

EDI

Newsletter

Equality,
Diversity and
Inclusion

November 2020

Welcome

Hello

Welcome to the Autumn 2020 edition of the EDI Annual Newsletter! I am delighted to introduce myself as the recently appointed Head of the University of Aberdeen Business School. This year, whilst it has had its challenges also marks a significant milestone as we celebrate our 525th anniversary in conjunction with the University's new 20-year strategy, Aberdeen 2040.

The opportunities associated with developing a business school which is part of an institution that has evolved over more than five centuries are extremely exciting. The Business School has seen a significant growth in recent years of students, academics, research and our international partnerships all over the world.

Our mission is "powering change for better businesses and better lives", and with the expertise of staff who are pioneers in their field, alongside our diverse and passionate student community I very much look forward to seeing what the next year brings.

Martin Meyer



Athena Swan – 1 Year Later

The Athena SWAN Charter for the advancement of gender equality in universities and research institutes was initiated in 2005. The name SWAN is an abbreviation of "Scientific Women's Academic Network". In 2018, seeking to ensure a Charter fully reflective of a shifting landscape and recent legislation, the Advance HE Board commissioned a steering group to perform an independent review of Athena SWAN. The outcome is the report, "**The Future of Athena SWAN**", published in March 2020.

The steering group made nine recommendations. These include: a broadening of scope to reflect gender as a spectrum ("rather than a binary definition of men and women" (p. 9) plus, emphasis on an inclusive Charter supporting the development and career progression of all staff. To reflect changes, the Charter is rebranded as Athena Swan (rather than Athena SWAN).

A separate report published in August 2019 evaluates the "**Impact of the Athena SWAN Charter**". The authors find 70% of Higher Education Institutions in the UK are engaged with the Charter and, they say, it

is most effective when "implemented as a tool to ensure that practices and policies present no disadvantage to any member of staff or student" (p. 1). Furthermore, the Charter is identified as a key instrument to help deliver genuine behavioural and cultural change. This is because the Charter is seen as an initiator for:

- mechanisms for open communication
- springboards for honest discussion
- real scrutiny of practices and commitment.

Together, these traits are viewed as, instrumental in supporting cultural and behavioural change for equality and diversity in all its forms.

Building on the above, the development of a School committee dedicated to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion is unfolding. A key cornerstone of this group is to embrace the new Charter for Athena Swan in our pursuit for equal justice, rights, and citizenship for every member of the school, within a diverse, all-embracing inclusive environment.

Angela Black

My reasons to be part of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee

Equality of opportunity and of respect mean a great deal to me. This plays out over numerous dimensions: gender, place of birth, race, faith, economic background would be a start to the characteristics that build into a unique and complicated individual web for each of us that can inappropriately boost or limit our chances of success in life. This is especially the case if "society" is not aware of, or even purposefully blind to, unequal chances or not willing to take steps to address the issues. Even the definition of society in the

previous sentence is crucial if we are not to act as if a person from one country has more right to opportunity than one from another.

Gender issues can be complex and are often indirect, for example the ignoring of problems faced by people in a particular role in society that are commonly associated with being female. At one time I was a male single parent of three children, and this was quite a formative time in my thinking.

Mark Whittington

My reasons to be part of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee



To give you a little background about myself, I grew up with my dad in the Merchant Navy. This provided me with the opportunity to travel to different parts of the world and

exposed me to different cultural contexts from a very young age. In addition to this, starting my career as a financial analyst with Hewlett Packard at the age of 20 and then working on various projects as a Team Manager for IBM and Accenture in the USA and in India, got me intrigued about issues relating to race, gender and overlapping matters. It made me realise why these can be sensitive topics to discuss. I believe this in part is a reason I chose to carry out research in my chosen areas, which are – negotiation and conflict management, group decision-making and cross-cultural management.

The personal influences in my life and my individual life experiences motivated me to get involved in the Athena Swan (AS) Committee at the Business School when I started here as an academic in

2018. My knowledge and curiosity stirred me to contribute and help in areas that everybody at the Business School can benefit from. I believe an equal, diverse and inclusive workplace can help both staff and students be more productive and contribute effectively to discussions that can make a positive difference for everyone. As the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Co-lead, a position I took up early this year, I wish to work towards this, in the hope that we can continue to work in a safe and respectful environment.

