



Forging academic connections and collaboration across the Commonwealth:

A Review of the Commonwealth Academic
Fellowship Programme 2015 – 2017

Full Report

The authors would like to gratefully acknowledge all the Academic Fellows, their Host supervisors in the United Kingdom and their home Employers who contributed to this report. Every individual who took time out of their day to provide us with their honest thoughts, opinions, and experiences with the programme helped contribute to the quality and depth of this report. It is genuinely appreciated by the CSC, who would not have been able to do this work without you.

Thank you.

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Executive Summary

Background

The Commonwealth Academic Fellowship programme offered almost 2,500 early and mid-career academics from across the Commonwealth the opportunity to undertake Fellowship programmes at UK universities between 1969 and 2017. Whilst the structure, tenure length, and sometimes the specific aims varied over the years reflecting the priorities of the CSC at the time, from the outset Academic Fellowships were broadly aimed at providing academics from eligible Commonwealth higher education institutions with the opportunity to **plan, conduct and write research**, and to **enhance their knowledge, skills and expertise** within specific disciplinary contexts. Moreover, the programme sought to **promote academic networking and collaboration**, with the implicit intention of **enhancing the teaching and future research capabilities of Commonwealth higher education institutions** through the catalytic impacts of individual placements.

In 2020 the CSC undertook a review of the Academic Fellowship Programme, with a focus on the most recent cohorts, those holding awards from 2015 to 2017. This decision was driven partly due to changes in the length of tenure and focus of the awards for these cohorts and partly by the fact that in 2015 the CSC Evaluation programme introduced a new Longitudinal Survey Framework to guide its data collection activities.¹ This paper reports the findings of this exercise, focusing on data gathered from the Fellows, their Host supervisors in the United Kingdom, and their home Employers between 2015 and 2017. It concludes that challenges with resources notwithstanding the programme has led to a variety of positive outcomes and long-lasting impact benefitting not only the Fellows but also their Employers and Host institutions in the UK.

Aims of the Review

- To identify the knowledge and skills enhanced by the Fellowship and investigate the extent to which they were applied in the activities of the Fellows upon returning home.
- To investigate the contribution of the Fellowship in cultivating and strengthening new and existing collaborations and networks in research and other areas, and how these links have influenced the activities of the Fellows and the home and Host institutions.
- To identify the outcomes, impact, and the scope of the potential short and long-term benefits of the Academic Fellowships on the Fellows' Host institutions in the UK and their employing institutions in their home countries, as well as to the Fellows themselves.

It is felt that as well as reporting on the outcomes and impact of these particular Fellowships this review will also provide evidence as to the value of similar programmes more widely, not only for individuals and their home institutions but also to their UK colleagues and international collaboration and research more broadly.

¹ The CSC Longitudinal Survey Framework is an intervention and follow-up approach which tracks alumni through the post-scholarship period through the completion of follow-up surveys every two years over a ten-year period. This same framework also applies to the evaluation of the CSC's Fellowship programme, although follow-up surveys are distributed less frequently and to a reduced timeframe (at 6-, 18- and 36-months post-award) to reflect the shorter duration of these awards.

Methodological approach

The review of the Fellowship programme was primarily informed by surveys that were conducted with Commonwealth Academic Fellows from the 2015, 2016, and 2017 cohorts, as well as with their Host supervisors and Employers. The aim of the surveys was to understand their experiences with the Fellowship programme and to establish their views on the outcomes and impact of the programme. Whilst resource and time limitations in this instance precluded the collection of more in-depth qualitative data, the following survey data – which included both closed and open questions – was collected:

- A baseline survey conducted with 52 Academic Fellows.
- Post-Fellowship longitudinal surveys conducted with Academic Fellows administered at 6, 18 and 36 months, and completed by 46, 39, and 28 Fellows respectively.
- A survey conducted with Host supervisors, 43 of whom participated.
- A survey conducted with the Employers of the Fellows, 18 of whom completed the survey.²

Overall, all (55) Fellows from the 2015-2017 cohorts participated in the surveys, of whom 56% were male and 44% were female³. Most (75%) of the participants studied STEM subjects, while others completed studies in Social Sciences (18%), Arts and Humanities (5%), and Education (2%). A high proportion (71%) of Fellows spent six months or more at their Host institution, and 29% spent less than six months.

A large proportion (96%) returned to the same employment they had before the Fellowship, with 85% of these remaining with the same Employer up to 36 months post-Fellowship. More than half of the Fellows reported having fairly supportive managers and work colleagues both pre- and post-Fellowship.

Key findings from the CSC Academic Fellowship review

Based on the survey data collected, this review identifies a range of outcomes and impacts derived by the Fellowship programme from which lessons can be learned to inform future planning of similar schemes.

1. Findings on the knowledge and skills enhanced by the Fellowship

The review assessed whether the Fellows had gained knowledge and skills from undertaking the Fellowship, and the extent to which the acquired skills were applied in their post-Fellowship activities.

² The survey was sent to the Employers of those Fellows who returned to their pre-award employment.

³ While a total of 55 Fellows completed the surveys for the Fellowship review, not every participant completed all four surveys. For example, 52 participants completed the baseline survey, but some of those who did not went on to complete the six months survey. Participation also varied between the surveys that were conducted at 6-, 18- and 36-month intervals post-Fellowship.

- The findings show that prior to the Fellowship, 28% of the Fellows reported having **lower work-related related skills** than needed for their current role, and **none** of the Fellows reported having lower skills than required for their roles post-Fellowship. Instead, 63% at 6 months and 72% at 18 months post-Fellowship reported that they had higher skills than required in their roles. This suggests that undertaking the Fellowship **significantly enhanced the work-related skills** of the Fellows.
- The main areas observed by the **Employers** to have **substantially** changed post-Fellowship were Fellows' **knowledge of research techniques** (72%), **knowledge of their research field** (67%), **technical skills** (61%), and their **capacity to disseminate knowledge and influence decisions** (61%).
- Over half of the Host supervisors confirmed that there was a 'Substantial' or 'Very Substantial Change' in the knowledge and skills of the Fellows. The top two areas of improvement observed were **knowledge of other research in the field**, and their **knowledge of research techniques**, as reported by 81% and 67% respectively. Equal proportions (54%) said the **critical thinking** and **technical skills** of the Fellows had improved.
- The skills acquired by the Fellows were applied in post-Fellowship activities. A large proportion (95%) of **Employers** said the **Fellows used the skills gained through the Fellowship at work**;
- 84% noted **a change to the work practices** following the completion of their Fellowship, and 83% reported the Fellow having **trained their work colleagues**.
- The top two activities of the Fellows post-award were **teaching, and research activities** as reported by 95% or more Fellows at all post-award levels. A large proportion (89%) of Employers reported that the Fellows **taught their students something new** that they had learned from the Fellowship.
- At 18 months post-Fellowship, most (90%) Fellows **had led or designed a new initiative or project** 'All the time' or 'Often' compared to 69% reported pre-award. At 36 months post-award, 79% of the Fellows were **supervising the work of other employees**, and 57% were involved in devising the strategic direction of an organisation.
- All (**100%**) Fellows at 18 months and **93%** at 36 months post-Fellowship were **applying the knowledge and skills gained** 'All the time' or 'Often' in their activities.

The review also investigated the level of impact of the activities of the Fellows, and the contribution of the activities of the Fellows to social development, economic development, civic engagement, and policymaking.

- Over 80% of the Fellows at all post-award intervals reported making an impact at the institutional and local level. The impact at national level was reported by less than half of the Fellows, both before and after the Fellowship.
- Social development emerged as an area of impact that the largest proportion (81% pre-Fellowship, 87% at 6 months, 85% at 18 months) of the Fellows reported to be contributing to, despite a slight drop (64%) at 36 months post-Fellowship.

- Notably, prior to the Fellowship, less than half the Fellows were contributing to civic engagement (47%) compared to 67% at 6 months post-Fellowship. Only 39% reported to be making an impact on economic development before taking up the Fellowship, and over half of the Fellows reported that their activities were having an impact in this area post-Fellowship, with 75% reporting that this was the case at 36 months post-Fellowship.

Critically, the review also identified some important challenges that in part hindered the application of knowledge and skills in their activities post-Fellowship. These include lack of research funding, lack of equipment, resources and facilities, lack of government support, and lack of support from the workplace. **Over half of the Fellows, both pre- and post-Fellowship** (53% pre-award, 52% at 6 months, and 56% at 18 months) **revealed that the organisations they worked for ‘Rarely’ have adequate resources required to implement new practices suggested by the Fellows.** However, only 39% of the Fellows at 36 months post-award said this was the case. Notably, a few (11%) Fellows had changed jobs at the time of the survey, and two thirds of these had joined organisations that have slightly more resources to support their work.

2. The contribution of the Fellowship in cultivating and strengthening new and existing collaborations and networks in research and other areas

The review revealed a chain of consistent evidence from the Fellows and their Host supervisors and Employers that suggest that the Fellowship contributed to cultivating and strengthening new and existing collaborations and networks in research and other areas.

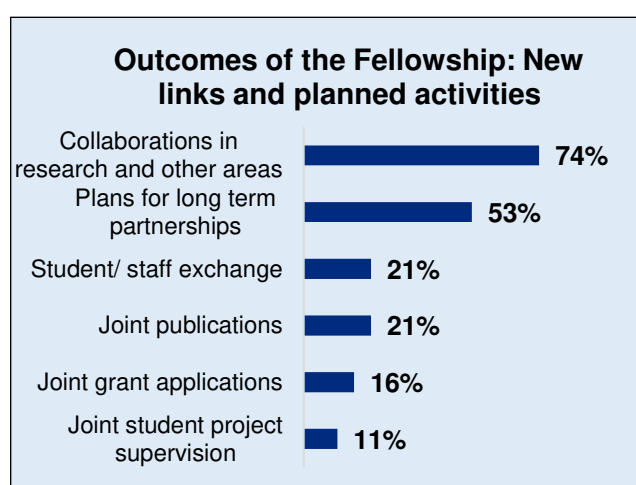
2.1 Evidence from the Host supervisors and the Employers of the Fellows

Of the 18 respondents to the Employer survey, a large proportion 13 (72%) reported that their organisation or university had not worked or collaborated with the Fellows’ Host institution prior to the Commonwealth Fellowship. Following the Fellowship, **over half of the Employers (56%) reported that the Fellowship resulted in new and strengthened links with academic contacts in another country**, and **50% said they had interacted with academic contacts in the UK.** 44% also noted the cultivation of new professional contacts in another country outside the UK, while 28% reported interaction with professional contacts that were made in the UK. Therefore, the Fellowship provided the Employers with a platform to network and build relations with other international academics.

The findings show that 60% of Host supervisors had not worked with the Fellows prior to the Fellowship and 72% reported not having worked with the Fellows’ colleagues or home institutions. Following the Fellowship, **72% of Hosts reported having planned future collaborations and activities with the Fellows and their home institutions.** Of these, 61% had no pre-existing relations with the Fellows. As shown in the figure below, a range of activities were planned, indicating that the Fellowship had provided a platform for the Fellows, Hosts, and home institutions to cultivate new links and establish long-lasting relationships. This was elaborated upon by two Hosts as follows:

‘We will continue to collaborate on paper-writing for this project, and we have agreed to co-supervise an MSc student from my institution to work with the Fellow on another element of their work next summer, which will be a good way of continuing our collaboration. This will also enable stronger links between the institutions to develop. Potentially we can have ongoing student exchanges if this one goes well.’

‘I am currently planning a research funding application for collaboration with East African universities, and the Fellow’s institution would be a good partner for this project. The Fellow’s visit has also led to the establishment of further contacts at their institution’.



Some Hosts also reported the immediate benefits of the Fellowship to the Host institutions while the Fellows were on-award, and these included mentoring and supervising MSc and PhD research students, and contributions made to seminars and conferences at the Host institution and at external events. **Cross-cultural exchange also emerged as a substantial benefit for half (51%) of the Hosts.** The creation of new links was also confirmed by Employers, one of whom described the benefits as follows:

‘Most importantly, his Fellowship culminated the signing of an MOU between our universities. The MOU has resulted in collaborations in the areas of joint curriculum development, joint PhD supervision and student and staff exchange. Specifically, two teams from the Host institution have visited our university to discuss areas of collaborations. We also received donations of books to our department, a PhD scholarship was awarded to one of the students on a joint supervision basis. Similarly, two PhD students and staff of the department will be at the Host institution for a three-month visit under a student exchange project in 2018.’

Moreover, **over half (56%) of the Employers reported that their organisations had experienced substantial benefits from the Fellowship** with regards to capacity development and increased understanding of the UK. In addition, the Employers reported the following outcomes of the Fellowship:

- Enhanced research practices, new research projects being initiated and implemented by the Fellow and increased academic publications.
- Knowledge transfer to the students through teaching and supervising student research projects, and training and mentoring of work colleagues.

- The contributions made by the Fellows to developing new curriculum, and introducing new ways of learning, such as technology or platforms for learning.
- Some Employers added that these activities cumulatively contributed to improving the learning standards at the universities, therefore increasing the rating of the institutions.

2.2 Evidence from the Fellows

The Fellows reported on their interactions with different groups of individuals, as well as the influence of these groups in their professional development both pre- and post-Fellowship. The findings reveal that the Fellowship provided a platform for the Fellows to establish links and enhance existing networks from which the Fellows, their institutions, and wider communities have benefitted.

- A large proportion **(89%) of the Fellows interacted with academics in the UK** ('All the time' or 'Often') at 6 months post-Fellowship, compared to 49% prior to the Fellowship. Meanwhile, **84% of the Fellows who responded to the 6 months post-award survey said their post-award activities were influenced by academic contacts in the UK** ('All the time' or 'Often') compared to 67% reporting that this was the case prior to the Fellowship.
- Moreover, **76% interacted with professional contacts in the UK post-award** ('All the time' or 'Often') at 6 months post-Fellowship compared to 22% prior to the Fellowship, and **71% said their professional development was influenced by professional contacts in the UK**, compared to 39% pre-Fellowship.
- The review also revealed that **85% of the Fellows interacted with personal contacts outside their home country** ('All the time' or 'Often') at 6 months post-award compared to 69% pre-award. In the same post-award survey, **78% said their professional development was influenced by personal contacts outside their home country** compared to 50% reporting that this was the case prior to the Fellowship.

The benefits of these new or enhanced links were detailed by two Fellows:

'In summary my CSC Fellowship has conferred some measure of prestige and validation on my profile as a researcher: this has opened up tremendous opportunities for me both within and outside my home country. The research skills, networks and contacts that I cultivated during my Fellowship as well as the associated international exposure [has] boosted my confidence to take up more responsibilities and challenging leadership roles within my university.'

2015 Academic Fellow, 36-month survey

'I was able to initiate and formalise research collaboration between my Host university and a company in the USA. I also initiated a collaborative research project between my home and Host institution on formulations in selected tropical diseases.'

2017 Academic Fellow, 6-month survey

As evidenced above, the Academic Fellowship programme provided a platform to cultivate and enhance new and existing individual and institutional relationships which have resulted in the development of collaborations in research and other areas. The planned future collaborative activities also indicate the potential of having long-term relationships that will have an impact beyond those individuals directly involved.

3. A summary of the findings from the Academic Fellowship Programme review

This review was primarily concerned with the outcomes and impact of Fellowships held between 2015 and 2017. The findings demonstrate that the Fellowship programme enhanced the knowledge and skills of the Fellows and that these acquired skills and expertise were applied in teaching and research, amongst other areas. Furthermore, the programme provided a platform to cultivate relationships, research collaborations and networks. The comparisons drawn between pre- and post-Fellowship experiences indicate the positive influence of these fellowships on the activities, interactions and career/professional development of individual recipients. At an institutional level, the programme clearly contributed to the creation of new and enhancing of existing relationships between institutions – from which a range of subsequent benefits were also identified. These include a range of planned and already operational activities such as staff and student exchange programmes, joint PhD supervision and examination, joint curriculum development for graduate programmes, joint research grant applications, and continued collaborations in research and other areas. Overall, the review demonstrates the importance of the Fellows' individual placements, and their catalytic impacts on the capacity development of Commonwealth higher education institutions.

4. Lessons learned from the review of the Academic Fellowship Programme

Drawing from the surveys conducted with Employers, Hosts, and the Fellows this review triangulated different perspectives in providing a more holistic view of the outcomes and impacts achieved by the Academic Fellowship programme. A chain of evidence on the benefits and challenges of the Fellowship was obtained as a result, and the findings as well as the methodological approach used will inform current and future planning of similar CSC programmes. The longitudinal approach used for the post-Fellowship surveys (6, 18 and 36 months) allowed for the tracing of the outcomes and impact of the Fellowship over time, as well as identifying certain activities, outcomes and impact of the Fellowship that were more likely to occur at a specific timeframe following the Fellowship.

It is important to flag that lack of resources by the organisations to implement new practices emerged as a major constraint, reported by at least half of the Fellows, both pre- and post-Fellowship. These include lack of research funding, lack of equipment and facilities and, to a lesser extent, lack of support from the workplace. This should be borne in mind and factored into future programme design where possible to maximise on the capabilities of the Fellows and the institutions to achieve developmental impact. Nonetheless, the review revealed the importance of understanding the diverse range of contexts in which the Fellows conduct activities and pursue their careers and that the work environment and professional interactions before, during, and after the Fellowship appear to be central to enabling or hindering the developmental activities of Fellows.

Section 1 – Introduction

The Commonwealth Scholarship Commission (CSC) has administered a variety of Fellowship awards alongside its Scholarships for many years. These Fellowships have included Medical and Professional Fellowships, as well as programmes aimed at post-doctoral researchers such as Academic Fellowships and the recent Commonwealth Rutherford Fellowship Programme. The Commonwealth Academic Staff Fellowship programme was one of the earliest and longest lasting of the CSC Fellowships, offering a total of 2,493 Fellowships to Academic Staff from Commonwealth countries between 1969 and 2017.⁴ Whilst its structure and specific objectives evolved over the years, the overall aim of the programme was to provide post-doctoral academic staff with the opportunity to plan, conduct, and report on research, and to enhance their knowledge, skills, and contacts within specific disciplinary contexts. Another consistent aim of the programme was the promotion of academic networking and collaboration, with the intention of enhancing the teaching and research capabilities of Commonwealth higher education institutions through the catalytic impacts of individual placements.

Applicants for Commonwealth Academic Fellowships were for predominantly nominated by Vice-Chancellors and executive heads of higher education institutions, with direct applications from Commonwealth Alumni being introduced in 2012. Originally offering UK-university placements for up to one year, the tenure length was revised to a maximum of six months in 2002 with the goal of increasing the number of placements offered and encouraging a greater focus on professional skill enhancement and academic collaborations to target the enhancement of teaching and research capabilities. Posited less as an opportunity for discrete academic research, this shift sought to avoid the potential strain caused to home university departments due to longer absences by academic staff whilst still providing a focused period of training.

In 2012, the tenure length was further revised to three months and the programme more consciously re-oriented towards mid-career academics to develop professional techniques and networks for individual and institutional capacity development. Also introduced in 2012 was the Alumni Fellowships programme, an additional application route available to alumni from the CSC's PhD Scholarship scheme. This second stream of Fellowships was viewed as potentially providing better opportunity for longer-term impact through the further enhancement of skills and deepening of academic links originally cultivated in the UK during applicants' doctoral study. Running alongside the Vice-Chancellor nomination route, inviting direct applications from alumni also offered the possibility of diversifying the demographic profile of Fellows and was also facilitated by a broader refocus on research undertaken by early rather than mid-career academics. Notably, the gender gap narrowed dramatically from this time, reaching parity in 2017.

These changes were formalised in 2015, when revisions to the programme saw a renewed emphasis on early career research rather than mid-career skills update. Greater flexibility was also introduced to the tenure length, with placements at UK universities now offered for between three and ten months. This shift thus offered scope for the continued cultivation of professional skills and academic collaborations and networks prioritised in the preceding decade, whilst again providing Fellows with additional opportunities to conduct and report on research with demonstrable

⁴ A detailed demographic breakdown of the full cohort can be found in Appendix One

development impact. In doing so, the programme intended to address the more recent requests of applicants themselves and remained in place until 2017. This period also coincided with the introduction of the CSC's Longitudinal Evaluation Survey Framework; gathering data from both Commonwealth Fellows and Scholars prior to, and at specific intervals following the completion of their award, this approach allows for a more nuanced understanding of the changing outcomes and impact of these awards over time.

The aims and objectives of this review

This paper presents the findings of a review which investigated the outcomes and the impact of Commonwealth Academic Fellowships awarded from 2015 to 2017, with the aim of identifying lessons that can inform future planning of similar programmes. The review is largely informed by data gathered through surveys conducted with Academic Fellows from these cohorts, as well as their Host supervisors and home Employers. Specifically, the aims of the review are:

- To identify the knowledge and skills enhanced by the Fellowship and investigate the extent to which they were applied in the activities of the Fellows upon returning home.
- To investigate the contribution of the Fellowship in cultivating and strengthening new and existing collaborations and networks in research and other areas, and how these links influence the activities of the Fellows and the home and Host institutions.
- To identify the outcomes, impact, and the scope of potential short- and long-term benefits of Academic Fellowships on Host institutions in the UK, employing institutions in home countries, as well as to the Fellows themselves.

Outline of the report

Following the introduction in Section One, the methodological approach used to review the Academic Fellowship programme is outlined in Section Two. The findings from the baseline survey on the background of the Fellows is found in Section Three. This is followed by Section Four which presents the collated findings from the 6, 18, and 36-month post-Fellowship surveys conducted with the Fellows, where a comparison is drawn between the time series to understand the experiences and activities of the Fellows in the immediate period following the Fellowship and later on in their careers, while identifying the outcomes and impact of the Fellowship. Section Five outlines the findings from the Host supervisors and the Employers of the Fellows. In Section Six, a summary of the key findings from the Fellowship review are discussed. This paper concludes by identifying lessons learned from the Academic Fellowship review to inform future planning and investment in programmes of this nature.

Section 2 – Methodological Approach

2.1– Methodology and Data Sources

To evaluate the Academic Fellowship Programme, self-administered surveys were used to collect data as follows:

- A baseline survey conducted with 52 Academic Fellows from the 2015, 2016, and 2017 cohorts.
- Post-Fellowship longitudinal surveys conducted with Academic Fellows from the 2015, 2016, and 2017 cohorts. The surveys were administered at 6, 18 and 36 months following the Fellowship, and 46, 39, and 28 Fellows completed each survey, respectively.
- A survey conducted with Host supervisors, 43 of whom participated.
- A survey conducted with the Employers of the Fellows, 18 of whom completed the survey.

The surveys were sent to Fellows and Host supervisors automatically as part of the CSC's wider Evaluation programme. Surveys to Employers were distributed once permission and details had been obtained from the Fellows who they employed. It is key to note that the initial six months post- award Fellows survey questionnaire focused on whether the objectives of the programme were met and the immediate consequences of the Fellowship. However, the 18- and 36-months survey questionnaires were identical to each other and were more focused on understanding the longer-term impact of the Fellowship. The Host supervisor and the Employer surveys focused on identifying their perspectives on the benefits of the Fellowship both for individual Fellows and their respective institutions and organisations.

2.2– Data analysis

For each data set, descriptive statistics were used to analyse data from Likert scale questions, and the frequency of distribution of the responses was computed for each variable. The responses from the free text questions were read, and keywords identified and coded using a pre-existing coding dictionary developed under the CSC Longitudinal Survey Framework, taking into consideration any programme-specific themes. The frequency distribution of these codes was also established to determine the most and least common activities and experiences of the Fellows. The findings were compared across the baseline, 6-months, 18-months and 36-months surveys to identify any changes in the experiences and activities of the Fellows pre- and post-Fellowship, thereby identifying evidence of particular outputs and outcomes attributable to specific time periods. The evidence obtained from Fellows' Hosts and Employers was likewise examined and triangulated with findings from the Fellows' surveys to identify any consistent evidence and differences across the data sources.

Points of Note

- As the cohorts considered were small, a comparative analysis between cohorts was not conducted. Instead, the data from all cohorts was collated and treated as one data set at each data collection point (baseline, 6- 18-, and 36-months surveys).
- The tenure period varied between 2015 and 2017, and the Fellows could spend from 3 months up to 10 months at a Host institution. The tenure period was also investigated to identify the influence (if any) of shorter (less than six months) and longer tenure length (six to ten months) on the outcomes and impact of the Fellowship programme.
- Due to restrictions on resources, interviews could not be conducted for this review. The findings are therefore based on the surveys conducted with the Fellows, their Host supervisors in the United Kingdom and their home Employers.

Section 3– Findings from the Baseline Survey

The baseline survey collected pre-award data from the Fellows to identify their objectives for the Fellowship and understand their activities and careers prior to being awarded the Fellowship, with the aim of giving context to their post-Fellowship activities. In total, 52 Fellows completed the baseline survey. The key findings are:

- Almost all (94%) Fellows were employed in the public higher education sector before their Fellowship, with very few (4%) in private higher education institutions, and even fewer (2%) in the public or government sector.
- Most (90%) of baseline respondents anticipated that they would return to the same job post-Fellowship and were granted paid leave while on award. However, over half of these (58%) had a requirement to return to employment that had a penalty clause or financial bond.
- Three quarters (75%) of the Fellows reported that their organisations or universities were very supportive of their decision to apply for a Commonwealth Fellowship, and 73% said their direct supervisor or line managers were supportive.
- Notably, a higher proportion (83%) of the Fellows who undertook a tenure period of six months or more reported that their organisation or university was very supportive of their decision to apply for a Commonwealth Fellowship, compared to only half (50%) of the Fellows with a tenure period of less than six months.
- A few (28%) of the Fellows reported that they had lower work-related skills than needed for their current role, while 61% had about the same skill level, and only 11% had higher skills than the skills required in their current role before their Fellowship.
- The top four formal responsibilities Fellows held in their pre-Fellowship employment were conducting academic research, reported by all (100%) Fellows, collaborating with external colleagues in their home country (92%), teaching students (89%), and collaborating with external colleagues outside their home country (75%).
- While all of the Fellows reported to be involved in academic research, only half (50%) of these Fellows reported that they conducted this activity 'All the time.'
- Equally, half (50%) of the Fellows who were involved in academic research reported to have led or designed a new initiative or project 'Often' before their Fellowship.
- Overall, gaining knowledge to build capacity at home institution and conducting research emerged as the top two objectives for undertaking the Fellowship for all Fellows. However, a comparison between the two nomination routes reveals that 63% of the Fellows recruited through the Vice Chancellor route (n=24) reported that building capacity at home institution was their primary objective, while conducting research was the primary objective for half (50%) of the Fellows nominated through the Alumni Fellowships route (n=28).
- Most (92%) of the Fellows with a longer tenure length (6 months to 10 months) ranked conducting research as their most important objective.

