

## **Session 6**

### **PROFESSIONAL STAFF CARVE OUT A NEW SPACE**

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Six years ago the Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management published a paper called “The Invisible Workers” which lamented the invisibility of staff who undertake roles in higher education which are not academic. In the readings, interviews and data, professional staff (as they are now called in a large number of institutions) constituted more than half the workforce, but they were defined by what they were NOT and they experienced a high level of frustration in their relationships with Academic staff and with their institutions. This paper examines if the situation for professional staff has changed in the intervening period.

It is now clear that professionals are carving out a more critical space in the sector than they did at that point, achieving more than incremental change. At senior levels, professionals are no longer only in specialist roles such as HR or IT or Building Services. They have now moved into the Vice Presidential space and, in some universities, Pro Vice Chancellor and Deputy Vice Chancellor, roles previously reserved for senior academics. These roles are now increasingly taken up by senior administrators, particularly if they have a student, international or corporate focus. So, while things appear to be changing in the senior roles, is there much change in the more junior or middle management roles? This paper will consider the literature over the last six years as it relates to professional staff, look at the changing statistics around employment of professional staff, touch on their position in the burgeoning private provider sector, and consider what changes have taken place for professional staff at all levels.