distribution amongst the women who have taken employment in standard full-time academic jobs (ie., the proportion of women who are at each seniority level), Figure 4 reveals that 6% of these women are professors and a further 17% are readers or senior lecturers. Carrying out a similar exercise for the men employed in standard full-time academic jobs (see Figure 5) reveals that 22% of the males are in the professorial grade with another 24% in the reader/senior lecturer grade. In other words, of those

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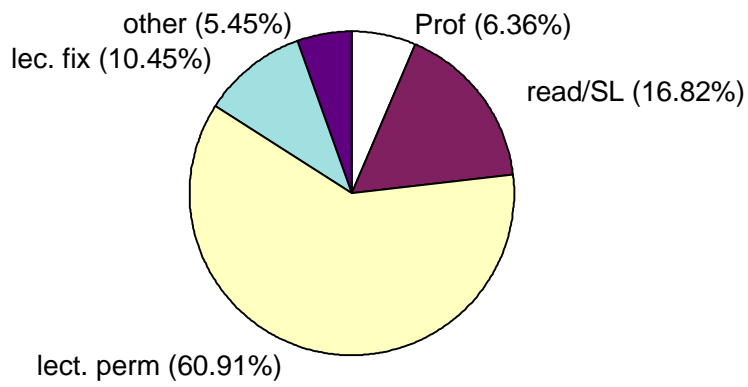
<sup>3</sup>The American PhD granting institutions have a similar concentration of women in the lower grades, although there are higher proportion of females amongst full professor: non tenure track 39.2%, assistant professor (untenured) 24.2%, associate professor (untenured) 14.2%, assistant professor (tenured) 12.9% and full professor (tenured) 7.5% (Bartlett, 1997;2).

<sup>4</sup>23.3, 15.4, 10.3 and 3.8 for the 'old' universities (appendix C); 25, 17, 7.9 and 7 for the 'new' universities; 23, 14.6, 10.1 and 3.6 for those Institutions with a 4 or 5 RAE ranked department (appendix D); 23.9, 13.9, 9.7 and 3.1 for the 4 or 5 ranked departments alone (ie., excluding other clusters of economists in the Institution, Appendix D); and 25, 17.4, 9 and 5.8 for those Institutions with a department ranked below 4.

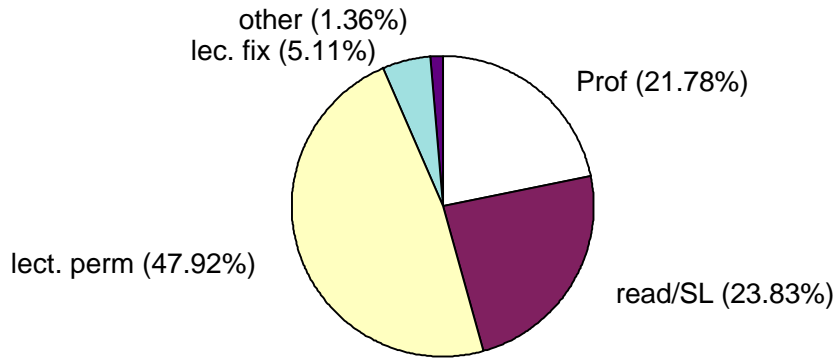
F3. Grade by gender by subject area



F4. Women by grade: full-time academi



F5. Men by grade: full-time academic



people who have chosen standard full-time academic employment, males are twice as likely to occur in the higher grades than are women: men are 3.7 times more likely to be professors and 1.4 times more likely to be senior lecturers or readers. This is not to say that the chance of being in the stock of people in a higher grade is the same as the chance of promotion for an individual in the current time period: reliable information concerning promotion across the grades is not yet available.

## 2.2 Part-time employment

Part-time employment has become increasingly prevalent throughout the UK labour market and is typically considered to be more popular amongst female employees. In 1994, 28% of all employees in the UK were engaged in part-time employment (DFEE, 1977;20) and women held 80.6% of these jobs (DFEE, 1977;10). UK academia does not appear to follow this pattern, rather, 15.7% of academic economists work part-time and only 26.6% of these jobs are held by

women. Furthermore, this tendency for female economists not to be employed part-time in universities is stronger when the focus is on standard academic jobs.

