The Part-time Researcher Experience

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What is it like being a part-time researcher?

Sometimes great. I'm very enthusiastic about my subject and it is such a privilege and feels so self-indulgent. Sometimes – more often – it is a great burden and I feel very guilty about spending time on this when there's so many other pressures on my time.

Short film

What are the challenges of completing a PhD on a part-time basis?

- http://www.vitae.ac.uk/policy-practice/95563/Part-time-researcher-film.html

Expectations

…I thought I would have more contact with my supervisor or academics in the department. Everyone said it would be isolating, but I was not prepared for the intellectual isolation.

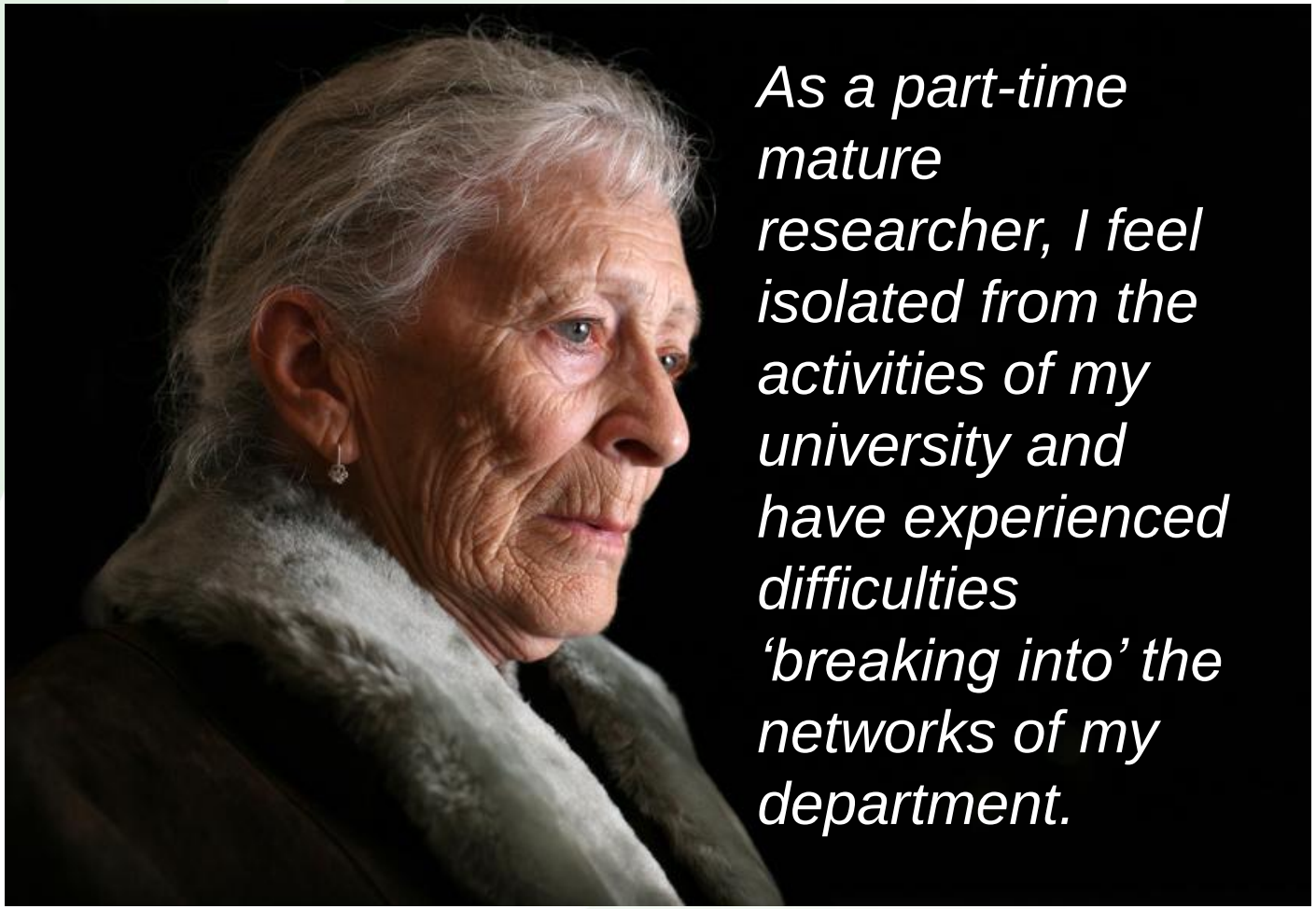
Time management

Very hard being part-time, juggling work and children so that research is third priority.

Being part-time and employed full-time is challenging to say the least and that's just the time management issues. Intellectually it's very stimulating.

It adds another ball to juggle in my life, along with work, family and church. Somehow I survive by just doing the next thing!

