RE-ENVISIONING ACADEMIC CITIZENSHIP

Mark Sterling and Lia Blaj-Ward

GREAT DEBATES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

RE-ENVISIONING ACADEMIC CITIZENSHIP

This groundbreaking piece of scholarship not only builds on a mass of past research but also considers what academic citizenship means for new areas, including AI, while providing wholly fresh insights of its own. The book is never dry; it is always clear, and it is likely to prove very thought-provoking to everyone who reads it.

—*Nick Hillman*, Director,
Higher Education Policy Institute

As universities across so many countries face mounting questions about their purpose, their value and their role in society, and as too many university sectors face public funding reductions, this rich exploration of academic citizenship, collegiality and service could not be more timely or more important. It is heartening to see that so many universities are re-discovering and re-focusing on their core mission: to deliver public good and help make the world a better place. This is something as a global higher education community we all need to share, showcase and celebrate.

—*Phil Baty*, Chief Global Affairs Officer,
Times Higher Education

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BY

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emerald PUBLISHING

United Kingdom – North America – Japan – India
Malaysia – China

Emerald Publishing Limited
Emerald Publishing, Floor 5, Northspring, 21-23 Wellington Street,
Leeds LS1 4DL

First edition 2025

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-83608-361-0 (Print)
ISBN: 978-1-83608-358-0 (Online)
ISBN: 978-1-83608-360-3 (Epub)

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AAUP	American Association of University Professors
AI	Artificial Intelligence
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
AWET	Academic Workload Estimation Tool
BERA	British Educational Research Association
CBE	Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire
DORA	Declaration on Research Assessment
EDI	Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (also DEI – Diversity, Equity, Inclusion)
ESCP	École Supérieure de Commerce de Paris (original appellation, replaced by acronym to reflect evolution into multi-campus institution)
EUA	European University Association
FAHA	Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities
FRSSAf	Fellow of the Royal Society of South Africa
GAICD	Graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors
GenAI	Generative Artificial Intelligence

GPT-4	Generative Pre-trained Transformer 4
HEPI	Higher Education Policy Institute
ICEF	International Consultants for Education and Fairs
KEF	Knowledge Exchange Framework
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
LERU	League of European Research Universities
LGBTQIA+	Umbrella Term Reflecting a Range of Gender-Linked Identities
MERIT	Management, Education, Research, Impact and Team Spirit
NOR-CAM	Norwegian Career Assessment Matrix
NTEU	National Tertiary Education Unit
OBE	Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OS-CAM	Open Science Career Evaluation Matrix
PARC	Participatory Autism Research Collective
PFHEA	Principal Fellow of the Higher Education Academy
PLOS	Public Library of Science
SDG17	Sustainable Development Goal 17
STEM	(STEMM) Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics (and Medicine)
THE	Times Higher Education
THE IR	Times Higher Education Impact Rankings
THE WUR	Times Higher Education World University Rankings
TRIPLE	Team Spirit, Research, Impact, Professional performance, Leadership and Education
UHR	Universities Norway

UNL	Universiteiten van Nederland
UTFA	University of Toronto Faculty Association
VECAP	Victoria University of Wellington's Early Career Academic Programme
VSNU	Vereniging van Samenwerkende Nederlandse Universiteiten (UNL since 2021)
WHEN	Women's Higher Education Network
YERUN	Young European Research Universities

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Professor Mark Sterling is Pro-Vice-Chancellor of the Faculty of Science and Engineering at Manchester Metropolitan, a university with strong sustainability credentials and a recognised commitment to its city and its global communities. Previously, he led the redevelopment of the academic career framework and the introduction of academic citizenship as a core component of the framework at the University of Birmingham. In a number of leadership and management roles, he has evaluated accounts of academic citizenship as well as guiding and supporting the enactment of academic citizenship in a wide range of projects and initiatives. A Civil Engineer with an internationally recognised research portfolio in Wind Engineering, he has generated over 150 collaborative research outputs on the effects of extreme winds on infrastructure, vehicles and plants, as well as writing about higher education. His latest book examines academic career pathways and the role they can play in developing the 21st century higher education sector.

