



RIKSBANKENS
JUBILEUMSFOND
THE SWEDISH FOUNDATION FOR
HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

The Flexit Programme

Progress Report 2013

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Introduction

The purpose of this progress or monitoring report is to support decisions on how Riksbankens Jubileumsfond's (RJ) Flexit initiative can be developed. This aim has entailed efforts to make recommendations and proposals in the report concrete and practicable. It should be noted that the starting point for proposing improvements is precisely what has been found wanting, and this brings a risk of this report conveying a dismal picture of the Flexit programme. This is not my intention, nor probably that of the researchers or companies either. Instead, addressing the problems associated with the programme should serve to develop it further.

Previous reports

I have studied all the earlier progress reports on the Flexit projects. My interpretations of the observations contained in these reports are summarised in the following points:

- The companies vary, and the same applies to the researchers' circumstances.
- It is difficult to draw general conclusions about the workings of Flexit.
- The researchers would like to see more contact with academic institutions.
- The role of Flexit researcher is unclear.
- The mentorship is unclear.
- The academic and business worlds differ in terms of planning horizon and pace.
- Collaboration is complicated.
- Strategies for tackling conflicts of interest between companies and researchers are lacking.
- The companies stress the importance of researchers' social skills.
- Researchers and companies alike refer to *differences* between the academic and business sectors, and there is some agreement on what these differences are.
- On the whole, the companies are satisfied.
- Few companies emphasise the actual research; on the other hand, academically based knowledge and the researcher as such are significant and confer legitimacy.
- At times, being a Flexit researcher is lonely.
- Flexit researchers would like formalised contact with academic institutions.
- The companies have made contacts inside academia.
- The researchers have found that the programme has taught them a great deal.

Another clarification is called for. Essentially, the present progress report provides no observations that are new and hitherto unknown to RJ. Rather, the hope is to contribute a somewhat deeper analysis and compile proposals for improvements in a single report.

Background and scope

In 2009, Riksbankens Jubileumsfond (RJ) set up a pilot initiative that came to be known as 'Flexit'. As the prefix 'pilot' indicates, this postdoctoral programme seeks to improve contacts between higher education institutions (HEIs) and the business sector on a trial basis. The name 'Flexit' derives from the ideas of 'flexibility' and 'exit' from academia, in other words building bridges between sectors and enhancing researcher mobility. In Flexit, which caters for humanities and social science researchers, postdoctoral researchers who have gained PhDs in these fields during the past five years can apply for positions lasting up to three years in the business sector. These placements are composed of 75% research and 25% service in a company, with RJ bearing salary costs and other expenses relating to the

research, while the company pays the salary for the remainder of the position and provides workspace. The company has employer responsibility and appoints a mentor for the position holder, who works on the premises as an in-house researcher but is also expected to retain and develop contacts with HEIs.

Four main aims were defined for the programme:

1. Building bridges between research in the humanities and social sciences (HSS) on the one hand and the business community on the other.
2. Facilitating knowledge transfer and encouraging contacts to enable more organisations outside academia to perceive and profit from the skills of PhD graduates in HSS and vice versa.
3. Influencing the academic qualification system so that HEIs value experience from the business world more highly, and vice versa.
4. Presenting alternative career opportunities for researchers in HSS.

In brief, then, the main purposes involve bridge-building for knowledge transfer (aims 1 and 2) and enhancing researchers' employability in the business sector and academia alike (2, 3 and 4).

Answering the question of how well Flexit has achieved its purposes calls for a longer time horizon. It is not feasible to determine at present, for example, whether companies in general have changed their view of PhD graduates in HSS. Nor is it reasonable to assume that a few researchers, in this short time, have succeeded in influencing the academic qualification system. However, based on experience to date, it is possible to state what the programme has attained so far and what improvement measures need to be taken for further development towards its objectives.

Approach

To assist my assessment, I have had access to previous written material from RJ, Flexit researchers and companies taking part: calls for funding applications, annual reviews, seminar information and reports. On one occasion I attended a one-day meeting at which the Flexit researchers and RJ discussed the programme. This material was supplemented by interviews with Flexit researchers, recruitment consultants and employees at RJ, and by written questions addressing the companies. The interviews, although based on an interview guide, were so open that the guide was not always followed (Appendices 1 and 2). The questions to companies were structured and few in number (Appendix 2). Eight of the ten researchers were interviewed by telephone. The discussions ranged from one to two and a half hours. Only four of the companies sent written replies to the questions. My assessment was that the companies would be more inclined to reply in writing to a small number of structured questions, but in retrospect telephone interviews would have been preferable for the companies as well. To supplement the analytical material, I therefore also obtained information from previous monitoring and also from the consultant whose function was to involve the companies in the programme.

The ambition has been for this progress report to represent 'what the stakeholders say', i.e. topics and issues relevant and important to those taking part. In addition, my aspiration has been to present as many perceptions as possible, and thus not state how many or few perceive events and aspects in terms of 'good' or 'bad', or 'positive' or 'negative'. However, this has been difficult and I must acknowledge here that the report contains numerous 'quasi-quantifications' like *few*, *the majority*, *none* and so forth.

It has also been my concern to focus on perceptions and experiences, rather than on who has shared them. In this report, names of companies and people have therefore been excluded and the terms *Researcher*, *Company* and *Funder* represent the lowest degree of identification.

Researchers and companies

The following researchers and companies are or have been involved in the Flexit programme:

Researchers	Companies	Project title	Start year	Subject area	HEI, year of PhD
Marcus Persson	Ericsson ConsumerLab	The Material Youth Culture of Mobile Technology	2009	Sociology	Lund University, 2007
Martin Berg	Good Old	<i>Nätgemenskapernas socialitet</i> ('The Sociality of Online Communities')	2009	Sociology	Lund University, 2008
Susanna Toivanen	NCC	<i>Framtidens arbetsplatser</i> ('Workplaces of the Future')	2009	Sociology	Stockholm University, 2007
Mikolaj Dymek	Jung	<i>Spelifikation – Marknadskommunikationens nya (data)spelregler</i> ('Gamification: the New [Data] Rules of Market Communication')	2010	Industrial Economics	KTH Royal Institute of Technology, 2010
Magnus Roos	Veryday (formerly Ergonomi-design)	<i>Metoder för att mäta emotionella relationer till produkter, tjänster och varumärken</i> ('Methods of Measuring Emotional Relationships with Products, Services and Brands')	2010	Psychology	University of Gothenburg, 2009
Sara Ljungblad	LOTS Design	<i>Att förstå framtidens användare: Kvaliteter från konsument till professionell context</i> ('Understanding the Users of the Future: Qualities from Consumer to Professional Context')	2010	Computer and Information Science	Stockholm University, 2008
Lina Wedin	Skanska	<i>Gröna Innovationer i Byggsektorn – En undersökning av regleringsutrymmet för miljömässiga lösningar i bygg- och fastighetssektorn</i> ('Green Innovations in the Building Sector: An Investigation of Regulatory Scope for Environmentally Aware Solutions in the Building and Property Sectors')	2010	Sociology of Law	Lund University, 2009
Alexandra Borg	Bonniers	<i>Läsning 2.0. Boken och läsaren i det digitala samhället</i> ('Reading 2.0. Books and Readers in the Digital Society')	2011	General Literary Studies	Uppsala University, 2011
Anna-Maria Rimm	De Oberoende	<i>Villkor och överlevnad: förlagsstrategier och positionering på den svenska bokmarknaden</i> ('Conditions and Survival: Publishing Strategies and Positioning in the Swedish Book Market')	2011	General Literary Studies	Uppsala University, 2009
Jonas Andersson	Forsman & Bodenfors AB	<i>Jaget som profil: Internetanvändarnas motivationsgrunder för vidarebefordran av innehåll på den sociala webben</i> ('The Ego as Profile: The Basis of Internet Users' Motivation for Forwarding Content on the Social Web')	2011	Media and Communications	Goldsmiths College London, 2010

