

THE UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER**Submission Report for Athena SWAN Bronze Award****1. THE SELF-ASSESSMENT PROCESS****(a) *How the assessment was undertaken***

Having achieved SWAN Charter membership in March 2008, the University embarked immediately on the preparation of an application for a Bronze Award. We established a fairly large self-assessment team in order to achieve good coverage of our three SET Faculties and 15 SET Schools, together with representation of staff at every career stage, from Research Associate to Deputy President & Deputy Vice-Chancellor. A small working group was drawn from the self-assessment team. This group met face-to-face, shared ideas and experiences, reflected on the University's strengths and weaknesses with regard to the representation of women in the SET disciplines, scrutinised the gender statistics and identified courses of action; they then critically evaluated successive drafts of the submission. The remainder of the self-assessment team formed a consultative panel, receiving drafts of the application and providing extensive critical commentary.

The members of the self-assessment team, with brief biographical descriptions, are listed in Annex C.

(b) *How issues for action were identified*

At the first meeting of the working group, a member with childcare responsibilities described their experience of flexible working. It became clear that practice was variable not just across the SET Schools but even within them. Therefore the group decided to conduct a survey of flexible working among academic staff in the three SET Faculties (see section 4. 'Flexible Working Survey', below).

Other actions will follow from the findings of the Women in Leadership Project (see 3a(i) below) and from work being done in individual Faculties (see 3a(ii) below).

(c) *Special factors: Project Unity*

In October 2004 the Victoria University of Manchester and UMIST came together to form the new University of Manchester. The Victoria University's 40 departments, and UMIST's 20 departments were completely restructured into four very large Faculties comprising 22 Schools. Three of the Faculties and 15 of the Schools provide the home for the University's SET disciplines. So Manchester is a full-service university with a very strong science base.

Both heritage universities had their own HR information systems which were not compatible. This means that the earliest date for which we have baseline staff data is July 2006.

(d) *Level of award*

The University is applying for a Bronze Award as this is its first application. A number of Schools have already expressed their eagerness to apply for a Silver Award. The experience gained through this application should provide a sound foundation for subsequent applications.

3. WHAT THE UNIVERSITY HAS ACHIEVED

3(a) Special initiatives

(i) *Women in Leadership (WiL) Project*

This Project, which ran from February 2005 to July 2007 had three aims:

- To increase the number of women with the aspiration, knowledge, skills and experience to be able to apply for a senior management post with a chance of success that is equal to their male peers.
- To create a working environment in which both men and women feel comfortable.
- To remove any identified organisational or procedural barriers to the appointment of women to leadership and management roles.

These aims relate closely to Charter principles (i) and (ii):

- (i) 'To address gender inequalities requires commitment and action from everyone, at all levels of the organisation'
- (ii) To tackle the unequal representation of women in science requires changing cultures and attitudes across the organisation.'

During the 2¹/₂ years that it ran, the Project

- identified some of the obstacles to academic women's career progression;
- examined aspects of maternity leave, the return to work and part-time working;
- analysed the University's employment data in relation to gender, grade, and academic discipline;
- offered coaching for individual women;
- established a mentoring scheme in which 32 senior women (27 of them in SET disciplines) were matched with male and female professors within the University who had substantial experience of leadership and management;
- provided informal career development workshops for women academics on topics such as, 'Establishing and developing your profile in science', 'Making your voice heard and your opinions count', 'Developing an international research reputation in science', 'Combining an academic career with childcare responsibilities', 'Dealing with challenging situations in the workplace'. The Project was not restricted to SET but there was an excellent take-up by women in our 15 SET disciplines, with 76 attending several workshops, a number of which were geared to their specific interests.

The activity of the Project led to a set of 30 operational recommendations. These were adopted by the Board of Governors and Senate in November 2006. One change to the working environment relates to the 'long-hours' culture, which is particularly prevalent in laboratory-based subjects. In such circumstances, it is important that the working day is not further lengthened by the scheduling of obligatory meetings. Therefore, a recommendation to Schools was:

'That there should be agreement about what constitutes the normal working day and that meetings which people are required to attend should not be routinely or frequently scheduled outside those hours.'

A survey of progress on the implementation of the Project's recommendations in June 2007 produced a number of responses like this from a Head of School:

'The School Board now meets at 2.00 p.m. rather than from 4.00 p.m. to 6.00 p.m.'

As an example of an organisational barrier to promotion that was removed through the work of the Project, we can cite an amendment to the University's regulations for the supervision of PhD students. It had been the normal expectation that a supervisor held a full-time academic post. Although this might initially seem a minor limitation on a part-time work profile, it would be extremely difficult to be promoted to a senior lectureship or a chair without evidence of successful PhD supervision. Also an academic who has not successfully supervised a PhD student is debarred by many universities from being an external examiner of doctoral theses. PhD supervision is also an expectation of many grant-awarding bodies. As women who have young children experience great difficulty in attending international conferences or working in laboratories abroad, they need to be able to compensate for these omissions from their CV. Being successful PhD supervisors and sought-after external examiners is one way in which they can strengthen their CV. After this case was made by the Project, the regulation was changed so that now part-time academics are permitted to supervise PhD students.

