

GENDER EQUALITY PLAN

January 2022

Publication and official endorsement of the Gender Equality Plan

The University of Chester's Gender Equality Plan (GEP) is published on the University of Chester website [here](#). This publication of the GEP on our website publicly signals our commitment to gender equality and enables proper accountability against the plan's aims and objectives by the University's staff, partners, stakeholders and the wider community.

Note: Throughout, where we refer to data analysis, we draw upon data collected for HESA – which relates to sex, and have used the terms female/male. Elsewhere we use the terms women/men in an inclusive sense of gender identity.

The University of Chester's commitment to Gender Equality

The University's Vice Chancellor has signed her commitment to the principles of the GEP and nominates the Director of Human Resources (HR) as Strategic Executive Team lead to take the plan forward. The University's Strategic Executive Team has full responsibility for the implementation of the commitments set out in the GEP. It will be accountable for the success of the GEP within the organisation and with its key stakeholders, such as the governing body, funding bodies, trade unions and student associations.

The University of Chester is committed to creating a positive and inclusive working environment as well as gender budgeting, a management strategy aiming to integrate a gender perspective into the financial processes and procedures of institutions. This instrument for advancing gender equality can create new approaches to policy and decision-making related to raising and allocating resources and identifying gender inequalities in resourcing and workload. Gender budgeting goes beyond addressing the gender gap in distributions of earnings and other remunerations among staff and acknowledges that financial decisions and procedures, including research funding allocation, are political processes that may produce gendered outcomes and inequalities.

Communication of the University of Chester Gender Equality Plan

As well as the GEP being published on the University's website, it will also be actively disseminated and communicated across the University with the Strategic Executive Team's support for the plan made clear. The Vice Chancellor's communication to all staff and students will be clear that delivering the commitments and actions set out in the GEP is the responsibility of every staff member within the organisation, at all levels, and that they will be held accountable for implementation of the GEP within their Faculties and Departments. The expectations and resources allocated to the implementation of the plan are clearly set out in this document along with the review processes for ensuring that gender equality remains a priority focus at the University.

The objectives and desired outcomes of the GEP

As a result of developing the University of Chester Gender Equality Plan, the following actions will now be incorporated into the University's Athena Swan action plan. The action plan includes specific commitments, goals, actions and resources dedicated to improving gender equality within the organisation and its activities.

Compiling these documents into one will ensure streamlined assessment through the Athena Swan SAT and ensure all documentation relating to gender equality is in one place:

Athena Swan action plan point	Additional/ Revised action
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2	In addition to the <i>What Has Athena Swan got to do with me?</i> Campaign, build in plans informing the University staff and students about the existence of the GEP, its main aims, areas of intervention and timeframes. This will be conducted in March 2022 as part of the university's Diversity Festival and will include a public session to present it to staff, with the participation of senior management and leadership to increase staff commitment. Ongoing communication will follow, as part of Athena Swan campaign.
Added 3a	Collect and analyse data on number of absence days taken by women and men and according to absence motive
11	Develop guidance on inclusive language around the organisation in relation to gender but also other forms of identity and diversity.
12	Amend positive action guide to include 'scouting' - identifying women in underrepresented fields, including active scouting of women through, e.g., field-specific internet sites.
15	To consider issues such as visibility of women in activities such as expert panels and public outreach, the visibility of women on the new Research and Knowledge Exchange Institute pages will be reviewed, with a consideration of how images could more effectively convey researcher status. The distribution of news items highlighting staff who are women will also be enhanced.
29	Review whether social practices are welcoming and inclusive for all staff.
22	Involve gender equality expertise in recruitment and promotion committees to ensure/ report on the equal consideration given to candidates of all genders, including, for example, the type, frequency, and quality of the questions asked of all candidates, or in the case of promotion processes, the remarks made about candidates for career progression, and any gender biases observed
22	Amend shortlisting guidance and criteria to require departments and committees to justify recruitment and promotion shortlists that do not include women (and other under-represented groups)
22	Review Recruitment and selection procedure to consider implementing a policy of re-advertising if there are no applicants of the under-represented gender in the applicant pool
22 & 31	Collect and analyse data on number of men and women on recruitment and promotion panels
33	Collect and analyse data on number of training hours/credits attended by women and men
43	Review processes for the reintegration of staff after career breaks, including proactive mentoring and support.
55	Examine committee decision-making processes to ensure decisions consider gender issues and women are empowered to take an equal role.
55	Examine and adapt processes and procedures for selection and appointment of staff on committees and other bodies, including an audit of the work of committees and decision-making bodies to assess the inclusiveness of their practices and outcomes; reviewing the selection processes of committees and decision bodies specifically; making appointments to committees on a fixed term basis to ensure that membership changes regularly.
55	Ensure that membership and minutes of key committees are published more widely and openly on websites with consideration given to information relating to conditions for applying and the evaluation criteria
57	Ensure that leadership and decision-making roles are properly recognised in evaluations of work, including in relation to generation of research funding and outputs

