

University of Reading: Athena SWAN Bronze Award May 2008

The context

The University of Reading is a medium sized research focused university with SET activity organised by School in the Faculty of Science and the Faculty of Life Sciences. The total number of employees within the university across all categories is 5364 (53% female). The total research and academic staff number is 1324 (39% female) and in SET the total research and academic staff number is 687 (35% female).

What the data indicates

- At all academic grades across the university males outnumber females, although at lecturer level the numbers are approximately equal.
- There are no female research staff in mathematical or computer sciences.
- Data for the promotion of staff in SET indicates that women are put forward at a higher percentage than their presence in the department would indicate and that, overall, their success rate is greater than for their male counterparts.

Support for women at key career transition points

- The university has long been involved in initiatives to support women returners including the Daphne Jackson Fellowships and, more recently, collaboration with the UKRC for Women in SET Women Returners' Scheme, whereby women returners in the area are offered access to university Staff Training Courses and careers advice and may be offered work placements as part of reskilling or through the Knowledge Transfer Partnership Scheme.
- The Certificate in Research Career Management is a course for research staff and is accredited by the Staff and Educational Development Association. It is run by the University Centre for Staff Training and Development in conjunction with the Careers Advisory Service. It aims to improve effectiveness at managing research projects and improve personal and career development skills.

Changing the culture and gender balance in decision making

- The issue of timetabling came to light where a female lecturer working part-time was scheduled to teach at 9 am which was outside of her contractual hours when other full time colleagues have their entire timetable in the middle of the day. Timetabling is now undertaken centrally and there is a new requirement that the Head of School should sign off periods of unavailability for teaching of individual academics to make timetabling fairer.
- The University investigated gender balance on a selection of key decision making bodies. They found that the average ratio of female:male was 36:64. This investigation is now being extended to all committees and will also look at how committee membership is determined.
- The 'Blackboard' virtual learning environment is being developed as a mechanism for offering information, announcements and discussions.