Dr Lia Blaj-Ward, Associate Professor (Academic Literacies) at Nottingham Trent University, has a professional scholarly interest in learning experiences in university contexts, academic roles, identities and career frameworks. She is a member of the Editorial Advisory Board for the Society for

Research into Higher Education (SRHE) *Studies in Higher Education* journal and an Associate Editor for *Higher Education Research and Development*, the journal of the *Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia* (HERDSA). Lia's latest book is an edited collection on mentoring within and beyond academia; the chapters wrap scholarly reflection around a central dialogue piece, which invites readers to 'eavesdrop' on a mentoring conversation about a current topic linked to learning, teaching and/or professional practice (transitions into and within academia; micro-credentials; participatory action research to create well-being and inclusive communities; community-linked knowledge exchange and assessing climate learning).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are very grateful to the Emerald editorial team for making the book publishing process such a positive experience. The anonymous reviewers are also due thanks for alerting us to aspects in need of further consideration.

The authors of the reflective pieces included in the book have very kindly helped amplify our message about academic citizenship and celebrate the continued value of collaboration, collegiality and service in academia. We are very grateful to them – and to the endorsers of the book – for the sensitive and thoughtful way in which they have contributed their perspective.

We also acknowledge here the invaluable contribution of the interviewees – not directly named in the book – who have helped shape and add depth to the scenarios in Chapter 2, as well as steering our thinking in fruitful directions.

As is the case with any book project, this particular one would not have been possible without support from colleagues, family and friends, who have helped us balance the writing process with other work and life commitments.

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1

A RE-INTRODUCTION TO ACADEMIC CITIZENSHIP

ABSTRACT

Academic citizenship underpins academic life and has received considerable attention in pre-pandemic scholarly literature. The way it has been represented in some of the recently redesigned academic career frameworks, however, does not do justice to its continued relevance in an ever rapidly changing higher education context working to rebuild itself and re-affirm its value in society. In the opening chapter, we map how academic citizenship has been defined in scholarly literature to highlight the richness of the concept and offer a foundation on which readers can build their own contextually relevant definitions. We highlight areas of overlap with two related concepts, 'collegiality' and 'service'.

A range of factors impact on how academic citizenship is understood, experienced and enacted – in short, citizenship means many different things to different people. Citizenship, we note in the book, is recognised (and incentivised) in different ways in universities with

different missions, histories and values. In the opening chapter, we set out the vision of universities which academic citizenship helps to build. We note why/how the term 'universities' is used interchangeably with 'higher education' in the book, while acknowledging the diversity in providers nationally and globally. We unpack different understandings of 'public good', given the ever-increasing role that universities are expected to play in society.

1.1 POINT OF DEPARTURE

During a period of intense (and extended) industrial action in the UK higher education sector, while writing for an educational think-tank, Sterling (2022) reflected that '*There is always more which binds the community than separates it, something which can be easily forgotten*'. That reflective piece re-affirmed the value of academic citizenship as the glue that holds universities and their communities together, going forward into the 21st century. In Sterling et al. (2023) we took the reflection further. Our analysis of recently redeveloped academic career frameworks in several UK universities, supported by the literature pertaining to global higher education, revealed useful insights. Namely, in a pandemic-transformed context, redesigned frameworks offer greater potential to scaffold academic roles, identities, work, professional learning and growth – in service to society. While there was an implicit understanding in these frameworks of the importance of academic citizenship, we found that there was ample space for it to be more visibly included as a catalyst for integrated impact across the range of missions and commitments of universities in society, and to be placed at the core of academic

career frameworks. Such thinking was still in its early stages of acceptance as evident in the uneven adoption in universities across the world.