There are 369 people working in part-time academic appointments in the UK. The largest group of these people are classified as 'others' in our survey (181 or 49.1%), 24.3% of these jobs are held by women. Most of the 'other' group are employed as teaching assistants, and most have a temporary contract (92.8% are on a fixed-term). It may be argued that these jobs are typically filled by graduates students and do not provide longer term employment prospects in themselves. There are two other categories of part-time employment addressed in the survey; research-only and standard academic, representing 13% and 37.9% of all part-time employment respectively. Research-only employment will be discussed in section 3 below. Standard academic part-time employment can be divided between permanent and academic fixed term positions (64 or 17.3%, and 76 or 20.6% of the total part-time employment respectively). These jobs may be considered as longer term career employment, especially the permanent appointments. Men make up the vast majority of these jobs (53 or 82.8% of fixed-term and 59 or 77.6% of permanent). The numbers of women in these categories are obviously small: 11 permanent and 17 fixed-term part-timers throughout the UK.

Even though the number of men working part-time is considerably larger, their numbers relative to the total number are smaller: 23.9% of women in academia will be working part-time and 14% of men. For women in standard academic jobs only, 24.7% will be part-time whilst 14.5% of men will be. If we exclude the 'other' category, these values become 11.9% and 7.1% respectively.

Both women and men are more likely to work part-time if they are employed in a 4 or 5 ranked department (17.8% and 12.7% respectively - see Appendix E). The domination of men in the standard academic part-time jobs is even higher in these departments than for the total

return: men constitute 93.3% of the 30 permanent and 85% of 20 fixed term part-time academic jobs. Of those women working in standard academic jobs, excluding 'others', 5.8% (or 5) will be part-time, for men this value is 6.3% (or 45). These figures are surprisingly low, it is almost as likely for a women to be a professor as to have a permanent part-time standard academic job. It would seem that departments offer limited part-time employment and that women do not avail themselves equally of this opportunity.

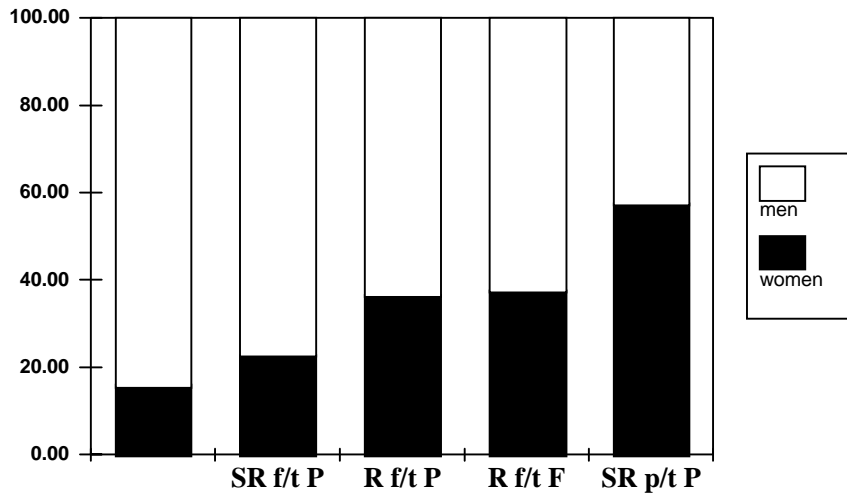
### **3. Research-only employment**

Our survey was sent primarily to economics departments and then onto other clusters of economists within the universities as recommended by the department, some of these may have been research units. This primary focus on economics departments may lead to under-representation of the total number of economists working in research-only jobs within academia in the UK, although comparisons with surveys of ESRC funded research bodies (IES, 1995) suggests that our results are reasonably representative.

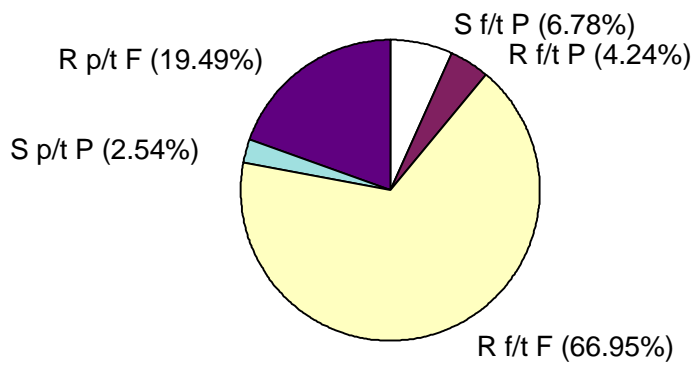
Turning now to consider the 336 research-only jobs in more detail, these jobs make up 14.6% of the total full-time employment in academic economics: 29.5% of the full-time female and 11.8% of the full-time male workforce work in research-only jobs. Even though women constitute a larger proportion of the workforce in this sector than in standard academic jobs (31.9% compared to 15.8%), men obviously still make up the bulk of these full-time research-only jobs (at 68%). Most research-only jobs are fixed-term; 75% of the full-time research-only jobs are fixed-term (85.9% of the women and 69.9% of the men work in these jobs).

