



# **INTRODUCTION OF AN ACADEMIC TRACK FOR INTERNSHIP IN IRELAND: VIEWS OF UNDERGRADUATE MEDICAL STUDENTS**

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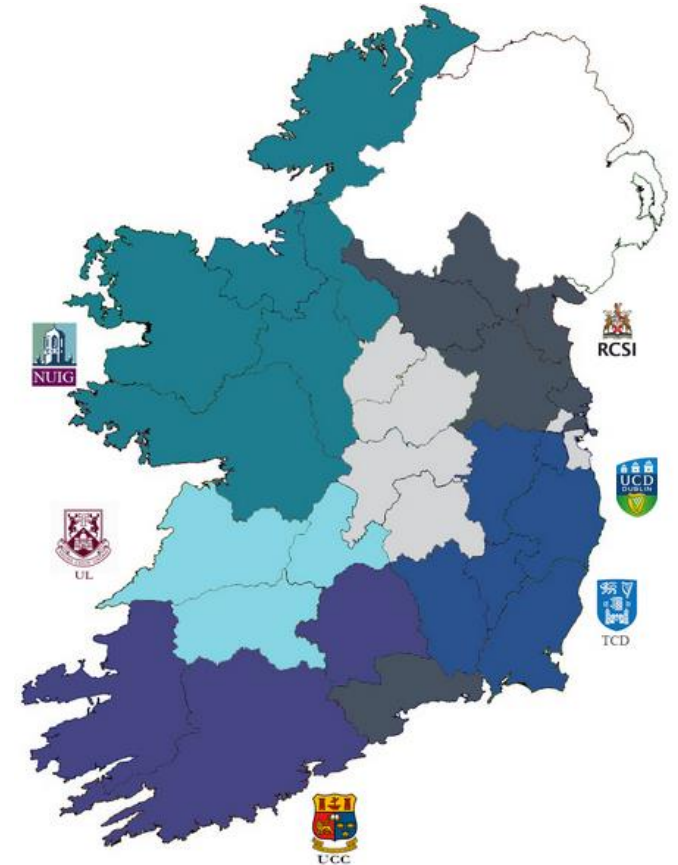
# BACKGROUND

July 2017: Academic Track for Internship in Ireland launched

First programme of its kind for interns in Ireland

Combined clinical and academic training

24 posts nationally: 4 in each of the 6 intern networks



# THE ACADEMIC TRACK OFFERS:

- ❖ Protected time for research project
- ❖ Named research supervisor
- ❖ Bursary
- ❖ Study days and seminars throughout the year
- ❖ 3 streams: Clinical research, Medical education, Healthcare leadership and management

# THE VALUE OF COMBINED CLINICAL/ACADEMIC TRAINING PROGRAMMES

Those who engage early with research continue to do so throughout their career<sup>1,2</sup>

Graduates of the UK's Academic Foundation Programme are far more likely to pursue specialist academic training (12.3 vs. 0.5%)<sup>3</sup>

Early career planning and mentoring for female graduates with an interest in research may help address gender imbalance in academic medicine<sup>4</sup>

Providing such opportunities may help retain medical talent in Ireland<sup>5</sup>

1. Yang et al, 2011; 2. Macknin et al, 2014; 3. UKFP Office, 2015; 4. Drew, 2013; 5. Gouda et al, 2015

# DEVELOPMENT OF THE ACADEMIC TRACK

Input sought from key stakeholders: Intern Network Executive (INE); Medical Council; HSE NDTP

All supported the development of the academic track

Medical students also key stakeholders: their opinions required

Literature review: no studies of the views of medical students regarding postgraduate combined clinical and academic training programmes published to date



# AIM OF STUDY

To investigate the views of undergraduate medical students on the introduction of an academic track for internship in Ireland

# METHODOLOGY

Study population: Undergraduate medical students in Trinity College Dublin in their fourth (penultimate) year of training

Questionnaire design based on literature review and review of UKAFP

Four parts:

- Demographic details
- Knowledge of the UKAFP and Irish academic track
- Expectations of what the academic track would involve and learning needs
- Reasons for and concerns about participating in the academic track

# RESULTS

Response rate = 50/203 (24.6%)