The EDI committee at the Business School reviews both the Athena Swan (AS) Charter and the Race Equality Charter (REC). Presently, the REC application is submitted at the institutional level and not at the departmental level yet. One of the main objectives for next year is for the EDI Committee to work on our application for renewal of the Athena Swan Bronze award, a decision that our Head of School, Martin Meyer is very much in support of. I am happy to be part of the EDI team and together I am sure we can foster a positive working and studying environment at the Business School.

Cheryl Dowie

Committee Insights – School Engagement

Whilst being Clerk for the EDI Committee is important to me, my main role within the Business School is engaging with local schools. Following a period of market research I developed an energising engagement programme for schools which raises awareness of what happens at a University, indeed how we teach and what we teach in the Business School, delivering ‘business related’ workshops which increase knowledge but also give young people the chance to enhance many different employability skills. We raise aspirations of many pupils by inviting them onto campus to observe lectures, to attend various events, having competitions, delivering workshops, some with Aberdeen Football Club Community Trust in both secondary and primary schools within the City and Shire. I mentor pupils in local schools, help with adhoc on demand tasks eg. mock interviews, consultative panels, careers events, and last year we had our first foundation intern working with us to support the school marketing team. Obviously, Covid has affected my role but I hope in the near future to be delivering workshops online. The EDI Committee are going to launch a competition in local schools for pupils to design a logo/slogan for EDI in the Business School.

Recently the Business School was shortlisted in the Inspiring Futures category for the Northern Star Business Awards. We were delighted to have gotten through to the finals and look forward to March 2021 for the awards ceremony. It was great to have our work recognised and I thank everyone who has helped me to date. Please feel free to contact me directly on p.cumming@abdn.ac.uk should you wish more information and potentially assist me with school engagement events.

Pam Cumming, Schools Engagement Officer

Meet the Committee

The Business School is an international community working to promote equality and maximise the development opportunities available to staff and students, which wouldn't be possible without the work and dedication of the EDI committee.

The EDI committee encompasses staff from across the Business School in all departments, ensuring fair and just representation across the institution. The committee members include:

- Cheryl Dowie (co-lead)
- Mark Whittington (co-lead)
- Pam Cumming (Clerk)
- Angela Black
- Shamima Haque
- Nathalie Kemp
- Sola Kasim
- Ashley Lim
- Nan Liu
- Lucy Holmes
- Fernandes Antunes Batista da Silva
- Maria Cascio
- Janine Chalmers
- Eleonora Monaci
- Caterina Motta
- Rhiannon Thompson



Question Spotlight

1. How has your role changed/adapted since working from home?

My role has changed dramatically. I was booked to give workshops/run events pretty much each day from March til the end of June. However, during this time I've had the opportunity to organise some online activities, competitions etc. I've also taken on a more active role in the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion committee and have been helping the Online team but still managing the odd school engagement activity albeit online. – *Pam Cumming*

It was quite challenging when I first started working from home since I had only joined the Business School in February, but everyone has been very helpful and that really helped me adapt fairly quickly into a new way of working. My role at work hasn't changed much since working from home, except I am expected to be a mum, a wife and at work all at the same time! – *Ashley Lim*

Working in admin, my role hasn't changed as much as for academic staff, but there is no face-to-face interaction with students or staff anymore. Everything is done via email, which necessarily slows down some processes, and can occasionally add more work, where a quick conversation would have been more effective in solving an issue and keeping on top of the many policy and process changes as a result of the pandemic. It certainly doesn't get boring! – *Nathalie Kemp*

As someone who has been recording my lectures for at least 15 years, perhaps the biggest change has been the interaction with students – being able to “read” facial expressions was clearly important to my delivery style! Encouraging students to engage through the typed chat has helped to an extent. – *Mark Whittington*

My role has changed in a way, where I feel I am working longer hours. (For example, on campus I would have a maximum of 3 meetings a day. But during this pandemic period, all my meetings are online, and I have back to back meetings of 4 or 5 every other day. – *Cheryl Dowie*