- Networking with professionals was ranked as the least important by most Fellows, as reported by 82% of the Fellows nominated through the Alumni Fellowships programme, and 62% of the Fellows recruited through the Vice Chancellor route.
- Over half (53%) of the Fellows had previously received a Commonwealth Scholarship for international study.
- Fifty-two percent (52%) of the Fellows said it was highly unlikely to impossible (on scale of 1-10 where 1 was the least possible) to have undertaken the same training in another country if they had not received a Commonwealth Fellowship.
- Only 15 (29%) of the Fellows undertook their Commonwealth Fellowship at the same university where they studied for their PhD, and 11 of these were working with their former PhD supervisors.
- The pre-Fellowship work of the Fellows was mainly influenced by academic contacts in the UK and professional contacts in their home country, as reported by 67% and 72% of the Fellows respectively.
- A large proportion of the Fellows reported that their activities prior to the Fellowship influenced change mostly at the institutional level (94%) and at the local level (81%).
- Fellows' past activities have had an impact mostly on social development as reported by 81% of Fellows, and just over half (56%) reported having an impact on civic engagement. Less than half of Fellows indicated that they contributed to economic development (39%) and policymaking (47%).

The findings from the baseline survey illustrate the activities of the Fellows, the interactions with and influence of various groups, and their objectives for the Fellowship. This information helps to give context to the post-Fellowship activities while also forming a basis for comparison between the findings from the pre-and post-Fellowship surveys.

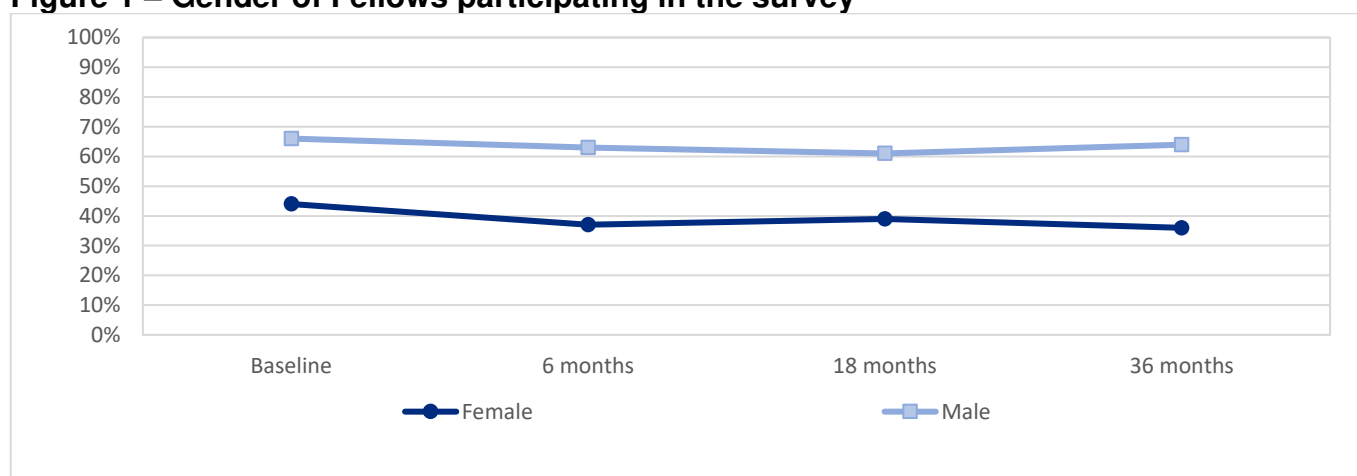
Section 4 – Findings from the Post-award Longitudinal Surveys

This section outlines the collated findings from the longitudinal surveys conducted with the 2015, 2016, and 2017 cohorts at 6-, 18- and 36- months after their Fellowship award.⁵ It also draws from the findings from the baseline survey (where relevant), which are compared to the post-Fellowship surveys to trace and identify the outcomes and impact of the Fellowship programme.

4.1 Demographics of the survey participants

A total of 55 Fellows cohorts participated in the surveys, however the number of the Fellows completing the surveys at each point varied. The baseline survey was completed by 52 Fellows, and the post-Fellowship longitudinal surveys administered at 6-, 18- and 36- months following the Fellowship, were completed by 46, 39, and 28 Fellows respectively. The gender breakdown of the participants at each survey interval is shown in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1 – Gender of Fellows participating in the survey



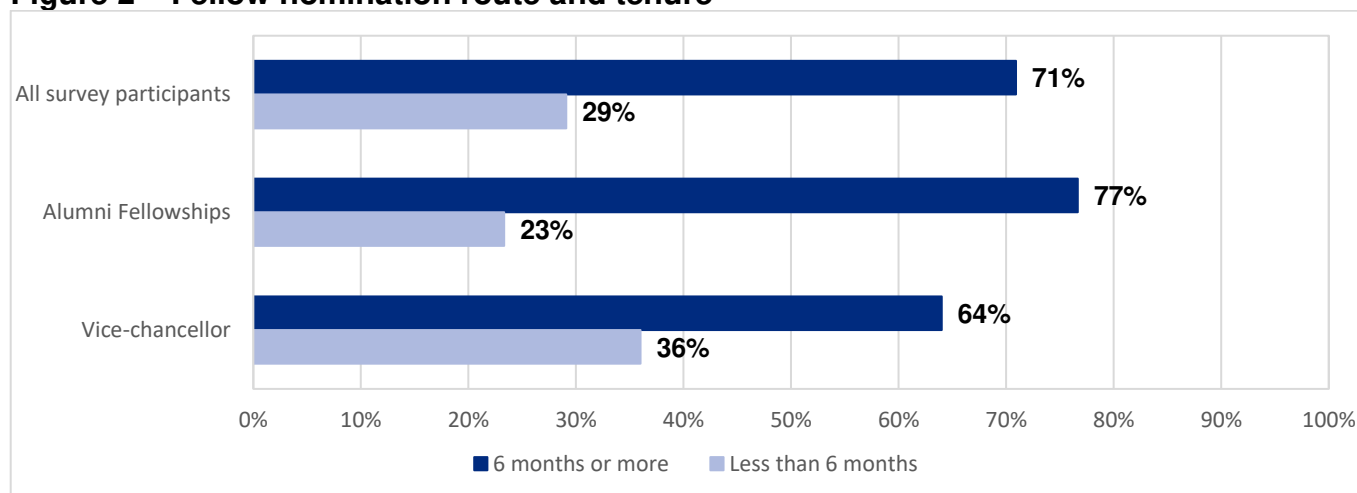
Source: 2015-2021 Academic Fellows Longitudinal Surveys
Baseline n=52; 6 months n=46; 18 months n= 39; 36 months n=28

Overall, over half (56%) of all survey participants were male. The male Fellows generally became over-represented, with more males than females completing the surveys at each time series.

Out of the 55 Fellows who participated in the surveys, 55% were Alumni Fellowships, and 45% were nominated by Vice-chancellors. Figure 2 below summarises the nomination route and the tenure length for the Fellows.

⁵ As a result of the small data set from each cohort, the findings presented from the 6-, 18- and 36-months surveys are a reflection of all cohorts combined for each of the three surveys.

Figure 2 – Fellow nomination route and tenure



Source: 2015-2021 Academic Fellows Longitudinal Surveys
All participants n=55; Alumni Fellowships n=25; Vice-chancellor n=30

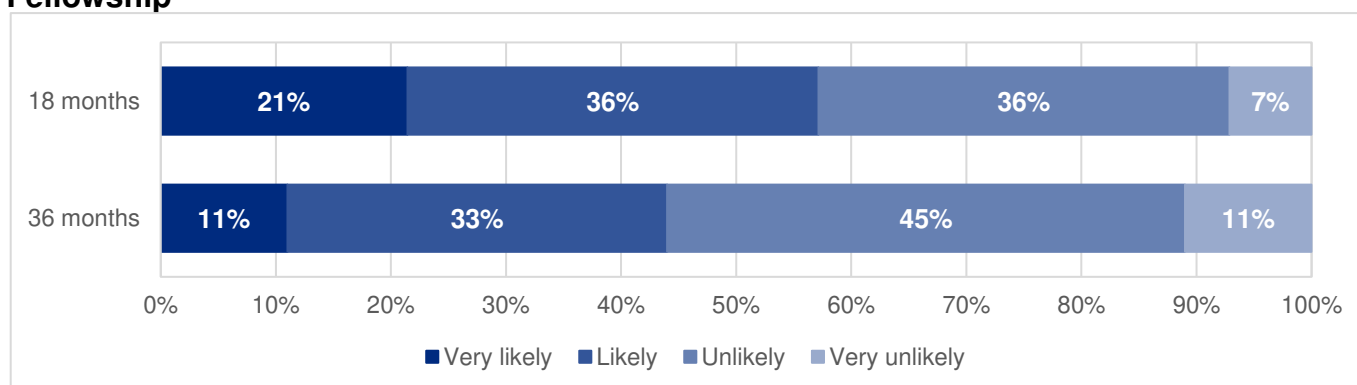
Overall, 71% of the Fellows spent six months or more at a host institution, and 29% spent less than six months. Following the Fellowship, longitudinal surveys were conducted with the Fellows at 6-, 18-, and 36-months intervals to understand their experiences and activities post-Fellowship. The next section discusses the qualifications obtained by the Fellows following the Fellowship.

4.2 Further qualifications attained post-Fellowship

For the 18- and 36-months surveys, the Fellows were asked to report on any further qualifications obtained following the award, and this included professional, technical or other qualifications. Just under half (44%) of the Fellows reported that they had obtained further qualifications in the 18-months survey, and 36% in the 36-months survey. Of these, only 13% and 11% of the Fellows from each of these post-award surveys reported having attained specifically a professional qualification.

These Fellows were then prompted to comment on the likelihood of gaining these further qualifications without having first undertaken the Commonwealth Fellowship. The findings are summarised in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3 – Likelihood of gaining additional qualifications without first undertaking the Fellowship



Source: 2015-2021 Academic Fellows Longitudinal Surveys
18 months n=14; 36 months n=9

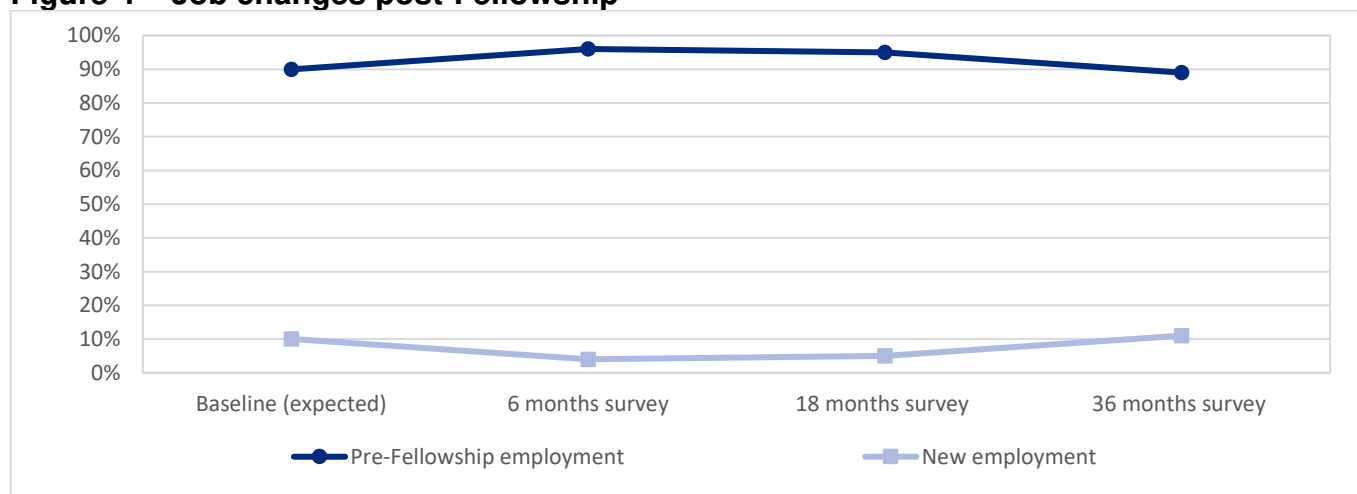
Just under half (43%) of the Fellows at 18 months, and 56% at 36 months reported a low likelihood ('Unlikely' or 'Very unlikely') to have attained further qualifications without first undertaking the Fellowship. This suggests that undertaking the Fellowship contributed to attaining further qualifications for these respondents. Having said that, the findings also reveal that for more than half (57%) of the Fellows responding to the 18-months survey, the Fellowship was not a contributing factor as they were 'Very likely' or 'Likely' to have obtained further qualifications without first undertaking the Fellowship.

4.3 Post-Fellowship employment

Of the 52 Fellows who completed the baseline survey, 90% anticipated that they would return to the same job, and those that indicated that they would not, noted that they would be seeking promotions within their employer institutions. The same proportion (90%) indicated that they were on paid leave while on the Fellowship, however significantly less (58%) were given a requirement that they return to employment that included a penalty clause or financial bond.

Following the Fellowship, all the Fellows who completed the three surveys reported to have been employed at the time of completing the surveys, and immediately after the Fellowship (6 months post-Fellowship) almost all (96%) returned to the same employment they had before the Fellowship. Very few Fellows changed jobs shortly after the Fellowship, but over time more began to do so, and this was most pronounced at the 36-month point compared to 6- and 18-months post-Fellowship as shown in Figure 4 below.

Figure 4 – Job changes post-Fellowship

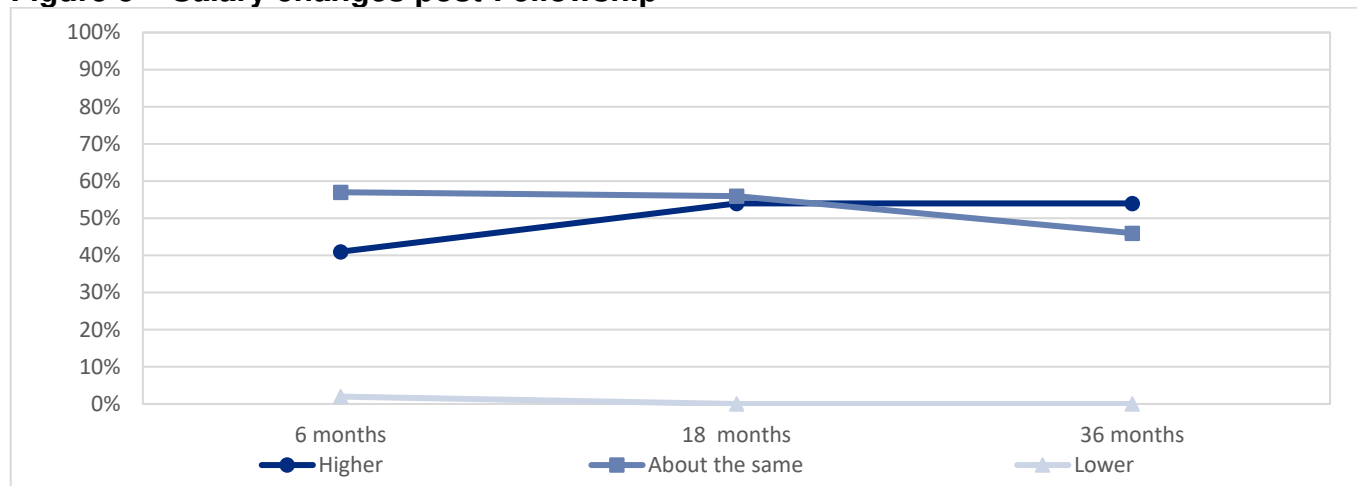


Fellowship Source: 2015-2021 Academic Fellows Longitudinal Surveys
Baseline n=52; 6 months n= 46; 18 months n=39; 36 months n=28

The six-month survey revealed that those who changed jobs felt that the Fellowship had contributed substantially to the attainment of a higher job position either within their current institution or elsewhere.

As illustrated in Figure 5 below, the longitudinal surveys also demonstrate that over half of Fellows (57%) remained on the same salary in the immediate period (6 months) upon returning to their pre-award job positions. However, just over half of survey respondents had secured a higher salary at 18- and 36-months post-Fellowship, which suggests that the Fellows are more likely to be on a higher salary after a year and a half post-award.

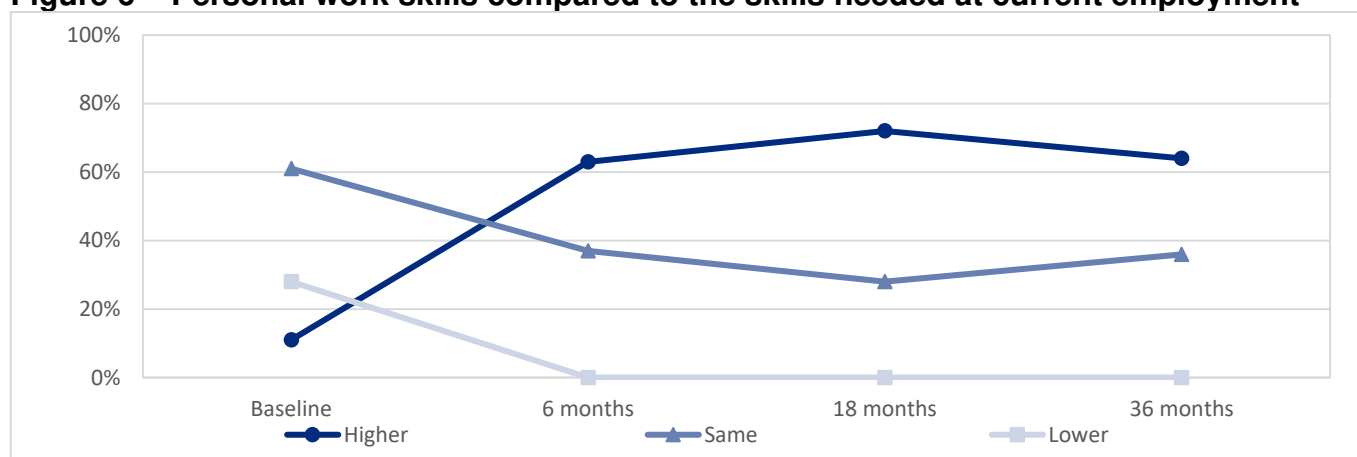
Figure 5 – Salary changes post-Fellowship



Source: 2015-2021 Academic Fellows Longitudinal Surveys
6 months n=46; 18 months n=39; 36 months n=28

In comparing their own personal work skills to the skills required at their current employment, the surveys show that at 6- and 18-months post-Fellowship the Fellows personal skills were higher than the skills needed for their roles, and this is more pronounced at 18 months as shown in Figure 6 below.

Figure 6 – Personal work skills compared to the skills needed at current employment



Source: 2015-2021 Academic Fellows Longitudinal Surveys
Baseline n=52; 6 months n=46; 18 months n=39; 36 months n=28

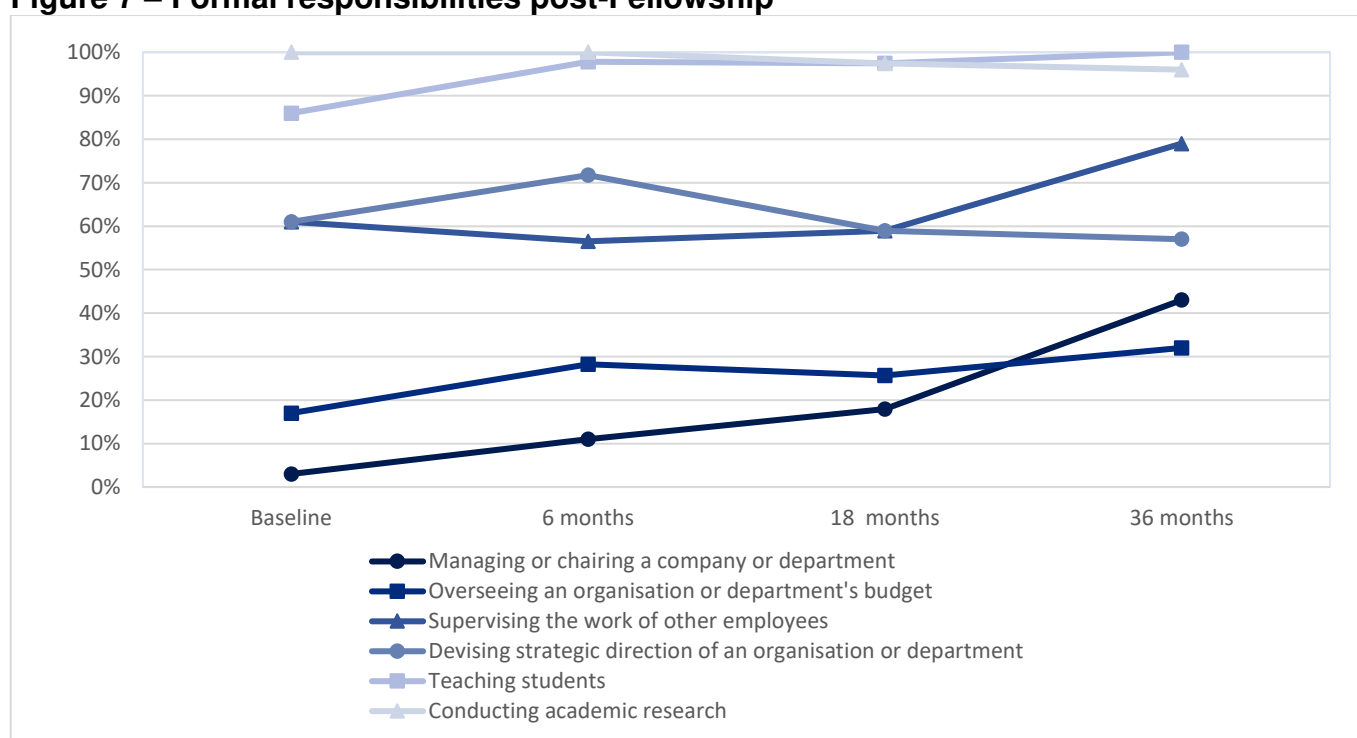
Over half (63%) of the Fellows at 6 months, 72% at 18 months, and 64% at 36 months post-Fellowship reported that their personal skills were higher than those required by their current role. A comparison with the findings from the baseline survey shows that only 11% of the Fellows reported that this was the case prior to the Fellowship. Notably, 28% of the Fellows reported to have lower skills than required for their roles prior to the Fellowship, yet no Fellows reported this to be the case post-award. Given that most of the Fellows returned to the same employer, as mentioned earlier, this suggests that undertaking the Fellowship significantly enhanced the skills of the Fellows.

It is later in their career paths (at 36 months) that the Fellows reported to have employment that matches with their personal skills. As indicated by the findings on job change (Figure 4 above), it appears that at 36 months more Fellows start to change jobs or take on more senior positions, and this suggests that this shift in employment also gives the Fellows an opportunity to match personal skills with the skills needed for new employment or for a new role taken up with their employer.

4.3.1 Formal responsibilities post-Fellowship

The Fellowship review also investigated the responsibilities of the Fellows at their workplaces post-Fellowship as shown in Figure 7 below. Generally, the top two responsibilities reported by almost all (86%-100%) of the Fellows responding to the post-award surveys are conducting research, and teaching, with slightly more Fellows being involved in research than teaching prior to the Fellowship.⁶ The post-Fellowship period saw some Fellows picking up teaching tasks and being slightly less involved in research activities.

Figure 7 – Formal responsibilities post-Fellowship



Source: 2015-2021 Academic Fellows Longitudinal Surveys
Baseline n=52; 6 months n=46; 18 months n=39; 36 months n=28

Apart from teaching and research, over half of the Fellows were also involved in devising the strategic direction of an organisation or department and supervising the work of other employees. Notably, as early as six months post-Fellowship, a higher proportion of the Fellows (72%) reported to be involved in devising the strategic direction of an organisation or department compared to other roles such as budgeting, supervising other employees, and managing a department or company.

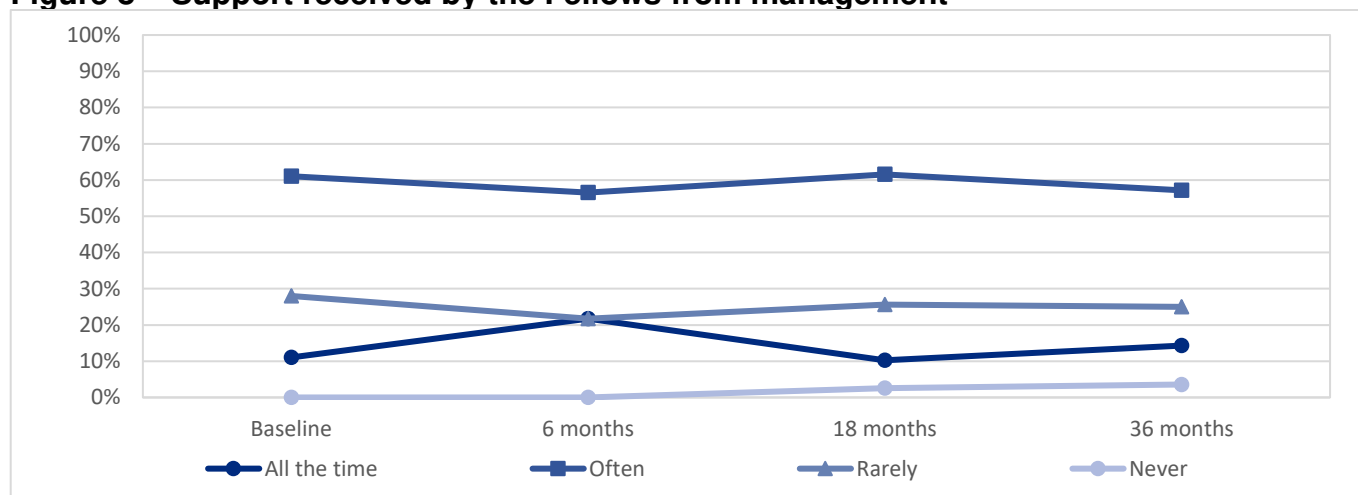
⁶ The baseline figures are based on the 2016 and 2017 cohorts only. The question asked to the 2015 cohort (n=16) had a different format. Having said that, 93% of the Fellows from this cohort reported to have Substantial Involvement in teaching, and 81% in research work. Half had Substantial Involvement in management and implementing new work areas.

Nonetheless, a lower proportion of the Fellows reported their involvement in this activity at 18 (59%) and 36 (57%) months. Instead, it appears that supervising the work of other employees is a very common responsibility at 36 months post-Fellowship, as reported by 79% of the Fellows, compared to other responsibilities such as managing budgets and managing a department or company. That said, it is key to note that there was a sharp increase in the proportion of the Fellows reporting on managing or chairing a company or department, from 3% pre-award to just under half (43%) at 36 months post-Fellowship. This suggests that management responsibilities are less likely to be taken up in the immediate period post-Fellowship compared to the other roles.

4.3.2 Experience returning to work after completing the Fellowship

Fellows were prompted to assess the context of their workplace by rating how frequently they experienced different situations. Figure 8 below summarises the responses on the support received by the Fellows from management.