Data Collection and Monitoring

The University of Chester collects and publishes disaggregated data on the sex and/or gender of staff and students and carries out annual reporting. This data enables scrutiny of the differences between men and women in different roles, directorates and at different levels of the University both for staff and students.

The University of Chester collects this data to:

- Establish a baseline situation in relation to gender equality in the organisation, against which progress can be monitored on an annual basis;
- Carrying out a gender equality analysis to identify areas of relative strength and weakness, which will allow better targeting of actions and priorities focussed on gender equality and ensure that it is fully evidence-based;
- Communicate to the University's staff, students and other key stakeholders and the wider public about the organisation's commitment to gender equality and the progress made;
- Perform better in meeting its Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED).

The importance of collecting intersectional data is also acknowledged.

The University of Chester collects and reports data on the following:	Website publication link:
Staff numbers by sex/gender at all levels, by disciplines, function (including administrative / support staff) and by contract type	Athena Swan
Average numbers of years needed for women and men to make career advancements (per grade and by discipline)	Athena Swan
Pay gaps by sex/gender and job	Gender pay gap report
Numbers of staff by sex/gender in academic and administrative decision-making positions (e.g. Strategic Executive team, boards, committees)	Athena Swan
Numbers of female and male candidates applying for distinct job positions	Athena Swan
Numbers of staff by sex/gender having left the University in past years, specifying the numbers of years spent in the University	Athena Swan
Numbers of staff by sex/gender applying for/taking parental leave, for how long and how many returned after taking the leave	Athena Swan
Number of female and male students at all levels and for all disciplines, and academic and employment outcomes	Athena Swan and Access and Participation Plan
Numbers of staff by sex/gender among employed researchers	Athena Swan
Numbers of staff by sex/gender among applicants to research positions, among persons recruited and success rate, including by academic field, academic position, and contract status	Athena Swan
Numbers of staff by sex/gender in recruitment or promotion boards, heads of recruitment or promotion boards and share of decision-making bodies, including by scientific field.	Athena Swan

The HR Manager – Development and Diversity, is responsible for obtaining the relevant data, maintained in accordance with GDPR and other data protection legislation, provided by the University’s HR Management Information Systems (MIS) teams and Student MIS teams

Once gathered, the data is analysed by the SAT to establish an understanding of the key differences and gaps between women and men within the University and its activities. This analysis will help to guide the key priorities for the GEP and to adjust these priorities as the situation evolves over time.

Dedicated Resources

At the University of Chester, the GEP has dedicated resources and expertise in gender equality to implement the plan. Responsibility for developing and leading the plan as well as supporting specific measures sits with the HR Manager – Development and Diversity, reporting to the Strategic Leadership Team member, the Director of HR. Coordinated by the HR Manager – Development and Diversity, the audit, planning, implementation, monitoring and review of the GEP will be undertaken by the University’s Athena Swan Self-Assessment Team (SAT). With representatives from each University Faculty as well as representatives from professional services functions, the SAT ensures that expertise is drawn upon from staff from different parts of the University to support the delivery of the plan. The SAT team have time allocated to develop and implement the GEP

The above named will ensure that all staff are aware that promoting gender equality is the responsibility of every staff member within the University. In doing this, the SAT ensure that staff from across the University may be engaged in various steps, from reviewing existing data and practices, to identifying areas for attention and establishing the GEP’s objectives. The SAT is gender balanced and, as appropriate, members will facilitate wider university discussion and working groups to review specific issues, for example organisational culture, and to develop new policies and or practices with the input of different parts of the University.