Isolation



As a part-time mature researcher, I feel isolated from the activities of my university and have experienced difficulties 'breaking into' the networks of my department.

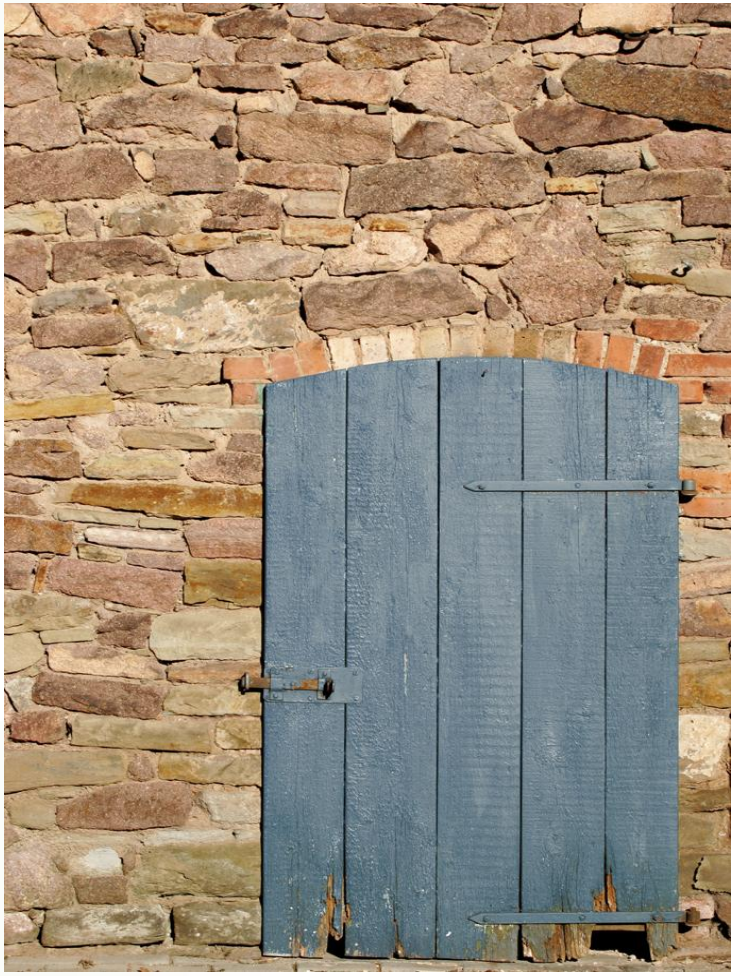
Communication with supervisors

‘My supervisor generally uses email to contact me, but constructive feedback and advice only tends to be during face-to-face meetings.’

‘It is difficult for researchers like me living a distance from their university or who have caring (eg parental) responsibilities, when the majority of our study is done in the evening, to have face-to-face meetings or get immediate feedback on an issue’

Communication with the institution

‘Training and provision is focused on full-time researchers with part-time researchers as an afterthought. I have been sent emails saying 'all researchers need to do this' followed by 'but not if you're part-time' or having to clarify things and it being assumed that I am on campus ('just drop into the office') so now I don't bother to respond to these things.’



Communication with peers

‘I feel great. This is a good opportunity for me to talk to people who are part-time PhDs. They have the same situation as myself. We can discuss and share the problems and how to make it right.’

Recommendations

- Recruitment
- Understanding the cohort
- Support and flexibility
- Integration and peer support
- Training and development

Short film

What is the most rewarding part of completing a PhD on a part time basis?

- http://www.vitae.ac.uk/policy-practice/95563/Part-time-researcher-film.html

Further support for HEIs wanting to support part time researchers

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Resources

Courses and resources

- Advancing in Academia
- Broadening horizons
- Careers in academia
- Effective researcher (PGR)
- Effective researcher (research staff)
- GRADschools
- GRADschool facilitator training
- Managing your academic career
- **Part-time researcher**
  - Part-time researcher film
- Social Enterprise
- Staff supporting researchers masterclasses

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Part-time researcher

Vitae has undertaken a research and development project to explore the experience of part-time researchers. Findings suggest that many feel isolated and do not feel a part of the research community in which they operate. This presents a considerable barrier to part-time researchers completing their doctorates and entering an academic career. To help HEIs to enhance the experience of part-time researchers Vitae has produced the following resources:

- a research report focusing on the part-time researcher experience
- a training resource pack for use by UK HEIs to support part-time researchers. The resource pack includes an administration manual and guidelines for facilitators to lead and de-brief the individual exercises
- a DVD offering tips and advice gathered from successful part-time researchers.

Related Links

- Part-time doctorates
  Web pages aimed at PGRs

Documents

- Understanding the part-time researcher experience
  Size: 896KB
  Understanding the part-time researcher experience
- Part-time researchers training package for postgraduate researchers briefing
  Size: 105KB
  A resource to organisers of researcher development programmes