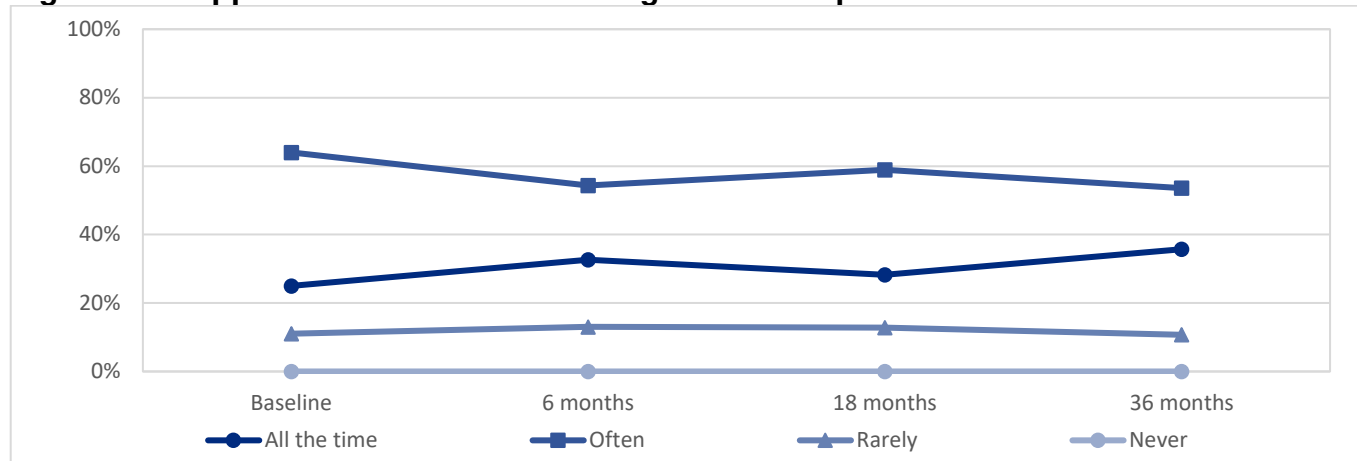
Figure 8 – Support received by the Fellows from management



Source: 2015-2021 Academic Fellows Longitudinal Surveys
Baseline n=52; 6 months n=46; 18 months n=39; 36 months n=28

Over half of the Fellows reported that they receive support from management 'Often' before and after the Fellowship. Based on the 'All the time' and 'Often' responses combined, over 70% of Fellows received support from their management pre- and post-award. While a low proportion of Fellows received support from management 'All the time', double the proportion of Fellows (22%) reported this was the case at 6 months, compared to 11% reported in the baseline survey. Fellows were also prompted to report on the extent to which they had received support from their work colleagues. These findings are summarised in Figure 9 below.

Figure 9 – Support from immediate colleagues at workplace

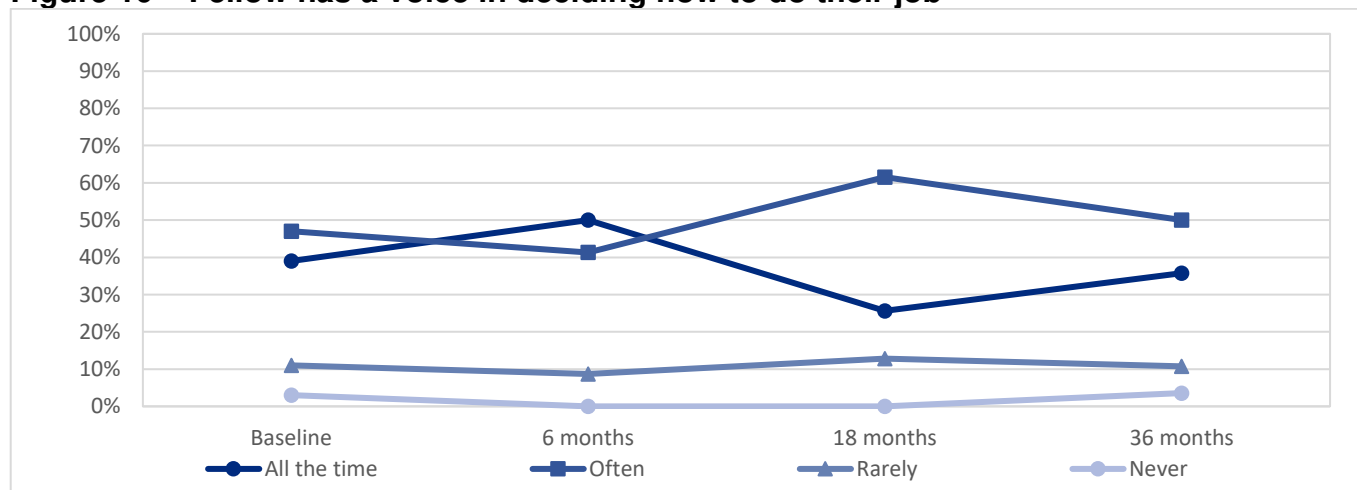


Source: 2015-2021 Academic Fellows Longitudinal Surveys
Baseline n=52; 6 months n=46; 18 months n=39; 36 months n=28

The combined responses from ‘All the time’ and ‘Often’ indicate that a high proportion (80% or more) of Fellows also received support from colleagues when suggesting implementing new practices, both pre- and post-award, and across all post-award data collection points (6-, 18-, and 36- months).

Moreover, a high proportion of the Fellows reported that they had a voice in deciding how to do their job ‘All the time’ and ‘Often’. A slightly higher proportion (91%) at six months post-award than prior to the Fellowship (86%) said this was the case as shown in the Figure 10 below. This suggests that the Fellows were in a slightly better position to influence their work activities post-Fellowship.

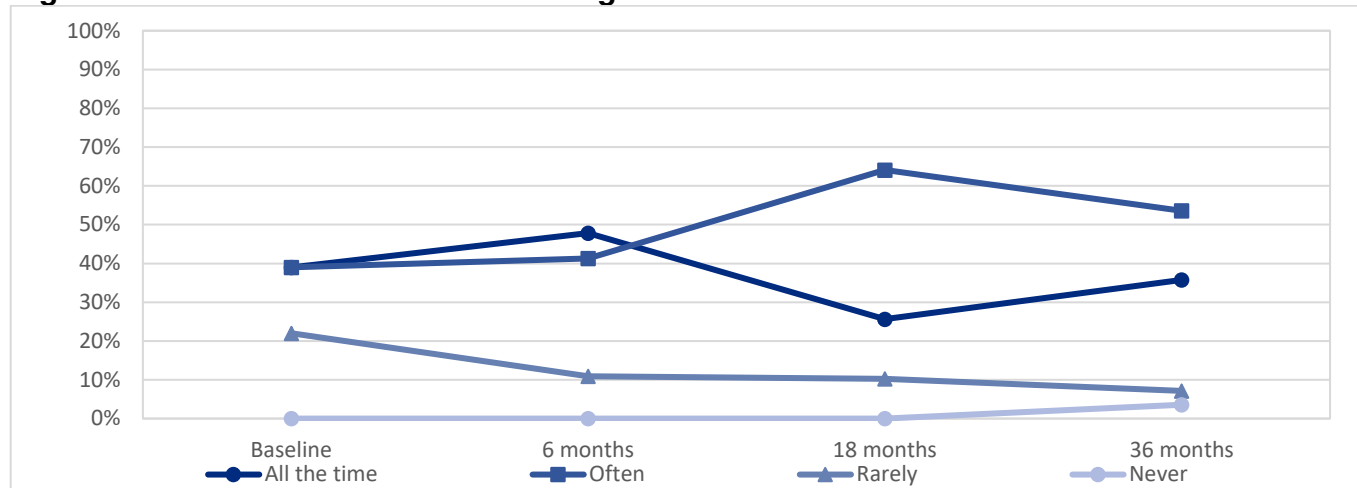
Figure 10 – Fellow has a voice in deciding how to do their job



Source: 2015-2021 Academic Fellows Longitudinal Surveys
Baseline n=52; 6 months n=46; 18 months n=39; 36 months n=28

Meanwhile, just under half of the Fellows (48%) reported to influence the work of their team ‘All the time’ and 41% said they were able to influence this work ‘Often’, particularly at six months post-award, as seen in Figure 11 below. Combining responses from ‘All the time’ and ‘Often’ shows that a slightly higher proportion (89%) of the Fellows at six months post-award, compared to 78% prior to the Fellowship, frequently influenced the work of their team.

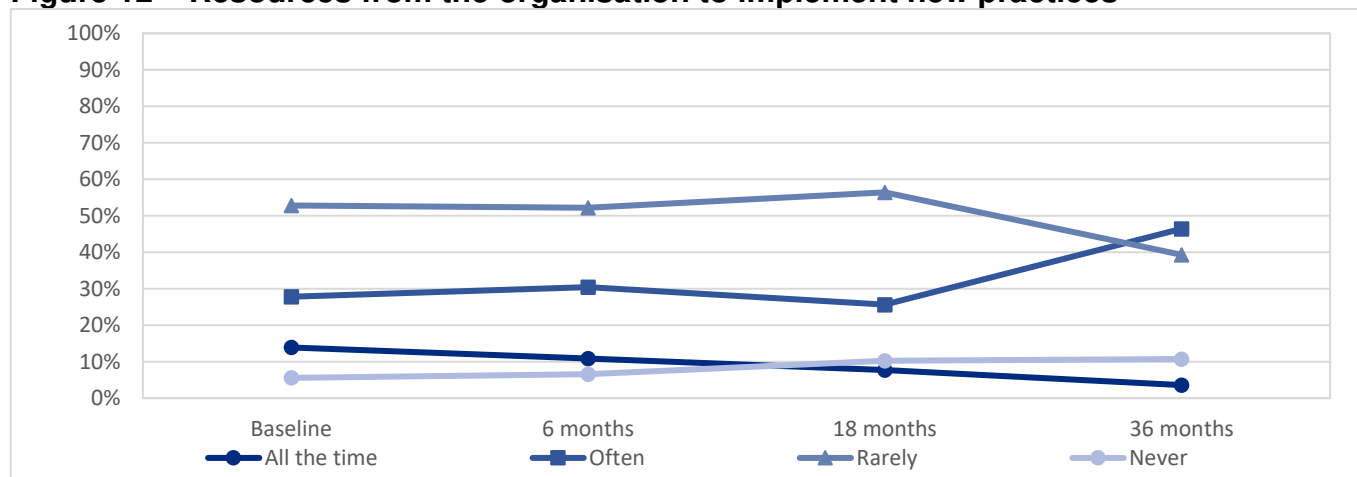
Figure 11 – Fellow has a voice in what goes on within their work team



Source: 2015-2021 Academic Fellows Longitudinal Surveys
Baseline n=52; 6 months n=46; 18 months n=39; 36 months n=28

The availability of resources from within employer organisations to implement new practices was also investigated, and the findings are illustrated in Figure 12 below.

Figure 12 – Resources from the organisation to implement new practices



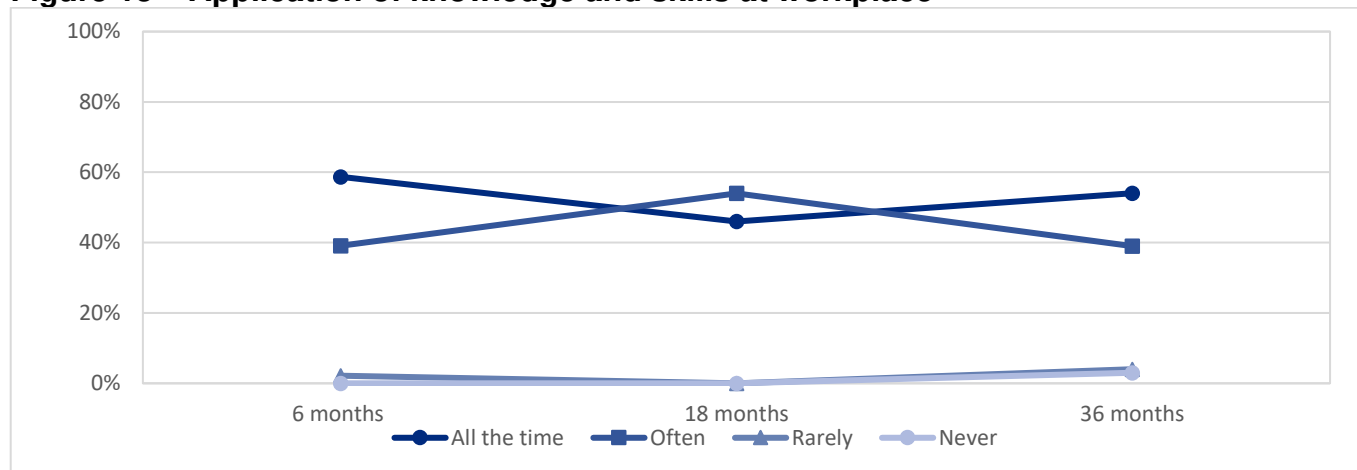
Source: 2015-2021 Academic Fellows Longitudinal Surveys
Baseline n=52; 6 months n=46; 18 months n=39; 36 months n=28

The findings show that over half of the organisations that the Fellows work for ‘Rarely’ have the adequate resources required to implement new practices suggested by the Fellows, something that is consistent pre- and post-award, given that most Fellows returned to the same employer immediately after the Fellowship. Notably, at 36 months post-award the findings on job change, discussed in the earlier section, showed that a few (11%) Fellows had changed jobs at the time of the survey, and two thirds of these had joined organisations that have slightly more resources to support their work.

4.3.3 Application of skills and knowledge gained from the Fellowship

Fellows were prompted to identify the frequency with which they were applying different skills and knowledge gained from their Fellowship. Figure 13 below summarises the findings on application of skills at the Fellows’ workplaces.

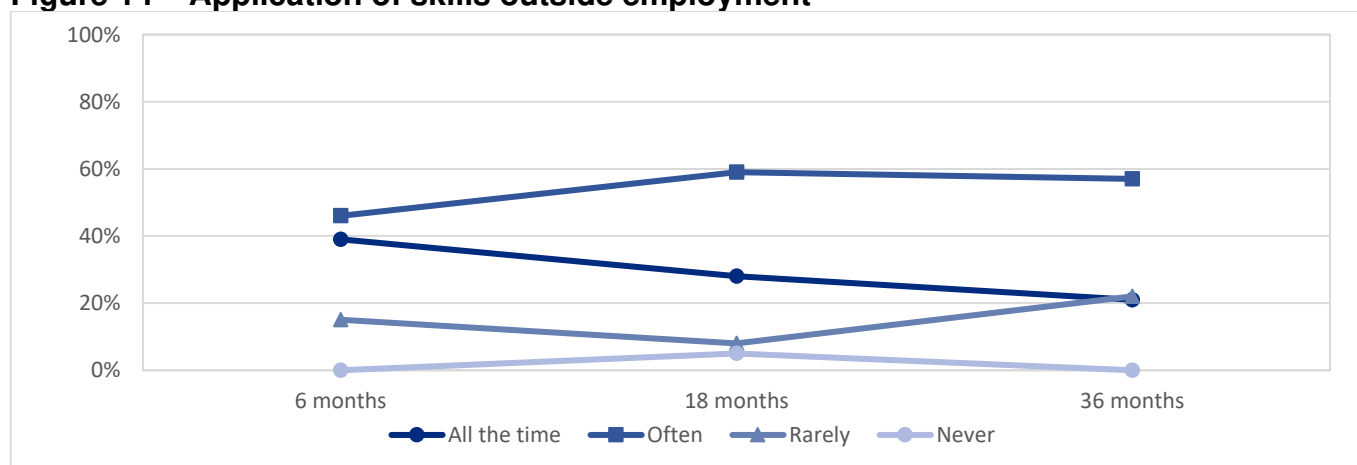
Figure 13 – Application of knowledge and skills at workplace



Source: 2015-2021 Academic Fellows Longitudinal Surveys
6 months n=46; 18 months n=39; 36 months n=28

The findings from the three surveys revealed that at least nine-tenths of Fellows were applying the skills acquired from the Fellowship at their workplaces 'All the time' or 'Often', and over half (59%) said they did so 'All the time' immediately after completing their Fellowship (six months post-Fellowship). The extent to which the learned skills were applied by Fellows, and support they received from their colleagues and management (see Figures 12 and 13 above), suggest that the working environment was fairly conducive for Fellows to apply the skills and knowledge learned on award. Figure 14 below outlines the findings related to the application of skills outside employment.

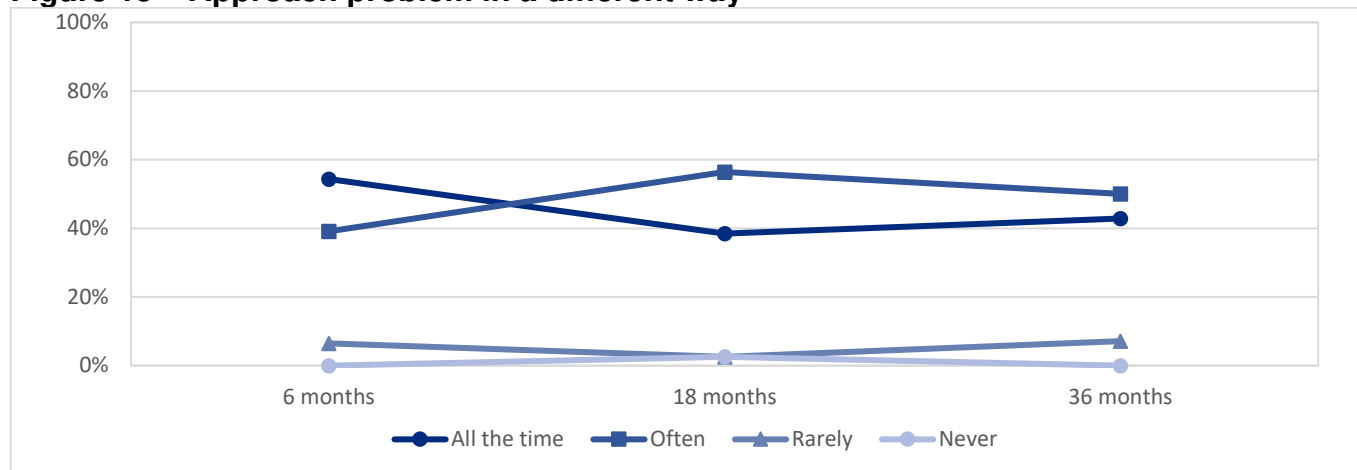
Figure 14 – Application of skills outside employment



Source: 2015-2021 Academic Fellows Longitudinal Surveys
6 months n=46; 18 months n=39; 36 months n=28

The combined findings from 'All the time' and 'Often' show that 80% to 87% of Fellows were also applying the skills learned from the Fellowship outside of their employment. Over half of the Fellows at 18- and 36-months post-Fellowship reported that this was 'Often' the case. Moreover, as shown in Figure 15 below, a very high proportion of the Fellows reported that they were approaching problems in a different way after their Fellowship. Notably, over half (54%) of the Fellows at six months post-Fellowship reported that they did so 'All the time'.

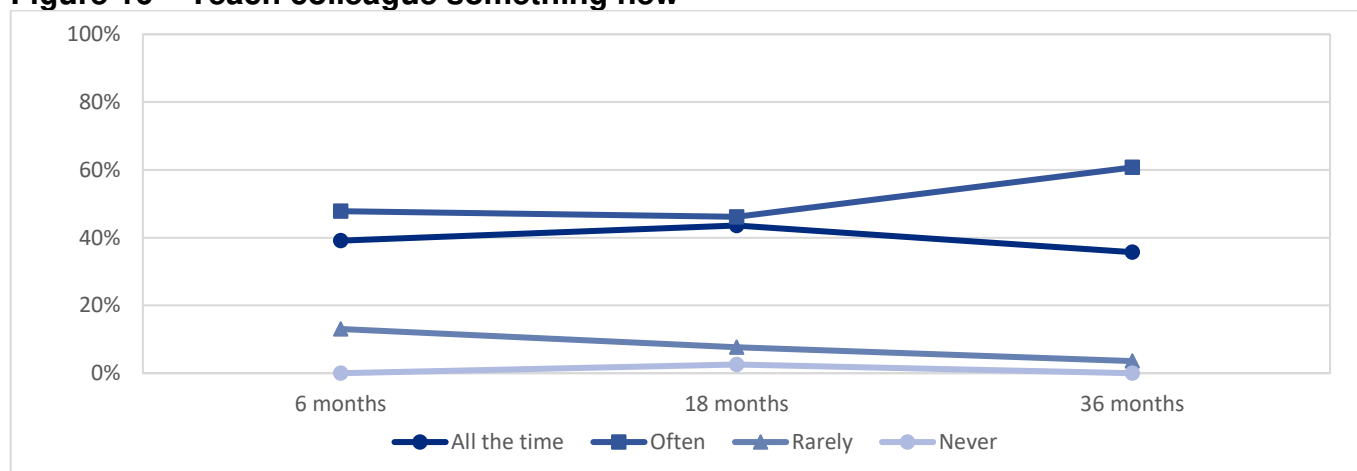
Figure 15 – Approach problem in a different way



Source: 2015-2021 Academic Fellows Longitudinal Surveys
6 months n=46; 18 months n=39; 36 months n=28

Fellows also frequently had the opportunity to teach their colleagues something new they had learned during their Fellowship. The proportions of Fellows reporting this activity are shown in Figure 16 below.

Figure 16 – Teach colleague something new

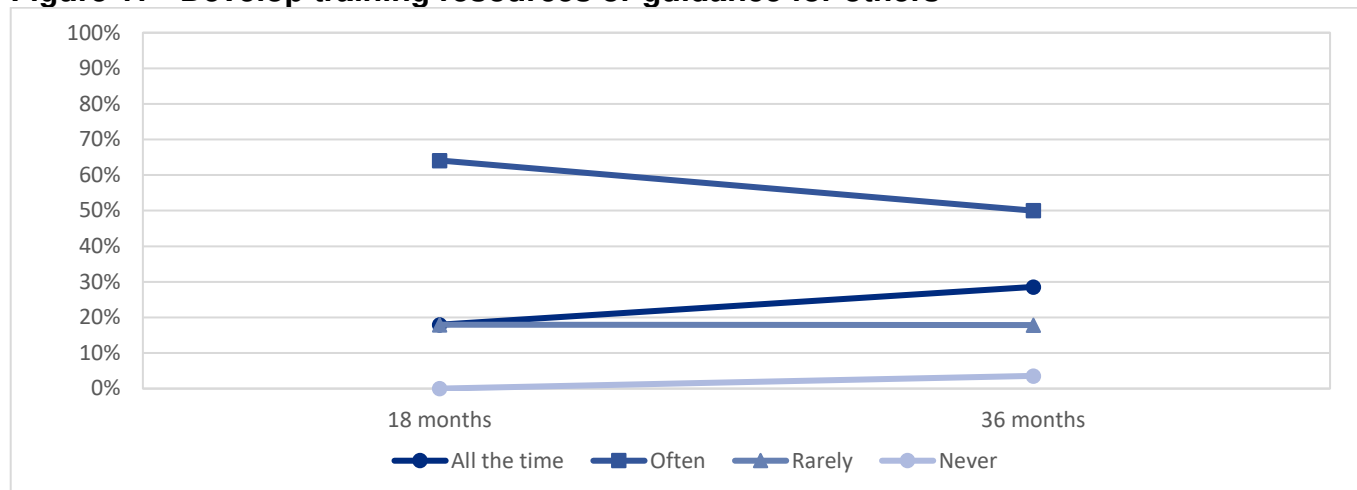


Source: 2015-2021 Academic Fellows Longitudinal Surveys
6 months n=46; 18 months n=39; 36 months n=28

The combined responses from teaching a colleague something new ‘All the time’ and ‘Often’ increase from 87% at six months to 97% at 36 months post-Fellowship, suggesting that the Fellows continue to share their knowledge and skills with colleagues over a long period of time post-Fellowship. Developing training resources for others also appears to be a very common activity for the Fellows⁷ as shown in Figure 17 below.

⁷ Following the six months survey, the survey questionnaire was adjusted to include a question on developing training resources for others, hence no findings from the six months survey are presented in figure 17.

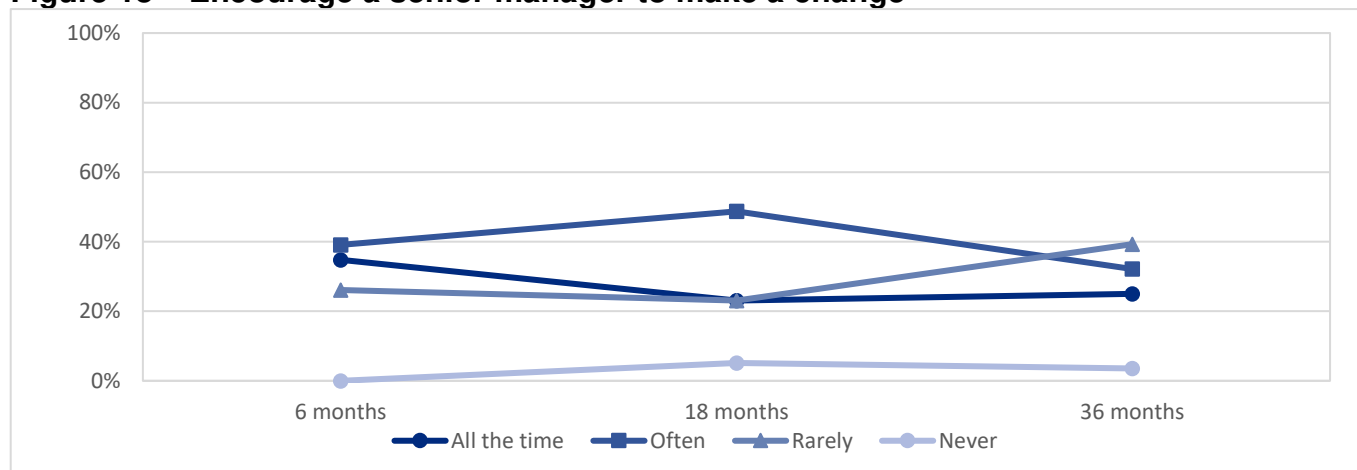
Figure 17– Develop training resources or guidance for others



Source: 2015-2021 Academic Fellows Longitudinal Surveys
18 months n=39; 36 months n=28

Furthermore, Fellows reported on the extent to which they were able to encourage senior management to make a change at their institution, with the findings shown in Figure 18 below.

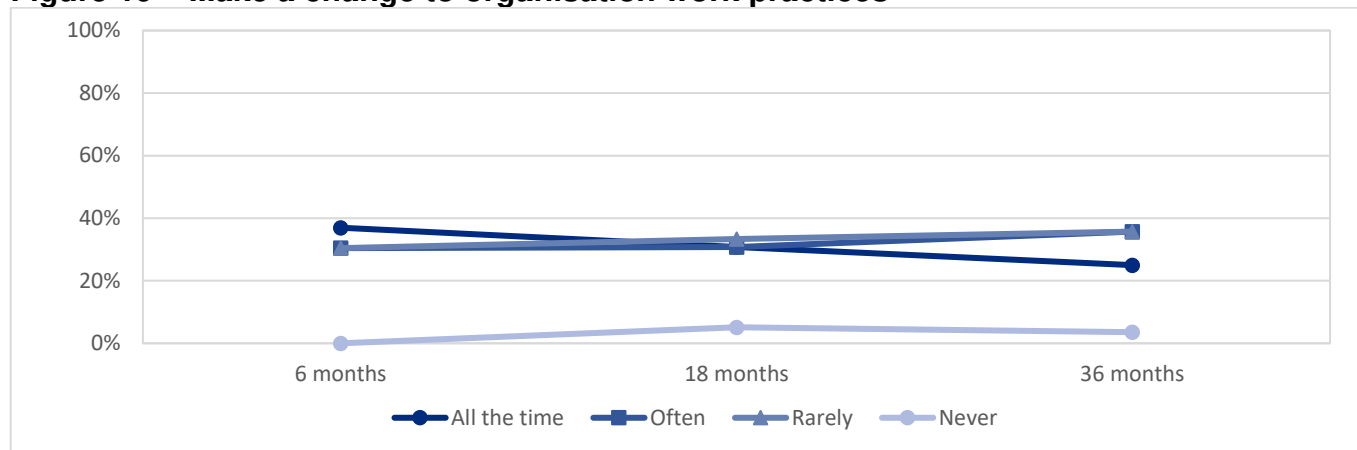
Figure 18 – Encourage a senior manager to make a change



Source: 2015-2021 Academic Fellows Longitudinal Surveys
6 months n=46; 18 months n=39; 36 months n=28

The findings reveal that the Fellows become less influential to senior management over time. Notably, the combined responses from 'All the time' and 'Often' show that just over half (57%) of the Fellows at 36 months compared to 74% at six months post-Fellowship reported to have encouraged a senior manager to make a change. Figure 19 below shows the responses obtained from the Fellows regarding the extent of influence they have had on their organisation work practices.

