

As the academic profession is central to the functioning of higher education, academics themselves are bound to experience substantial changes when the higher education system as a whole undergoes major transformation.

The conditions under which the academic profession operates seem to have changed even more rapidly during the one and a half decades since the first international comparative study of the profession was undertaken than in the preceding decades. The conditions for teaching and research are more strongly shaped by financial constraints and efficiency pressures. Respect for the quality of academics' work is challenged by a growth in measures of performance assessment, and the profession's power to shape their institutional environment has weakened. Academic careers have become less predictable and, at least in the early stages, more shaky. Although pressures on academic work to be more relevant increase, academics have greater difficulty in being heard and recognized by society as a key source of expertise. Growing competition, increasing commercialization in all aspects of higher education, closer cooperation between universities and external stakeholders, the spread of communication technologies, the growth of English as the lingua franca of higher education, and the increasing relevance of lifelong learning all contribute to these changes.

In this context, the members of the second international comparative study of the Changing Academic Profession were invited to write country reports in which they not only focus on the changes relevant to the academic profession that have been selected for particular attention in this study, but also begin to address a broader range of current conditions for the academic profession. Researchers from twelve countries and five continents volunteered to contribute to this volume by highlighting the major conditions for the academic profession in their respective nations.