

# Life beyond the PhD: pathways, persistence & possibilities

Dr Vivienne Anderson

Higher Education Development Centre

University of Otago

Dunedin

New Zealand

[vivienne.anderson@otago.ac.nz](mailto:vivienne.anderson@otago.ac.nz)

Dr Catherine Gomes

School of Media & Communication

RMIT University

Melbourne

Australia

[catherine.gomes@rmit.edu.au](mailto:catherine.gomes@rmit.edu.au)



## Why are we offering this workshop?

Academic work is 'precarious' work (Standing, 2011)

- more PhD grads than jobs
- casualisation of the academic workforce
- competitive research funding environment (Ylijoki, 2011)

BUT there are a range of academic work options

- Teaching and Research Positions
- Teaching Only Positions
- Research Positions (RFs, postdocs)

ALSO twisting pathways can lead to unexpected places or alternative opportunities 😊

# Why are we sharing our own 'stories'?

Wilkins (1993): feelings & biography...

- are “sociologically significant”
- provide interpretive resources (p. 98)

Wright (2003): autobiography avoids...

- “the pitfalls of over-generalisation”
- “the authority of authenticity” (p. 805)



# Viv's story



# Cat's Story



# What skills does a PhD give you for each of these?

Analytic

Writing

Research

Critical thinking

Data management

Project management

Information literacy

Time management

Oral communication

Summarising

Methodological skills

Presentation skills.....



## But you are not just a PhD student / grad...what are your other skills?

*Some examples...*

- teaching
- curriculum development
- assessment
- leadership
- other professional skills
- working with people of different ages
- cross-cultural communication
- bi/multilingualism
- creative pursuits
- other...?

# Starting out as an academic: what's important?

## Research Fellow/Postdoctoral Fellow:

Do research, publish, publish, publish, publish, get grants, get grants, supervise student research (if you want to)

## Lecturer:

Teach (coordinate, lecture, assess, [visit] & supervise students), research (write grants, do projects, present & publish research), serve (do admin, attend meetings, give talks, sit on committees, develop new programmes etc etc.)

## Lessons from the road

1. There is not one 'there', so don't worry if yours seems ill-defined, uncertain or unexpected
2. Everywhere is 'there' & can lead on to the next 'there', so seize the learning & opportunities to be had where you are now
3. Take stock of your strengths, expertise & skills (if necessary, ask someone else to help you with this), & look for opportunities to 'fill in the gaps'
4. Keep a note of everything you do as part of your current role, including weird things that seem random (if you want to be an academic in NZ, think *research, teaching, service*)

## If you want to be an academic...

1. Get used to journal and grant rejections; cultivate bloodymindedness. ☺ *Eat a lot of chocolate and move on*
  2. Learn to respect the peer review process – it's the best we've got to ensure that work is rigorous
  3. Be reviewers (but not the kind of reviewers you don't like)
  4. Aim for a healthy work-life balance, while accepting that deadlines can require an 'extra push'
  5. Be disciplined, but gentle to yourself – recognise that:
    - *life is a marathon, not a sprint*
    - *any work has 'ebb & flow' periods*
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## If you want to be an academic...

6. Try to find a balance between using your time strategically (maintaining boundaries) & being generous/collegial. If you can't find a supportive research environment in your institution, look elsewhere.
7. Find supportive mentors & colleagues who understand your work, while maintaining 'outside' friendships that keep you grounded
8. Early on, grab opportunities for research collaborations, even if they seem to be on left-field projects. *Later, be more selective*
9. Don't assume you know exactly where you're going – be open to surprises! **OPEN YOUR MIND**

## Other tips: Publishing etiquette

### As a writer:

- don't look a gift horse in the mouth
- don't annoy editors: make sure your work is perfect (or nearly perfect)
- often heard 'must be strategic' - what does this mean?

### Be aware...

- Editors want to help authors to take work to the next level
- Publishers want to make money

## Your turn...

- Where might 'there' be for you?
- With this in mind:
  - What are your current strengths?*
  - What gaps do you need to fill (& how might you fill them)?*
- Any questions...?



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# References

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