Figure 19 – Make a change to organisation work practices



Source: 2015-2021 Academic Fellows Longitudinal Surveys
6 months n=46; 18 months n=39; 36 months n=28

Based on the responses of 'All the time' and 'Often', making a change to the organisation work practices is an area that just over half of the Fellows have been involved in, and which becomes less common over time post-Fellowship.

4.3.4 Examples of activities and experiences of the Fellows demonstrating the application of acquired skills and knowledge

The surveys prompted respondents to provide examples of their activities post-Fellowship that demonstrate how they had applied the skills and knowledge acquired during their Fellowship. Research and teaching emerged as the most common activities that the Fellows were applying the knowledge and skills gained on award. Examples of other areas include training colleagues on learned technology and research

approaches, proposing new research methodologies, suggesting new workplace processes, designing a new curriculum, improving laboratory procedures, writing successful proposals for research grants, establishing research centres, and organising periodic written and oral seminars for staff and students. Others reported on some community activities they were involved in where they applied the knowledge and skills acquired on-award. These include activities that promote access and inclusion of marginalised groups in society, empowerment of women in science and employment, children's education, networking, mentoring colleagues, consultancy, developing technology and supporting programmes aimed at creating awareness about human rights. Personal development and career progression also emerged as some of the experiences that were influenced by the Fellowship. Below are some examples that demonstrate the experiences and activities of Fellows as read from their free text responses.

Research activities and collaborations

Research activities conducted by the Fellows upon returning to their home countries were described by some Fellows, and three examples extracted from their responses are provided below:

‘In addition to the project conducted during the Fellowship, my collaboration with other researchers in the UK institutions have also given rise to two papers which have all been accepted in an International Journal. From the experience gained from the projects carried out in the UK, I have currently initiated a project at home. An overview of this current study has given rise to a publication.’ (2017 Academic Fellow, 6 months survey).

‘I was able to initiate and formalise research collaboration between my host university and a company in the USA. I also initiated a collaborative research project between my home and host institution on formulations in selected tropical diseases.’ (2017 Academic Fellow, 6 months survey).

‘I have worked on a project aimed at monitoring and mitigating the impacts of shrimp farming. We ran that project successfully for a year, assessing the impacts of shrimp farming on the environment and biodiversity including three training programmes, one stakeholder’s consultation meeting and one national workshop. A manual has been published on how shrimp farming is affecting the local biodiversity. The manual has been well accepted by the shrimp stakeholders. We conducted a survey among the stakeholders. There was clear indication of satisfaction among the affected people in that region to adopt mitigable measures.’ (2015 Academic Fellow, 18 months survey).

Teaching activities

Fellows that were involved in teaching also provided examples of how the acquired skills and knowledge were applied in their teaching activities:

‘First, a lot of improvements in doing my work and responsibilities in teaching and supervision of students’ research project. All the undergraduate students supervised by me did excellent in their final reports. This is because, the research experience acquired during my Fellowship was used, which contributed to the better research outcome which my students recorded.’ (2017 Academic Fellow, 18 months survey).

‘Aspects of my research Fellowship have been applied in my teaching and research. I teach my students some of the skills that I learnt during my Fellowship program. My research students also learn some of the skills which they also apply in the research work.’ (2016 Academic Fellow, 36 months survey).

Community Activities

Fellows reported on how they were applying the knowledge and skills acquired while on the Fellowship in conducting community activities. Below are some quotations from the responses Fellows wrote about their work in their communities:

‘In my community, I have been actively involved in the investigation of community acquired infections, infection prevention and control measures, and establishment of antimicrobial stewardship team. I work in the community as a volunteer for emergency preparedness investigation in disease outbreaks especially in internally displaced persons (IDPs) camps due to climate change, to ensure good water and sanitation hygiene (WASH). I collaborated with W.H.O and the theatre and media arts department of my institution to conduct a community enlightenment and awareness campaign on viral haemorrhagic fevers using dance drama.’ (2015 Academic Fellow, 36 months survey).

‘I have worked to empower women who are single or divorced or widowed by providing information regarding various government schemes and financial assistance to have their own business. I could help the women financially (if the amount is affordable) to initiate their dream livelihood. I helped a widow to start up her own business of making bread and selling. I purchased all the equipment required like a gas furnace, vessels and helped in publicity.’ (2016 Academic Fellow, 36 months survey).

Mentoring and training others

Some examples of the work of Fellows that involves training or mentoring others include teaching in an academic environment or job-oriented training, as described by Fellows from their survey responses below:

‘I have been involved in mentoring the younger academics in my department, faculty and university community in general. I have been playing a supportive role in supporting the Director to develop some ideas on how to move the centre forward.’ (2017 Academic Fellow, 36 months survey).

‘Over 100 junior academic staff have been trained in pedagogy of employability for higher education. This has resulted in employability development and integration in courses at institutional level. Students’ employability skills have developed. Supervision and mentoring support conversation themes have been developed using Delphi and Nominal Group Techniques, and mobile mentoring support has been provided, targeting areas of need by pre-service teachers.’ (2017 Academic Fellow, 18 months survey).

Personal development and career progression

Some Fellows reported that the Fellowship had contributed to their personal development, and this was described as the self-fulfilment having completed the Fellowship, and the prestige, confidence, and life-changing experience that comes with it. For example, some Fellows reported:

‘In summary my CSC Fellowship has conferred some measure of prestige and validation on my profile as a researcher: this has opened up tremendous opportunities for me both within and outside my home country. The research skills, networks and contacts that I cultivated during my Fellowship as well as the associated international exposure have boosted my confidence to take up more responsibilities and challenging leadership roles within my university.’ (2015 Academic Fellow, 36 months survey).

‘It is amazing and great experiences were gained. My employer has great confidence in my ability to take on higher responsibility. I can do my jobs with less difficulty and with a near-zero error. A lot of time, I was called to work in areas where people find it difficult to deliver a given assignment.’ (2017 Academic Fellow, 18 months survey).

Taking up more responsibilities and being promoted to more senior or leadership positions have also been reported by the Fellows as steps in their career development:

‘When I returned home, I was made the graduate coordinator for my department and within five months I was made the vice dean for the faculty of social sciences education, and I have been part of major decision-making processes at the university level. As per my position as the vice dean of my faculty, I attend executive board meetings, faculty board meetings, academic board meetings, academic planning meetings and take part in major decision making at the departmental, faculty and university level.’ (2017 Academic Fellow, 18 months survey).

‘My association with Commonwealth Fellowship has brought high level legitimacy and recognition to my work. This has brought more responsibilities and leadership roles in my university. I have been able to translate my UK experiences in flood risk management into field interventions in my home country. My Commonwealth Fellowship experiences have opened new opportunities. I have also maintained relationships with my host institution in the UK. Three of my Postgraduate students have benefited from the resulting student/staff exchange program with my UK host institution. My experience has been great and highly rewarding.’ (2015 Academic Fellow, 18 months survey).

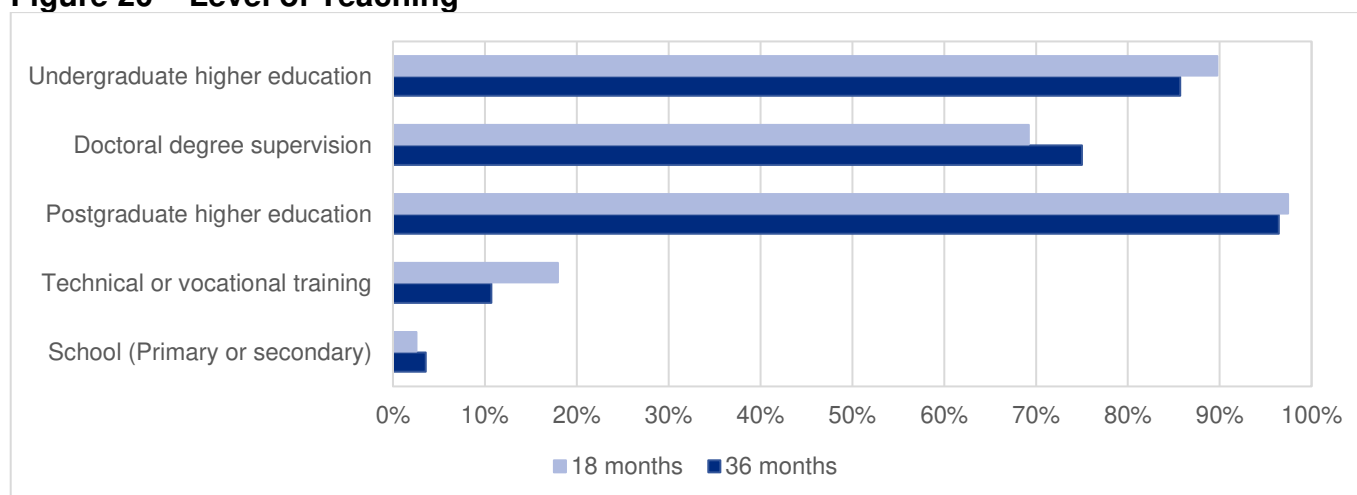
Apart from the successes, Fellows also identified some challenges that have to some extent hindered the success of their activities post-Fellowship. These include lack of research funding, lack of equipment, resources and facilities, lack of government support, and lack of support from the workplace.

The surveys further investigated specific activities such as the teaching, academic and research work of the Fellows to establish the extent of their involvement in, and the application of knowledge and skills through, these activities, thereby better identifying the outcomes and impact of the Fellowship. These findings are discussed in the following sections.

4.4 Teaching activities

The surveys asked Fellows to indicate the level of teaching they were involved in, and the extent to which the knowledge and skills gained from the Fellowship are being applied in the teaching activities. Figure 20 below gives a summary of the level of teaching.

Figure 20 – Level of Teaching

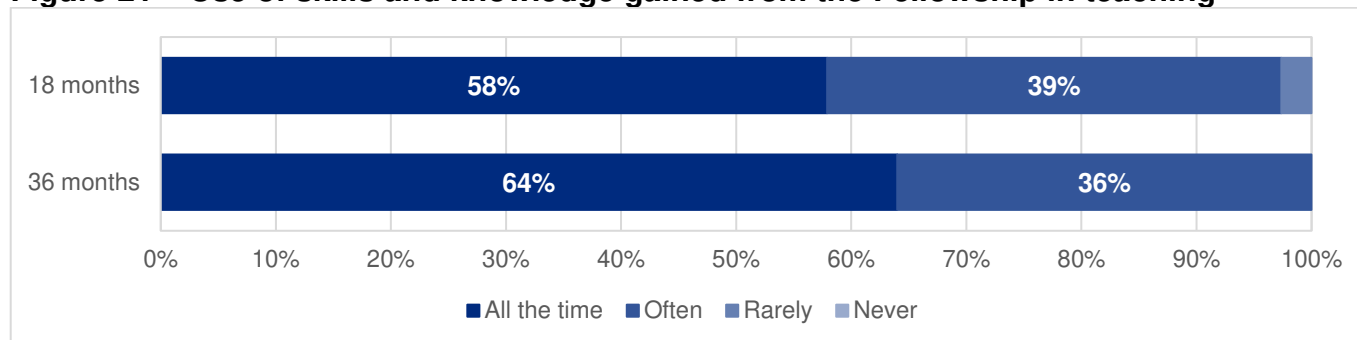


18 months n=39; 36 months n=28

Fellows were mainly involved in teaching at the undergraduate, post-graduate, and doctoral level at the time of completing the surveys. At 18 months Fellows appeared to be slightly more involved in teaching at the undergraduate level compared to 36 months post-Fellowship. Instead, more Fellows (75%) took up doctoral degree supervision at 36 months compared to 18 months (69%) post-Fellowship. When examining this data by the tenure length of the Fellows, it appears that all Fellows (100%) who spent less than six months on the Fellowship reported to be involved in doctoral supervision at 36 months post-Fellowship. Also, more Fellows that spent less than six months on the Fellowship were involved in undergraduate teaching than those who spent six months or more regardless of post-Fellowship period. This reveals the importance of restructuring of the Fellowship programme, particularly between 2015 and 2017 whereby the Fellows could choose to spend anywhere between 3 to 10 months at a host institution in a way that best fits with existing responsibilities at their home institution.

Fellows were asked to report on the frequency at which they applied the knowledge and skills gained from the Fellowship in their teaching activities. As shown below in Figure 21, the surveys reveal that 58% of the Fellows at 18-months post-Fellowship and 64% at 36-months applied the knowledge and skills gained 'All the time' in this context. Overall, combined responses for 'All the time' or 'Often' reveal that 97% of the Fellows at 18 months and all Fellows at 36 months were frequently applying the knowledge and skills gained in their teaching activities.

Figure 21 – Use of skills and knowledge gained from the Fellowship in teaching



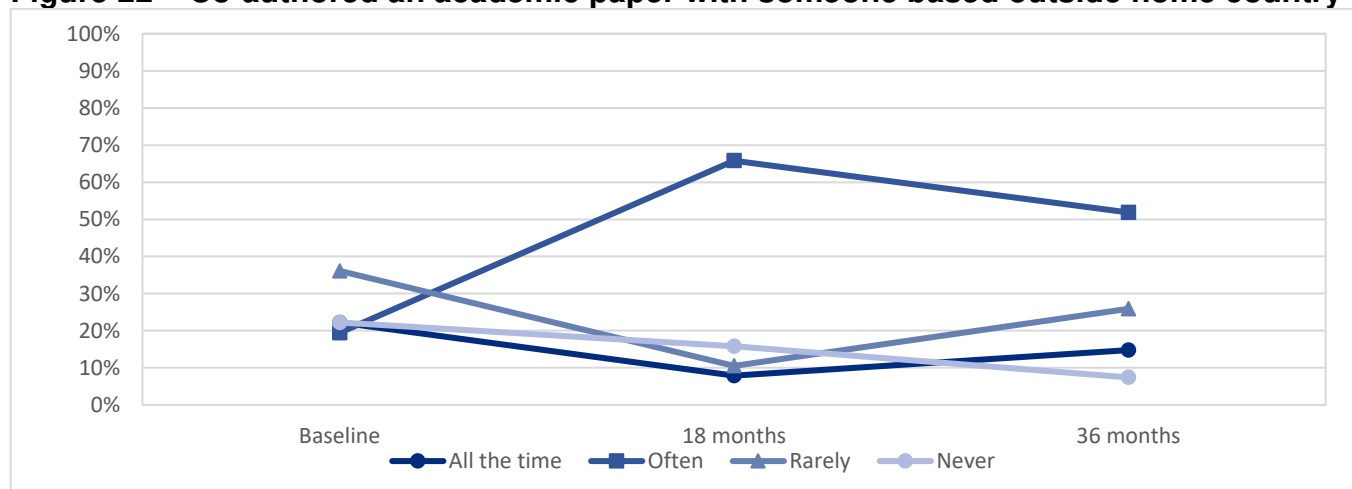
Source: 2015-2021 Academic Fellows Longitudinal Surveys
18 months n=39; 36 months n=28

In addition to teaching activities, Fellows also reported on their academic research activities post-Fellowship, which are discussed in the next section.

4.5 Academic Research activities

Fellows' research activities pre- and post-Fellowship were also investigated to identify the outcomes and impact of the Fellowship in this area. Fellows were asked how frequently they were involved in a number of different research activities related to collaboration and dissemination of research. These findings are summarised in Figure 22 below.

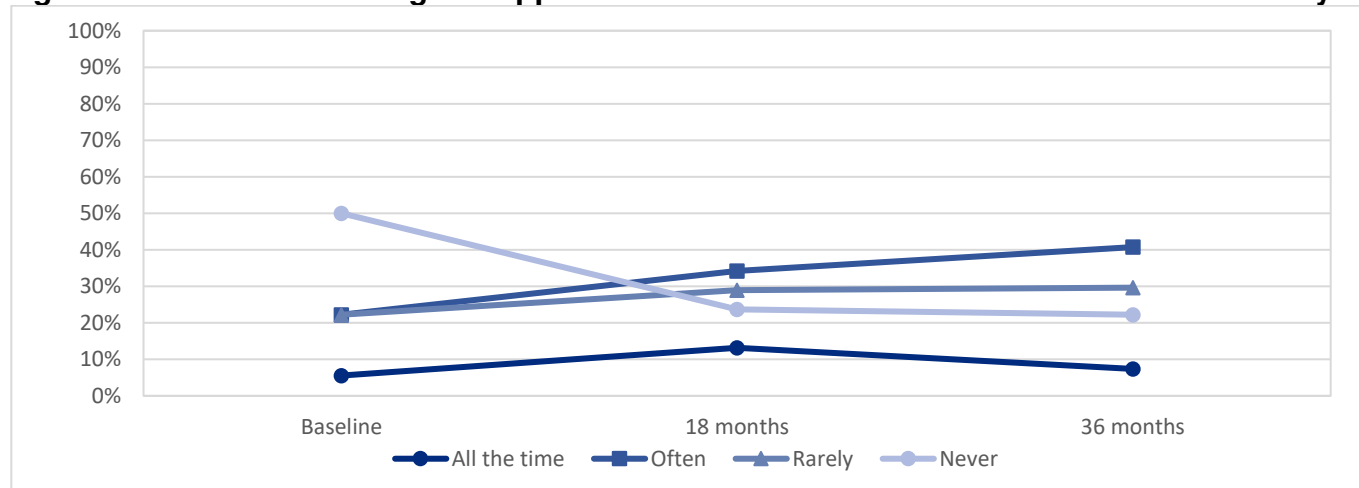
Figure 22 – Co-authored an academic paper with someone based outside home country



Source: 2015-2021 Academic Fellows Longitudinal Surveys
Baseline n=52; 18 months n=39; 36 months n=27

Co-authoring an academic paper with someone based outside their home country is an activity that a minority of Fellows were frequently involved in prior to the Fellowship, with only 41% reporting to have been conducting this activity 'All the time' or 'Often'. However, this proportion grows substantially at 18 months, where a large majority (74%) of Fellows reported to be frequently involved in this activity, and although this number shrinks to two-thirds (67%) at 36 months post-Fellowship it is also worth noting that the frequency of Fellows selecting 'Never' is at its lowest at this point. This suggests that the Fellows developed networks for collaborative research work during the Fellowship from which academic papers were produced. The extent to which Fellows were involved in co-authoring grant applications with someone based outside their home country was also investigated, the findings for which are illustrated below in Figure 23.

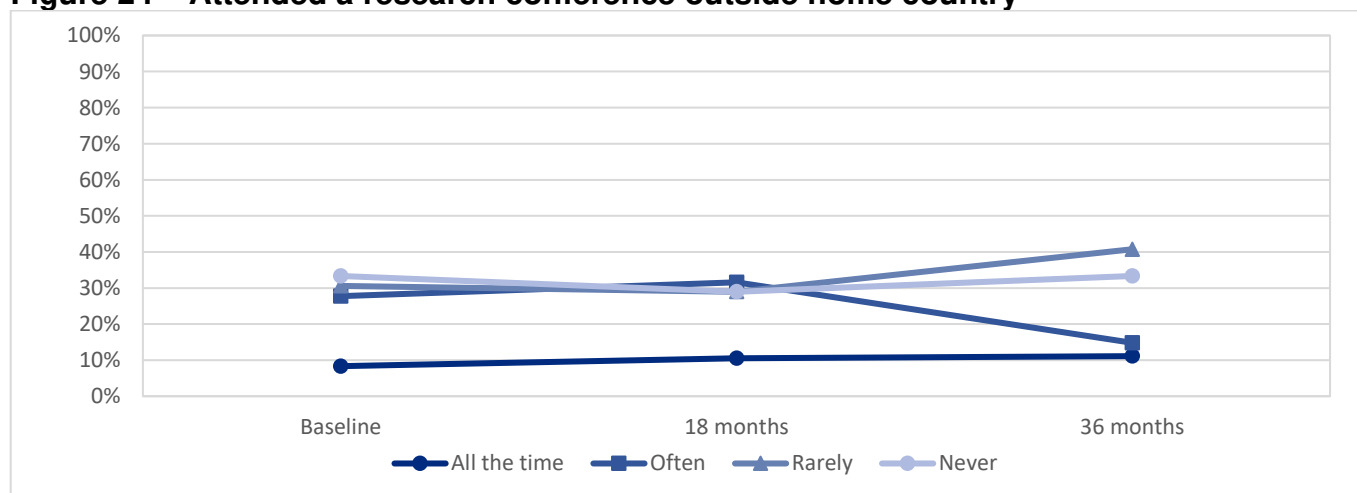
Figure 23 – Co-authored a grant application with someone based outside home country



Source: 2015-2021 Academic Fellows Longitudinal Surveys
Baseline n=52; 18 months n=39; 36 months n=27

Prior to the Fellowship, half (50%) of the Fellows reported to have ‘Never’ been involved in this activity, a proportion that shrinks to 24% at the 18-months point and 22% at 36-months post-Fellowship. Although the level of involvement in this activity varied post-Fellowship, the increase in the proportion of Fellows conducting this activity suggests that the Fellowship enhanced their ability to engage in this activity by providing an opportunity to create and establish links with partners for joint research grant applications for joint research projects. Fellows also reported on the frequency with which they had attended research conferences outside their home country both pre- and post-Fellowship. The findings are illustrated below in Figure 24.

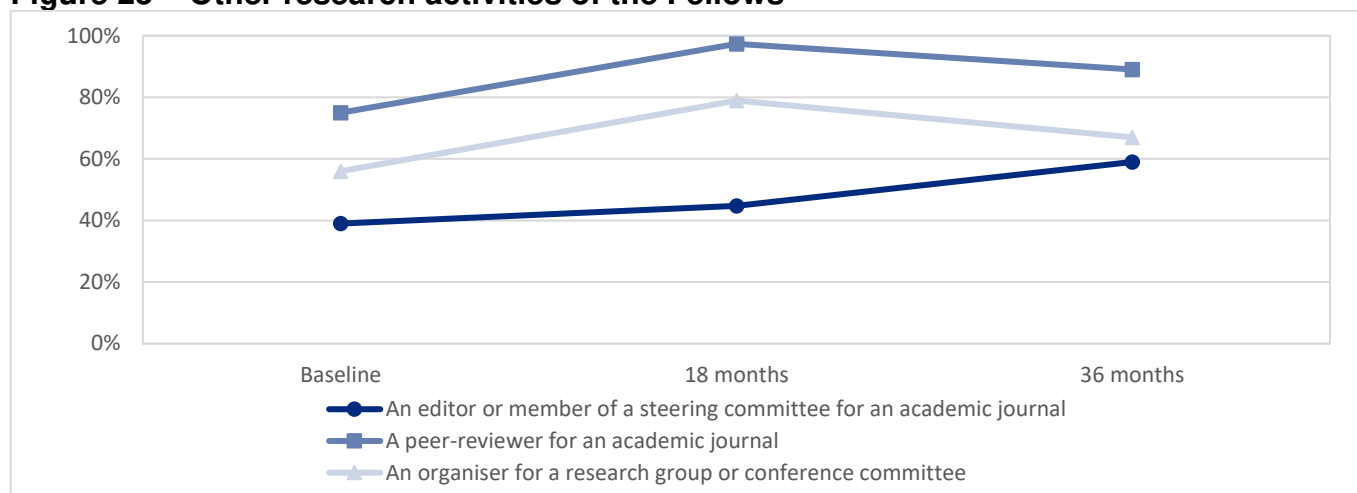
Figure 24 – Attended a research conference outside home country



Source: 2015-2021 Academic Fellows Longitudinal Surveys
Baseline n=52; 18 months n=39; 36 months n=27

Attending a conference outside the home country is an activity that only a minority of Fellows participated in, whether pre- or post-Fellowship, and it is done less frequently 36 months post-Fellowship (although this is also the point at which the lowest rate of ‘Never’ responses is found). This suggests that the likelihood of frequently attending conferences diminishes as the time out of the Fellowship increases. Three other types of research activities were also investigated (organising a research group or conference committee, peer-reviewing for an academic journal, and being an editor or member of a steering committee for an academic journal), results for which are summarised in Figure 25 below.

Figure 25 – Other research activities of the Fellows

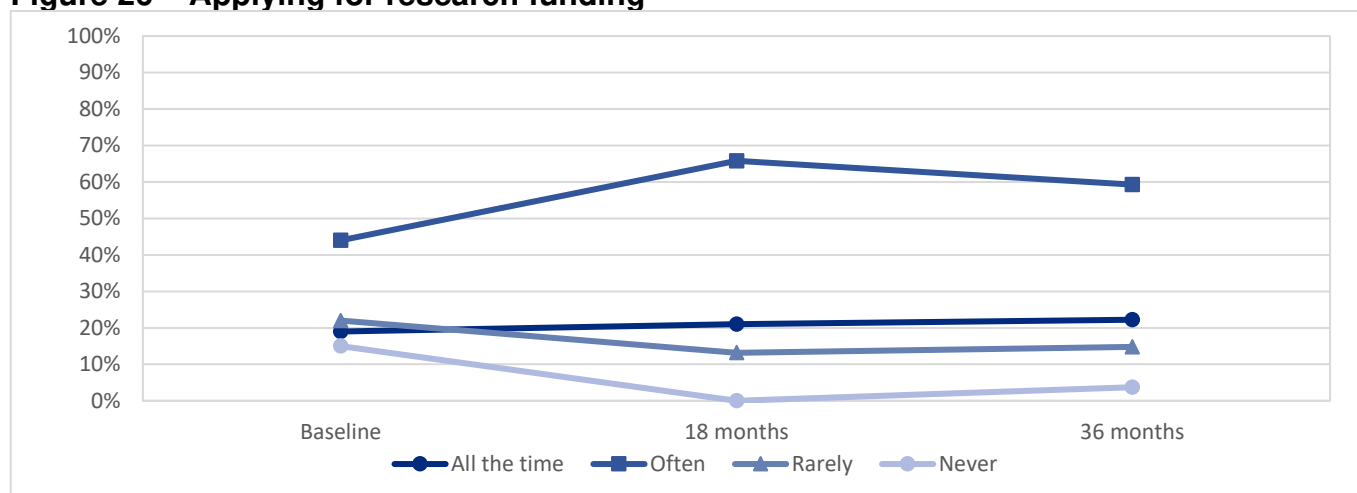


Source: 2015-2021 Academic Fellows Longitudinal Surveys
Baseline n=52; 18 months n=39; 36 months n=27

There are progressive increases in the proportion of the Fellows involved in all three activities from baseline to 18 and 36 months. Whilst there is a slight drop at 36 months for editing and peer-reviewing activities, this remains higher than the baseline rate. All Fellows with a longer tenure period (6 months plus) and at 18 months post-Fellowship were involved in peer-reviewing for academic journals.