Since I am a PhD student, I was reviewing the literature pre-pandemic and I am still reviewing the literature during COVID-19. So, in terms of scope, it hasn't changed a whole lot. The plans to attend conferences were also put on hold for the time being. Everything is online now. Yet, the silver lining of the absence of face-to-face interaction for me has been the enormous amount of online events and webinars made available from organisations across the globe. It has been wonderful to learn from people that I would not otherwise have met. – *Fernanda Antunes*

2. Describe your working from home experience in three words.

- Quiet, efficient, eye-opening. – *Nathalie Kemp*
- Time-saving, time-management and life-balance. – *Mark Whittington*
- Challenging, boundless, flexible. – *Fernanda Antunes*
- Lonely, productive, cozy. – *Pam Cumming*
- Efficient, challenging, flexible. – *Ashley Lim*
- Challenging, exhausting and quiet. – *Cheryl Dowie*

3. What is your favourite thing about working from home?

- The commute! – *Mark Whittington*
- My favourite thing about working from home is spending more time with my family and my dog. – *Fernanda Antunes*
- I don't feel famished even after working long hours! – *Cheryl Dowie*
- I think my favourite thing is that I can focus on a task without interruptions, which makes me feel more efficient. It's a double-edged sword though, because I also miss the social interactions in the office. – *Nathalie Kemp*
- The best part of being able to work from home is I could save about two hours a day on commuting to work. – *Ashley Lim*
- Being with Bracken all day, whilst he's also a pest, he ensures I get away from my desk for walks and cuddles. – *Pam Cumming*



Women's Development Network

The Women's Development Network was launched at the International Women's Day event at the university in March 2020. It encompasses the Senior Women's Network, the Aurora Alumni network and one of the co-chairs sits on the university Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee. The Network will normally meet 4 times per year for a formal event invited speaker and members are also encouraged to propose and lead more regular activities themselves. The purpose of the network is to:

- Act as a forum for development, debate, and networking for female staff/anyone identifying as female at all grades, career paths and ethnic groups in both formal and informal settings
- Share ideas, experiences, knowledge and opportunities to support colleagues
- Promote equality of opportunity for women across the University
- Provide a source of information and support relating to development processes and mechanisms
- Further information is available [here](#).



Blog: A female academic's reflection on work-life balance in the Covid-19 pandemic

It's been 6 months since the UK March lockdown, and our home has been my place for work since then. The study is now invaded by textbooks and papers that used to be in my university office and smells like an old library, but I find it rather a relaxing place to work now as my two young children have returned to school and nursery.

The summer has come and gone so quickly. With work being dominated by the preparation for the new term and implementing changes, I decided to take some annual leave to do research. I am glad that we have the technologies that enables us to communicate and interact, sometimes I feel that the pandemic has brought colleagues closer, other times I do miss the real human interaction.

The last six months feel like a process of constant adjusting and readjusting,

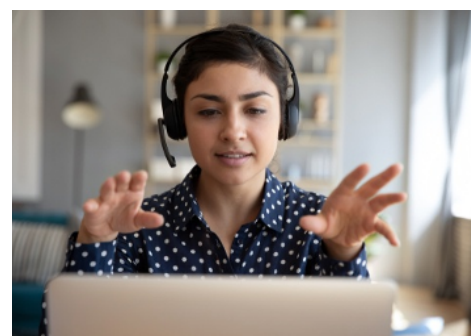
many of our "identities and conflicting priorities overlap in waves" as Boncori put it. But this reflection is not a moan about how hard things have been, rather it's an opportunity to reflect on the dynamics of the different people working and living in our communities. I know I am very fortunate compared to others, our children coped relatively well during the difficult times; we have a garden; they also had each other; despite the uncertainties we still have jobs; we still have interactions with other people; and we are managing our jobs. My experiences underscore how hard it must have been for others: the single parents, children who have special needs, those who have no interactions with others, those who have lost their jobs or businesses.....the list can go on.