The researchers' PhDs were awarded up to two calendar years before they took up their Flexit positions. Their numerical gender composition is even: five women and five men. With one exception, their PhDs were awarded at large, long-established HEIs in southern Sweden. In a subject classification of their backgrounds in HSS, although dividing them in this manner is not easy, social sciences were found to be more common than humanities. When they applied for funding, the majority either lacked tenure or had insecure positions at their HEIs.

The companies consist of three in PR, two in industrial design, two in publishing, two in building and property and one in telecommunications. All the companies are located in the metropolitan regions of Gothenburg, Malmö and Stockholm. They vary greatly in size. Their distribution may be considered skewed in the sense, for example, that it does not reflect proportionate employment in the respective sectors. A study from the Swedish Institute for Studies in Education and Research (SISTER)¹, however, shows that social science researchers who had left their HEIs often found jobs in the area of *financial and business services*, while humanities researchers often went into *personal and cultural services*, which include publishing and advertising. In areas like manufacturing and extractive industries, *commerce and communication* and *health and social care*, the proportion of HSS researchers is very low.

The Flexit placement

As mentioned above, the Flexit placement is twofold in terms of content and form. The portion making up the bulk of working time, 75% of full-time employment, consists of the holder's own research project. The remaining 25% is composed of service at the company. For the latter 25%, the company appoints a mentor to induct and support the researcher in the activities and duties at the company. To obtain a Flexit position, an application and recruitment process takes place. The position is intended for applicants who have obtained doctoral degrees in humanities or social science subjects not more than some five years previously.

The application and recruitment process

The call was shaped from the start with a form and content that could not be regarded as traditional compared with RJ's previous calls. True, the term 'traineeship' had been used in the earlier ALM (Archives, Libraries and Museums) programme, but it cannot be said to have become commonly used by the funder. Another example is that the companies were obliged to draw up a research profile in which they describe research fields and questions of interest to them. These questions were intended subsequently, in the application, to be reformulated into a research plan. It was also specified that personal qualities like *social skills* were desirable in the applicant. Applicants were also to attach a personal letter and specify referees — again, not the usual practice in traditional applications. In addition, the application had to indicate how the applicant intends to strengthen ties and facilitate knowledge exchange between HEIs and the business sector. Apart from these relatively uncommon components, the project plan had to elucidate traditional areas such as purpose, design, theory, method and implementation, and relate to an international research front. The applications were reviewed by experts in the academic sense, whereupon interviews were carried out with representatives of the companies concerned.

¹ Anaya-Carlsson, K and Melin, G (2007): *Den postdoktorala perioden för doktorsexaminerade läsåret 1998/99* ('The postdoctoral period for PhD graduates in the 1998/99 academic year'), SISTER Working Report 2007:60.

The companies and the funder alike state that they regard the number of applicants for the positions as (too) low. The explanations given are that outreach has been inadequate; certain doubts about the duration of the placement have been discussed; the position is such a new and unusual one; and researchers in social sciences and perhaps especially humanities traditionally attempt to linger in academia despite the uncertain conditions. As for the repercussions of the low number of applications, this is difficult to assess and calls for a more profound analysis.

According to most researchers, their primary motives for applying for the position were that they wished to leave the academic community while also continuing to carry out research. The majority of researchers also had an uncertain existence, or none at all, in academia. Flexit positions were highly attractive to them, and favourable not least because of the high proportion of research time and for the three-year period. In the discussions, positive feelings were expressed: applicants mention the scope for liberating themselves from their HEIs, in terms of ‘getting away from the department for a while’ and ‘venturing to break free’. These remarks witness to a wish for something different from the traditional academic career. The researchers also refer to their personal traits, describing themselves in such terms as ‘social’, ‘extravert’ and ‘impatient’ — characteristics that they do not associate particularly with the academic environment, and which they think are crucial for being Flexit researchers. Simultaneously, all the interviewees state that ahead and at the beginning of the project they experienced a new type of stress, unclear expectations, nervousness, indistinct work tasks etc. These sources of uncertainty were not unfrequently compared to those in academia, which also does not offer secure positions or conditions for recent PhD graduates. Overall, the picture of the researchers’ motives and drives for applying to Flexit may be described as follows: ‘You know what you have if you have it, but you don’t know what you’re going to get and, above all, it’s worth a try.’

The researchers have unclear perceptions of the most appropriate timing of a project of this kind in their careers. On the one hand, they describe it as important for the Flexit position to come early on in a career, i.e. as a postdoctoral one, since a person may then conceivably have a more open attitude towards collaboration with businesses and a curiosity about new directions in research. There is also the view that more senior researchers will probably not leave the academic community for a position like Flexit. On the other hand, they describe the difficulties of being ‘green’, in the sense of inexperienced, both in the business sector and in academia. In addition, the Flexit role itself is new. Besides uncertainty, as described above, it also creates difficulties in obtaining a qualification, which is the primary purpose of a postdoctoral position.

The companies describe themselves primarily as seeking not new research findings but a supply of research. Although the companies state that research is important for their operations, this is not defined in detail. One company states that its quest is for research close to the individual company, as opposed to sector-specific research. The Flexit researcher is thus a means of achieving, first, a supply of research in the form of up-to-date research production and, second, a facilitator of research close to companies.

Induction and mentorship

As previous monitoring of the Flexit programme has shown, Flexit researchers’ induction at their new workplaces has involved problems and shortcomings. Several of these problems are attributed to deficiencies in mentorship. Some researchers state that they initially received a good induction concerning the company in general, sometimes including a plan for the forthcoming work, and also

clear, well-defined work tasks, but that the latter have become increasingly diffuse over time. The opposite picture is also provided, where the companies concerned have entirely lacked induction procedures and there is an expectation in the corporate culture that new recruits will find their own places and roles. In this respect, no distinction is drawn between whether the new recruit is a Flexit researcher or something else.