The general concept of academic citizenship covers a broad range of activities and its meanings have evolved over time. It includes aspects of academic work within and across institutions and disciplinary communities that underpin research activity, direct facilitation of learning as well as various other forms of societal engagement. Citizenship has been described as '*both highly tangible and deeply abstract*' (Feldt et al., 2024, p. 2).[1] Not surprisingly, defining, measuring, evaluating and ultimately rewarding citizenship has been a challenge and continues to be so (Alleman et al., 2017; Macfarlane & Burg, 2018; OECD, 2024). There is also a risk that career frameworks underpinned by an insufficiently nuanced view of academic citizenship perpetuate an individualist, competitive way of being in academia rather than a commitment to community, i.e. in an attempt to quantify citizenship it may be reduced to an itemised list of tasks, often perceived (negatively) as '*academic housekeeping*' (Heijstra et al., 2017a, 2017b), rather than acknowledging the ethos and community-oriented values that underpin it (Peterson, 2021). Similarly, it may be looked at narrowly as internal contribution within an institution, perpetuating a view of academia as an ivory tower rather than paying sufficient attention to externally oriented engagement. An evidence review of academic careers in Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries (OECD, 2024) offers a useful reminder that staffing costs account for two-thirds of higher education expenditure and that career frameworks signal relevant ways to channel that investment towards different

1 Unless otherwise specified, we use 'citizenship' interchangeably with 'academic citizenship' throughout the book.

areas of academic activity (including academic citizenship), to obtain the desired returns.

A question that Macfarlane's (2007a) asked earlier this century – '*what, if anything, do terms like "service" and "academic citizenship" mean to the modern academic?*' (p. 263) – needs revisiting in light of a range of new developments which have since impacted lived experience of higher education, and in many cases have asked more of academics and institutions.[2] Rather than trying to provide a unique definition of citizenship which would lead to unproductive disagreements, we argue that citizenship should be defined at an institutional level. We contend that this enables universities to develop definitions that resonate with their own mission and the specificities of their own geopolitical context, while supporting their contribution to the higher education sector and to society locally, nationally and globally. It also provides a route for individuals to influence the definition and ensure that it aligns with their values (although given the diverse nature of academics we acknowledge that complete alignment is likely to remain only an aspiration). Our book explores the meaning and importance of citizenship through several different and ever evolving lenses. Through these lenses we develop guidelines which will be helpful to universities and individuals.

The guidelines we lay out in our closing chapter drawing on discussion throughout the book are intended to facilitate, among the global academic community, critical engagement and self-reflexivity with regard to academic citizenship. They are intended to support the development of career framework

2 Writing about collegiality and its cognate concepts in the United States, Alleman et al. (2017) make a similar call to '*develop a new and deeper understanding of what the concepts mean and what they might look like in an environment that is much different from the medieval university or the colonial American college*' (p. 89).

policy documents, of other forms of recognising citizenship and the implementation of these in ways that speak to the value of communities. They also aim to shape individual understandings of how to enact citizenship for the wider benefit. Throughout the book, we use the phrase 'academic citizenship' as the overarching concept – a concept which includes the manner in which work is undertaken or support is provided as much as the work or support itself. In the literature on higher education, citizenship is sometimes used interchangeably with 'collegiality' and 'service'; at other times, the three carry specific, distinct meanings. We highlight pre-pandemic meanings and understandings that have become more salient in recent years, and we explore new ways in which these have been – and could be – enacted, recognised and rewarded, to benefit all stakeholders of a university.

The book is the outcome of an extended, often challenging conversation between the authors. We are two academics with substantially different scholarly backgrounds, academic roles and life experiences but a shared interest in academic career frameworks that enable and celebrate mutually beneficial collaboration within academia and between universities and university-external communities. In our conversation, we drew on insights from existing scholarly literature, analysis of strategy documents and career framework documents from various universities across the globe and interviews with purposefully chosen stakeholders. As the writing progressed, we brought others into the conversation, through invited reflective pieces intended to spark further debate about academic citizenship, to increase the visibility of academic citizenship, modelling the collaborative, inclusive ethos that our book wishes to promote. Methodological detail is provided at various points throughout the chapters as well as in the Appendix to this book.