There are very few part-time research-only jobs in the UK: 48 people in total, 26 or 54% of these are carried out by women. At the senior researcher level there are 8 part-time positions, 3 female and 5 male. There are no permanent part-time researcher positions available to either gender although there are 40 fixed-term researchers, which means that some 83% of this

F6. Grade by gender: research



F7. Women by grade: research grades



workforce is fixed-term. Women carry out 57.5% of these fixed-term part-time jobs.

Figure 6 shows the proportion of females working in each research grade (full-time and part-time), a similar pattern arises as with the standard academic grades: women are concentrated in the lowest grades (57.5% of the fixed term part-time researchers) and fall off in the highest grades (16% of full-time senior researchers). Figure 7 shows the grade distribution amongst those women who have research-only jobs; 10% have jobs at the senior level, 86% are on fixed term contracts. Figure 8 shows the same information for males in research-only jobs; 21% are at the senior level and 70% are on fixed term contracts. Men are again twice as likely to be employed at the senior level than women. Furthermore, (comparing Figures 4 and 5, with Figures 7 and 8) both men and women are twice as likely to occur at the senior level in standard academic jobs than in research-only jobs. Having a greater concentration of females in research-only jobs therefore leads to a lower average level of seniority for females in academia.

#### **4. Student numbers and inflows**

##### **4.1 Graduate student numbers**

Table 2 presents the graduate student breakdown for the total survey return. Beginning with the grand totals in the final four rows of the table, there were 3600 students enrolled in some form of graduate economics program on November 30, 1996. Of these, 1083 (or 30.1%) are female<sup>5</sup>. Some 41% of all of the graduate students are enrolled in research degrees, the vast majority of these are - we believe - PhD students. The numbers of research/PhD students from our survey of November 1996 are very similar to those found by HESA for July 1995 (appendix F), suggesting that our survey of this group is quite comprehensive. Total student enrolments can

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<sup>5</sup>These numbers are higher than that in the United States where 23% of PhD graduates in the 1995/96 school year were female - although our data does not actually refer to PhDs or to graduates but to research students and to current enrollments (Bartlett, 1997;4) - which was slightly lower than the 26.7% reported for the 1993/94 school year in the US (Blank, 1996;505).