Several of the problems are attributed by researchers to the mentorship, or rather to problems concerning the same. These may be changes of mentors, a complete absence of a mentor, a mix of management and mentorship, and difficulties in defining the role.

It is worth noting that the Flexit programme is a pilot not only for the funder and researcher, but also for the companies included. The companies state that it has been difficult to define the mentor role. There is a notion in the companies that the researcher must be independent, must not be controlled, and must be all-knowing, reflective and proactive. Before the position began, there were also notions of the researcher as introvert and self-centred. These notions tally with how the public have been found to view researchers², and may be one explanation why induction has suffered. Possibly a more concrete explanation, and one the companies themselves specify, is lack of time. Both companies and researchers state that the pace of work at the company is very high and that even if the business leader would like to create a more extensive and better induction there has not been time. Moreover, as the business leaders describe it, the time frame to which the researchers are assumed to be accustomed is lacking in the business sector. This applies both to time for work and, in particular, to substitutability at individual level. Companies and researchers alike describe environments where the workforce is largely replaced over three years.

This is also reflected in the business leaders' description of the mentorship. The leaders' ambition at the outset of the programme is said to have been very high, but because of the above-mentioned obstacles it has not been possible to live up to these ambitions. Mentor replacements due to changed work tasks or because mentors have left the companies concerned have, for example, made it difficult for the new ones to 'own' and assume responsibility for the researcher. One business leader also states that the purpose had not been made properly clear, or that there had not been an internal process to consolidate opinion behind the Flexit programme as a whole, so that the result was mutually unclear expectations. Another company held the view that the role of mentor had been very much a matter of mediating and explaining, both to colleagues and to the researcher, differences in work procedure and environment between the business and academic sectors.

² See, for example, the annual reports from the *Vetenskap och Allmänhet* ('Public and Science') foundation.

The position

The companies' perceptions of the formal position are reported below.

Duties and working time

According to the companies and the researchers alike, the position holders devote or have devoted their working time to numerous activities: performing consultancy assignments, holding seminars and in-house training courses, reporting to customers, writing reports (such as trend summaries and research overviews), compiling brochures, arranging breakfast meetings, analysing the business environment, blogging, using Twitter, using social media in general, holding telephone meetings, creating encounters between academics and the company, writing applications, formulating newsletters or weekly bulletins, marketing the company, meeting customers, devising communication tools and giving lectures. According to the researchers, their duties have varied from those requiring no skills to advanced and positively challenging ones.

The researchers' perceptions of how their duties originated and were distributed vary, so that no overall picture is obtainable. Some had fairly clearcut duties assigned to them, while others created their own entirely unaided, and another has had a mix of both kinds. Several also speak in terms of their companies (probably) not knowing what they did in the 25% of their working time. However, there is a consensus on the time available for their company duties: it was insufficient, at least at the beginning of the project. Nevertheless, this perception varies, with some position holders regarding the lack of time as only to be expected for a workplace newcomer and others finding the pressure excessive. In terms of the first type of perception (i.e. the shortage of working time when one is new to the job), researchers describe the work as tiring, of course, but also instructive, especially at the outset of the project, since the work then afforded new aspects and perspectives for their research. The (excessively) heavy company workload in relation to the research could thus be used to develop the research questions, for example, or the research plan as a whole. In terms of the second type of experience (i.e. that the work pressure was too heavy), it emerges that the position holders worked so much as to have no time at all for research, or that the company duties as such diverged so far from the research that no synergic effects whatsoever were discernible. In this context, there were also perceptions of being exploited or diminished. The researchers then created various strategies to deal with the situation: everything from distancing themselves to vociferous demands about working time and duties. Both those who created their own work tasks and those who distanced themselves describe how, over time, they devoted more and more of the intended 25% of their time to research instead.

Overall, the business leaders replied that the projects flowed smoothly, with satisfactory outcomes. However, two mentioned difficulties in planning and assigning duties, not least given the aforesaid views of researchers and sometimes unclear expectations of the project as a whole. One company stated that it was sometimes difficult to motivate the researcher for work that should have direct connections with the research, but in which the researcher did not show the same interest. The companies also mention incurring higher costs for the Flexit researcher than those cited initially, partly because of insurance, pensions and so forth. This meant that the 75% of the funding for the Flexit researcher was not external, which has created budget problems. However, it emerges that this would in no respect have affected the 25%/75% distribution of the work. The balance between company work and time for research is perceived by the companies as good.

Labour law

The researchers, for their part, emphasised that Flexit was an exciting programme to join and that they had not reflected particularly on the terms, conditions and form of employment but that, in retrospect, there was a lack of clarity regarding the rules of labour legislation. Matters relating to both statutory and collectively regulated leave of absence, such as parental and other leave, were raised. Questions about sickness absence also came to the fore. What the respondents primarily associated with these questions was what will happen to the three-year position: will it be extended with reference to any absence, or will periods of absence be disregarded? However, questions about income qualifying for disability pension also arose, and there were further unclear aspects of the form of employment during the three years. Most position holders were employed on a time-limited basis, although this form is limited to two years. The researchers also found that they were given differing answers on applicable terms and conditions by the funder.

The research

The annual performance reviews of the researchers have shown that, in all essentials, they follow or, in a positive sense, develop their research plans. In the present study, there were no detailed discussions with the researchers concerning their individual research plans or how they had turned out. Instead, they were asked whether they perceived their research as affected, quantitatively or qualitatively, by the fact that they had been Flexit researchers. Quantitatively, this meant whether they believed that, as Flexit researchers, they had produced more or less publishable research than they would have done at an HEI. Qualitatively, the question was whether the researchers perceived that the quality of their research — with respect to problem formulation and results — differed from what it would have been if they had remained at an HEI. It should be pointed out that these questions are hypothetical, but their purpose was not primarily to capture either the number of articles or the nature of good research. Instead, they should be seen as seeking answers on the value and content of the experience of being a Flexit researcher. Once again, no generalised description can possibly be found for the researchers, with the reservation that none believed that they would have published less if they had stayed at an HEI. Thus, being a Flexit researcher is not considered to have enlarged the scope for achieving more publications in a short period.

On the other hand, some of the researchers think they now have empirical material, article concepts and new research ideas that would not have come into being without their participation in the Flexit programme. Accordingly, several researchers are of the opinion that, in the long term, Flexit can generate more publications and more research grants in the period after the project ends as well. Others do not have quite such a positive view of synergic effects of, or quantitative value added by, Flexit. On the contrary, one researcher holds the view that Flexit quantitatively inhibited research production.