The Fellows were prompted to reflect and report on their research experiences that occurred a year prior to completing the survey. These included being involved in academic research projects, applying for research funding, and publishing academic journal articles. Figure 26 below illustrates the extent of involvement of the Fellows in applying for research funding.

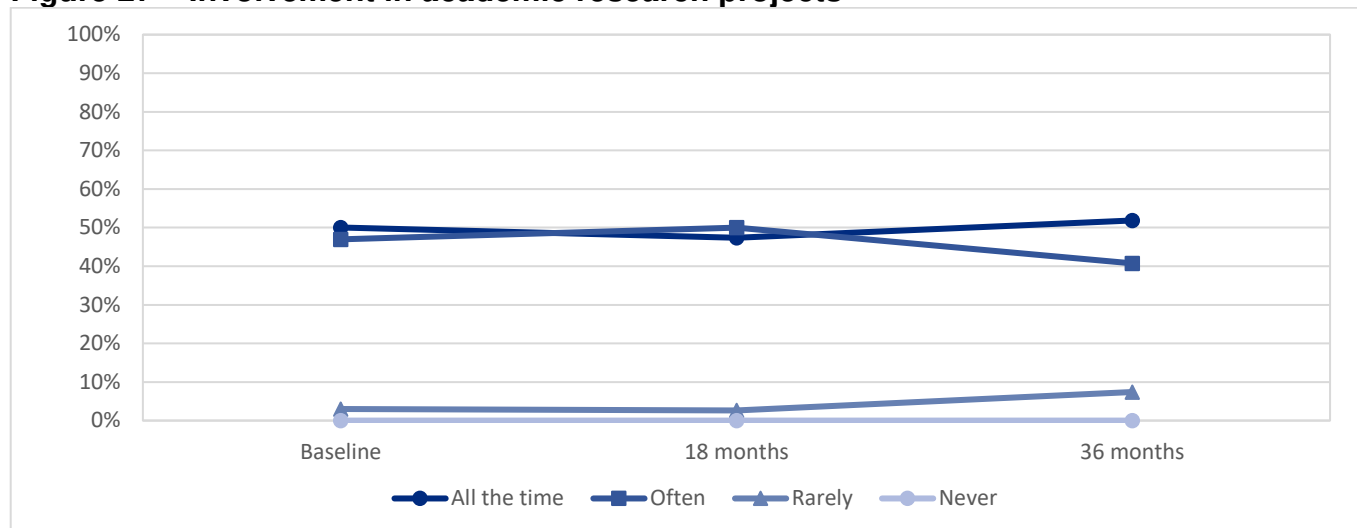
Figure 26 – Applying for research funding



Source: 2015-2021 Academic Fellows Longitudinal Surveys
Baseline n=52; 18 months n=39; 36 months n=27

Notably, there was more involvement in applying for research funding post-Fellowship compared to the pre-Fellowship period. A higher proportion of the Fellows - 87% at 18 months and 81% at 36 months - reported to be involved in this activity 'All the time' or 'Often' compared to 63% reported in the baseline survey. Figure 27 below illustrates the extent to which the Fellows were involved in academic research projects.

Figure 27 – Involvement in academic research projects

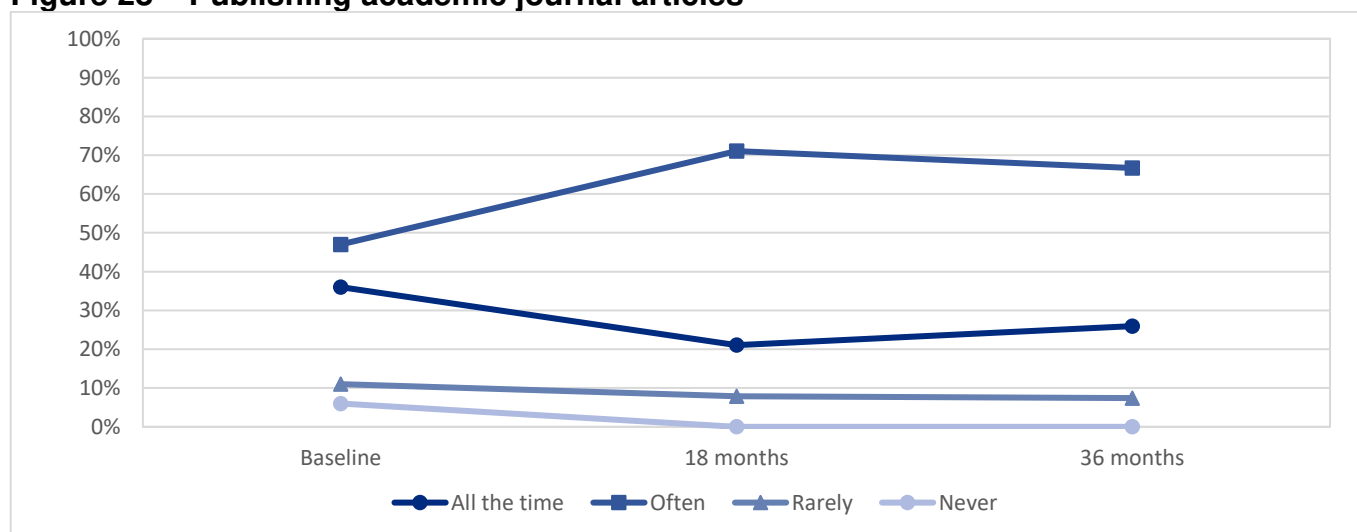


Source: 2015-2021 Academic Fellows Longitudinal Surveys

Baseline n=52; 18 months n=39; 36 months n=27

The findings reveal that 97% of Fellows, at the pre-award and 18 months post-award interval were involved in academic research projects ‘All the time’ and ‘Often’. Slightly less (93%) reported the same at 36 months. Nearly half (47%) of the Fellows conducted this activity ‘All the time’ at 18-months, which is a slight drop compared to prior to the Fellowship (50%). The involvement of the Fellows in publishing academic articles was also investigated, and the findings are summarised in Figure 28 below.

Figure 28 – Publishing academic journal articles



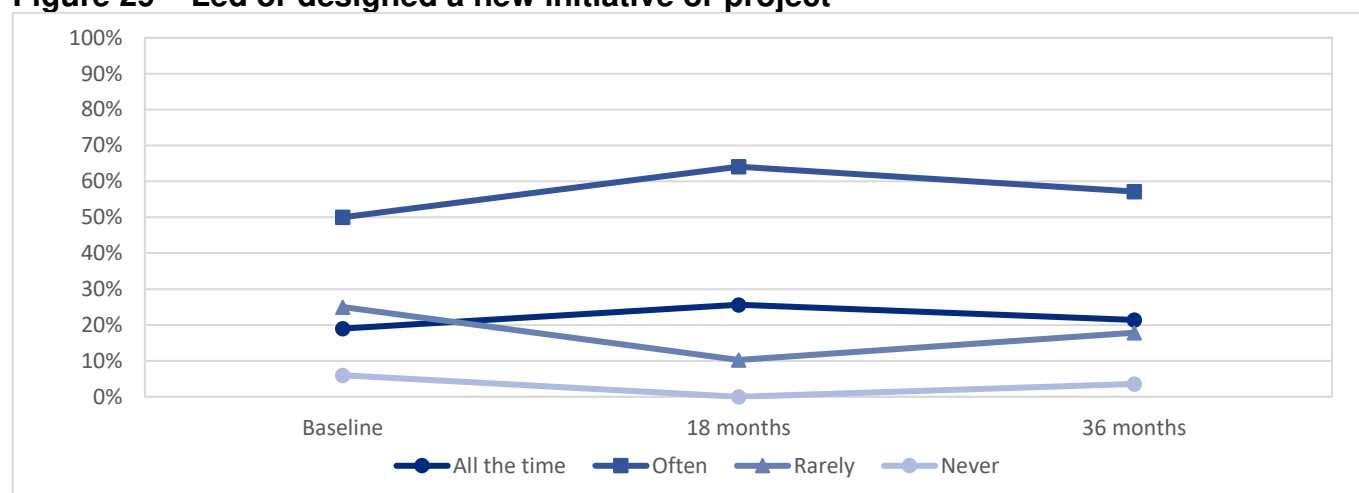
Source: 2015-2021 Academic Fellows Longitudinal Surveys

Baseline n=52; 18 months n=39; 36 months n=27

Following the Fellowship, 92% of Fellows at 18 months and 93% at 36 months reported to have published academic articles ‘All the time’ or ‘Often’, compared to 83% recorded for the pre-Fellowship period. The findings also reveal that less than half (47%) of the Fellows published academic articles ‘Often’ before the Fellowship, compared to nearly three quarters (71%) and two-thirds (67%) at the 18- and 36-month intervals.

To further investigate the research activities of Fellows, survey respondents were asked to gauge the extent to which they had been involved in designing or leading a new initiative or project in their organisation. As shown in Figure 29 below, at least half of the Fellows indicated that they were involved in this activity 'Often' both pre- and post-Fellowship. The highest proportion (90%) of the Fellows involved in this activity 'All the time' or 'Often' was recorded at 18 months post-Fellowship compared to 69% pre-award and 78% at 36 months post-Fellowship. This suggests that to some extent the Fellowship contributed to more involvement in this activity.

Figure 29 – Led or designed a new initiative or project

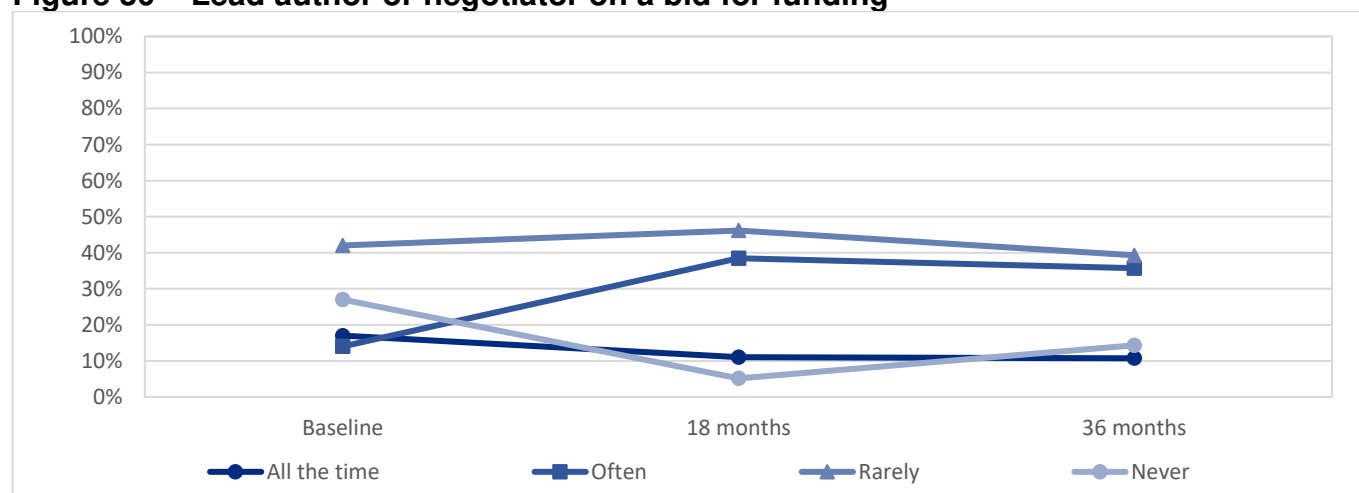


Source: 2015-2021 Academic Fellows Longitudinal Surveys

Baseline n=52; 18 months n=39; 36 months n=28

Figure 30 below summaries the extent to which the Fellows had a lead role authoring or negotiating bids for project funding.

Figure 30 – Lead author or negotiator on a bid for funding



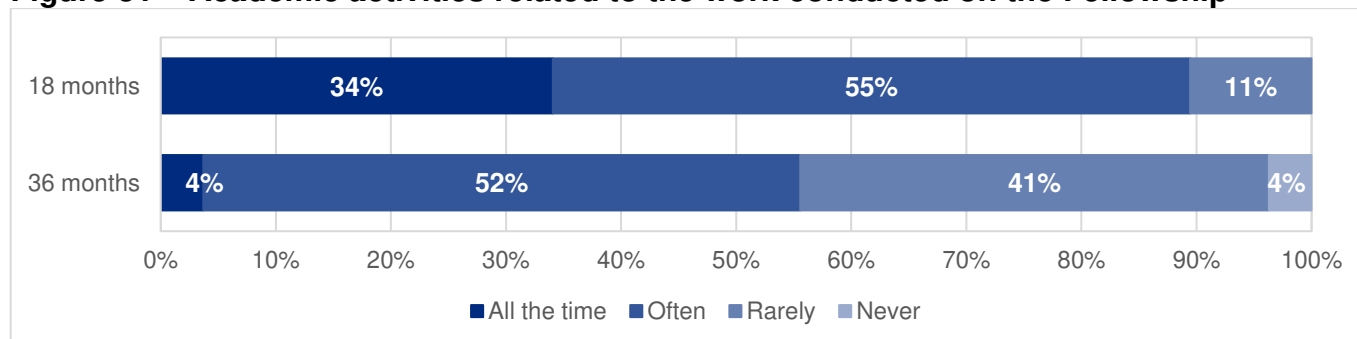
Source: 2015-2021 Academic Fellows Longitudinal Surveys

Baseline n=52; 18 months n=39; 36 months n=28

While this activity appears to be less common compared to leading or designing a new project, there was a gradual improvement in the proportion of the Fellows involved in this activity from the pre- to post-Fellowship period. Notably, the baseline survey showed that only 31% of the Fellows were leading or negotiating bids for funding 'All the time' or 'Often' before taking up the Fellowship. This proportion increased to 49% at 18 months, and slightly decreased to 47% 36 months post-award.

Finally, the 18- and 36-month surveys also asked Fellows how frequently their academic research activities post-Fellowship were related to their Fellowship experience. Their responses are shown in Figure 31 below. Most Fellows (89%) at 18 months reported that the academic activities conducted post-Fellowship were frequently ‘All the time’ or ‘Often’ related to the work conducted on the Fellowship, compared to 56% at 36 months.

Figure 31 – Academic activities related to the work conducted on the Fellowship



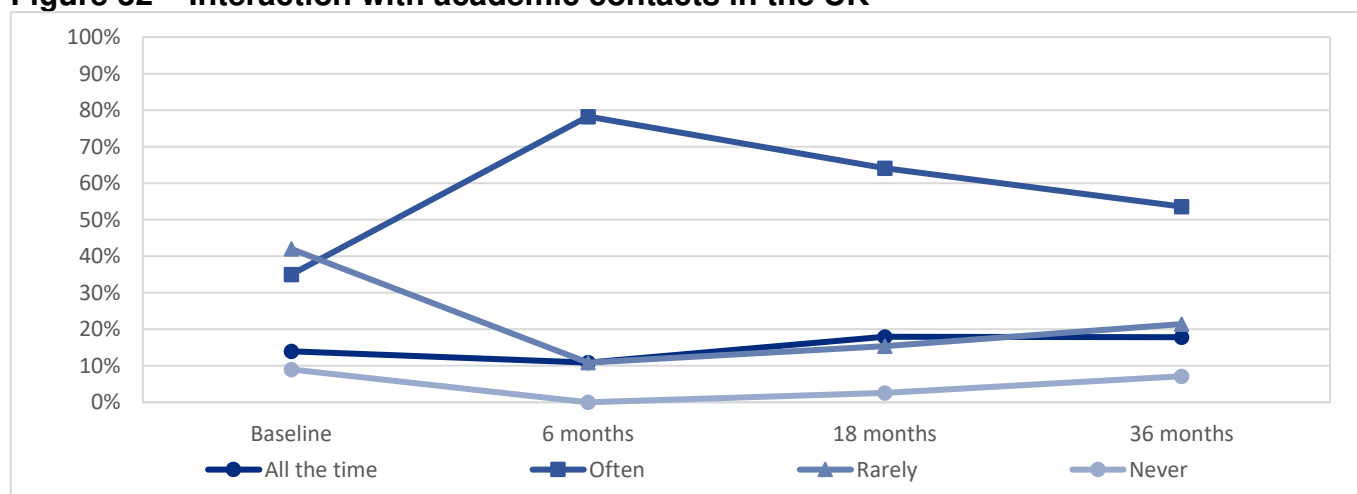
Source: 2015-2021 Academic Fellows Longitudinal Surveys
18 months n=39; 36 months n=28

A comparison of the Fellows’ tenure period also shows that a higher proportion (67%) of those on-award for more than six months reported to be conducting post-Fellowship activities that are related to their Fellowship work ‘All the time’ compared to the Fellows (27%) who had a tenure of less than six months. With a flexible tenure length, the Fellowship programme gave the Fellows a platform to cultivate networks for research and other collaborations.

4.6 Interaction and influence of contacts

Another important component of this review is to identify the rate of interactions Fellows have with others, and how these interactions influenced their professional development pre- and post-Fellowship. This subsection summarises the findings with respect to the different types of contacts Fellows may have cultivated during their Fellowship.

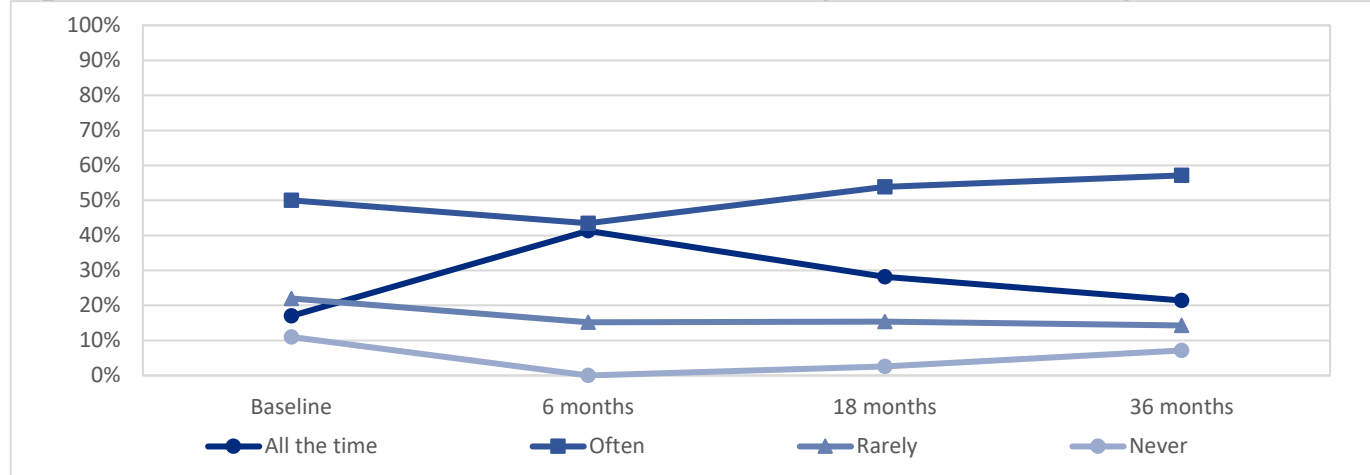
Figure 32 – Interaction with academic contacts in the UK



Source: 2015-2021 Academic Fellows Longitudinal Surveys
Baseline n=52; 6 months n=46; 18 months n=39; 36 months n=28

Just under half (49%) of the Fellows had interactions with academic contacts in the UK ‘All the time’ or ‘Often’ prior to the Fellowship, rising rapidly to 89% at six months, with a slight drop to 82% at 18 months, and a further reduction to 72% at 36 months post-Fellowship. Although the proportion of Fellows interacting with academic contacts decreased over time in the post-award period, the rapid peak immediately after the award suggests that the Fellowship had contributed to the increase in these interactions. The influence of academic contacts in the UK in the professional development of the Fellows was also investigated and the findings are summarised in Figure 33 below.

Figure 33 – Influence of UK academic contacts in the professional development of Fellows

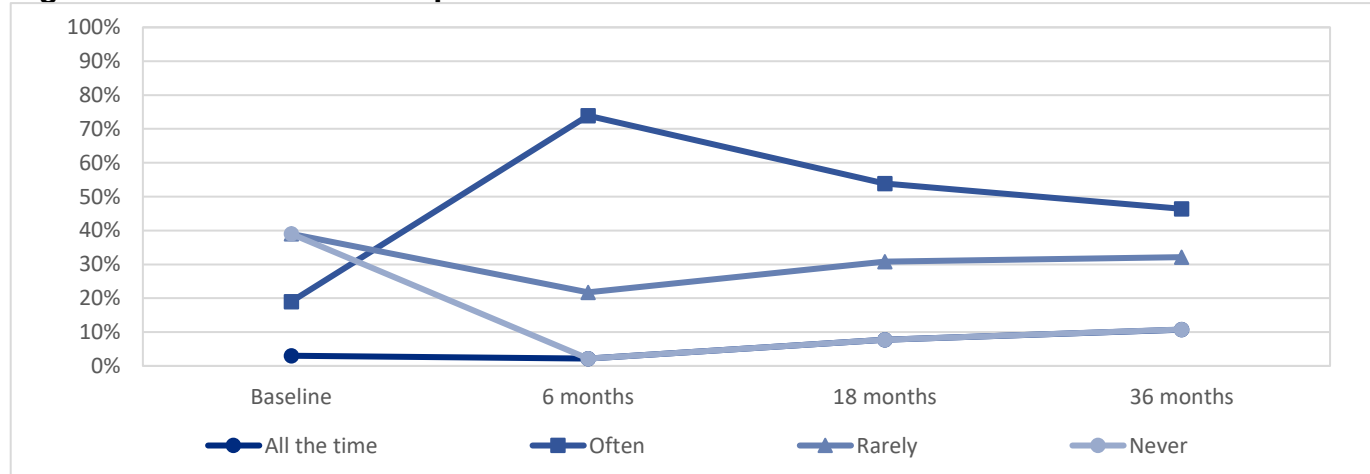


Source: 2015-2021 Academic Fellows Longitudinal Surveys
Baseline n=52; 6 months n=46; 18 months n=39; 36 months n=28

The baseline survey revealed that for two thirds (67%) of the Fellows, their professional development was influenced ‘All the time’ or ‘Often’ by the academic contact they had in the UK before taking up the Fellowship. A higher proportion (84%) reported that this was the case at 6 months, compared to 82% at 18 months, and 78% at 36 months post-Fellowship suggesting that the Fellowship enhanced the influence of academic contacts on the professional development of the Fellows.

Fellows were also asked about the frequency of interaction with professional contacts in the UK before and after their Fellowship, and the findings are summarised in Figure 34 below.

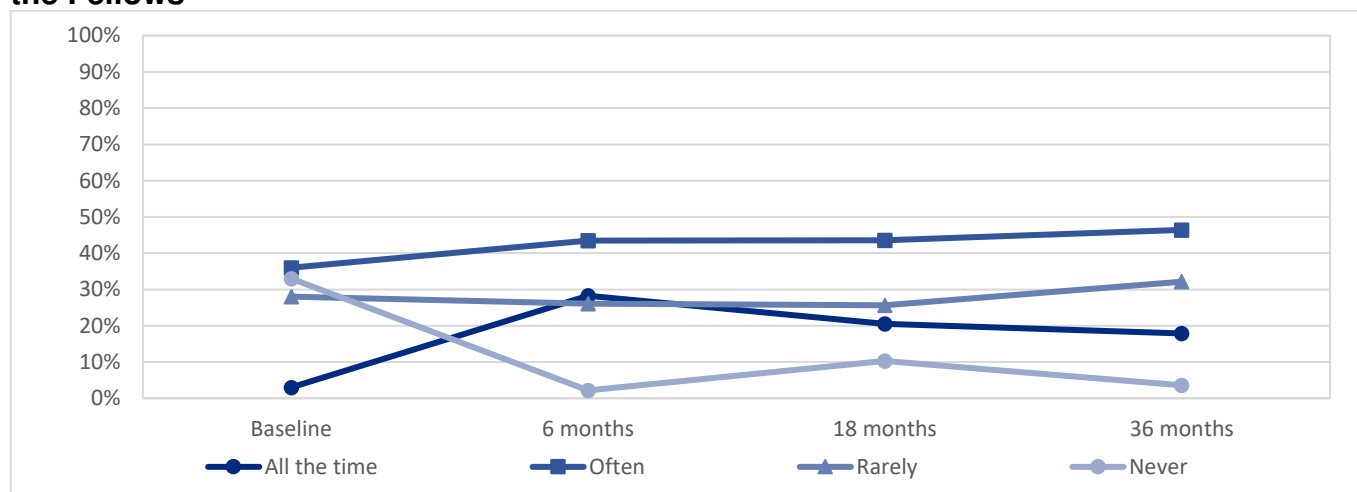
Figure 34 – Interaction with professional contacts in the UK



Source: 2015-2021 Academic Fellows Longitudinal Surveys
Baseline n=52; 6 months n=46; 18 months n=39; 36 months n=28

The combined responses from 'All the time' and 'Often' show that a very low proportion (22%) of the Fellows had interacted with professional contacts in the UK before taking up the Fellowship. However, following the Fellowship, over half of the Fellows interacted with professional contacts in the UK 'All the time' or 'Often' at each survey point. Notably, in the immediate period post-Fellowship (at 6 months), 76% of the Fellows reported to be interacting with professional contacts in the UK 'All the time' or 'Often'. The influence of this group on the professional development of the Fellow was also investigated, and the findings are shown in Figure 35 below.