(ii) Faculty Initiatives

All three SET Faculties have their own gender equality initiatives. The Faculty of Engineering and Physical Sciences (EPS) has drawn up an Equality and Diversity Action Plan which was approved by the Faculty Leadership Team in March 2008.

The Action Plan covers three areas:

- learning about the current staff profile
- reviewing existing procedures and processes,
- building on existing practices to enhance and develop an inclusive culture.

Under each of these headings, specific actions have been identified, e.g. a programme of awareness raising for managers, career development workshops, mentoring and coaching programmes and promotion of flexible working arrangements.

The Plan includes baseline statistics for the Faculty. The Faculty has agreed that, at each academic grade, it will aim to achieve the proportion of women at the grade below. For example, at Lecturer A, the proportion of women is 24%, so this figure becomes the short-term objective for Lecturer B, where the proportion is currently 19%. The next step will be for action plans to be devised by each School. Some are already well advanced. For example, Chemistry recently had a gender audit by the Royal Society of Chemistry (in conjunction with Athena); Physics and Astronomy has achieved Juno Supporter status and is working towards Juno Champion level.

The Faculty of Life Sciences (FLS) has identified two senior professors, one male and one female, as 'gender champions' to support its initiatives to achieve a better gender balance. One such is the Faculty Open Forum, currently entitled Women in Science. The inaugural meeting was held in March 2008 when a number of actions were agreed in areas such as childcare and mentoring.

Following the publication of the WiL Project Report in November 2006 (see 3a(i) above), the Faculty of Medical and Human Sciences (MHS) established a Faculty-wide group in order to review its proposals and make recommendations for their implementation. The group included senior academic representation from each of their five Schools and the Faculty's Head of HR. A report containing 21 recommendations for action was approved by the Faculty Management Team.

(iii) The WiSET programme

WiSET is a network for all female students, researchers and academic staff in EPS. Originally funded by the DfES to support more women into SET careers, it is now in its third year. It aims to provide female students and research assistants with access to development through networking with female academic scientists and with women working in science and engineering communities.

WiSET has also provided training on topics such as academic presentation skills and marketing yourself effectively and has showcased inspirational women working in the SET community and in academia. This programme aims to increase the pool of young female scientists and engineers and relates to the career transition that SWAN focuses on between contract research and tenured academic posts.

(iv) Maternity Leave and Child Support

The University has a generous maternity leave scheme. Under its Occupational Maternity Pay arrangements, it pays eligible staff their full contractual pay during the 26 weeks of Ordinary Maternity Leave and Statutory Maternity Pay for the first 13 weeks of Additional Maternity Leave. In addition, all staff with caring responsibilities have the opportunity to apply for up to two years unpaid leave under the Career Break Policy, which is designed for staff who wish to take a break for domestic reasons while preserving their continuity of employment. Men are encouraged to use their entitlement of paternity leave.

There are two University nurseries with 150 places between them. In June 2005 the University introduced the Busy Bees Voucher scheme, enabling most types of childcare to be paid for out of pre-tax income.

3(b) Improving career options for women in SET

A key theme for a SWAN award is support at career transition points. All staff in the University have an annual Performance and Development Review (PDR). EPS plans to focus on the PDR as a vehicle for establishing any issues around an individual's career development. They are also introducing coaching sessions to support each promotions round.

Both EPS and MHS run career development programmes for Research Assistants and Associates. Sessions designed to support career development and transition include 'Preparing your CV for Promotion', and 'Engaging in Personal and Professional Development'. Support is provided by Heads of School, senior academics and Faculty Promotions Committees for women applying for promotion from the level of Lecturer (and equivalent) to Senior Lecturer/Reader.

4. FLEXIBLE WORKING SURVEY

Members of staff who have responsibility for the upbringing of a child under 6 or a disabled child or for the care of a dependent adult have a statutory right to request to work flexibly. Recognising that other staff may wish to make such requests, the University's Flexible Working Policy undertakes that all requests will be given serious consideration. In order to discover how widely the Policy was known and implemented in the three SET Faculties, the working group conducted a web-based survey of academic line managers and academic and research staff with caring responsibilities during April 2008. There were two versions of the survey: version A, which was

designed for Heads of SET Schools, Divisions and Groups, and B for researchers and academics with caring responsibilities.

Forty-five academics with line management roles responded to survey A. Between them they had responsibility for 1467 scientists (34% of the total academic and research staff in SET). Nearly two-thirds of these respondents were professors. Seven of the nine Heads of School were aware of the University's Flexible Working Policy whereas only half of the 33 Heads of Group were. As these are the managers who have operational responsibility for their staff it is clear that more needs to be done to increase awareness at that level. Five of the 45 managers had received, between them, nine formal requests for flexible working, of which eight had been met; nearly two-thirds (29) reported that they managed staff who had informal flexible working arrangements. The majority (63%) said that they did not experience difficulties with staff working flexibly. Indeed, the general view was that the benefits by far outweighed any disadvantages, with respondents describing increases in motivation and productivity and a more positive working environment. Where difficulties were described they related to teaching responsibilities, demands on other colleagues and problems with communication. e.g. 'Research groups work less well without regular interactions between group members.'