Some think their research developed qualitatively in a direction they could not have foreseen. One interviewee, for example, said:

‘I would never have asked myself these questions if I’d still been at the department. I wouldn’t even have known how. [...] The discussions with them [colleagues at the company] have changed the way I approach problems generally, and how I arrange the study — the whole basis, in fact.’

Few, however, describe the research process as having been influenced in this kind of direction. Several of the interviewees think the research has become detached from the company, except for the ample scope for collecting data or capturing empirical processes. The research has then in large measure been a solitary endeavour carried out despite, not thanks to, the position at the company.

The researchers also underline the fact that the Flexit position is one that confers a qualification for an academic career, in particular, such as being able to attain the status of senior lecturer a short time after the position, although this does not emerge clearly from the programme objectives. It is indicated, first, by the way in which prioritisation takes place and what is prioritised in the funder’s monitoring and, second, by the 25%/75% distribution of the researcher’s time. The funder’s and the researchers’ expectations of the position qualifying the holder for academia may have contributed to what could be described as an instrumental attitude to the company and work there. With this kind of attitude, the work and the company position are merely means to an end — the end being, in this case, academic seniority.

The business leaders emphasise that research is important for their activities and that, in the future, it

will be even more important both to conduct in-house research and to monitor research. Research is believed to generate scope for competitiveness and attractiveness in the future. However, it is hard to infer what the business leaders regard as significant when it comes to the Flexit researchers' work. As one company puts it, 'research deliveries' have not yet taken place. On the other hand, the researcher's presence in the company is referred to in many different external contexts, and there the reactions from others have been solely positive. Thus, the researcher has helped to confer status and legitimacy on the company. One company, too, emphasises that the researcher's presence at the company has at times influenced internal meetings and discussions in such a way as to make the latter more thoughtful and analytical. Another company, similarly, describes how the researcher sometimes helped to 'calm down' colleagues suffering from an excessive stress. Accordingly, the researchers have helped to bring about both higher external status and more internal reflection. As described by other companies, they have not 'interfered with' the research but, rather, let the researchers themselves take the initiative for discussions.

Time and space for research

One urgent but intractable problem concerns the time, and to a large extent space, available for research. The researchers describe the contrast between the academic and business worlds in terms of how efficiency and the pace of work are seen. The short lead times in business, and how the researchers felt no or little understanding from the companies for the fact that research takes time, have been striking. Here, too, various strategies are developed to deal with what are sometimes perceived as inconvenient questions from the companies. One such strategy is to explain; another is to ignore. The 'explaining strategy' may be described as researchers seeing their own function as being to inform others about the phases (not least those of analysis and peer review), conditions and requirements surrounding the research. As one of the researchers expressed it,

'I've explained hundreds of times that a 25-page article corresponds to at least one year's work and waiting. Usually more.'

Another, too, thinks it has resulted in the company gaining a new awareness of the conditions of research, and that this in turn has made life easier for the researcher. The 'ignoring strategy' is one that researchers seem to have developed over time at the company. It is more a matter of a certain resigned acceptance that, in explanations of time and of differences between research work and, for example, working as a consultant, the message does not get across. It may also demonstrate an understanding that the companies (and above all colleagues) do not always seek explanations or more knowledge of the conditions of research; instead, comments on time, pace, deadlines and efficiency may also reflect the use of jargon at the company.

As mentioned above, it has been difficult to draw the line between time spent working for the company and time spent on research, and it is the latter that suffered. With one exception, this has been perceived as highly problematical, since the traditional academic qualification system, i.e. through publications, has been considered most important and it is this that has been monitored by the funder. This has meant that the researchers became increasingly meticulous in checking and safeguarding their time for research. One researcher says:

'I was like a puppy for the first six months, always positive and curious about everything, and the time just *flew* by. Now I write down all the time I spend and actually say no, I have to do my research, and that's accepted, I think.'

Another thinks, with hindsight, that the allocation of time should have been discussed in more depth in the company. Yet another says that even if the research time did not reach 75%, the 25% of working time spent at the company nonetheless enriched the research.

Time for research may be a problem that people learn to deal with over time, but the space issue is harder to resolve, at least if the intention is for the researcher to be physically on the spot at the company 100% of the time. The researchers describe their new work environment, in an open-plan office, as ‘chaotic’ and ‘impossible to do research in’. Most of them solved the problem by spending all or part of their 75% research time at home, at a library and/or sometimes at an HEI. Strong wishes are expressed for silent rooms on the companies’ premises where one can be undisturbed. However, one of the researchers interviewed thinks that this is an impossible and perhaps naïve wish, but that all the parties (i.e. the researcher, the company and the funder) had initially overlooked the fact that the open-plan office environment may be problematical for the researcher. Researchers who leave their companies to do their research work express the view that this has not been a painless option: they find that both superiors and colleagues have questioned their absence. Here, too, parallels to the two above-mentioned strategies of explaining and ignoring can be drawn.

Another problem in this context has been the lack of a formalised connection with an HEI. The researchers who left the company to do their research in peace were largely alone during this time: their research work was, with one exception, carried out at home or at a library. The researchers also state that they missed seminar activities and the more spontaneous, everyday research-related discussion that takes place at HEIs. One interviewee referred to a need to ‘fill up’ with academic discussions, but said it is hard to ‘just knock on the door’ of the HEI and ask if one can ‘hang around for a bit’. This means that it is not only at the companies that researchers feel or perceive that they are different, or like a guest, but also in the academic community, where they no longer have a place.

From the companies’ point of view it has emerged in some cases that there has been a contradiction between, on the one hand, being entirely responsible as employer and, on the other, not having any insight or control regarding three-quarters of the researcher’s time. The problems in getting away to do their research experienced by the researchers are also expressed by the companies. Besides the fact that, of course, the companies are aware that carrying out research in an open-plan office may be perceived as difficult, issues of personal chemistry and possibly finding the job disagreeable are also present.

Joint efforts

One of the main objectives in the inception and design of the Flexit programme was to bring academia and business closer together. It was formulated as building bridges between HSS research and the business sector. With the funder assembling researchers and the business sector in jointly devised projects, the intention was for interesting and important perspectives to be clarified from various perspectives. The overall contemporary notion of the need for collaboration between the academic and business communities is often described in terms of cooperation or coproduction. In its narrow or possibly early sense, ‘cooperation’ is a matter of researchers providing information about their research and companies, using this information, being able to develop their operations in the long term. In a somewhat broader sense, cooperation can be described as the researcher developing knowledge of the needs and prospects of the business sector, which not only satisfies intradisciplinary needs but also takes into account the benefits in a broader sense. Businesses, for their part, afford the requirements for a more long-term development of cooperation, though still mainly through the knowledge of the latest

research that is received. Coproducing is a form of cooperation in which the idea of *working together* also generates new, shared knowledge — added value, which would not have been created if the cooperation had failed to materialise.