## T2. Graduate Students in Economics

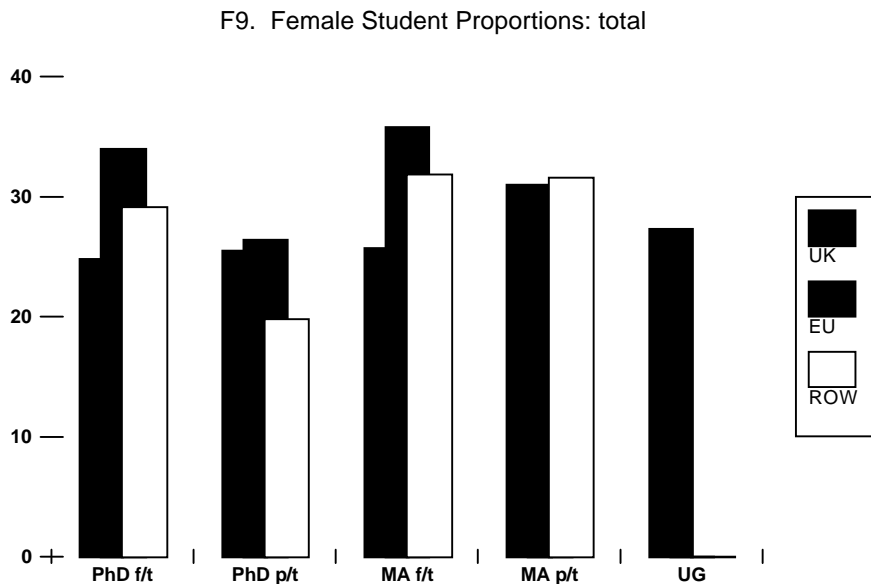
### Total Return

	Female	Male	Total	% fem
<b>Research students</b>				
<b>Full Time</b>				
UK	61	185	246	24.80
Non-UK EU	123	239	362	33.98
Non-EU	145	353	498	29.12
Total	329	777	1106	29.75
<b>Part Time</b>				
UK	52	152	204	25.49
Non-UK EU	23	64	87	26.44
Non-EU	19	77	96	19.79
Total	96	293	389	24.68
<b>Masters students</b>				
<b>Full Time</b>				
UK	122	352	474	25.74
Non-UK EU	189	339	528	35.80
Non-EU	228	488	716	31.84
Total	539	1179	1718	31.37
<b>Part Time</b>				
UK	103	229	332	31.02
Non-UK EU	10	27	37	27.03
Non-EU	6	13	19	31.58
Total	119	268	387	30.75
<b>Total - all students</b>				
UK	338	918	1256	26.91
Non-UK EU	345	669	1014	34.02
Non-EU	398	931	1329	29.95
Total	1083	2517	3600	30.08

Source : RES Survey April 1997 Data Return



also be divided according to a broad definition of student nationality, showing that females make up a lower proportion of UK students (26.9%), a larger proportion of non-EU (29.95%) and have the largest numbers amongst EU students (34%). Furthermore, these relative numbers display little change over all of the full-time graduate programs. Considering Figure 9, which includes an approximation of the proportion of those who graduated in December 1995 with a first degree in economics in the UK<sup>6</sup> who were female (AGCAS, 1997), there is very little fall-out in the numbers of women moving across first degrees, Masters and PhD programs: the proportion of total female students sits around 30%, whilst the proportion of females amongst UK students is about 25%.




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<sup>6</sup>Most of whom are probably from the UK, although the data are not specific about the nationality of these students.

Amongst the survey returns for those Departments only who earned a 4 or above ranking in the 1996 RAE exercise (Appendix E), the female proportion in the total graduate student body is again some 30%. Comparing the full-time PhD students in the 4 and above departments with the total survey return reveals similar findings as above: the female proportion of UK students is lower (20% rather than 25%), EU ratios are slightly lower (down a percentage point to 33%) and non-EU students are slightly higher (up just over a percentage point from 29.45 to 30.55). Of all the PhD students currently enrolled full-time in the 4 and 5 departments, 29.77% are female (or 231 out of 776 students). In the total return, 29.75% of the full-time PhD students were female (or 329 out of 1106 students). Thus, there is a sizable pool of well qualified male and female research/PhD students in the UK<sup>7</sup>.

#### **4.2 Inflows into academia**

Having a single year of data places serious limitations on any dynamic analysis, however, changes in the stock of individuals in any grade due to inflows from new hires can be considered (section 3 of Table 1). This assumes that there are no outflows over the year. The majority of inflows into professorial and reader/senior lecturer grades is probably due to promotion of which there are no data available yet. Nevertheless, new hires into these grades over the last 12 months did little to change the relative employment position of women amongst the professors (rising from 4.17% to 4.19%) or the senior lecturer/reader grade (from 9.3% to 9.56%). Most of the new hires took place at the lecturing grade where the constraint of not having information about promotion is not so concerning (especially amongst fixed-term lecturers).

There were 49 new permanent lecturers hired in the 12 months prior to the survey, 13 (or

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<sup>7</sup>HESA results suggest that 40.5% of all the 1478 research/PhD students enrolled in July 1995 were from the UK. Our total survey return suggests that 30% of the 1495 research/PhD students enrolled in November 1996 were from the UK. Of those students enrolled in a 4 or 5 Department in November 1996, 24.2% of the 1001 research/PhD students were from the UK. For the 5 ranked departments only, 23.3% of the 701 research/PhD students were from the UK.

26.5%) of whom were female. These numbers are obviously very small number so we should be cautious about how valid the implications of these flows for changes in relative employment actually are. Nevertheless, the 13 new hires changed the relative stock of female lecturers from 15.3% (121 out of 789) to 16.0%: an increase in the proportion of women by some 0.7 of a percentage point. If this trend continued, it would take another 10 years or so to bring the relative stock of female lecturers up to the proportion in the inflows of 26.5%. Amongst fixed term lecturers the proportion in the inflows of 27.8% female increased the stock from 21% to 23.5%, implying that the flow proportions will equal the stock proportions in another 2 to 3 years. (The structure of this group should be changing most rapidly given the lack of persistence with temporary contracts.) Averaging across permanent and fixed term lecturers, the proportion in the inflows of women into this academic grade is 27.1%.