Progress on the Gender Equality Plan

The GEP has been published on the University’s website since June 2022 and thereafter, the University’s annual Equality Report will incorporate regular GEP progress reports. Regular reports allow ongoing review of the impact of the plan as well as keeping the wider community informed and engaged in the organisation’s progress towards gender equality. Progress reports will include qualitative information alongside quantitative data, such as updates on human resource data disaggregated by sex and monitoring data to keep track of the implementation of key actions.

Training

The University of Chester provided mandatory equality and unconscious bias training for staff to ensure all staff understand the core principles of equality, diversity and inclusion. This has included all decision-makers, from April - September 2021. 76 % of staff completed this training and the University acknowledges that due to turnover, sickness absence, maternity leave etc it is not possible to expect 100% attendance. The commitment of resources to provide this training acknowledged that all staff, leaders and decision-makers have a role to play in identifying practices, cultures and unconscious gender biases that cause disadvantage to women (and other protected groups) and supported staff to reflect on how they can implement more inclusive approaches in their own roles within the university, further reinforcing the above point that promoting gender equality is the responsibility of every staff member within the University. As the training was mandatory, it engaged the whole University staff body at all levels and roles across. This one-off training is then built upon with an ongoing annual programme including numerous gender-focussed sessions in the University’s annual Diversity Festival, which includes an International Women’s Day

event and several events delivered in collaboration with the University's Institute of Gender Studies, as well as a comprehensive EDI training provision.

All Chairs and members of Recruitment and progression panels undergo mandatory Diversity and Equality Training, refreshed every 3 years.

The Diversity Festival 2021 included a session entitled *The Race to End the Motherhood Penalty: How not to get Pregnant Then Screwed with Joeli Brearley*, available [here](#) and the University's supportive Parents' and Carers' Networks ensure that training is delivered to key managers and decisions makers which reflect the needs and views of staff within these groups, as well as ensuring these groups input into policy and decision making.

The University's Women's Network allows the sharing of expertise and supports women's career progression and development. In addition, Imposter Syndrome sessions are held frequently with the Diversity Festival.

The University delivers a range of sessions focussed on Leadership and decision making. The in-house Certificate in Supervisory and Leadership (Level 4) and Postgraduate Diploma in Leadership and Management in Higher Education (Level 7) delivered by members of the University's Leadership and Organisational Development Team in collaboration with the Work Based and Integrative Studies (WBIS) department of the Faculty of Business, showed that 86% of those promoted after undertaking the programme were women.

The University's [Senior Leadership Team](#), referred to as the University as Strategic Executive Team, is gender balanced ensuring that within the University of Chester women *are* perceived as leaders.

All staff are made aware of activities that raise awareness of gender equality issues and University approaches to address them through Athena Swan activities and the annual Diversity Festival.

Work-life balance and organisational culture

A key component of the transformation of the University's culture for advancing gender equality is work-life balance. Work-life balance is relevant for both women and men and involves ensuring that all staff are properly supported to advance their career alongside personal responsibilities that they may hold outside of the workplace, including caring responsibilities.

As part of the Athena Swan SAT, the following work-life balance policies and practices are periodically analysed, reviewed and addressed

- Family Leave Policies (Maternity Leave; Adoption Leave; Shared Parental Leave; KIT/SPLIT Days Guidance; Paternity/Co-Parenting Leave; Parental Leave; Time Off for Dependents)
- Fixed term contracts (Athena Swan data)
- Flexible working time arrangements, including how departmental processes, procedures and practices impact on staff with caring responsibilities or part-time workers, and remote working;
- Support for caring responsibilities, including childcare and care for other dependents – the University's proactive Parents' and Carers' networks ensure this objective is fulfilled.
- Workload management, including how different tasks are allocated and distributed, such as teaching and administrative versus research workloads in universities;
- Advice and support on work-life balance.