Cooperation in various forms

One form of collaboration described by the researchers is with academic institutions alongside the research. This work consisted, during the Flexit period, of teaching, lectures for the public and about Flexit for PhD students and others, trainee supervision of students at the company and supervision of degree projects. In addition, it has consisted in the researchers directly or indirectly proposing subjects for students' dissertations. Undergraduate and postgraduate students have thus, through the Flexit researchers, been able to meet researchers who have a career outside the HEI. However, there have been difficulties since the HEIs have not (always) had funds or been willing to pay for the time. There are also researchers who think it has been unclear whether the funder will permit teaching at the HEI or not.

As mentioned above under the heading 'The research', the researchers' perceptions of how Flexit has influenced the content and quality of research have varied. One expresses what may be described as 'coproduction', i.e. the research process, or at least parts of this process, have been subjected to joint efforts and problem-solving. This has happened not least because the academic problems addressed in the research plan have been revised after discussions with the company, which the researcher thinks has benefited both the researcher and the company. The company has also, to some extent, been involved in the research work, at least initially. Some researchers think that the research process is comparable to coproduction in the sense that, for example, research questions have been reformulated. Other researchers think that there has been no coproduction at all, and that the most people have done is to work together in the sense of informing one another about their own and others' research.

One example of collaboration is the seminars that the Flexit researchers, with support from the funder, have arranged to spread information about the Flexit programme, their own research and their experience of being in-house researchers. Business people and academics were invited to the seminars and, as representatives of both private enterprise and academia, took part alongside the Flexit researchers themselves, either by giving their own talks or by joining in the panel discussions. The seminars, which ended with a get-together and buffet meal, were very well attended and appreciated. One of the researchers describes arranging a seminar as a 'tough job' owing to a lack of experience of this type of work. Another thought it was time-consuming to prepare, mainly because it 'took time away from the research', but that the attendees' response and numbers were highly gratifying. As another researcher describes it, the seminars contributed to the very bridge-building between academia and the business sector that is one purpose of the Flexit programme.

Overall, the companies express their satisfaction with the collaboration with the researcher regarding the research. One thinks it is particularly gratifying to see how the researchers have communicated their own and other people's research. One of the companies also describes the researcher as a 'door opener' to an otherwise closed university world. Another company takes the view that, thanks to the Flexit researcher, it has advanced further in an area to which it would probably not have allocated time and resources without the researcher's initiative. Yet another states that it finds learning about new research easy, since it is an organisation in which researchers and research are natural elements. Above all, it is their views of the cooperation that the companies express. None of the respondent companies have

described a coproduction process in the stricter sense, although a couple give an account of what may be described as in-depth collaboration. Although the companies express general satisfaction with the researcher's research, there is also a wait-and-see attitude among them when it comes to commenting on the research component. One company expresses the view that they are not fully acquainted with that part of the position, while another says that the researcher did not get very far and it is therefore difficult to state an opinion, and a third assumes that 'it's probably going as it should'. These and other pronouncements should be understood against the background of a range of aspects, such as respect for the researcher and research in general, the relationship with the researcher on the spot and how long, or rather for how short a time, the researcher has been coming to the company.

It may be stated here, as in previous monitoring reports, that collaboration between researchers and companies, not to mention coproduction, is difficult in practice. Nor was the programme designed for coproduction. Admittedly, the companies submitted a research profile with associated questions, to which the researcher responded with a research plan that had been reformulated or adjusted to the profile. With this kind of situation at the outset, the prospects for coproduction may be considered favourable and there are also examples of this taking place. However, after the favourable start, the researchers express the view that, at least at the beginning of the project, there has been uncertainty as to how much they can or dare to deviate from the research plan, since it is the plan that will be followed up by the funder. A couple of researchers think it would have been good if the plan could have been formulated in a two-stage model, with the researchers and companies working together to develop the research project. Another person claims to have worked in exactly this way with the company. However, several of the researchers say that they feel that the time, interest and possibly knowledge has been lacking for the company's part to engage more in the research than it has done.

A completely different form of cooperation has been that between the Flexit researchers and, in some respects, the funder. As mentioned above, the majority describe Flexit as being largely a solitary endeavour. However, the funder has regularly held meetings and workshops where the researchers have been able to discuss matters together and give one another advice. These get-togethers have been and are highly appreciated. Although the researchers taking part have varying experience and perceptions of the project and the companies, the discussions have been rewarding — perhaps because of the very differences. One of the researchers provides the following description:

'Then you've really been able to let rip — be thoroughly critical and whinge about everything and everyone. And you get a hearing, and someone gives you advice on how to proceed, and someone else tells you not to put fuel on the fire. But then there's someone sitting there with a completely opposed opinion. Or not opinion, perhaps, but a quite different story. And it's good to hear that too — what they've done to move on, or just so that you grasp the fact that the fault doesn't necessarily lie with you. Other companies work entirely differently.'

The researchers talk not only about how important these meetings have been, in enabling them to share their experience of everyday working life, but also because the meetings have made further research and joint publication possible, for example about the experience of being a Flexit researcher. The majority wish the funder had arranged even more meetings of this kind but, at the same time, say that it would have been difficult to find the time to attend them.

Researcher development in focus

All the researchers interviewed recommend continuation of the Flexit programme. It has been and is a

project that has very often put the researchers to the test, in ways they would have been inconceivable to them. But they unanimously express the view that it has been one of the most instructive projects they have been engaged in, from various points of view and in a range of respects. For example, the Flexit programme has resulted in their own personal development and improved their ability to set limits; it has given them the opportunity to see the academic and business worlds in fresh ways; enhanced their understanding of conditions and competition in the business sector; developed their capacity to communicate research and their knowledge as an intermediary or agent of collaboration between academia and business; given them a bolder attitude towards both sectors; and conferred knowledge for creating a new role and new tasks in academia. Moreover, the researchers have learnt a new language, which is described as more commercial and sales-oriented, and they have gained an understanding of how important knowing both 'languages' is for good research collaboration with business in the future. This experience and these lessons have helped to bring about personal development that would be difficult or even impossible to obtain if the researcher had remained in the academic world.

Concluding comments

In the Flexit programme, which is still in progress, some projects have been under way for a year and others have ended. It is, moreover, a small programme with few stakeholders so far. These stakeholders' experience and perceptions of the programme vary, while their narratives have some aspects in common. Issues of induction, the inception of duties and the degree of collaboration are areas of divergent experience, while perceptions of time and space for research are more uniform. As mentioned in the introduction, there is a risk of a report of this kind giving a gloomy picture that does not match the whole programme or everyone's experience. After receiving all the participants' accounts and above all answers to the question 'Would you recommend others to apply for Flexit?' and subject to a few reservations (such as that applicants should have certain personal traits and be prepared for a period of feeling lost), the researchers recommend Flexit to others. Again, they all recommend that the programme should continue and think there is now an awareness of the unclear aspects that existed at the beginning of the programme.