The apparent increase in the relative employment numbers of female lecturers (especially amongst fixed-term contracts) does suggest some catch up in the short to medium term. Furthermore, the inflow rate of 27.1% is not dramatically below the 29.8% proportion of females in the total research/PhD student body. However, the size of the inflows relative to the stocks are very small, suggesting that relative numbers of women in the higher grades will adjust very slowly from this source.

There is little extra information concerning the dynamics of student enrolments in economics in the UK that can be ascertained from our single survey. If it is assumed, however, that all research students are doing doctorates, that a full-time PhD takes 4 years, a part-time PhD takes 6 years, and that enrolments have been constant over the last few years, this would suggest that there were 98 female students completing their PhD last year and some 243 males. Comparing these values with the numbers of new hires amongst fixed term lecturers (thereby ignoring the possibility of graduates going straight into permanent lectureships) we find that 10.2% of the female and 10.7% of the male PhD graduating class took up standard full time

academic appointments in the UK (17% and 18.3% respectively if we ignore students who are not from the EU).

Adopting the other extreme by assuming that all the new fixed term and permanent lecturers were hired directly from the pool of new graduates (although such an assumption could be expected to lead to some double counting since many of the permanent lecturers may have been previously employed in fixed-term appointments), some 23.5% of female and 25.5% of male graduating PhD students are found to remain in academia in the UK (or 39% and 43.7% respectively excluding the non-EU students). These results confirm the previous finding that the inflow rate for women relative to the stock of potential applicants is slightly lower than for males. It is also clear that the majority of recent PhD graduates are not employed in standard full-time academic jobs in the UK.

## **5. Conclusion**

Much of the conclusion has been presented in summary form in the executive summary above. At the risk of being repetitive, the major findings generated from analysis of the survey data are that the great majority of economists working in academia in the UK have standard academic (teaching and research as opposed to research-only) jobs which are full-time and permanent. Women make up 15.8% of this workforce. There are very few part-time jobs in academia, especially after temporary teaching assistants are excluded, and most of these jobs are held by men. There is a substantial body of male and female economic research/PhD students in the UK, most of whom are not entering academia on graduation (more so for women than men). The inflow of new hires into lecturing positions suggests that it will take a good decade for the proportion of lecturers who are female to match the proportion of female PhD students. The presence of females in grades above lecturer falls away rapidly, and new hires into these grades over the last 12 months did little to change this situation. Men are twice as likely to be at higher seniority levels than women. This picture is very similar for the research-only jobs, although the

great majority of these are fixed term.

Similar descriptive exercises as above could be carried out for a range of subsets of the total survey responses. For example, analogous tables and figures to those discussed above are presented for (i) the 'old' universities (Appendix C), (ii) those Institutions with a 4 and above RAE ranked department (Appendix D), and (iii) the 4 and 5 departments alone - ie., excluding the other groups of economists in their Institutions - (Appendix E). As the sample is narrowed in this manner, there are increasingly fewer females, the female proportions occurring in the higher grades relative to males are generally lower, and the inflow rates relative to enrolments are lower. These differences are arguably quite small, however, and would not be thought to be significant once small sample problems are allowed for.

The only way to increase the numbers of female economists in academia in the UK is to increase the inflows of females. There would appear to be scope for this given the lower tendency for female graduates to move into academia than males. Although, this will lead to a lengthy adjustment process since the outflows are essentially fixed by the demographics of a workforce with permanent contracts. At the higher seniority grades there does not appear to be any effect of new hires on the relative gender proportions, this is perhaps surprising since there is always a relatively larger pool of women at the grade below to choose from. This would suggest that efforts to bring the proportion of lecturers who are female up to that amongst the student body will have little impact on the relativities in the higher grades. It may be that the vast majority of movement up the grades comes from promotion, however, so that the data on new hires into the higher levels are too small to be illustrative. This issue could be addressed with any future surveys if data on movements across the grades via new hires and promotion are collected.

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## **Appendices**

These appendices are available from the author (kam9@york.ac.uk)

**Appendix A** RES Women's Committee Questionnaire on the Gender Balance of Academic Economics in the UK.

**Appendix B** CHUDE members who were respondents to the Women's Committee Questionnaire on the Gender Balance of Academic Economics in the UK.

**Appendix C** Summary statistics for 'old' universities.

**Appendix D** Summary statistics for universities with a 4 or 5 RAE ranked department.

**Appendix E** Summary statistics for 4 or 5 RAE ranked departments only.

**Appendix F** HESA graduate student table.