The University works hard to ensure a respectful, open, and welcoming organisational culture that is sensitive to a variety of gender identities and does not consider women and men as homogeneous groups. The University strategy as well as the EDI and Health University strategies all ensure that all staff feel valued and welcomed at work. The University's Dignity and Respect Policy sets out expectations for the behaviour of staff and managers.

Gender balance in leadership and decision-making

The University's Athena Swan documents show the gender breakdown of Professors and Associate Professors at the University of Chester.

The University's Vice Chancellor, Deputy Vice Chancellor, one Pro Vice Chancellor and Director of Human Resources, all part of the University's Strategic Executive Team, are all women, highlighting that women are well represented in decision-making at the top of the University. 12.5% of Faculty Deans are women, highlighting an area for improvement and 50% Directors of Professional Services functions are also women.

The Athena Swan survey analysed the types of barriers that exist to ensuring women are represented in decision-making and leadership positions, including structural, institutional and individual barriers, responses can be viewed [here](#) along with resulting targets which have been set as part of the detailed Athena Swan action plan to promote gender balance and achieve targets in leadership and decision-making roles across the University, with responsible person/s identified.

At the University of Chester all decision-makers and leaders, particularly Committee members and Chairs, are provided with Diversity and Equality, including gender equality training. This helps to mitigate (unconscious) selection biases, but also raises awareness and understanding of the gender dynamics at play in interactions during meetings.

The Athena Swan action plan identifies areas where target increases in the number of women represented in a particular area and has implemented a Positive Action Guide for recruitment and promotion, which provides information on targeted advertising and through succession planning, actively seeking and identifying women candidates suited to roles in decision-making and leadership positions

The Athena Swan action plan includes actions on the University's promotions procedures, ensuring there is clarity for those wishing to apply.

Leadership programmes for women are available at the University (WBIS programmes detailed above) or via the University-funded AdvanceHE Aurora programme to help enhance their leadership competences and explore individual leadership styles. Leadership mentoring and peer networking opportunities are also available through the mentoring processes and Women's Network within the University.

Gender equality in recruitment and career progression

The University of Chester recognises that women face systemic discrimination and structural barriers along their career path. Recruitment, selection and career progression measures within the University aim to ensure that women and men get equal chances to develop and advance their careers.

The Athena Swan SAT continue to critically review existing selection processes and procedures at all stages and work toward remedying any biases

The University's Athena Swan application and action plan reviews, explores and outlines:

- Targets set in terms of recruitment of women and progression into senior roles and the inclusive and proactive measures that can be implemented to achieve these targets.
- Recruitment and promotion- the University of Chester has clear policies and codes of conduct for recruitment and promotion. The clearly defined principles within these documents increases transparency and helps avoid unconscious biases.
- Mandatory unconscious bias training for all recruiters, including reviewing language used in adverts and being aware of language biases in recommendation letters
- Ensuring open and publicly advertised recruitment and selection procedures over closed ones.
- Positive action measures to increase the number of potential women candidates by broadening the disciplinary range of recruitment in fields where women are underrepresented.
- A move toward anonymous shortlisting in University Recruitment software
- Ensuring that search and appointment panels are gender-balanced, or if not possible, including a minimum number of the under-represented gender.
- Ensuring that administrative responsibilities, student supervision and marking workloads are transparent and valued alongside research outputs.
- Considering organisation-wide workload planning models to promote transparency and fairness, by enabling an equitable and transparent spread of workload between academic staff that is consistent between departments.

Evaluation and appraisal for researchers also considers:

- Within the Equality Statement of the Professorial and Associate Professorial Appointment Procedure 2021, in the case of part time staff, expectations regarding quality will be the same as those for full time staff, but expectations regarding the quantity of work will be lower. In assessing part time staff against the criteria, the Academic Titles Committee will take account of any part time working leading up to the application and will use their judgement in each case.
- Within the Code of Practice for REF2021, it is asserted that there are many reasons why an excellent researcher may have fewer or more outputs attributable to them in an assessment period. Consequently, the University does not set expectations of individuals in respect to their contribution to the pool of outputs, and therefore the University does not need procedures to adjust expectations on the basis of individual circumstances.
- With a significant proportion of staff on teaching and research contracts coming from professional rather than traditional academic backgrounds, the University are very mindful of this and place great value on professional as well as academic experience.
- As signatories of the Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA), the University recognizes the need to improve the ways in which researchers and the outputs of scholarly research are evaluated. Consequently, the University does not rely solely on metrics such as publication citations or journal impact factors as a method of assessing quality. As a "teaching-led, research informed" university, the quality rather than the quantity of research is always of greatest importance.
- Whilst the Professorial and Associate Professorial Appointment Procedure captures well the breadth of soft skills associated with Research, the Academic Promotions Procedure does not. Consequently, we plan to review how this document could better capture the breadth of soft skills associated with research. At present, there is no weighting to particular criteria.