The researchers think it is too early to draw conclusions about the impact of their participation in the long term. This kind of question, about impact, relates to the researchers' future careers and here their views are very much divided. Some see clear career advantages in working both in the academic and in the business world, while others are disappointed that academia, in particular, does not recognise their qualifications from Flexit. This respondent group think, on the other hand, that they are likely to find it easier to make a career in the business sector, now that they have the experience from the Flexit programme, than their former colleagues at the HEIs.

In my opinion, these comments regarding careers alone show that the Flexit programme has helped to increase mobility between the two sectors, albeit on a small scale. This also applies to the exchange of knowledge between the business and academic sectors. The funder's objective of pinpointing alternative career paths for HSS researchers is laudable but nevertheless one-sided in its orientation towards the business sector in particular. Institutional entities other than businesses should also be capable of serving as alternative career paths.

Influencing the academic qualification system is possibly too complicated a task for the Flexit programme. But it is worth noting that some HEIs nowadays apply the collaboration criterion when filling lecturer positions. Changes are under way in the university world as elsewhere, and the Flexit programme supports this kind of transformation process.

Proposals

Proposals and recommendations for how the Flexit programme can be developed for future funding calls are presented below. As we have seen above, however, all the researchers interviewed consider that the programme should continue, and none of the companies state the opposite. Some of the companies strongly recommend other companies to appoint Flexit researchers, and one company thinks it is, admittedly, a major responsibility that must be considered carefully in advance, but nonetheless recommends it.

1. Issue Flexit calls for five more years

Funding for the Flexit programme has been announced in three application rounds since 2009. Both to obtain continuity in the programme and to enable the programme to have an impact, I recommend issuing annual calls for an additional five years. Flexit is a bold programme with high, good ambitions. There is no doubt that there have been difficulties in getting it to work well for the stakeholders and it would therefore be unfortunate to end it when clear lessons have been drawn. I propose five years, and not just another three, to demonstrate the funder's staying power as well. A tenacious funder can help to reduce any doubts on the part of companies and Flexit researchers alike. Moreover, it takes time for funding calls both to be disseminated and to gain status in the academic world. I also propose that the programme should be followed up after another three-year period and that earlier Flexit researchers should also be included in this monitoring.

2. Combine two-year general fixed-term employment (ALVA) at companies with a flexible transition year

Today, the Flexit position is a three-year one. There are strong arguments in favour of maintaining a three-year position in the future: first, it takes time to adjust from academia to the business sector and, second, the Flexit programme should be given the same status and advantageous design as other forms of project support awarded by RJ. Nevertheless, attempting to equate the Flexit position with a qualifying position at an HEI, where the legislation is not the same as in the business sector, is not satisfactory. In this case, there are therefore arguments against three-year support, and these arguments are connected with the Employment Protection Act (*Lagen om anställningsskydd, LAS*).

From all three perspectives — those of the funder, the researcher and the company — the three-year positions are problematical. For the **funder** it is more difficult to attract companies willing to employ people under the main rule, i.e. on a permanent basis, than on a fixed-term basis. For **companies**, ethical problems arise when permanent employment contracts are signed, but these are in practice three-year fixed-term positions from the start. For **researchers**, unclear points arise as to what conditions apply, especially with respect to parental leave. Questions about, for example, parental leave and extension are *not* solved by shortening the Flexit position at the company to two years and making it explicitly a form of fixed-term (ALVA) employment, but the lack of clarity about what terms and conditions apply is reduced.

The proposal of a flexible transition year should be individually adjusted, but still with the division of 25% service and 75% research. There are three possible implications of this proposal:

(A). Researchers could, in consultation with the funder, take part or all of their transition year before

the beginning of the Flexit position. However, this requires an HEI to be the grant administrator during this period. The time could, for example, be used to formulate and establish research in coproduction. This could get the company more involved, but there is also a risk of projects not getting off the ground because, for example, of staff changes on the business side, or the researchers dropping out because of receiving other funding or being appointed to other positions.

(B). The researcher, in consultation with the funder, could take the transition year after the Flexit position, and spend it in employment at another company or an HEI. The receiving party would then be the grant administrator.

(C). The researcher and the company could agree that the previously fixed-term employment should be superseded by a permanent position, where the transition year would confer further partial funding for an additional year. There would be no change with respect to grant administration.

3. Include more institutional units

Clearly, the researchers and the companies draw a distinction between academia and the business sector. The funder does the same, through the Flexit programme's purposes of bridge-building and knowledge dissemination between the two sectors. In other words, the funder decides that researcher mobility among various sectors of society is important to spread knowledge and also understanding of the different sectors' activities. Here, I do not discuss researcher mobility as such, or give an account of differences and similarities between academia and (private) enterprise. Instead, linking back to the main purpose of the programme, i.e. alternative career options, I seek to elucidate the advantages of broadening the programme so that it also includes more institutional units than it has done to date. One advantage of including more institutional units than businesses is that it enlarges the selection of participating organisations. A larger selection may also make it easier for the funder, to a larger extent, to impose requirements and safeguard the allocation of time and commitment to the researcher by the organisations taking part.

Recruitment not only of companies but also of researchers can be facilitated. For HSS researchers, institutional units like sector and member organisations, non-profit organisations, state-owned enterprises, municipalities and county councils should also constitute attractive career alternatives to academia. A broader selection of organisations can thus attract more researchers to apply for the programme. In addition, there are thresholds for researchers to become employed in organisations of these types as well. But it is virtually always the business sector that is alleged to be hesitant about employing people with PhDs in social sciences and humanities.

4. Abolish formalised mentorship at the companies

In the current programme form there must, if requested by the funder, be a mentor at the company to support the researcher and liaise with the funder. This is a tried and tested method, for example for postgraduate students who collaborate with companies during their studies. Nevertheless, Flexit researchers and companies alike give expression to practical problems with mentorship and also problems connected with different expectations of what the mentorship should entail. Examples of problems are mentor replacement due to the mentor leaving, or taking on different duties in the company; mentorship that was set up solely because the funder demands it, but has never worked;

unclear aspects of the role that the mentor is supposed to fill; and an unclear demarcation of the dividing line between mentorship and a managerial position.

