

University of Leicester: Athena SWAN Bronze Award May 2008

The context

The University of Leicester employs approximately 3,600 staff. There are 861 academic and research staff located in the SET areas including 376 in the Medical School. The University has 19,000 students with 3,046 located in the Medicine & Biological Sciences Faculty and 1,979 in the Science Faculty. Whilst each faculty has a distinct identity there are a number of interdisciplinary activities between the two.

What the data indicates

- Across SET departments at Leicester the current representation of female staff at Lecturer level is 25%, decreasing to 9% at Professorial grade (though this has almost doubled in the past 4 years).
- The Department of Psychology demonstrates a dramatic 'leaky pipeline', with a high number of women undergraduate and postgraduate students, and low representation of female staff, especially at the level of Reader and Professor.

Support for women at key career transition points

- The University is undertaking a complete review of its recruitment policy. A number of issues that may generate barriers for women are being considered. They include better gender representation on panels, open monitoring of outcomes of recruitment, detailed examination of frequently used criteria that might adversely impact upon women, and how men and women might be encouraged to apply for posts where they are heavily under represented.
- When vacancies occur for lectureships, appropriate internal candidates are encouraged, through mentoring, to apply. Where they are unsuccessful feedback is offered. Such encouragement extends to those working flexibly, part time or currently on a career break.

Changing the culture and gender balance in decision making

- The University recognised that its data collection and reporting of all equality metrics had not been fully developed. To address this, a comprehensive Equality Data Management Scheme was approved by the University's Equal Opportunities Committee. One important element of the Scheme is to make equality metrics widely available. For instance it is intended that they will become regular items for discussion at Faculty and University Equal Opportunity Committee meetings. These metrics will of course indicate gender specific outcomes and Committees will be encouraged to utilise such data to challenge current practices.
- The University's promotion panels for academic staff have been reviewed and gender representation is a stated criterion for membership. The current female representation of the two relevant panels is 20% and 33%. The University is mindful of the need to reach equal representation without burdening eligible females.