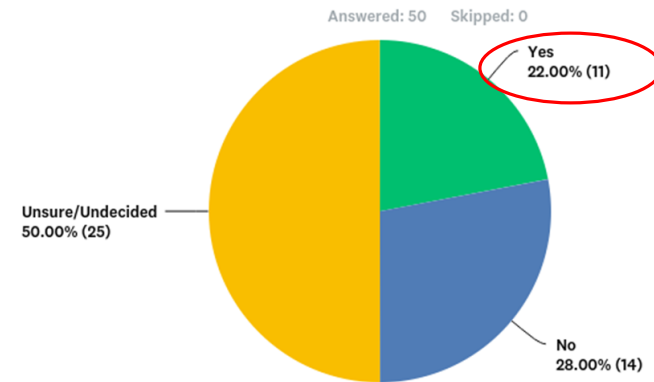
Similar numbers (40% and 41% respectively) were aware of the UKAFP and Irish Academic Track

A greater number of students were considering applying for the Irish Academic Track compared to the UKAFP (50% vs. 22%)

- Yes
- No
- Unsure/  
undecided



Are you considering applying for the Irish academic track?



Are you considering applying for UKAFP?



# RESULTS

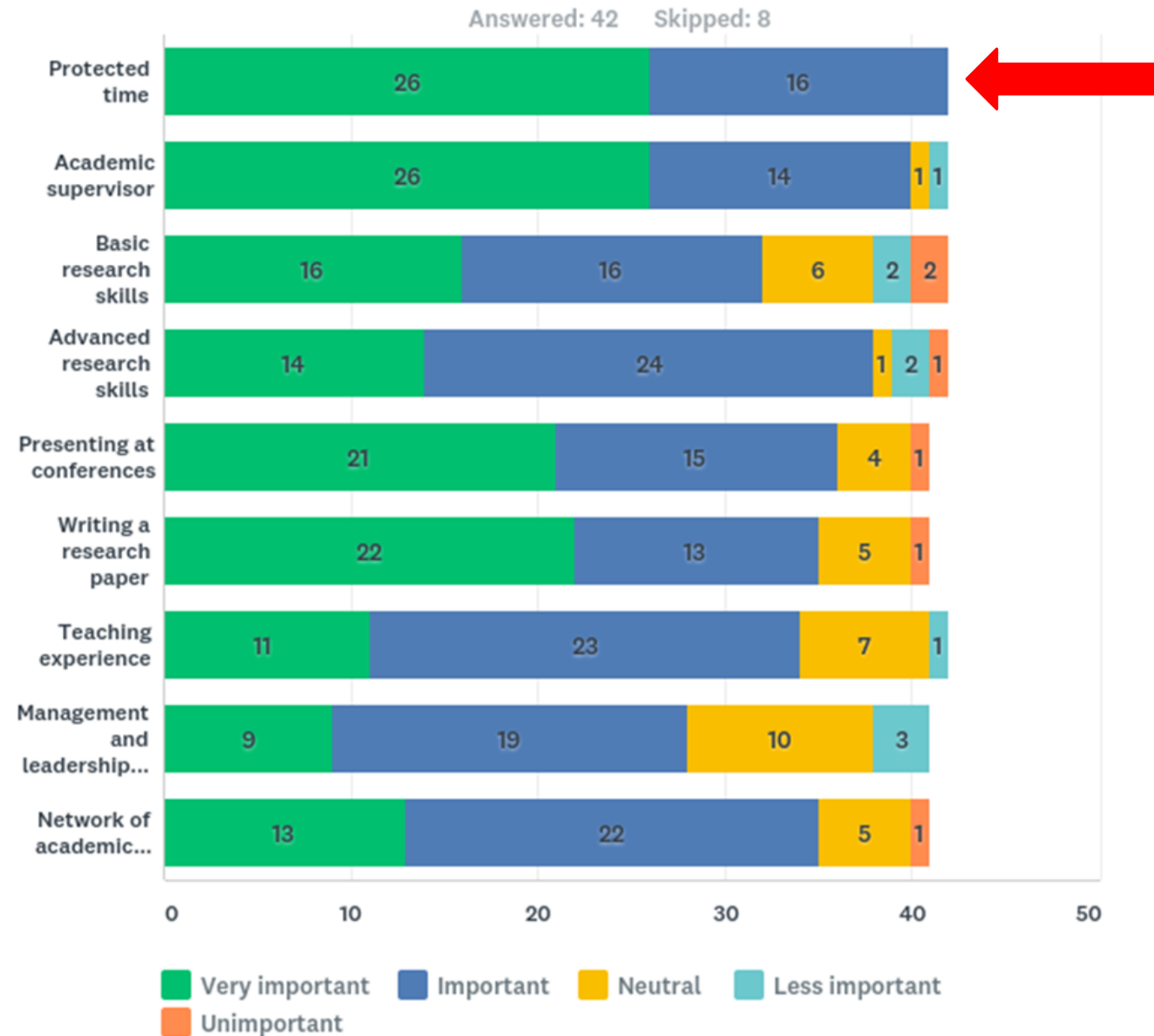
Students asked to rate the importance of different aspects of the academic track on a five part scale from “Unimportant” to “Very Important”