The starting point for the proposal is that the formalised mentorship strengthens the notion of the researcher as the different one who, moreover, needs extra care. The idea of being different is thus supplemented by ideas about deficient independence. There is no doubt that a change of duties, occupation or sector, such as a transition from business to academia, may be highly challenging both for the individual and for the organisation. In the Flexit programme all the stakeholders — the researcher, the company and the funder — are already aware of these difficulties initially. The proposal to abolish formalised mentorship at the company should therefore not be seen as meaning that induction and taking care of the newly appointed researcher is unimportant. In a programme of this kind it may possibly be even more important than in traditional new appointments. The proposal is a grant of authorisation to the researchers and companies alike: it would make the researcher a full colleague, who may need supervision and care just like other employees; and the companies would be responsible for shaping the induction and continuous support for all their staff, including the researcher. The latter may involve induction programmes, mentorship, an external discussion partner, various contact people for different tasks, follow-up discussions and so forth, but it should be made clear that it is the company's personnel strategy or custom that will be applied. However, the funder should give the companies scope for as good an induction as possible, by the funder providing, for example, a checklist for future companies involved.

Another recommendation is that the support offered by the funder to the researchers and companies alike in the form of a specific person to liaise with them all should be retained and strengthened. Although the Flexit programme has been under way for four years, it is unlikely that the funder can be less active in its supportive role in relation to companies and researchers within the foreseeable future. Rather, based on current experience, the funder should make it possible for induction training and monitoring to be developed (see below).

5. Formalise HEI affiliation

The Flexit project has the explicit aim of building bridges between research and the business sector, with the researcher acting as the facilitator. Nevertheless, it has emerged that building the foundations of a bridge on the academic side is difficult, since the researchers lack formalised eligibility. What is meant by 'formalised affiliation' is that the researcher is given a clear, if limited connection with an HEI. The problems on which the researchers express themselves concerning the currently loose connection with the academic world have both practical and legitimacy reasons. One example of a concrete, practical problem is that, as a Flexit researcher, one does not always have access to article databases at university libraries.

The idea that the researchers themselves, or in cooperation with their respective companies, should use previous contacts or forge new ones in the academic community is both good and practical. On the other hand, the notion that RJ should, in advance, formalise contacts with HEIs for collaboration in the Flexit programme in order thereafter to announce funding for positions in cooperation with the companies is not a fruitful one. The proposal therefore means that, just as they should now, contacts should be made after the recruitment process is concluded — that researchers personally, or with their host companies, should contact the HEIs to which they want to become affiliated. With affiliation come funds for the HEI for administration from the funder, and a sum of SEK 100,000–150,000 a year has been mentioned.

Here, we propose no details concerning what the affiliation should cover or entail. Thus, questions about space at the HEIs, the researcher's duties and so forth are excluded. Rather, the intention is to emphasise that it should be possible to shape formalised affiliations in various ways and with different content depending on research projects, the researcher's needs and the HEI's wishes. However, a couple of reflections concerning grant administration, the time percentage and supervision are given. Proposals have been put forward by the researchers, first, concerning the need for HEIs to be the grant administrators, instead of the companies, and secondly regarding academic supervision. I do not find the proposal of HEIs being entirely made the grant administrators and the researchers spending 75% of their time on research at the HEI and 25% on work or traineeship at companies a fruitful one, given the main aims of the Flexit programme. This kind of structure is possible with other types of funding, as long as the HEI has the will and the need. Moreover, the researchers have proposed that the Flexit programme should also fund a percentage of the researcher's time, such as 10% of a Flexit position, at an HEI.

As mentioned above, problems regarding the Flexit position currently stem from the Employment Protection Act's rules, and thus I do not see it as advantageous to add a further fixed-term appointment. Moreover, several researchers express the view that it is difficult to draw the line between work at the company and the research, and that this makes adding an extra appointment or extra duties at an HEI problematical. It should be noted that there are examples where having some working time in periods at their HEIs has worked for researchers. I therefore recommend the funder to clear the way for individual solutions to be feasible, and also clarify that they are so.

The researchers have also proposed a mentor, supervisor or coach in the academic community. I have no views on this proposal apart from the designation, as also mentioned above, giving the picture that the research is not yet mature enough to carry out research independently. The need that is probably expressed by the researchers concerns the scope for engaging in discussions on research on an equal footing. In most cases, the companies lack employees who have the time or skills to discuss and advise in depth on academic matters. This role could be filled by an academic partner at an HEI. However, time and resources are issues not only for the business sector but also for academic employees. It should therefore be possible for the funds that should, it is proposed, be set aside by the funder for formalised affiliation to be used flexibly under the joint designation of 'administration'.

6. Remove the five-year limit

The current programme call contains the requirement that the researcher's PhD must have been obtained not later than some five years before the Flexit appointment. This kind of requirement implies that it is a postdoctoral position, i.e. one designed mainly to confer a qualification for a career in the academic world. Further, the description of 'traineeship' that has been used to market the programme gives signals that Flexit is a programme for young, new or inexperienced researchers. I propose that conscious or unconscious references to youth and experience should be removed in future calls and, by the same token, so should the formulation on a limit for the year in which the researcher's PhD was gained.

Earlier in this report, it has been reported that the researchers mainly consider it appropriate for the Flexit position to occur at an early stage in their careers, despite the problems that exist. Moreover, the view was reported that more senior researchers are not willing to leave academia for a position like

Flexit. Whether more senior researchers are unwilling to leave the academic community is difficult to comment on, other than by observing that the absence of intersectoral openings creates unnecessary locking effects. Research funding awarded by a well-regarded funder is, however, just as attractive to senior as to junior researchers. For a senior one, external research funding may not be a requirement for being able to carry out research. Senior researchers also have the option of applying for leave of absence. In addition, researchers who have established themselves in the academic world and have research experience from activities outside academia may be important role models for encouraging colleagues who are recent PhD graduates to seek alternative career paths.

7. Introduce researchers' induction training and develop companies' induction and further training

The experience possessed by the funder today is recommended be put to practical use in induction training for the researchers appointed within the Flexit framework. The companies, the funder and the researchers refer to mutually differing expectations, divergent languages and cultures, an environment to which the researcher is unaccustomed, different perspectives on time, and the distinctive nature of research work. As the present report has described, these differences have given rise to dissatisfaction, time pressure and general uncertainty. It is not, of course, possible or even desirable to eliminate existing differences between academia and the business sector, but increased knowledge and understanding early in the process can help to reduce both the number of negative perceptions and the intensity when such perceptions arise. My impression is that the problems have not been sufficiently talked about, on either the companies' or the researchers' side, or that the funder has possibly been aware of problems but lacked tools for dealing with them. It is reasonable to assume that the pilot nature of the programme also contributed to solutions having to be devised on an ad hoc basis. My assessment is that the funder has a major role to fulfil in terms of informing, training and continuously supporting the parties in these matters. This distinguishes the programme from other, more traditional initiatives. The proposal of induction training is, in this connection, just part of its distinctiveness. Other elements may involve written material, for example specifying employment conditions.