There is a lot of advice in the media on the work-life balance and well-being for

employees in this unprecedented time. I do think fundamentally, we need to acknowledge and value the differences in us. We may not fully understand others' experiences during this difficult time, but by sharing our own challenges and vulnerabilities, we can open the door for discussion.

You can read the full blog post [here](#).

Nan Liu



Events

The Public Sector Equality Duty Requirements

On Thursday 8th October 2020, Sola Kasim, a member of the School's EDI Committee led a discussion on "The Public Sector Equality Duty Requirements – necessary but insufficient pre-requisites in closing inequalities in staff attainment rates across UK's universities"

The main point of his presentation was that in order to better tackle the long-standing inequalities in staff attainment rates in UK's universities and realise the goals of the Public Sector Equality Duty Requirements reporting, a quantifiable metric, labelled the "Promotion Gap" needs to be introduced and adopted by stakeholders. An institution's Promotion Gap allows it to quantify the degree of gender and/or race bias(es) in promotions, as a first step towards finding solutions. Being quantifiable, progress (or a lack of) in reducing any bias can be monitored.

After a brief overview of the scale of the inequality problem, the presentation

focused on a definition of the Promotion Gap, discussed the logic of the definition and used a numerical example to fix ideas, via a brief scenario analysis. An important merit of the approach is that it is equitable and transparent, in seeking to balance the attainment rates of the staff with the Protected Characteristics and those without.

The presentation concluded with how the Promotion Gap analysis can be used to construct League Tables, with the aim of encouraging laggards to learn best practice from the leaders.

Sola Kasim

National Coming Out Day

National Coming Out Day was founded back in 1988 and is celebrated every year on October 11th.

We know that for many in the LGBT+ community, coming to University provides a safe space to "Come Out" and allows them to be true to themselves. We know that at times it can be hard, but we want you to know that we are here for you, and it does get better.

Earlier this year we launched our Aberdeen 2040 Strategy with a series of commitments to be a more inclusive, interdisciplinary, international and sustainable university,

and we're proud of and committed to our community of staff, students, alumni and collaborators, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

If you need advice or support about coming out, particularly in this current challenging environment, or if you'd just like to meet new people, we have a number of network groups to support our LGBT+ community - check out our links below:

- [Staff & Postgraduate Student LGBT+ Network Group](#)
- [Women and Non-Binary Students' Forum](#)
- [LGBTQ+ Students' Forum](#)
- [Trans Students' Forum](#)



Coronavirus measures give Bangladeshi workers for global clothing chains a stark choice: disease or starvation

Over the past three decades, global inequality has reached a critical level. The world's 26 richest people own as much as the **poorest 50%**. Multinational fashion companies have secured **billions of dollars** by moving production locations abroad and using supply chains in developing countries including Bangladesh, China, India, and Myanmar, where labour costs are very low.

The revenues of each of the 25 biggest companies are **larger** than the GDPs of some countries. Despite this, the lives of most of the workers involved in production for many of these companies have not improved. It takes a CEO from a big fashion, retail or other company just **four days** to earn the same amount a Bangladeshi garment worker will earn over her lifetime.

Many have described the conditions of such workers as **modern slavery**. Their plight is particularly clear during the current coronavirus pandemic – workers have either been laid off without pay, or forced to work in unsafe environments.

Over the past 15 years, I have been investigating corporate accountability in

relation to the lives of those who work in garment factories for western buyers. Colleagues and I recently published **research** deriving from interviews with workers' rights NGOs, social auditors appointed by multinational companies and those owning and working in garment factories in Bangladesh that supply goods to big multinational companies.

In 2020, this has come to a head. The export-oriented garment industry in Bangladesh comprises more than 4,000 factories and five million workers, the

majority of whom are women. The industry earns approximately **US\$35 billion** (£28 billion) each year by supplying garments to western companies. While such trade has already boosted the huge economic power of factory owners, the coronavirus pandemic is leaving workers in a much more vulnerable position than factory owners.

This blog was written by Aziz Islam for The Conversation, you can read the original article [here](#).