- Protected time for research;
- Presence of a research supervisor;
- Formal training on basic and advanced research skills;
- Presenting at conferences;
- Writing a research proposal or paper;
- Gaining teaching experience;
- Formal training in leadership and management skills; and
- Participation in a network of clinical academic trainees

Highest rated aspect was protected time for research, followed by the presence of a research supervisor

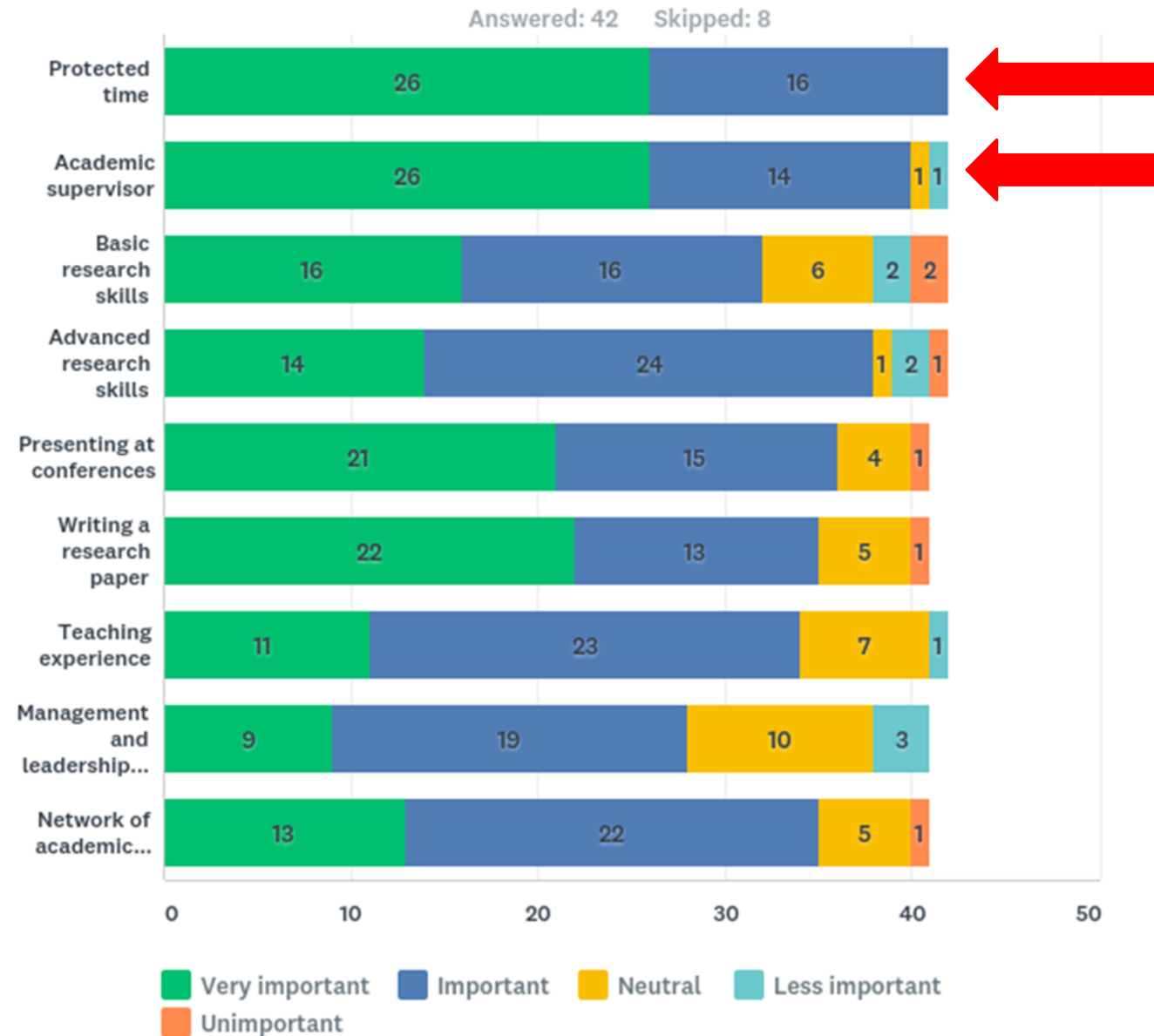
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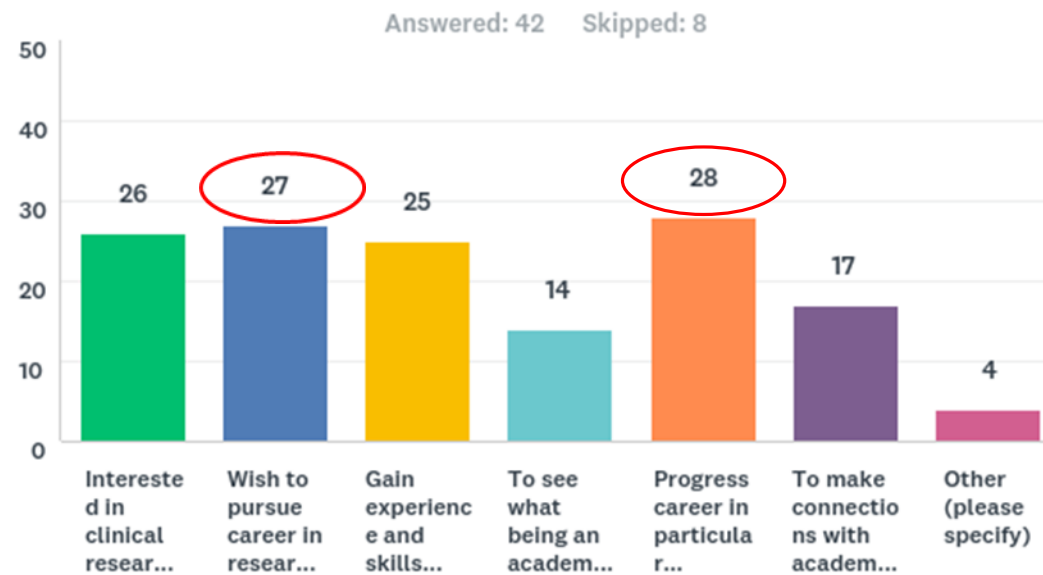
# RESULTS