Figure 35 – Influence of professional contacts in the UK in the professional development of the Fellows

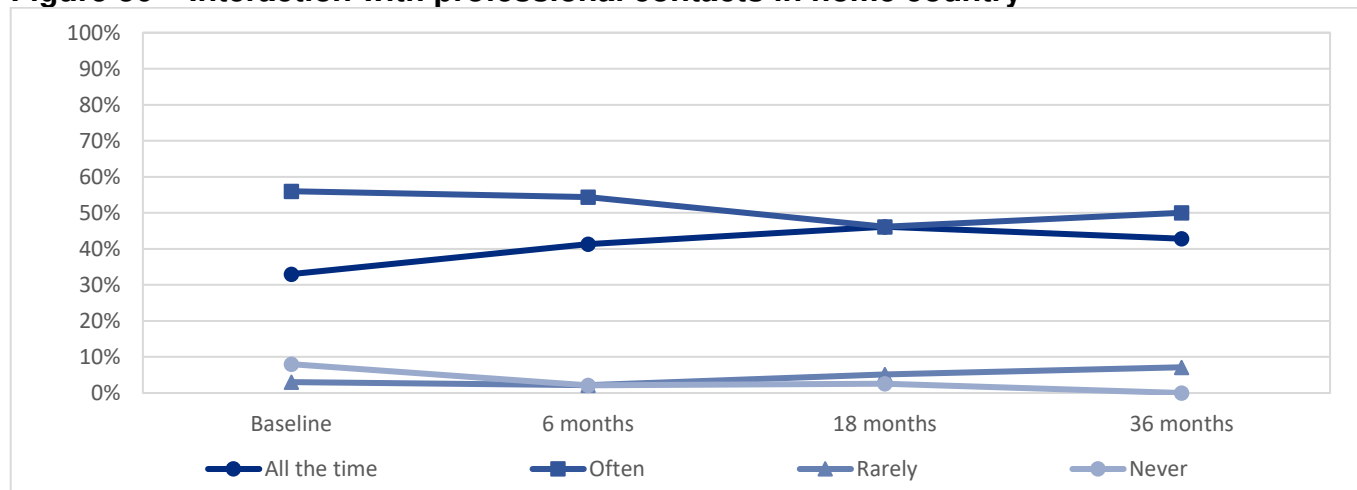


Source: 2015-2021 Academic Fellows Longitudinal Surveys
Baseline n=52; 6 months n=46; 18 months n=39; 36 months n=28

It appears that prior to the Fellowship, the professional contacts of Fellows in the UK influenced professional development for a minority of the Fellows. Only 39% of the Fellows reported to be influenced by this group 'All the time' or 'Often' in the baseline survey. This is significantly lower when compared to the 71% of respondents selecting 'All the time' or 'Often' at six months. This is also lower compared to 65% and 64% at 18-months and 36-months post-Fellowship respectively. The steep drop in respondents who chose 'Never' from the baseline to the first post-Fellowship survey (from 33% down to 2%) should also be noted. This suggests that the Fellowship both enhanced the interactions with this group (as shown earlier) and also enhanced their influence on the professional development of the Fellows.

The scope of these changes can be compared directly with the interactions Fellows had with professional contacts in their home country and the influence of this group on Fellows' professional development. As shown in the Figure 36 below, a very high proportion of Fellows reported to have been interacting with professional contacts in their home country both pre- and post-Fellowship. The changes between pre- and post-Fellowship responses were small, with only a slight increase in the proportion of the Fellows reporting that this was the case 'All the time' or 'Often', from 89% pre-Fellowship to 95% at six months. This later dropped slightly to 92% and 93% at 18- and 36-months post-Fellowship respectively.

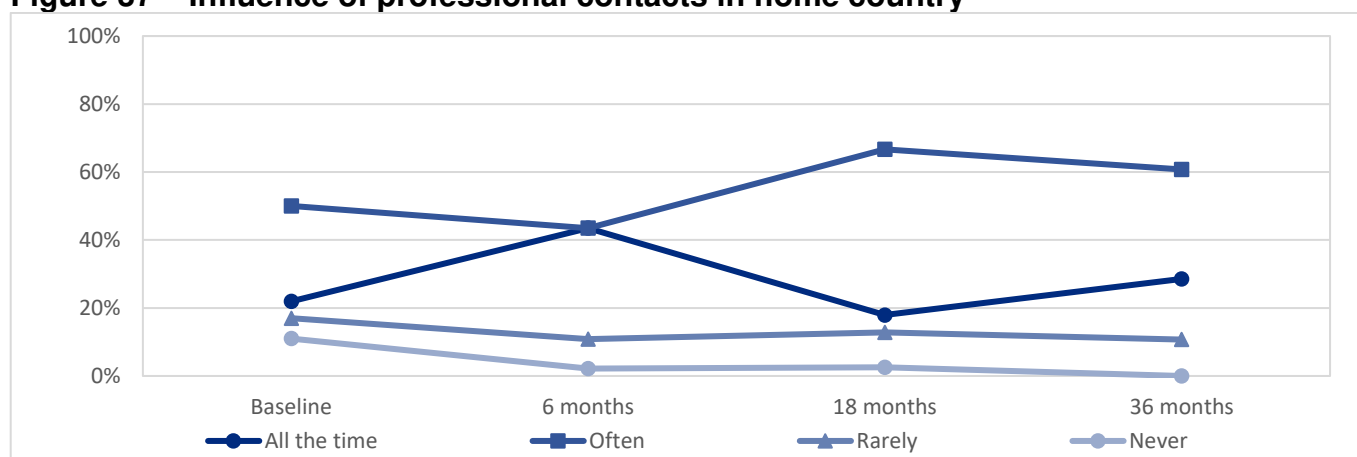
Figure 36 – Interaction with professional contacts in home country



Source: 2015-2021 Academic Fellows Longitudinal Surveys
Baseline n=52; 6 months n=46; 18 months n=39; 36 months n=28

Conversely, the influence of the professional contacts in Fellows' home country on Fellows saw more Substantial Changes, which are summarised in the Figure 37 below.

Figure 37 – Influence of professional contacts in home country

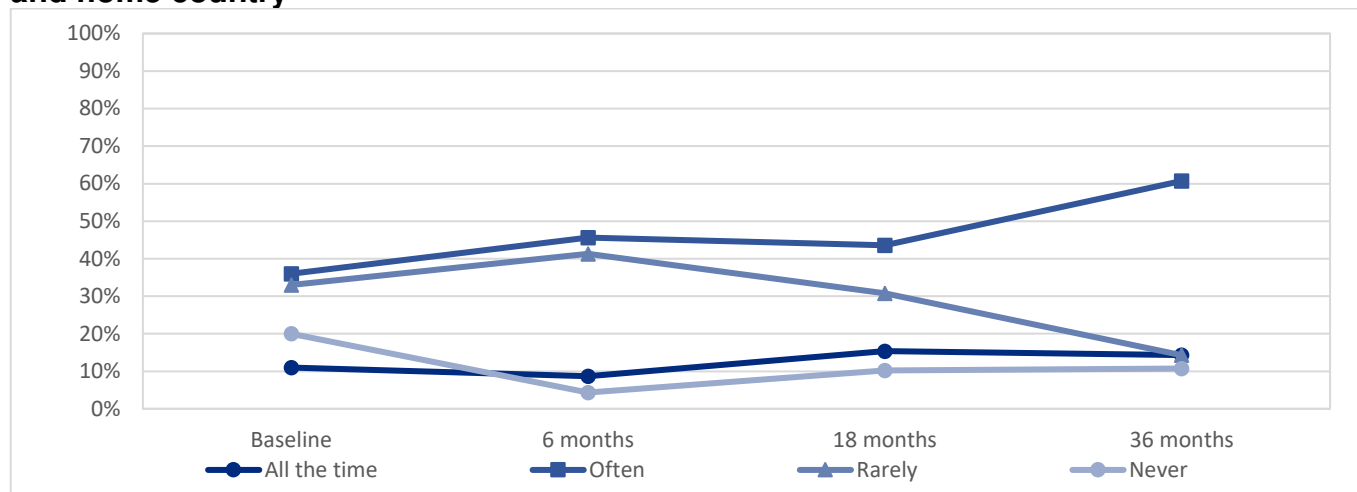


Source: 2015-2021 Academic Fellows Longitudinal Surveys
Baseline n=52; 6 months n=46; 18 months n=39; 36 months n=28

The influence of this group both pre- and post-Fellowship remained high, although a slight increase in the proportion of the Fellows reporting that this was the case 'All the time' or 'Often' was noted, from 72% pre-award to 86% immediately upon returning home post-award (at six months). A noticeable doubling in the rate in which Fellows indicated these contacts influenced them 'All the time' was also noted during this period.

The survey also asked Fellows about the interactions they had with professional contacts in another country other than the UK and their home country. These responses are shown in Figure 38 below.

Figure 38 – Interaction with professional contacts in another country other than the UK and home country

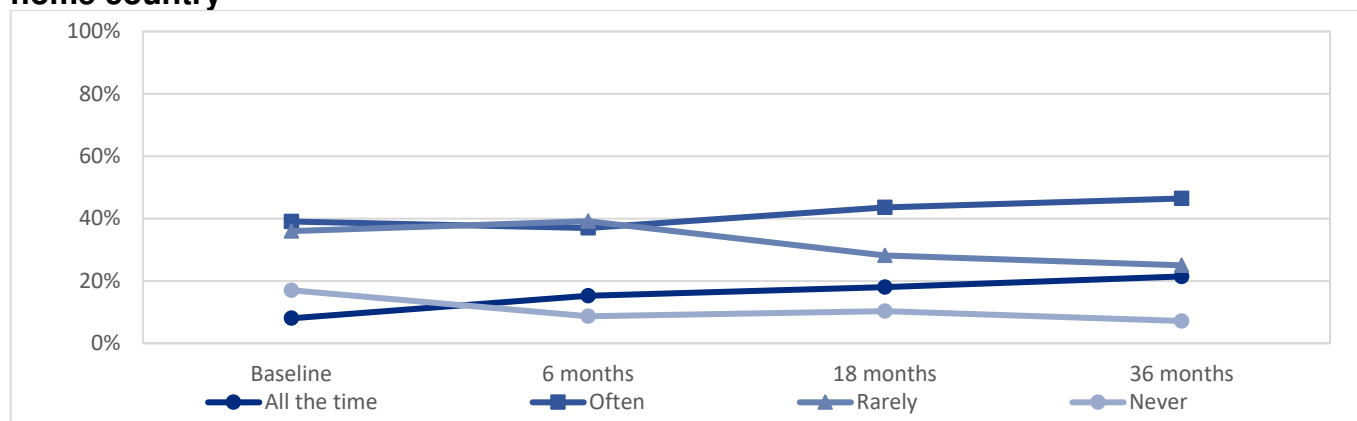


Source: 2015-2021 Academic Fellows Longitudinal Surveys
Baseline n=52; 6 months n=46; 18 months n=39; 36 months n=28

Just under half (47%) of Fellows reported that they had interacted with this group ‘All the time’ or ‘Often’ before taking up their Fellowship. The post-Fellowship surveys show that just over half of Fellows were interacting with this group immediately following the Fellowship. Notably, these interactions increased slowly over time from 55% and 59% at 6- and 18-months post-Fellowship, to 75% at 36 months post-Fellowship.

As with the other groups, Fellows were asked how frequently these contacts influenced their professional development over time. These responses are illustrated in Figure 39 below.

Figure 39 – Influence of professional contacts in another country other than the UK and home country

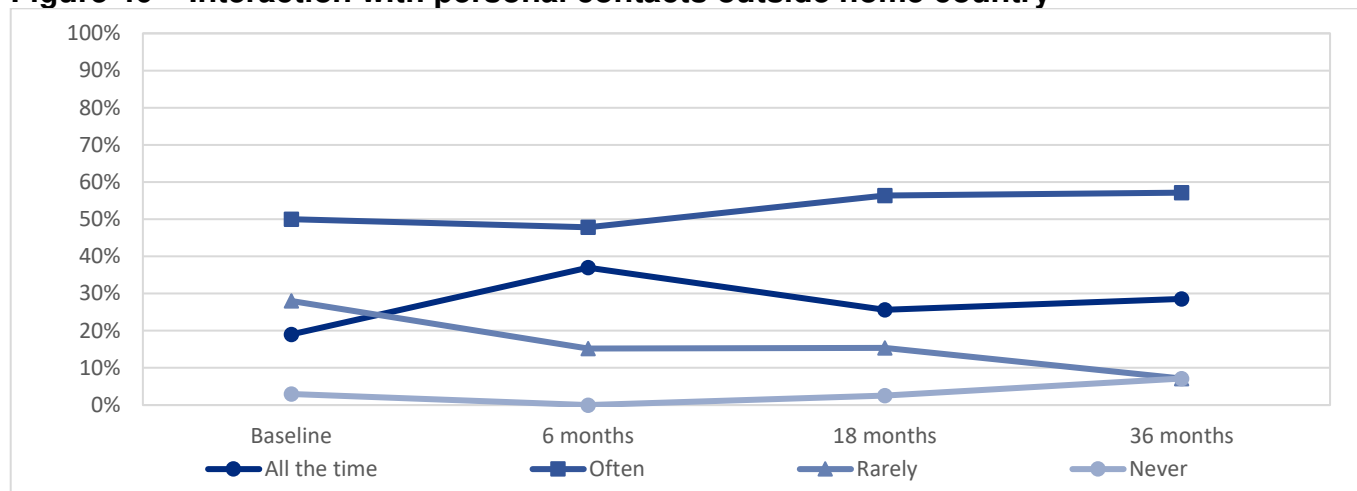


Source: 2015-2021 Academic Fellows Longitudinal Surveys
Baseline n=52; 6 months n=46; 18 months n=39; 36 months n=28

As was the case with the frequency of the interactions between Fellows and this group, just under half (47%) of the Fellows reported that this group influenced their professional development ‘All the time’ or ‘Often’ prior to the Fellowship. This increased slightly to 52% at six months post-Fellowship, before settling at approximately three-fifths for the final two surveys (62% at the 18-months point and 67% at 36-months). This suggests that the professional development of the Fellows was fairly influenced by this group, but that the Fellowship itself had a minimal effect.

Lastly, the review sought to understand the extent to which the Fellows interacted with their personal contacts and the influence of this group in the Fellows' professional development both pre- and post-Fellowship. Figure 40 below summarises the findings.

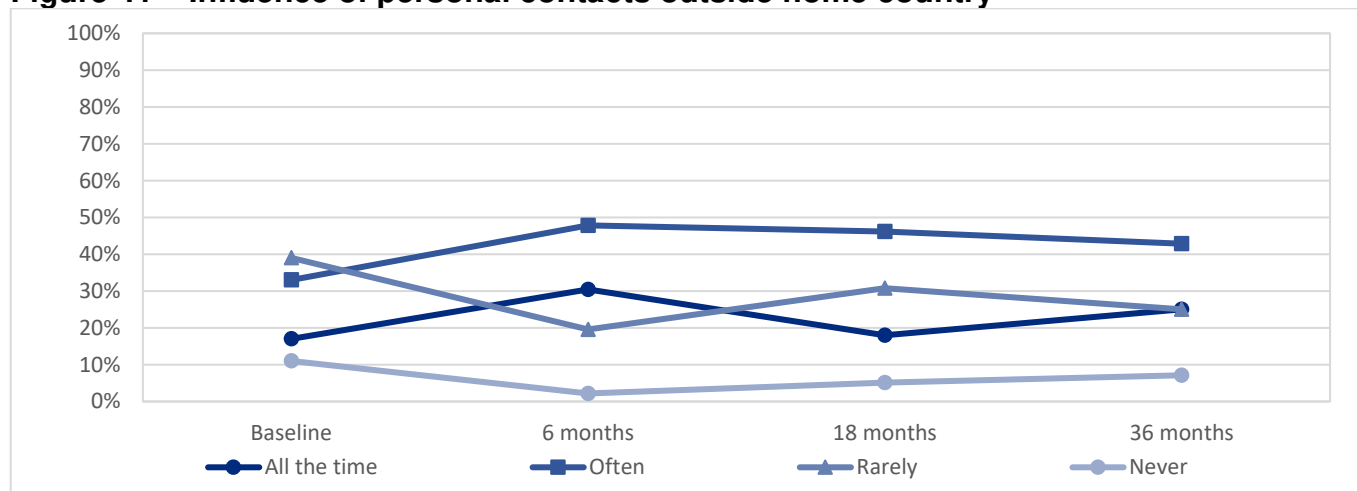
Figure 40 – Interaction with personal contacts outside home country



Source: 2015-2021 Academic Fellows Longitudinal Surveys
Baseline n=52; 6 months n=46; 18 months n=39; 36 months n=28

A sharp increase from 69% (pre-Fellowship) to 85% (six months post-Fellowship) is observed in the proportion of the Fellows reporting their interactions with personal contacts outside their home country to be 'All the time' or 'Often'. Whilst this remained high throughout the post-award period, there was a slight decrease to 82% at 18-months and 86% at 36-months post-Fellowship. Fellows were also asked about the influence of this group on their professional development, which is summarised in Figure 41 below.

Figure 41 – Influence of personal contacts outside home country



Source: 2015-2021 Academic Fellows Longitudinal Surveys
Baseline n=52; 6 months n=46; 18 months n=39; 36 months n=28

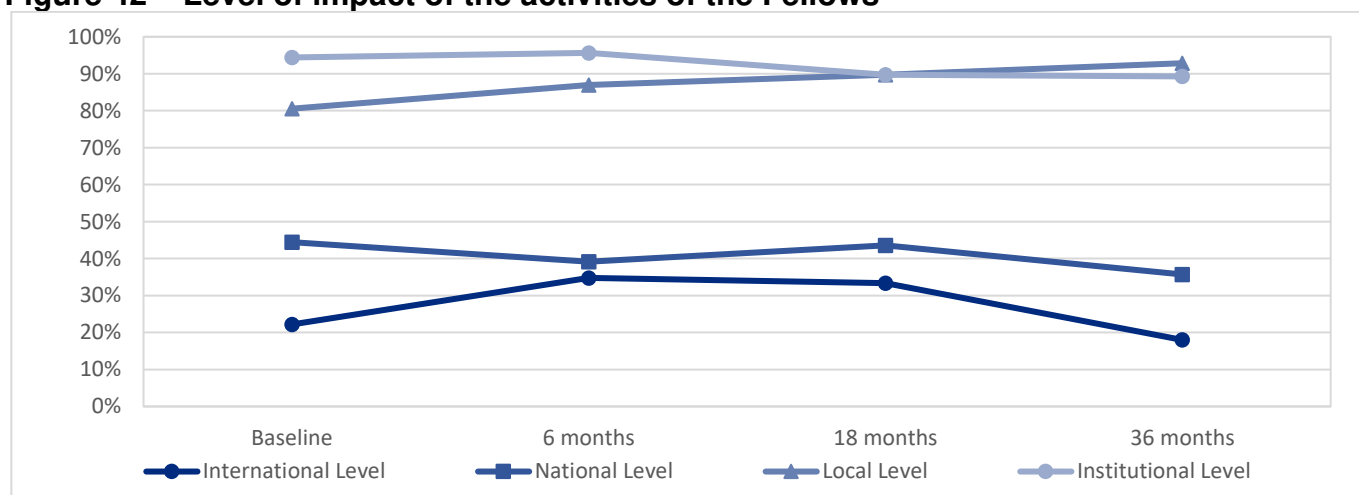
Notably, there was a sharp increase from 50% pre-award to 78% at six months post-award in the proportion of the Fellows reporting the influence of this group in their professional development 'All the time' or 'Often'. This group appears to be less influential over time, but the proportion of Fellows reporting their influence remained over half (68%) at 36 months post-Fellowship.

Overall, from all the groups discussed above (except for the interactions and influence of the professional contacts in a country other than the UK and the Fellows' home country) it appears that it is in the period immediately following the Fellowship (at 6 months post-Fellowship) that the interactions and the influence of these groups in the professional development of the Fellows is at its peak. It suggests that the Fellowship contributed to enhancing these interactions by providing an opportunity for Fellows to interact with these groups and establish lasting relationships that have impacted the professional development of the Fellows. Indeed, the proportion of Fellows reporting frequent engagement with or being influenced by these groups ('All the time' or 'Often') generally tapers over time but does remain at or above 50%.

4.7 The impact of the activities of the Fellows

Fellows were asked to contextualise the impact of their work across a variety of domains defined by level (institutional, local, national, and international), and area (social development, economic development, civic engagement, and policymaking)⁸. Each of these responses is explored below.

Figure 42 – Level of impact of the activities of the Fellows



Source: 2015-2021 Academic Fellows Longitudinal Surveys
Baseline n=52; 6 months n=46; 18 months n=39; 36 months n=28

The surveys demonstrate that a large proportion of Fellows reported making an impact at the institutional and at a local level across all survey intervals. The proportion of Fellows reporting impact at the local level progressively increased from the pre-Fellowship period (81%) to 36 months post-Fellowship (93%). At the institutional level, the contributions made by Fellows from the pre-Fellowship period to six months post-Fellowship stayed steady (94% and 96%, respectively), followed by a slight decrease to 90% at 18 months and then to 89% at 36 months. However, this still indicates that the vast majority of Fellows still achieved impact at the institutional level at 36 months after completing the Fellowship.

Less than half of the Fellows, both pre- and post-Fellowship period reported making a contribution at the national level. The proportion of the Fellows reporting the impact of their activities at the international level increased from 22% prior to the Fellowship to 35% at the 6-months post-

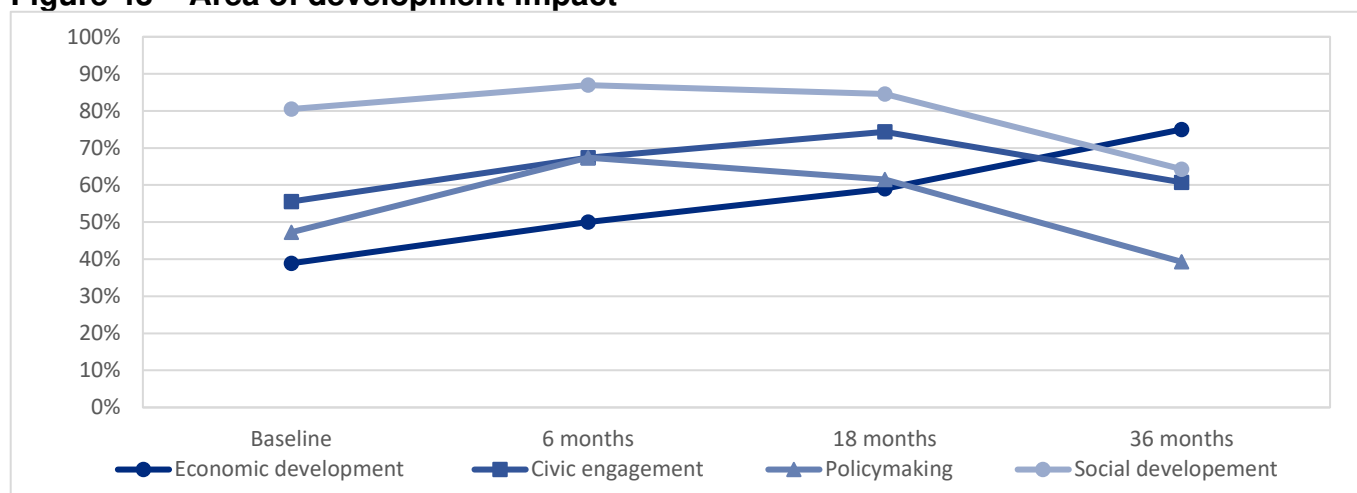
⁸ The Fellows could select more than one sector of development and more than one area of impact to which they were making a contribution.

Fellowship, then it dropped back down to 33% at 18 months and further down to 18% at 36-months post-Fellowship.

The findings from an analysis of impact versus tenure length shows that a higher proportion of the Fellows with a longer tenure length (6 months plus) throughout all-time series made an impact at the institutional level, while more Fellows who spent less tenure time (less than 6 months) reported impact at local, national and international level.

Fellows were also asked to identify the sectors of development to which they were contributing an impact, illustrated in Figure 43 below.

Figure 43 – Area of development impact



Source: 2015-2021 Academic Fellows Longitudinal Surveys
Baseline n=52; 6 months n=46; 18 months n=39; 36 months n=28

The work of most Fellows contributed to social development both pre- and post-Fellowship; this was most pronounced at 6 (87%) and 18 (85%) months and was reported by Fellows that had a shorter tenure period. Instead, at 36 months, a larger proportion of the Fellows reported contributing to economic development through their activities compared to the Fellows at 6- and 18- months. Notably, there is a gradual increase in the proportion of the Fellows reporting that their activities were contributing to economic development, from 39% prior to the Fellowship to 75% at 36 months.

Civic engagement activities were dominated by Fellows with a longer tenure length, and were most reported at 18 months, and to a slightly less extent at 36 months and 6 months. Overall, at least half of the Fellows contributed to each of the four development domains at the 18-months point. There is a noticeable increase in the contribution of the work of the Fellows within each domain from the pre- to post-Fellowship period, except for social development which saw a slight initial increase, followed by a sudden drop to 64% at 36 months, a fall below the baseline value of 81%.

Section 5 – Host Supervisor and Employer Perspectives

As a final part of the review of the Academic Fellowship programme, this section presents findings from the Fellows’ host supervisors and employers, providing their perspectives on the benefits, outcomes, impact, and challenges of the Fellowship to the Fellow, the host, and home institutions.

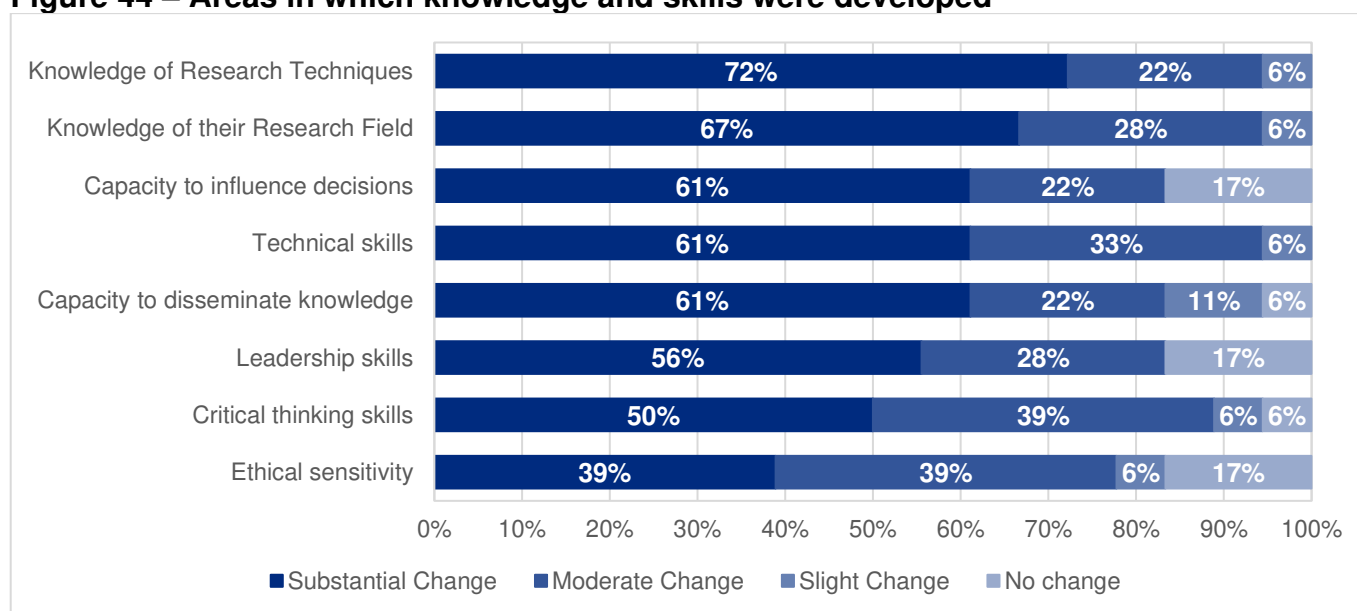
5.1 Findings from the Fellows’ employers

This section discusses the experiences of Fellows’ employers with the Academic Fellowship, and their views on the outcomes of the programme for the Fellows, themselves as employers, and their institutions.

5.1.1 The knowledge and skills developed or enhanced by the Fellowship

Figure 44 below gives a summary of the perspectives of Fellows’ employers about the areas in which the skills and knowledge of the Fellows were developed as a result of their participation in the programme.