Azizul Islam



Equality, Diversity and Inclusion at work: *the case for flexible work arrangements*

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) in the workplace means ensuring that diverse social groups are fairly represented in organisations, regardless of their age, gender, sexual orientation, cultural background and more (Prasad, Pringle and Konrad, 2006). Other than to comply with the current UK legislation (Equality Act 2010), organisations are increasingly seeking EDI practices for their potential to add value and competitive advantage (Saxena, 2014; Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development [CIPD], 2018; Gompers and Kovvali, 2018; Lorenzo et al., 2018; Hsieh et al., 2019; Brahma, Nwafor and Boateng, 2020).

One way often mentioned to support EDI at work is through the provision of flexible work arrangements (FWA) (Michielsens,

Bingham and Clarke, 2014; Alon et al., 2020; CIPD, 2020a), i.e., alternative formats that allow work to be performed with flexibility regarding time (e.g., flexitime), place (e.g., teleworking) and amount (e.g., job-sharing). Therefore, FWA support different employees' life circumstances, such as carer responsibilities and health concerns, and enhance the work-life balance (WLB). Not surprisingly, the practices are also linked with increased attraction and retention of talent and improved financial sustainability (de Menezes and Kelliher, 2011; Spreitzer, Cameron and Garrett, 2017; Klindži and Maric, 2019; CIPD, 2020b).

Despite the benefits associated with FWA, their adoption is not without challenges. Cultural and organisational norms, such

as presenteeism and long working hours, are barriers to endorsing FWA and therefore, diversity. Another inhibitor is the employee perception that FWA might be detrimental to career progression and lack of management support (Michielsens, Bingham and Clarke, 2014; Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2020b).

FWA are important practices that aid organisations in the achievement of their business goals while empowering their employees with choice. However, the success of FWA is highly dependent on the genuine endorsement of managers and effective communication throughout the organisation.

Fernanda Antunes

A Conversation About Career Progression

The Business School will be hosting an in-conversation event with Margaret L. Ross, Emeritus Professor in Law, hosted by Angela J. Black on the 18th November at 12pm.

After graduating from the University of Aberdeen Law School in 1979, Margaret became a part time tutor in 1980 while

working in legal practice in Aberdeen. She joined the Law School full time in December 1992 and over the years held various roles within the University as well as external public appointments in Scotland's Tribunal Service and in the Mental Welfare Commission. In this "conversation" we ask Margaret

about the way she managed to progress her career through the university. Together, we explore methods and strategies that can help to achieve career goals.

We invite questions from members of staff about aspects of career progression. All interested members of staff are warmly invited to listen along.

Recipe

Tomato and Egg Noodles 西红柿鸡蛋面/番茄鸡蛋面

(Recipe adapted from <https://thewoksoflife.com/tomato-egg-drop-noodle-soup/>)

Prep time: 10 minutes
Cook time: 10 minutes
Total time: 15 minutes
Servings: 1

Tomato Egg noodles is a popular Chinese dish. It's very simple to cook and it only required three main ingredients as its name indicates. It's definitely my go-to dish when I need a comforting meal that could be whipped up in no time.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 serving noodle of your choice
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 clove garlic (minced)
- ½ teaspoon ginger (minced)
- 1 green onion (chopped, separate the white and green)
- 2 tomatoes (cut into bite-sized pieces)
- 2-3 cups chicken stock (or vegetable stock)
- 1 tablespoon Ketchup
- 1 teaspoon soy sauce
- 1/8 teaspoon white pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon sesame oil
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- Salt (to taste)
- 1 large egg (beaten)

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Bring a pot of water to boil and cook the noodles according to the package instructions. Once the noodles are cooked, drain and transfer the noodles to a soup bowl.
2. Heat 2 tablespoons of vegetable oil in a non-stick pan over medium heat. Add the garlic, ginger and scallion (white), and cook until fragrant. Add in the tomatoes and ketchup, stir-fry for a few minutes, until the tomatoes soften.
3. Add the stock, soy sauce, white pepper, sesame oil, salt and sugar to taste. Cover and simmer for 5-7 minutes on medium heat.
4. Uncover the pan and turn up the heat slightly, pour in the beaten egg slowly. Turn off the heat and pour the soup onto the cooked noodles. Garnish with spring onion (green) and serve.