Integration of the gender dimension into research and teaching content

The University of Chester is taking steps to ensure, where reasonably practicable, that the gender dimension is integrated into the research activities of the organisation, and considers:

- The development of internal training on grant and bid development that also promotes the gender dimension as a compulsory consideration.
- Introducing a section on gender considerations within the Expression of Interest (EOI) applications forms currently under development.
- Identifying a suitable representative for equality matters within each of the recently established Research and Knowledge Exchange Institutes (RKEIs).
- Including the HR Manager- Development and Diversity, as a member of the Knowledge Exchange (KE) Taskforce that encompasses matters relating to equality and diversity within its Terms of Reference.
- The profile of the gender dimension will be raised through news and events will be included in the repurposed Research and Knowledge Exchange Newsletter in 2022.

Measures against gender-based violence including sexual harassment

The University has an Unacceptable Behaviours taskforce (UBT) to combat gender-based violence and sexual harassment and the University has a Dignity and Respect Policy to outline the process for anyone to follow who experiences or witnesses behaviour that violates any individual's dignity or that creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.

Through the work of the UBT, the University examines the prevalence of sexual harassment and other forms of gender-based violence and takes further steps to ensure that we have clear policies and measures on sexual harassment that address the following dimensions:

- **Behaviours:** The University's Staff Code of Conduct, Personal Relationships Policy and Dignity and Respect Policy establishes and codifies the expected behaviours of employees including the actions that are considered sexual harassment, in addition to the existence of the Dignity and Respect Policy. The Student Code of Conduct and Student Disciplinary Procedure operate for students and all these policies, under the work of the UBT, were reviewed in summer 2021 in line with the Office for Students *Statement of expectation for preventing and addressing harassment and sexual misconduct affecting students in higher education*.
- **Reporting:** The University's Dignity and Respect policy outlines how all members of the organisation can report instances of sexual harassment, including where they are the victim of harassment or witness harassment. A new online [reporting tool](#), available from early 2022 enables clear, visible, and robust reporting channels for both staff and students, addressing barriers to reporting, reiterating that that reports will be taken seriously, and giving the option to report anonymously with clear guidance on what can be done to investigate anonymous reports.
- **Investigation:** The Dignity and Respect policy sets out visible and easy to understand information for all staff and students about the investigatory and decision-making process, including associated timescales. The policy can set out arrangements to ensure investigations are independent and fair and clarify the range of actions that may result from the investigation, as well as information about appeal processes and how this can be accessed. The same process is followed for students via the Student Code of Conduct and Student Disciplinary Procedure.

- Support for victims: The policies outlined above give clear advice and information on the options which are available to victims or witnesses when a report has been made. This includes what practical support is available, such as counselling or other forms of pastoral support, both within the University (for students) or through external organisations (the University's Employee Assistance Programme or Occupational Health) and how staff or students are signposted towards it.
- Disciplinary measures and prosecution: The University has a clear Disciplinary Policy for Students and a clear Disciplinary Policy for staff.
- Bystander training is provided annually through the Diversity Festival and additional training will be provided through the University's UBT work.
- The University's [Respect](#) campaign is part of a broader campaign and awareness-raising to communicate these issues and expectations to the wider University and student community in order to establish a culture of zero tolerance toward sexual harassment and gender-based violence.
- The University's was awarded funding via the Police & Crime Commissioner's Office to improve student safety via the Government's 'Safer Streets' initiative in December 2021. One of the priorities of the bid will be to deliver training for staff and students around unacceptable behaviours, commencing January 2022.

Kathryn Leighton
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