1.2 DEFINING ACADEMIC CITIZENSHIP, COLLEGIALITY AND SERVICE

To guide readers to develop their own, context-relevant definitions of academic citizenship, which we are using as an umbrella term in our book, we start by piecing together insights from scholarly literature about academic citizenship and the overlapping concepts of collegiality and service.[3] The literature reveals the multiple nuances that these carry, as well as differences between how they are theorised, enacted and experienced. The terms are used interchangeably by some authors, and with specific meanings by others, to refer to activities which sustain academic institutions, the higher education sector and higher education's impact in society. Some studies offer detailed examples of different forms that academic citizenship, collegiality and service take. Detail, however, is not consistently available. The *Global Encyclopedia of Public Administration, Public Policy, and Governance* defines academic citizenship as: '*the service that academics perform for their institution, the scientific community, and the larger society*' (Tagliaventi et al., 2019, p. 1). Scholarly discussion about citizenship varies in terms of how it balances attention to these three types of contribution and how fully it mirrors lived experience of citizenship. Defining citizenship in terms of service, which itself is nebulous, is not particularly helpful, however.

3 We accessed scholarly literature written in English, but conveying realities in different national contexts, where understandings of academic citizenship, collegiality and service may carry nuances which are not fully captured in translation. Contributors to Finkelstein and Jones' (2019) volume on academic careers in a global perspective use 'service' in accounts about Canada or China and 'collegiality' with reference to the United Kingdom or Japan, possibly revealing a personal stylistic preference rather than making an explicit conceptual point.

In scholarly writing which explores higher education from a variety of disciplinary angles, collegiality is mentioned more frequently in relation to the community of academics, whereas service relates to a wider range of constituents of the higher education community, who are connected in various ways to a university. Collegiality itself carries multiple meanings. It has primarily been used to refer to governance, the structural arrangements in place to make decisions about the day-to-day running of a university as well as about longer term strategic ambitions and setting a direction of travel (Sahlin & Eriksson-Zetterquist, 2024). Collegiality as governance is contrasted to approaches labelled 'new public managerialist', which have replaced the more traditional collegiate structures originating in mediaeval universities. New public managerialist approaches have created space for professionally trained managers in university staffing plans as well as formal performance-oriented processes. They are partly the outcome of universities looking to achieve the right balance between their charitable status and their responsibilities as corporate bodies. The literature differentiates between vertical collegiality (where decision-making structures are more hierarchical) and horizontal collegiality, where decisions are made in a less stratified way (Cloete et al., 2024).

With a specific focus on the UK context, in recognition that in 21st century higher education discussion about the collegiate governance structures characteristic of old collegiate universities might be perceived as '*romanticised nostalgia, seeking a return to some imagined cloistered past*' (p. 4), Bacon (2014) proposed a form of neo-collegiality which would maintain elements of active participation in decision-making that continue to be relevant while appreciating that the choice of elements and the way they will be (re) introduced will differ from one institution to another. Writing about collegiality in the United Kingdom from the

perspective of organisational change, Burnes et al. (2014) echo the view that collegiality still has substantial potential to support universities' endeavours to respond flexibly to change by '*bring[ing] together the parties concerned in an ethical, democratic and participative manner*' (p. 919). More recently, restoring collegiality is discussed at length in an edited volume by Eriksson-Zetterquist and Sahlin (2024), in contributions written from a sociology of organisations perspective. Eriksson-Zetterquist and Sahlin acknowledge the '*dark sides and limitations of collegiality*' (p. 7), but note that '*when properly practiced, [collegiality] is a way to handle daily disagreements, tensions, debate and scrutiny, and thus make wise decisions*' (p. 19).

In addition to being used with reference to governance, 'collegiality' has been discussed in connection with behaviours that create a harmonious working environment and to the cohesive culture that results. These three manifestations of collegiality – governance, behaviours and culture – are linked to institutional contexts. Collegiality, however, also manifests as a form of intellectual affinity within discipline knowledge communities which transcend departmental and institutional boundaries. The multiple facets of collegiality are reflected in a piece of research by Kligyte (2021), which explores collegiality from a variety of angles: how the academic status quo can be maintained through developing newcomers' understanding of the written and unwritten rules of academia; how collegiality can be channelled towards meeting broader institutional goals as opposed to individual or local departmental ones while ensuring that responsibilities are equitably distributed; creating new knowledge and innovating in a variety of (other) areas of academic work; and embedding academic work, its outcomes and benefits more fully in the broader societal context. Purposefully selected interviewees from Australia and New Zealand, '*whose commitment to collegial practices was*