Ninety-two scientists, 50 women and 42 men at all levels from PDRA to professor responded to survey B. 89% of the women and 69% of the men said that they worked flexibly. Not surprisingly, the main reason given was childcare commitments. The reported benefits are listed in Table 1 (below).

Table 1. Benefits reported by scientists working flexibly

Benefits	Female responses	Male responses	Total
	N <i>(% of total female responses)</i>	N <i>(% of total male responses)</i>	N <i>(% of total responses)</i>
Supports family and career; work/life balance	19 (34)	8 (27)	27 (31)
Less stress, more productive working	19 (34)	7 (23)	26 (30)
Assists childcare arrangements	12 (21)	9 (30)	21 (24)
Feeling valued	4 (7)	5 (17)	9 (11)
Efficient time management	2 (4)	1 (3)	3 (4)
Total	56	30	86

Both men and women value flexible working largely because it enables them to combine having a career and raising a family. Interestingly, a higher proportion of

women (34% compared with 23% of men) reported that it resulted in a reduction of stress and more productive working.

5. DATA ANALYSIS

The key points arising from the statistics in Annex B are:

- There is a higher proportion of women than men on fixed-term contracts. There is some evidence from interviews with research staff that women do not see how they would be able to combine an academic career with having a family. This highlights the need to promote the University's Family-Friendly policies.
- Even when the proportions of men and women at lecturer level are similar, they diverge markedly at professorial level. The implementation of the recommendations of the WiL project should go some way to reducing this gap.
- There is a very wide range in the percentage of women across the SET disciplines, from 11% in Mechanical, Aerospace and Civil Engineering to 75% in Psychological Sciences. This underlines the need for a fine-grained analysis of the data, since averages conceal wide variations. It also points to the importance of increasing the pool of potential female applicants in the disciplines where women are under-represented.

6. CHALLENGES IN RELATION TO CHARTER PRINCIPLES

The most significant challenges for the University with regard to the Charter principles lie in principles (iii), (v) and (vi):

- (iii) The absence of diversity at management and policy-making levels
- (v) The system of short-term contracts ...
- (vi) The transition from PhD ...

With regard to (iii), at the most senior level the academic management of the University is largely male. Just one of the 15 SET Schools (Nursing, Midwifery and Social Work) is currently headed by a woman but this will increase in August when a female professor becomes Head of Physics & Astronomy. In FLS the last two years have seen a change from a Faculty Management Team which was entirely male, to one where now three of its eight academic members are female. So improvements are being made but more remains to be done.

For (v), more systematic work needs to be done on career guidance for researchers. In relation to (vi) the system of Performance and Development Reviews which is in place for academic staff needs to be adapted and implemented systematically for researchers on fixed-term contracts.

7. THE UNIVERSITY'S PLANS

(i) *Flexible Working*

Our survey shows that the University's Flexible Working Policy is not universally known. By December 2008, we will have addressed this through the University's *People and Organisational Development Strategy* by *inter alia*:

- a user-friendly booklet for distribution to all staff,
- induction sessions for new members of staff,

- timetabled team briefings by Heads of School to Heads of Group and Division.

Childcare arrangements for children under school age are generally more congruent with work patterns than those for children aged between five and eleven, because nurseries typically operate for a longer day than primary school hours. Therefore, the University will consider promoting flexible working for staff with responsibility for children up to the age of 16.

The concept of flexible working can be problematic when there are no contractual hours, as is the case for the majority of academics in Manchester. The University will examine its Flexible Working Policy to see whether it can be better adapted to the particular circumstances of academic staff.

(ii) *Part-time Working*

The undefined working week for academics is also a factor in the small proportion of women who are on part-time contracts. Although a number of women have said that they would find it helpful to return part-time after maternity leave, at present rather few do that. Initiatives to make part-time working easier must take full account of the opportunities afforded by flexible working because there is a tendency for women who change to a part-time contract to do research at home, so that they are in effect working full-time for a part-time salary.

(iii) *Operational Performance Reviews*

Every autumn the President and Vice-Chancellor conducts an Operational Performance Review (OPR) of the Faculties and central administration. For the 2008 review a template will allow a more probing analysis of each Faculty's performance in relation to the recruitment, appointment, promotion and retention of women.

(iv) *Statistics*

In order to be maximally useful for measuring progress, further statistical information is needed:

- a fine-grained breakdown of the figures enabling accurate comparisons to be made between Schools;
- an analysis that combines grade and age so that it is easier to see whether the disproportionate representation of women in the lower grades is solely a function of age;
- the average length of time at each academic career grade for men and women.

(v) *Exit Interviews*

No matter how good the data, it cannot give the reasons for any anomalies that may be identified, such as a higher turnover of female staff. Therefore exit interviews will be introduced during 2008, which will help us to address the fourth Charter principle: 'The high loss rate of women in science is an urgent concern which the organisation will address.'