

University of Nottingham, School of Mechanical, Materials and Manufacturing Engineering (M3): Athena SWAN Silver Award May 2008

The context

The School is one of the premier engineering departments in the UK, combining expertise in mechanical, materials and manufacturing engineering. It has an international reputation for the high quality of its teaching, graduates and research, and was awarded a rating of 5A in the 2001 RAE.

The School has over 50 academics, nearly 80 Research Associates and Fellows, 90 support staff and about 850 students.

What the data indicates

- Double the UK average of female undergraduate and postgraduate students in engineering departments
- Increase in female academic and research staff of 5% over 3 years, and the retention of 2 female professors in a very male-dominated discipline
- Women are overrepresented on fixed term contracts

Support for women at key career transition points

- The School has consistently supported a range of flexible working arrangements, and both male and female staff have moved between full and part time working. Examples of part-time working include extended lunch breaks to enable care of elderly relatives, variable hours to enable staff to complete school pick-up, and a gradual change in hours to facilitate the return to full time working to parents of young children.

Changing the culture and gender balance in decision making

- The School implements a transparent workload model which allows new members of staff to be allocated a reduced teaching and administrative load, and records cover for staff absent on maternity leave. The model is accessible by all staff and takes into account the number of contact hours, number of students on the module and time taken to mark coursework and examinations. It includes all aspects of teaching, including project supervision and pastoral care responsibilities, such as tutorial support, along with administrative loads, including membership of committees, course directorships and roles such as admissions or examinations.

Work-life balance

- The School ensures that all key meetings, such as the staff meeting, the research affairs group and the School management group, are held between the family friendly hours of 10am – 4pm.