Figure 44 – Areas in which knowledge and skills were developed



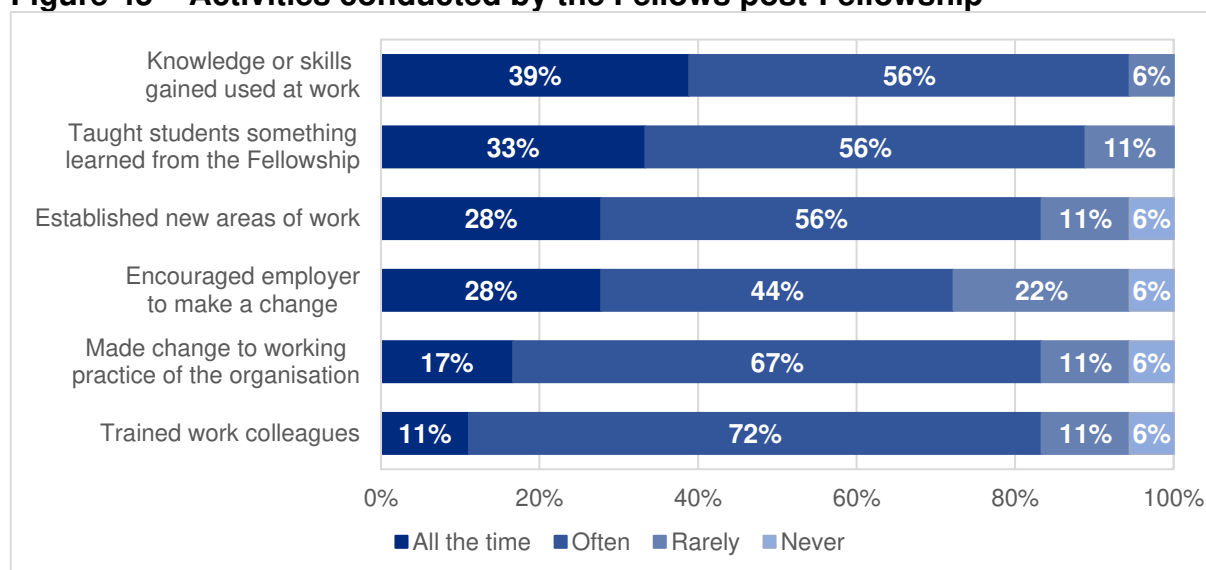
Source: CSC Employers Surveys (2016-2019)
n=18

As illustrated above, the findings from the employers’ survey shows that over half of employers reported that there was a ‘Substantial Change’ in the knowledge and skills of the Fellows in all areas listed above (except for ethical sensitivity). The most mentioned areas where the employers felt the knowledge and skills of the Fellows had been substantially changed were knowledge of research techniques (72%), knowledge of their research field (67%), and technical skills, capacity to disseminate knowledge, and capacity to influence decisions (61%).

5.1.2 Activities conducted by Fellows post-Fellowship

Employers also identified the frequency in which Fellows engaged in various activities post-Fellowship, illustrated in Figure 45 below.

Figure 45 – Activities conducted by the Fellows post-Fellowship



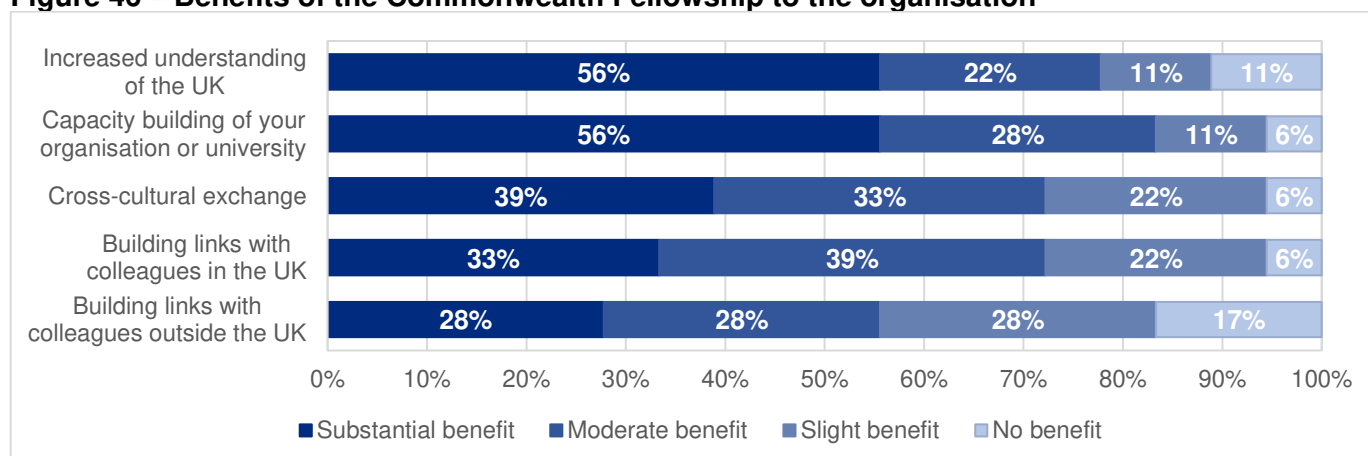
Source: CSC Employers Surveys (2016-2019)
n=18

Employers reported that the top two activities undertaken by the Fellows ‘All the time’ or ‘Often’ were the use of the knowledge or skills gained on award (95%) and teaching students something learned from the Fellowship (89%). It is also key to note that 84% of employers reported that Fellows were frequently making a change to work practices, and the same proportion indicated that Fellows had also established new areas of work following the Fellowship.

5.1.3 Benefits of the Commonwealth Academic Fellowship to employers

Employers also reported on the benefits of the Fellowship to their organisation. These responses are summarised in Figure 46 below.

Figure 46 – Benefits of the Commonwealth Fellowship to the organisation



Source: CSC Employers Surveys (2016-2019)
n=18

Over half (56%) of the employers reported that the Fellowship was a 'Substantial Benefit' to their organisation with regards both to an increased understanding of the UK, and through capacity building of their organisation or university. Overall, 94% of the employers felt they had benefitted from the Commonwealth Fellowship (whether Substantially, Moderate, or Slightly) from capacity building of their organisation, building links with colleagues in the UK and from cross-cultural exchange.

In addition to the benefits mentioned above, the free text responses provided by employers about their experience with the Fellowship programme revealed other benefits to having a Commonwealth Fellow in their organisation. The most reported benefits included enhanced research practices, new research projects initiated and implemented by the Fellow, and the publications made during and post the Fellowship award. Moreover, the employers reported knowledge transfer to students through teaching and the supervision of student research projects, and the training and mentoring of work colleagues as important outcomes that benefitted home institutions and universities. Other benefits to these institutions include the contributions made by Fellows to developing new curricula and introducing new ways of learning such as technology or platforms for learning.

'I am aware that he [The Fellow] has initiated some undergraduate projects based on his research during his Fellowship. As a department, my vision is for us to setup an energy materials research group. This opportunity has given him the needed knowledge base and experience to spearhead this initiative.' (Employer survey, 2017).

'She [The Fellow] has motivated and oriented staff on how to effectively use mobile social learning platforms to provide supervision and mentoring support to teacher trainees. She has developed a guideline on how to use these technologies in a low resource setting. She participated in reviewing the curriculum, providing expert knowledge gained while at the UK host Institution.' (Employer survey, 2017).

'Experience gained by the Fellow through the Commonwealth Fellowship has enhanced the capacity building of our university especially at undergraduate level.' (Employer survey, 2016).

'Tremendous impact on his [The Fellow] capacity to teach and supervise students at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. His activities have helped to enhance the rating of our faculty and university.' (Employer survey, 2017).

Some employers added that these activities all work together to contribute to improving the learning standards at the universities and therefore increase the rating of their institutions.

5.1.4 Benefits of new and enhanced relationships following the Academic Fellowship

Employers were also asked to report on new and strengthened relationships following the Fellowship. Of the 18 employers responding to the survey, a large proportion (72%) reported that their organisation or university had not worked or collaborated with the host institution prior to the Fellowship. One-third of these reported that they had established new links and collaborations following the Fellowship. In addition, 44% were able to join new networks, associations, or forums as a direct result of the Fellowship.

Over half of employers (56%) reported that the Fellowship resulted in new and strengthened links with academic contacts in another country, and 50% said they had interacted with academic contacts in the UK due to the Fellowship. Additionally, 44% said they had made professional contacts in another country, while 28% reported to have interacted with professional contacts that were in the UK. Therefore, the Fellowship provided employers with a platform to network and build relations with other international academics.

Employers also reported in their free text responses on the benefits of the relationships built with the host institutions following the Fellowship. Some examples are provided below:

‘Most importantly, his Fellowship culminated in the signing of an MOU between our universities. The MOU has resulted in collaborations in the areas of joint curriculum development, joint PhD supervision and student/staff exchange. Specifically, two teams from the host institution have visited our university to discuss areas of collaborations. We also received donations of books to our department, a PhD scholarship was awarded to one of the students on a joint supervision basis. Similarly, two PhDs and staff of the department will be at the host institution for a three-month visit under a student exchange project in 2018.’ (Employer survey, 2016).

‘We are able to use the Fellow’s links in the host institution to have some of our samples analysed in their laboratories. That is the greatest advantage we get from his trip.’ (Employer survey, 2017).

‘The visit of the Fellow’s host supervisor to our institution was a real blessing. The close links with him have been mutually beneficial to both our careers. This relationship enabled us to both think in new ways and develop new approaches to the current problem of antibiotic resistance in bacteria of clinical relevance. On an organisational level, I have become an external examiner at the host institution, and we have developed and applied for joint grant applications.’ (Employer survey, 2017).

Overall, research collaborations emerged as the most common benefit from the associations with the host institutions. From these collaborations, some employers reported that their institutions have successfully secured joint research grants. Others reported to have benefitted from gaining access to laboratory equipment and facilities at the host institutions, as well as receiving donations of other resources such as equipment and books from the host institutions. The establishment of strong institutional collaborations have had other mutual benefits such as staff and student exchange programmes, joint PhD supervision and examination, and joint curriculum development for graduate programmes.

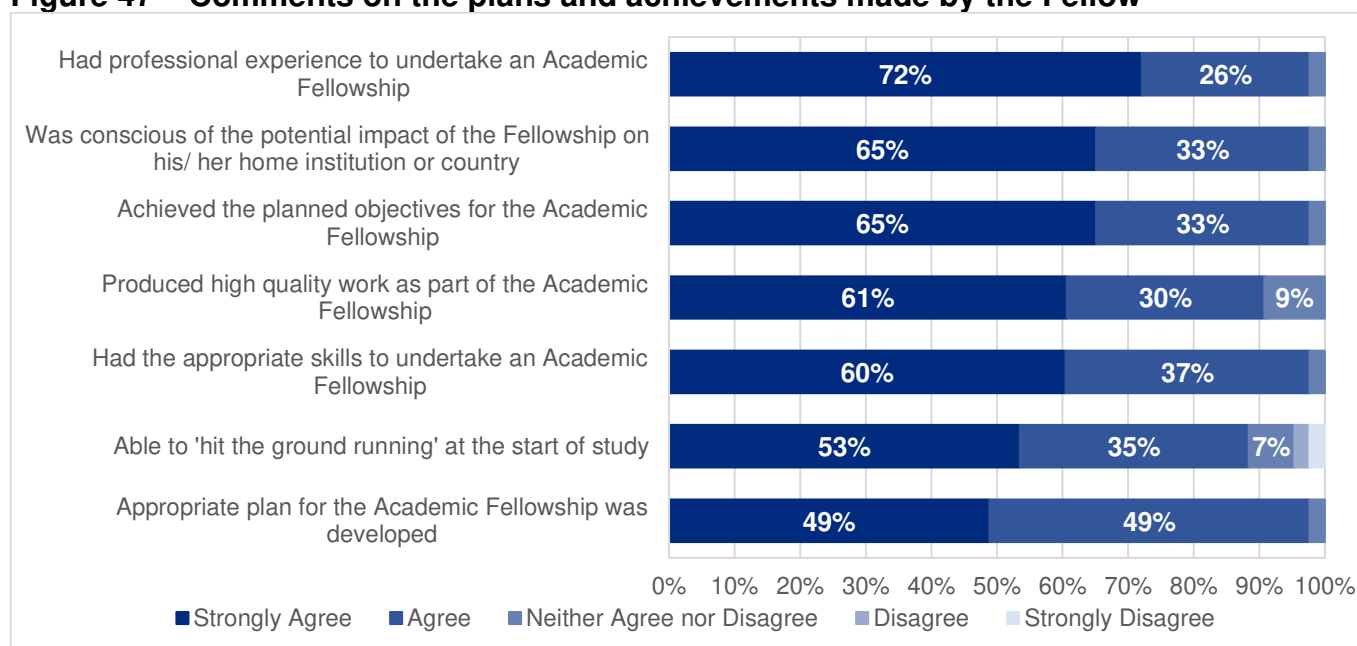
5.2 Findings from host supervisors

This section discusses the survey responses from the Fellows' host supervisors in the UK. Hosts were asked about their observations of the Fellows and their experience, and the extent to which Fellows had developed their skills and knowledge as a result of the Fellowship. In addition, they were asked to identify the benefits and challenges faced by the host institutions as a result of the Fellowship programme.

5.2.1 The perceptions of host supervisors on the plans and achievements of the Fellow

Figure 47 below gives a summary of the comments of the host supervisors on the plans and the achievements made by the Fellows.

Figure 47 – Comments on the plans and achievements made by the Fellow



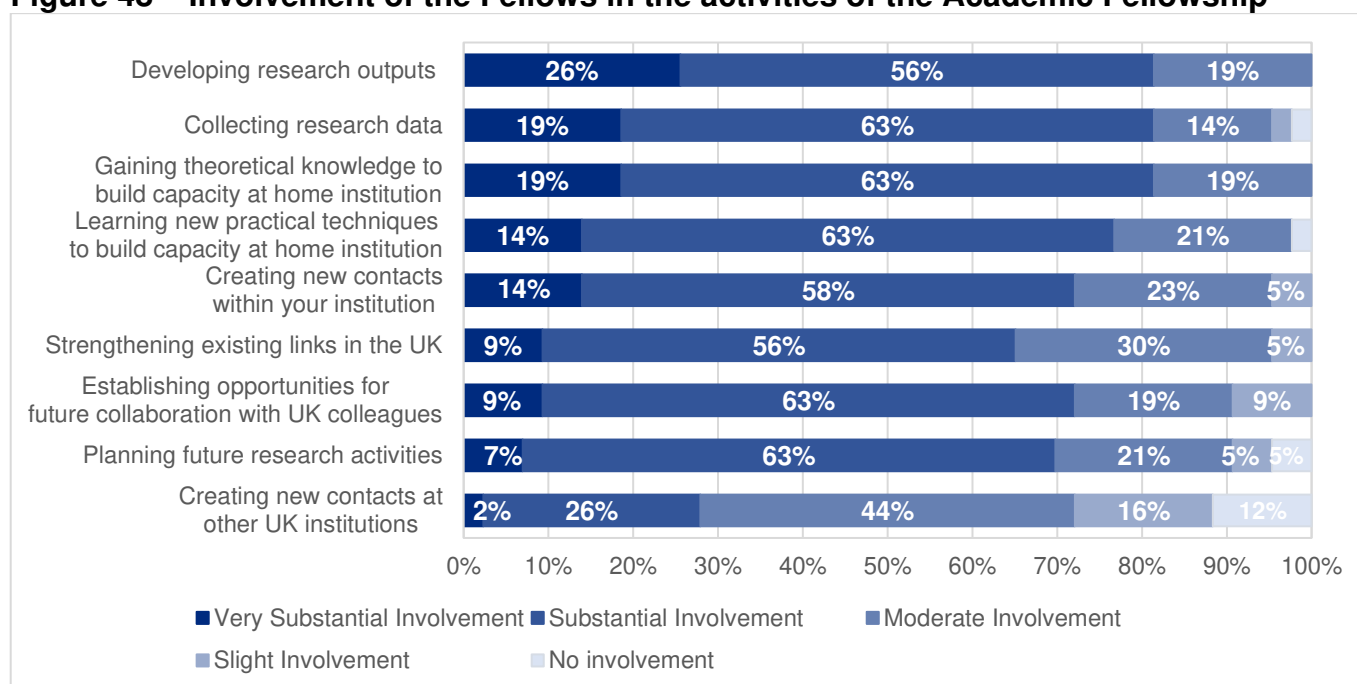
Source: CSC Host Supervisors Surveys (2016-2019)

n=43

Overall, at least nine-tenths of the host supervisors 'Agreed' or 'Strongly Agreed' that the Fellows' plans for the Fellowship were appropriate, and the planned objectives were achieved. In addition, a large proportion (88%) of hosts thought ('Agreed' or 'Strongly Agreed') the Fellows were able to 'hit the ground running' at the start of the study. 72% also 'Strongly Agreed' that their Fellow had the professional experience to undertake the Fellowship, thereby re-emphasising the preparedness of the Fellows for their Academic Fellowships, and the appropriateness of the nomination routes.

Host supervisors also had an opportunity to comment on the involvement of Fellows in the activities of the Academic Fellowship, which are illustrated in the Figure 48 below.

Figure 48 – Involvement of the Fellows in the activities of the Academic Fellowship

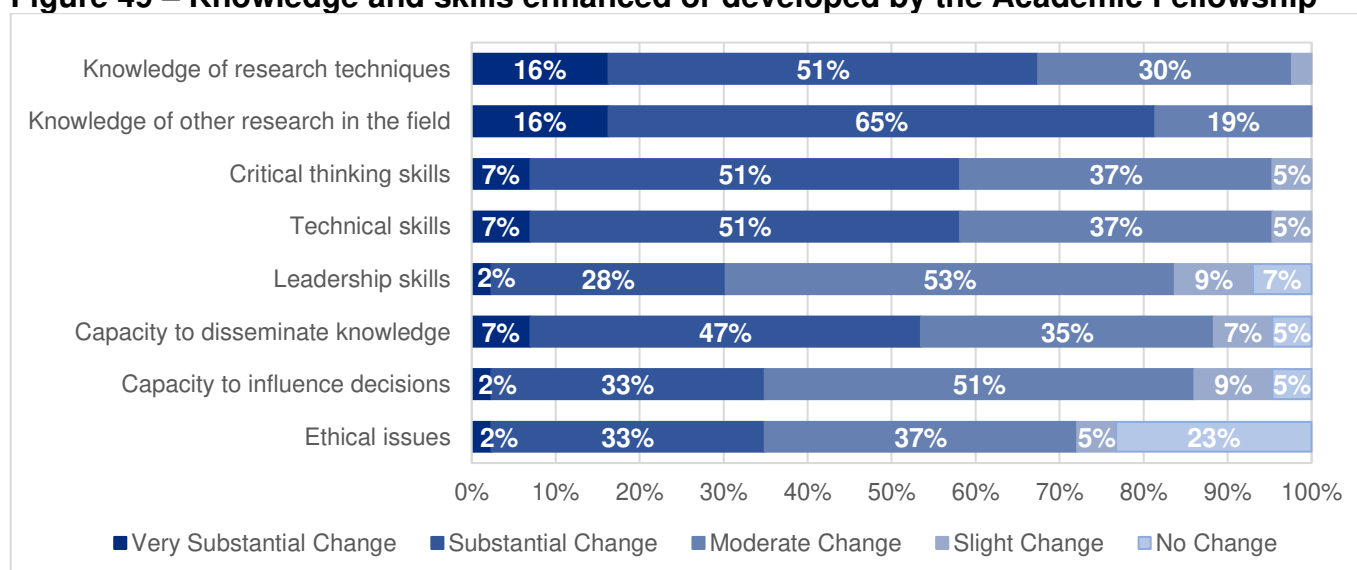


Source: CSC Host Supervisors Surveys (2016-2019)
n=43

Very few hosts said the Fellows had ‘Very Substantial Involvement’ in the activities of the Fellowship. However, substantial engagement was observed by over half of the host supervisors for all activities, except for creating contacts at other UK institutions which was recorded by only a quarter of hosts (26%). Slightly less than half (44%) of hosts observed a moderate engagement of the Fellows in this activity and only 16% saw a slight engagement.

Hosts were also asked to assess the knowledge and skills that the Fellow acquired or enhanced through their Academic Fellowship. The findings are illustrated in Figure 49 below.

Figure 49 – Knowledge and skills enhanced or developed by the Academic Fellowship



Source: CSC Host Supervisors Surveys (2016-2019)
n=43

Very few host supervisors felt they had observed ‘Very Substantial Change’ in the skills and knowledge developed by their Fellow. However, over half reported they had observed ‘Substantial Change’ in the knowledge and skills of their Fellow, particularly in the knowledge of other research in the field (65%), knowledge of research techniques (51%), technical skills (51%) and critical thinking (51%). When the top two responses (‘Very Substantial Change’ and ‘Substantial Change’) are considered in combination, knowledge of other research in the field (81%), and knowledge of research techniques (67%) emerged as the top two areas identified by hosts where change was observed in their Fellows. Very few hosts identified areas in which there was No Change, except for ethical issues.

From their free text responses, the hosts also identified capacity building as a benefit to the home university. They felt that their Fellows had acquired skills, knowledge, and expertise that could be transferred, thereby contributing to providing high-quality education at the Fellows’ home universities.

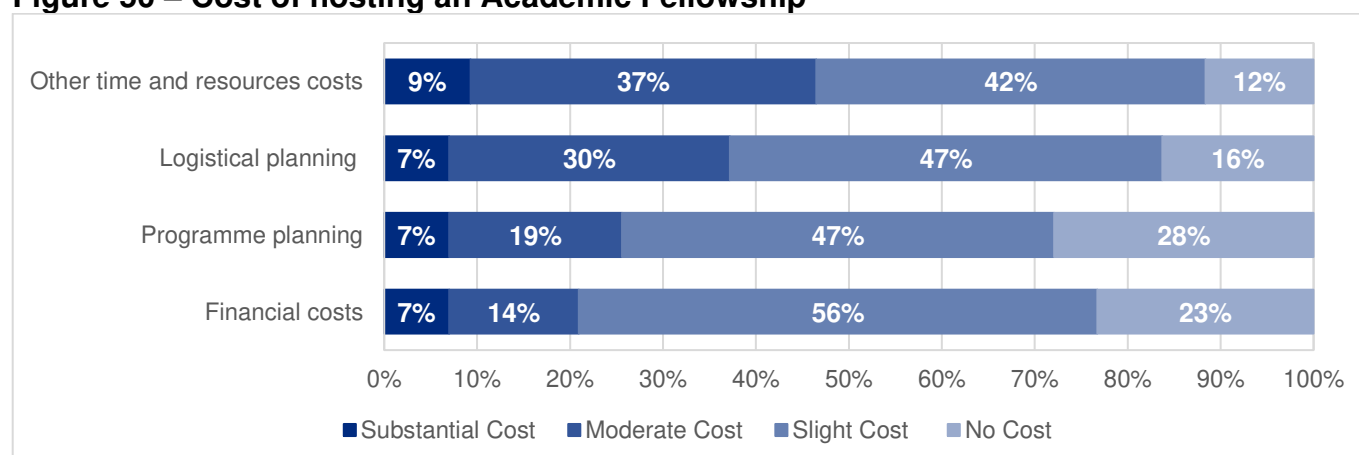
Apart from the skills and techniques acquired or enhanced by the Fellowship, the free text reports from the hosts revealed other benefits, such as attending conferences and seminars, access to learning resources and laboratory equipment, and an opportunity to publish their research in international journals. Other benefits to the Fellow that were identified by hosts included networking and having a conducive academic environment and culture, allowing the Fellow to fully concentrate on the Fellowship activities without having to perform other tasks from their home institution.

The survey also sought to identify any potential costs to the host institution associated with hosting an Academic Fellow, and if so, how substantial these costs were. This is discussed in the next subsection.

5.2.2 Costs and benefits of hosting a Fellow to the host institution

This section discusses the experiences of hosts with the Fellows and the Academic Fellowship programme as a whole. Figure 50 below summarises the different costs incurred by the host institutions as a result of the Fellowship.

Figure 50 – Cost of hosting an Academic Fellowship

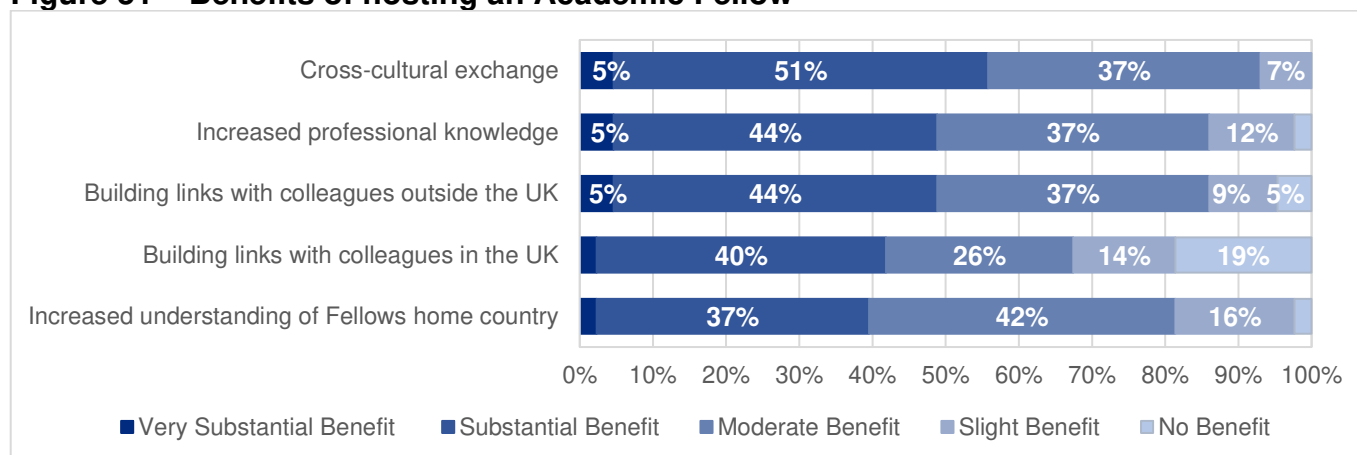


Source: CSC Host Supervisors Surveys (2016-2019)
n=43

Over half (56%) of the hosts reported to have incurred slight financial cost for hosting the Academic Fellows, while just under half experienced a 'Slight Cost' in programme planning (47%), logistics planning (47%), and other time and resources costs (42%). While programme planning seems to be largely a 'Slight Cost' or 'No Cost', roughly one third of hosts reported to have incurred Moderate Costs on logistical planning and other time and resources. Overall, very few hosts reported to have incurred a 'Substantial Cost' for hosting their Fellow.

Apart from the costs incurred, the benefits of hosting Academic Fellows were also identified and are summarised in Figure 51 below.