Respondents asked to select reasons why they would wish to participate in the academic track from the following list:

- Interest in research
- Plans to pursue a career in academic medicine
- To gain experience in clinical research, medical education or healthcare leadership and management
- To see what being an academic clinician is like
- To help progress their career in a particular specialty
- To make connections with researchers or leaders in healthcare
- Other (free text)

# RESULTS

Most common reason was “To progress my career in a particular specialty” (28/42), followed by “I wish to pursue a career in academic medicine” (27/42)



# DISCUSSION: LEVEL OF INTEREST IN ACADEMIC TRACK

Majority of students had no prior knowledge of Irish academic track: had not been launched at time of survey although recruitment process was underway

Greater interest amongst students in Irish academic track compared to UKAFP: recent data suggests that the majority of students graduating from Irish medical schools wish to undertake their internship in Ireland<sup>6</sup>

Results indicate a strong interest in an academic track in Ireland

Potentially a need to increase the number of places which currently represent only 3% of all intern posts

# DISCUSSION: EXPECTATIONS AND LEARNING NEEDS

Protected time highly valued: data shows protected time directly correlates with publication output, which is directly correlated with future academic achievement<sup>2</sup>; lack of time frequently cited as a barrier to clinical research<sup>7,8,9</sup>

Presence of academic supervisor also highly valued

Mentorship known to be associated with academic success<sup>10,11,12</sup>

Protected time and academic supervisor should be considered key components of the academic track

# DISCUSSION: EXPECTATIONS AND LEARNING NEEDS

*“I wish to progress my career in a particular specialty”* was most commonly cited reason for participation in academic track

In Ireland, it is perceived that a proven track record in research is looked upon favourably by prospective employers<sup>13</sup>

*“I wish to pursue a career in academic medicine”* was also frequently cited as a reason for participating in the academic track

The academic track provides a clear career pathway from the earliest career stages

Therefore the academic track may be attractive to top graduates who wish to progress in a particular specialty or pursue a career in academic medicine, thereby retaining this talent in Ireland



# DISCUSSION: STUDY LIMITATIONS

Low response rate (24.6%)

The majority of respondents were interested in pursuing the academic track: students with no interest not likely to participate in survey

Findings should be interpreted with caution

TCD students only: no graduate entrants

Limited awareness of the academic track at the time of survey

# CONCLUSION

Strong interest in a combined clinical academic training programme for interns: may indicate need to increase places

Protected time and academic supervisor are key components of the programme

The academic track is seen as a valuable opportunity: may help retain medical talent in Ireland

Further research required e.g. following the career progression of graduates of the programme

# ACADEMIC INTERNS 2017/18