The companies have been offered induction training, and my view is that this has been appreciated. My proposal is that this should be developed by more emphasis being laid on the experience gained from the programme by Flexit researchers and companies to date. The replacement of both managers and liaison officers at the company is a dilemma, and training should therefore also be given on more occasions than when the employment begins.

For researchers and companies alike, particular attention needs to be paid in the training to questions of expectations. It is my impression that both sides, in several cases, find that their expectations have been different but that each has a vague idea of the other's expectations. Those who are best suited to describing and reflecting on this are the Flexit researchers and companies who have undergone the entire programme period. Funds should therefore be set aside for previously involved researchers and companies to spread this experience and knowledge.

To supplement induction courses, the funder is recommended to offer more seminars as well. Proposed themes for seminars that have emerged in the interviews are *coproduction*, in which attendees are informed about methods for enhancing the depth of research collaboration, *conflict resolution* and *intellectual property rights*.

8. Redefine the main aims of the programme

The programme objectives should be reviewed or supplemented. They are based on two notions that, taken together, are problematical for the programme. One notion is about the necessity and importance of collaboration between the academic and business sectors in a changed world, in which collaborating can bring about great benefits for both parties and the community at large. The other is the notion that academia in general (and HSS in particular) inhabits one world and business another, and that academics and above all individual researchers 'have to get out' into the other world.

These notions reinforce the dichotomy between the academic and business worlds, rather than pinpointing overlaps and a growing number of similarities. The objectives are used to confirm, emphasise difficulties, question benefit and value, and so forth. Researchers and companies alike refer, for example, to being 'in and out' of their respective worlds, and to ivory towers and reality. Both mention, too, the need for researchers to 'adjust' and 'accept the ground rules' in business. The objectives are also used as yardsticks of whether projects have been successful or not. This is unfortunate for researchers and companies alike, since individual projects cannot possibly influence the academic qualification system. In addition, there is a less pronounced aim, which concerns academic qualifications: that the researchers, if they are successful in terms of publications, become more attractive and thereby have greater scope for finding their way back 'home' to the academic world. The Flexit project is then a temporary 'guest performance' in the business sector, and in this case the characteristics of the programme should possibly be modified, with grant administration taking place at an HEI instead.

My recommendation is, first, for the objectives to be redefined as long-term and short-term aims concerning bridge-building, knowledge exchange and intersectorial mobility. Second, I recommend that the funder make it clear that the programme affords a qualification for a broader employment market than academia. Monitoring of the individual Flexit projects should also reflect a comprehensive view and be linked with general short-term goals. My impression is that the monitoring to date has had research in focus, and the risk is that this may conceal the fact that the Flexit programme is about considerably more than following an original research plan.

Finally, a couple of brief recommendations are in order:

- **Draw up a plan for Flexit exit**

The prevailing way in which research projects are concluded is with a final report to the funder. Nevertheless, the Flexit project is not a conventional one, and my recommendation is that the funder should take the initiative for a 'Flexit exit' plan and draw it up in cooperation with the company and the researcher. Regardless of whether the researcher stays at the company, moves to another or returns to academia, issues may need to be discussed together before the project is entirely discontinued. There may be unexplored misunderstandings that have been difficult to raise, given the researcher's position of dependence on both the company and the funder. Just as problems may be hard to bring up when one is in a dependent position, so the researcher may tone down positive aspects in order to avoid appearing to be excessively compliant.

Researchers who have now finished their Flexit projects are returning to the academic community, and the lessons from their and the companies' experience should be systematically applied.

- **Work for a greater nationwide spread**

Finally, the funder is recommended to intensify its approaches to companies and HEIs outside the metropolitan regions, so that future Flexit researchers are spread more widely around the country. There should be keen interest in, and great scope for, involving the smaller or newer HEIs in disseminating information about the Flexit programme. Several of these HEIs have taken their collaborative function seriously, and this also makes it likely that the HEIs' managements can work actively for recent PhD graduates to be encouraged to apply, and for what they have learnt to be put to use after the programme, for example in lecturing on collaboration. University managements at HEIs outside the metropolitan regions also have close relationships with companies in their own regions, and can thus provide channels of contact into these companies.

Appendices

Interview Guide, Funder

1. What expectations or hopes did you have before the programme began?
2. What apprehensions did you have?
3. Thoughts about the four main aims and/or purposes:
 - Building bridges between humanities and social science research on the one hand and the business sector on the other?
 - Facilitating exchange of knowledge and fostering contacts so that more organisations outside academia can see and make use of skills possessed by humanities scholars and social scientists, and vice versa?
 - Influencing the qualification system so that academia values experience from the business world more highly?
 - Showing alternative career options for researchers in humanities and social sciences?
4. Recruitment process? Spread?
5. Role of the monitoring group? What was the plan for this? What was its purpose?
6. The funder's own role?
7. Expectations of the in-house researchers? At the companies?
8. Funding?
9. Difficulties?
10. Narratives of the dichotomy between the business sector and academia (both mentors and in-house researchers refer to the existence of difficulties. How have you, for RJ's part, perceived it?)
11. Did it turn out as you thought it would?
12. With hindsight, what would have been done differently?

Interview Guide, Researchers

- Recruitment and employment
 - Why did you apply? What was your work situation at the time of the call for applications?
 - Expectations
 - Apprehensions
 - Induction
 - What could have been done differently?
- Positive experience of the project
- Aims of the project
 - Personal aims and RJ's aims (bridge-building, career, exchange of knowledge, qualification system)
- Relationship with the company
 - Mentorship?
 - Colleagues?
 - Work duties?
- RJ's role
 - What support did you apply for and receive?
 - What could have been done differently?
- Flexit: a good idea, but difficult in practice?
 - What are the good aspects? A broader labour market for PhD graduates? Knowledge dissemination?
- How well has the annual monitoring worked?
 - What could have been done differently?
- Relationship with the company concerning the research
 - Cooperation and/or coproduction?
 - Time for research?
 - How has the project (the plan) developed?
 - Speaking the same language?
 - Quality and/or quantity of the research?
 - What could have been done differently?
- Lessons
 - Who has learnt and about what?
 - If you could choose, what would your post-Flexit career be?
 - Would you recommend others to follow in your footsteps? Why? What advice would you give?

Questions to Companies

1. In what way is research important to the company?
2. How well has RJ provided information to the company?
3. How can the recruitment process be improved?
4. How did you choose a mentor for the researcher?
5. What did the mentorship involve, i.e. what were the mentor's duties?
6. How well has the researcher been integrated in the company?
7. Is the division of 75% research and 25% company work fit for purpose? Has it been workable?
8. Do you recommend other companies to employ Flexit researchers?
9. Has Flexit contributed to your contacts with higher education institutions?
10. Has your view of the usefulness of researchers changed?
11. Do you have any other viewpoints you would like to express?