Figure 51 – Benefits of hosting an Academic Fellow



Source: CSC Host Supervisors Surveys (2016-2019)
n=43

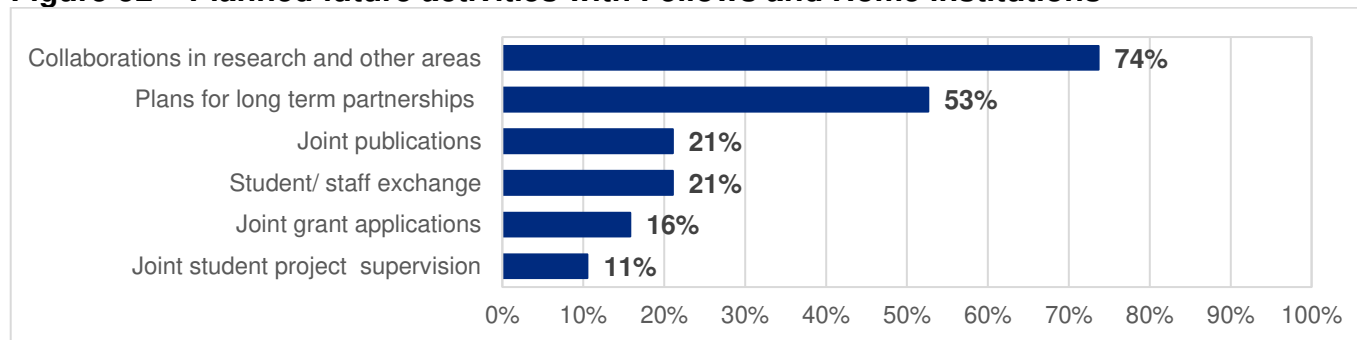
Overall, 88% of hosts reported having realised a 'Moderate Benefit' or 'Substantial Benefit' from cross-cultural exchange, while equal proportions of hosts felt they had benefitted from both increased professional knowledge and building links with colleagues outside the UK (81% each).

In addition, this review also drew from the free text responses provided by hosts about their experiences with the Academic Fellowship programme. The most reported benefits to the host institution from hosting a Fellow were knowledge exchange with host staff and researchers, and the Fellows' teaching, mentoring, and supervising of MSc or PhD research students while at the host institution. A few hosts reported that they valued the contributions made by the Fellows to seminars and conferences at the host institution and in external events during their Fellowship. Other hosts said hosting a Fellow contributed to the development of their internationalisation strategy and providing opportunities for staff and student mobility.

5.2.3 The benefits of new and enhanced relationships following the Academic Fellowship

Over half (60%) of the hosts had not worked with their Fellows prior to the Fellowship and 72% reported not to have worked with the Fellows' colleagues or home institutions prior to the Fellowship. Following its completion, 72% of host supervisors reporting having planned future collaborations or activities with the Fellows and their home institutions. 60% of these had no pre-existing relationship with the Fellow. The different planned future activities of these hosts are summarised in Figure 52 below.

Figure 52 – Planned future activities with Fellows and Home institutions



Source: CSC Host Supervisors Surveys (2016-2019)
n=43

As shown in the graph above, a range of collaborated activities were planned, indicating that the Fellowship had provided an opportunity for the Fellows, hosts, and home institutions to establish lasting relationships. This is confirmed by some of the free text responses from the hosts:

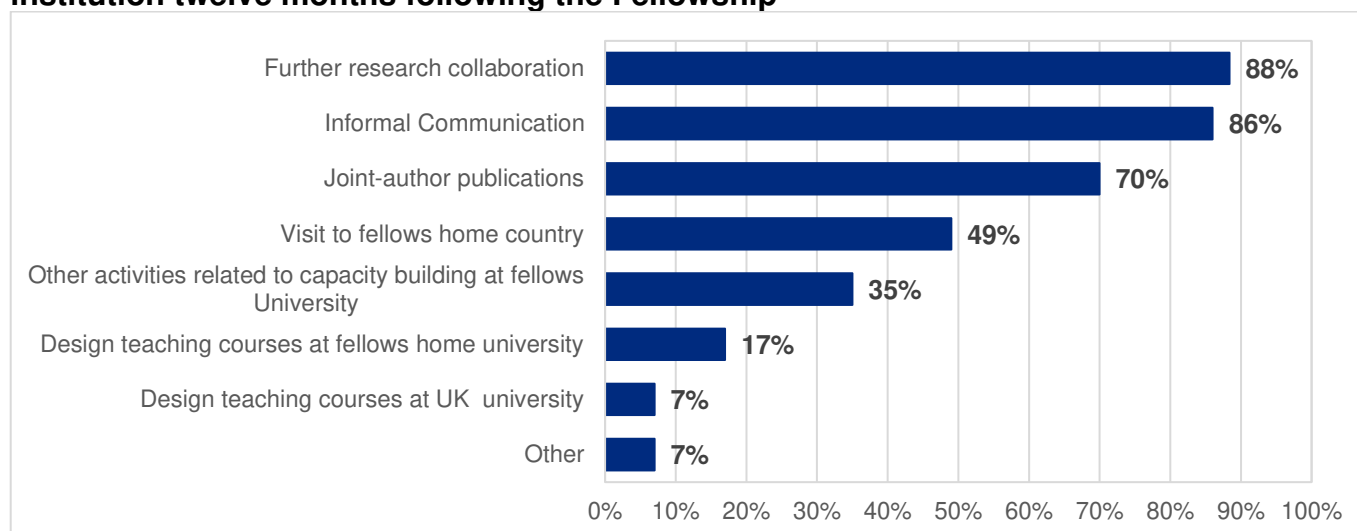
‘This was an extremely successful award leading to at least one joint publication and has established longer-term collaboration between the two institutions.’ (Host supervisor survey, 2016).

‘I am quite certain that further collaboration will result from the visit - both between the Fellow and myself, and between our institutions. For example, I am currently planning a research funding application for collaboration with East African universities, and the Fellow’s home institution would be a good partner for this project. The Fellow’s visit has also led to the establishment of further contacts at their institution.’ (Host supervisor survey, 2016).

‘We will continue to collaborate on paper-writing for this project when the Fellow returns home, and we have also Agreed to co-supervise an MSc student from my institution, and they will work with him on another element of his work next summer, which will be a good way of continuing our collaboration. This will also enable stronger links between the institutions to develop. Potentially we can have ongoing student exchanges if this one goes on well.’ (Host supervisor survey, 2016).

Hosts also reported on the level and type of collaboration anticipated with their Fellow and their home institution over the following 12 months. Their responses are illustrated in the Figure 53 below.

Figure 53 – Planned level of communication with the Fellow and the Fellow's home institution twelve months following the Fellowship



Source: CSC Host Supervisors Surveys (2016-2019)
n=43

A large proportion of the hosts were keen to maintain contact with the Fellows and the Fellows' home institutions. Most (88%) were particularly interested in pursuing further research collaborations, while a similar ratio (86%) intended to have informal communications with the Fellow and the Fellow's home institution, and 70% had plans for joint-authored publications.

From the findings discussed in this section, it is clear that the Academic Fellowship programme had a number of benefits that were identified by Fellows' employers and hosts. Above all, there is consistent evidence that the programme enhanced the knowledge and skills of Fellows and provided a platform to cultivate and enhance lasting relationships and collaborations between individuals and institutions.

Section 6 – A summary of the findings from the Academic Fellowship Programme review and lessons learned

This review of the Commonwealth Academic Fellowship programme investigated the outcomes and the impact of the Academic Fellowships awarded from 2015 to 2017. While the programme in this format was ended in 2017, it is hoped that the findings will inform future planning of similar programmes. This section summarises the findings of the review as demonstrated by the responses obtained from the surveys conducted with the Fellows both before and after the Fellowship, and from employers and the host supervisors of the Fellows following the Fellowship.

The review found that the Fellowship enhanced the knowledge and skills of the Fellows in different areas, as demonstrated by a chain of consistent evidence obtained from the surveys conducted with Fellows, hosts and employers. Among other areas, the acquired skills and knowledge are mainly applied in teaching and research, which are the main activities of the Fellows upon their return to employment.

It was also found that the Fellowship provided a platform to cultivate and enhance new and existing individual and institutional relationships, resulting in the development of future collaborations in research and other areas. The review showed that Fellows had increased interactions with different groups, and that the influence of these groups in the professional development of Fellows increased following the Fellowship. This suggests that the Fellowship promoted networking and collaborations - one of the main objectives of the Fellowship.

At an institutional level, the impact of the Fellowship in creating and enhancing relationships between institutions was reported by both hosts and the employers of Fellows, and the mutual benefits from the research collaborations were also mutually highlighted. These groups also highlighted planned, and already operational, activities such as staff and student exchange programmes, joint PhD supervision and examination, joint curriculum development for graduate programmes, joint research grant applications, and continued collaborations in research and other areas. Overall, the review demonstrates the importance of the Fellowships and their catalytic impacts on capacity building and the enhancement of future research and teaching capabilities across Commonwealth higher education institutions. Fellows also consistently reported that their post-Fellowship activities were having an impact at institutional level and beyond.

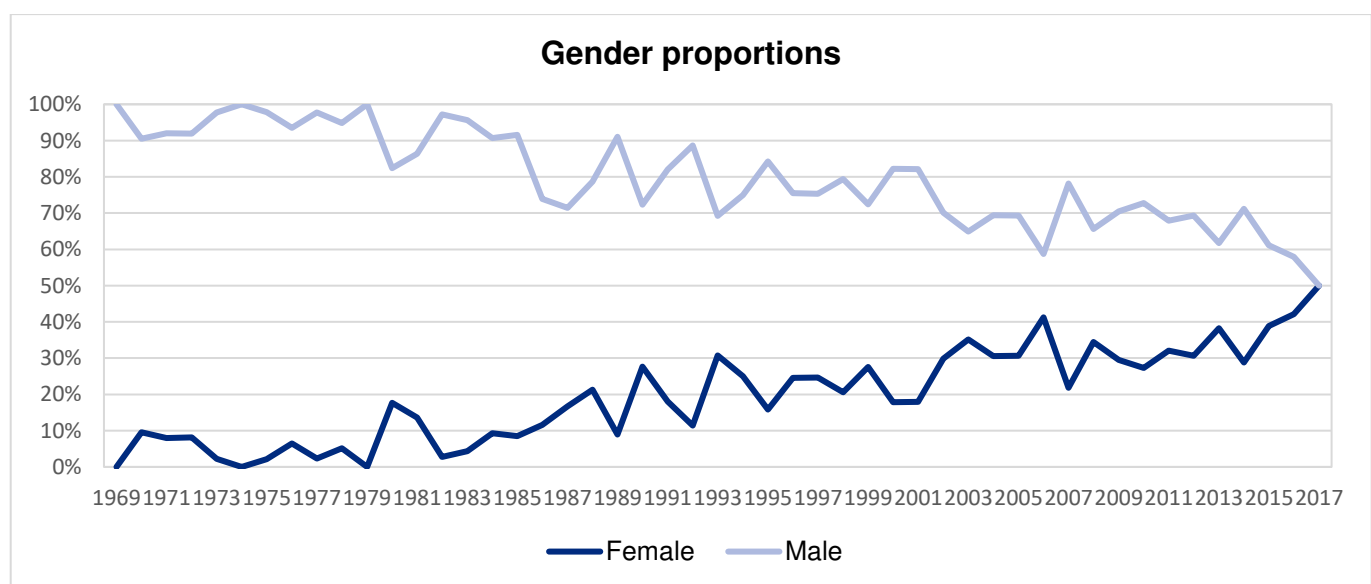
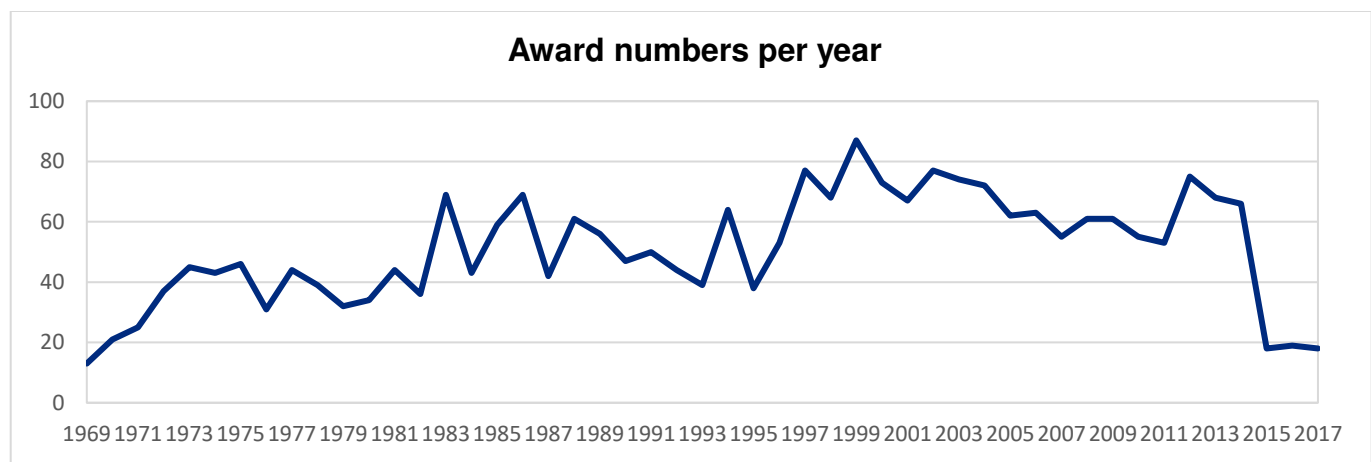
Lessons learned from the review of the Academic Fellowship Programme

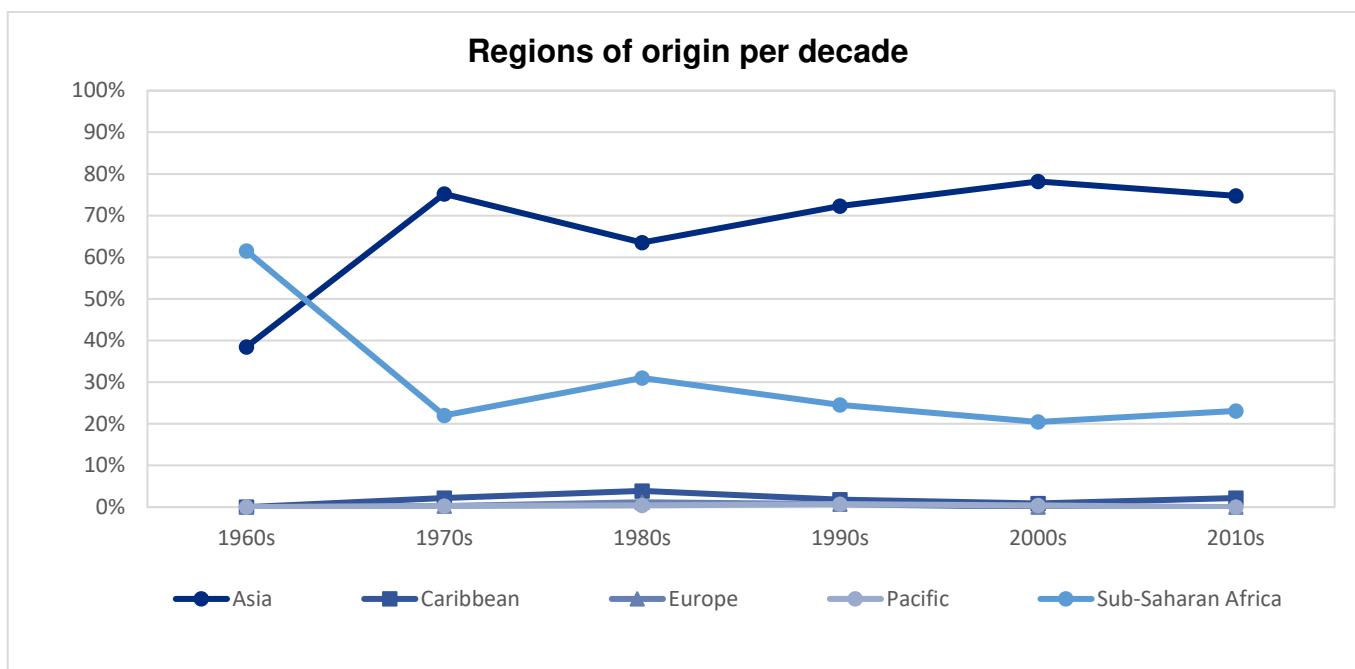
Drawing from the surveys conducted with the employers, hosts, and the Fellows this review investigated the outcomes and impact of the Commonwealth Academic Fellowship programme from different perspectives. A chain of evidence on the benefits and challenges of the Fellowship was obtained as a result, and the findings as well as the methodological approach used will inform current and future planning of the CSC programmes of this nature. The longitudinal approach used for the post-Fellowship surveys (6, 18 and 36 months) allowed for the tracing of the outcomes and impact of the Fellowship over time, as well as identifying certain activities, outcomes and impacts of the Fellowship that were more likely to occur at specific intervals. Making decisions on

workplace practices and devising the strategic direction of a department appear to be activities that are more common for the Fellows in the immediate 6-months post-award, thereby demonstrating the ability of Fellows to be agents of change and leaders (also confirmed by the employers) as a result of enhanced knowledge and skills. Meanwhile, doctoral supervision, supervising the work of other employees, and making decisions on the activities for their work team that are more likely to be conducted by the Fellows at 36 months post-Fellowship rather than earlier on in their career.

It is important to flag that lack of resources by the organisations to implement new practices emerged as a major constraint, reported by at least half of the Fellows, both pre- and post-Fellowship. These include lack of research funding, lack of equipment and facilities and, to a lesser extent, lack of support from the workplace. This indicates a need for greater support in this area, so as to maximise on the capabilities of the Fellows and the institutions to achieve developmental impact. Overall, the review revealed the importance of understanding the diverse range of contexts in which the Fellows conduct activities and pursue their careers. In particular, the work environment and the professional interactions before, during, and after the Fellowship appear to be central in to enabling or hindering the developmental activities of Fellows.

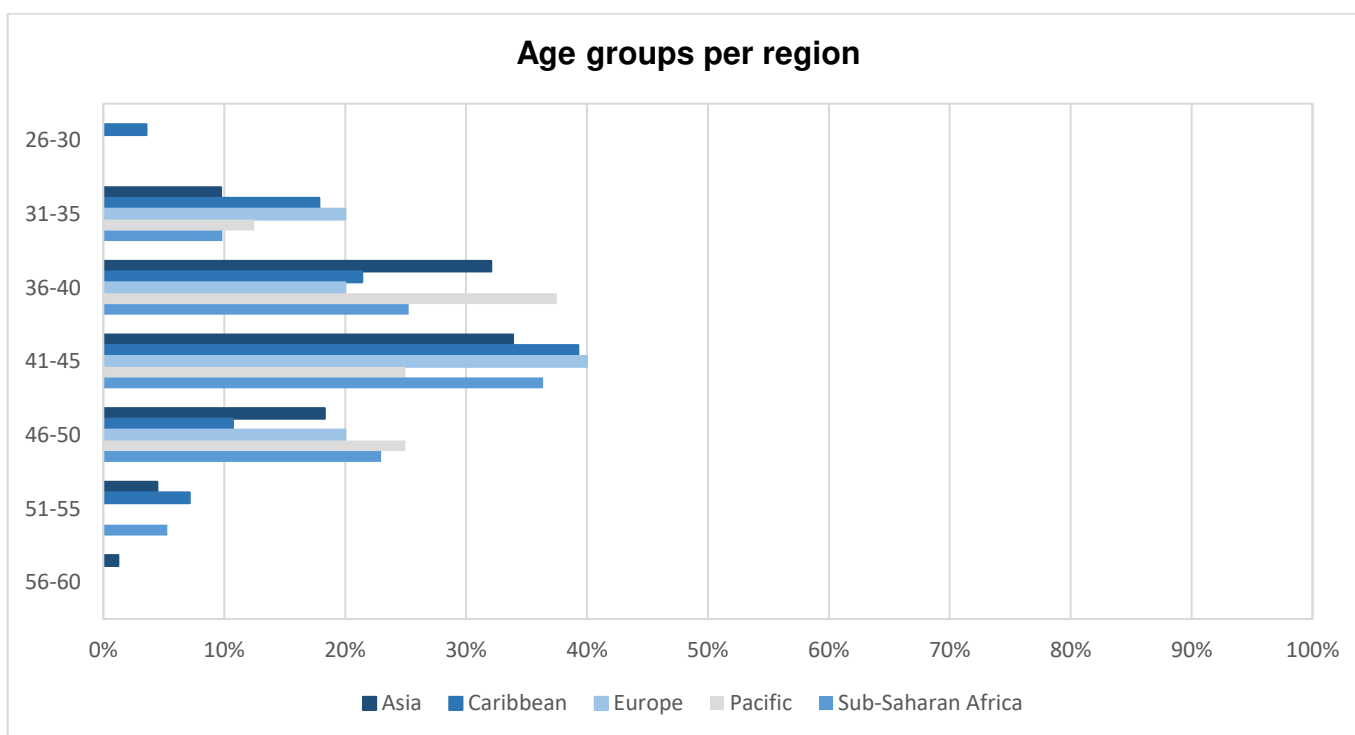
Appendix 1: The demographics for the Academic Fellowship Programme 1969-2017





Source: CSC Awards Data

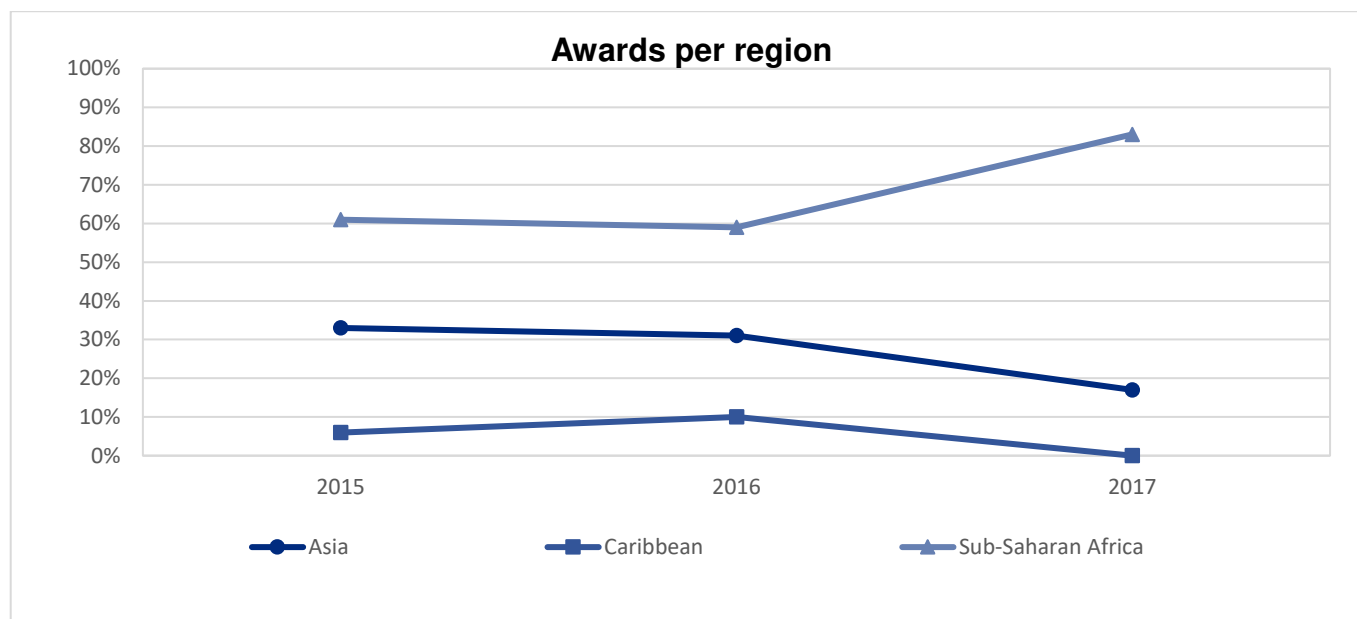
1960s n=13; 1970s n=363; 1980s n=513; 1990s n=567; 2000s n=665; 2010s n=372



Source: CSC Awards Data

Asia n=1812; Caribbean n=52; Europe n=11; Pacific n=10; Sub-Saharan Africa n=608

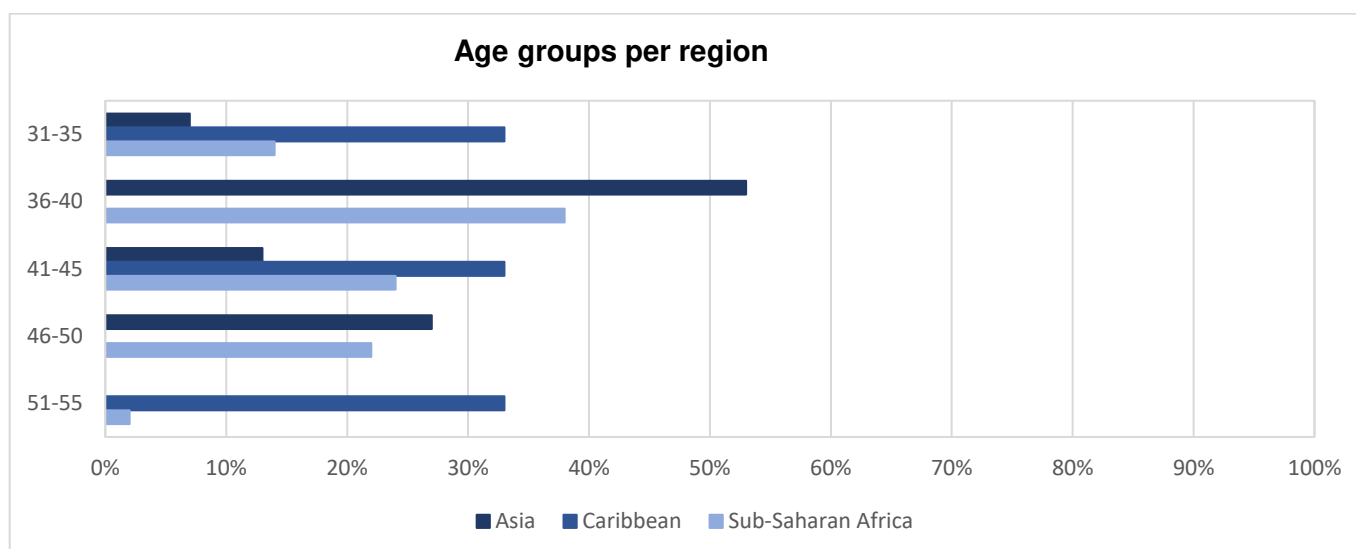
Appendix 2: The demographics for the Academic Fellowship programme 2015-2017



Source: CSC Awards Data
2015 n=18; 2016 n=19; 2017 n=18

Awards per country

Country	2015	2016	2017	Total
Nigeria	39%	32%	50%	40%
Ghana		11%	28%	13%
Bangladesh	17%	16%	6%	13%
Uganda	6%	5%	6%	5%
Tanzania	11%	5%		5%
Sri Lanka	11%	5%		5%
Pakistan	0%	5%	11%	5%
Trinidad and Tobago	6%	5%		4%
India	6%	5%		4%
Cameroon	6%	5%		4%
Jamaica		5%		2%
	100%	100%	100%	100%



Source: CSC Awards Data

Asia n=15; Caribbean n=3; Sub-Saharan Africa n=37

Fellow nomination route and gender

Gender	Alumni Fellowships	Vice-Chancellor	Grand Total
Female	40%	48%	44%
Male	60%	52%	56%
Grand Total	100%	100%	100%