University of Aberdeen

Gender Action Plan

July 2017

FOREWORD

I am delighted to introduce the University of Aberdeen's Gender Action Plan. The plan is an extension of the intensive work the University has been undertaking to embed and mainstream the principles of equality and diversity across the University. While our equality strategy aims to improve outcomes for staff and students across all the equality characteristics, there has been a clear focus on identifying and tackling gender imbalances in the staff and student communities.

We recognise the varied factors influencing the choices staff and students make, and our Gender Action Plan is designed to focus on factors within our sphere of influence to work towards ensuring that gender stereotypes and other societal barriers are challenged to encourage prospective and current students to pursue and achieve their goals at the University of Aberdeen.

Professor Margaret Ross, Vice-Principal for People Strategy
July 2017

Table of Abbreviations

AGED	Advisory Group on Equality and Diversity
AS	Athena SWAN
GAP	Gender Action Plan
GESG	Gender and Equality Steering Group
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
NCS	School of Natural and Computing Science
OA	Outcome Agreement
SAT	Self-Assessment Team
SFC	Scottish Funding Council
SRAS	Student Recruitment and Admissions Service
UoA	University of Aberdeen
UG	Undergraduate

1   INTRODUCTION

This document sets out the University of Aberdeen's Gender Action Plan (GAP). The actions reflect the University's commitment to the principles of equality and diversity and widening participation. The University welcomes a diverse population of new students and staff into its community each year and this diversity is recognised within the University's Strategic Plan as one of our greatest strengths. Our aim is to build upon this strength through positive action, improved processes and community engagement.

2   UNIVERSITY OUTCOME AGREEMENT

This plan should be read in conjunction with the University's Outcome Agreement (OA) with the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) and indeed represents an extension to it. Our OA sets out our ambitious targets for enhancing equality and diversity across the University which will be championed by colleagues within academic and professional areas, including targets for submitting for Athena SWAN awards, enhancing the uptake of equality and diversity training amongst staff and relevant students, commencing participation in the Equality Challenge Unit Race Equality Charter Mark, and other initiatives that support and recognise our diverse staff and student population.

The development of the OA was also an opportunity to showcase examples of positive action measures already taken to minimise gender inequality, including;

- Elimination of short-term contracts
- Introduction of enhanced Family Friendly policies
- Implementation of mandatory online equality and diversity training and delivered unconscious bias training
- Introduction of gender balance on recruitment selection committees and one-to-one recruitment coaching opportunities for internal candidates.
- Revised promotions and annual review processes.
- Expansion of leadership development opportunities and the monitoring of the uptake of these opportunities in analysing and tracking career trajectories.
- Significant development to the mentoring scheme over the prior 12 months, supporting over 85 partnerships.
- Regular and robust mechanisms for undertaking equal pay audits and implementation of remedial action in this area where necessary.

Staff equality network groups now operate across the University to support equality, diversity, tolerance and understanding and have matured to the point of becoming strategic informers as well as sources of support for staff. This includes network groups focussing on mental health, LBGT, disability and senior women. The networks have developed their own remits and constitutions which adds to their strength.

Our OA discusses the data analysis on gender balance in the University's total and Scottish-domiciled student populations. In the Scottish-domiciled population, the gender imbalance is particularly pronounced at undergraduate (UG) level in our Science, Technology, Engineering, Maths and Medicine subjects, with 84.3% of UG Engineering students, 88.0% of Physics students and 83.6% of Computing Science students being male. Conversely, 90.5% of UG Education students, 79.9% of Sociology students and 78.9% of Psychology students are female. There are also significant imbalances in many of our modern language programmes. We are keen to understand the reasons for these subject-specific gender imbalances in order to inform, and create, actions to address them. Central to this information gathering process will be attempts to understand these factors through a particular focus on outreach work at primary and secondary school level.

The University aims to bring the current male/female Scottish-domiciled UG students overall balance from 43%/57% to 45%/55% by 2019/20. For those degree programmes that currently have more than 75% of UG of one gender, the University aims to reduce the gender imbalance

by 1% year-on-year. The development of the GAP will contribute to the realisation of these targets.

Following consideration of our data and other internal and external factors we have chosen to prioritise four subjects which consistently face barriers in achieving an improved gender balance:

Prioritised Subject	Female Scottish UG (2016/17)	Male Scottish UG (2016/17)
Education	90.5%	9.5%
Physics	12.0%	88.0%
Computing Science	16.4%	83.6%
Psychology	78.9%	21.1%

We have chosen these four disciplines as the initial focus of our plan as they are the subjects with the most consistent imbalances. Physics and Computing Science are particularly useful to include in the initial phases of the GAP, as data analysis has already commenced through the Attracting Diversity project to address under-representation of females in these subjects at undergraduate level. Analysis of retention data for these four disciplines confirms there is no significant difference in non-retention between males and females.

The University's Gender Action Plan will be taken forward in conjunction with our existing equality and diversity initiatives to ensure strong engagement throughout the University. The following sections provide a summary of some of our key initiatives around gender equality.

3   ATHENA SWAN CHARTER

The University of Aberdeen has successfully renewed its prestigious bronze institutional Athena SWAN award in recognition of our continuing work to address gender equality. Seven out of twelve of our academic Schools have also been successful in their submissions for bronze level Athena SWAN awards, which is indicative of the strong commitment across the University to tackling gender inequalities. This has been an area of considerable progress for the University over the last three years and has contributed to the enhanced profile of wider equality and diversity initiatives. Indeed, some of the School teams established to support School Athena SWAN submissions are now widening their remits to cover equality more generally and have been re-constituted as equality teams. These teams, across the academic subject areas, are now implementing detailed and ambitious action plans to pursue the delivery of gender equality, as well as contributing to the implementation of the institutional action plan. Our focus is now on demonstrating the positive impact of our actions and plans are in place for applying for institutional Silver level accreditation by 2020.

4   EQUALITY CHALLENGE UNIT *ATTRACTING DIVERSITY* PROJECT

Since 2014, the University's Student Recruitment and Admissions Service has been an active partner in the Equality Challenge Unit's *Attracting Diversity* project which encourages the sharing of good practice on addressing gender imbalance across the Scottish higher education sector. The project aims to create an increased understanding of our student population, any equality and diversity issues in our recruitment processes and the experiences of current students.

Over the past three years the priority objectives for this project have included the following:

- **E&D in student recruitment functions:** The continuous improvement and refinement of equality and diversity considerations in student recruitment functions.

- **Data recording and analysis:** An in-depth look at the University's data recording process in regards to equality and diversity in student recruitment. An analysis of the current data held by the University so as to identify any unintentional E&D gaps in student recruitment. A review of the E&D data that we do and don't record.

- **Enhancing equitable recruitment:** The continuous improvement and refinement of the recruitment process in light of an in-depth data analysis so as to ensure equality of access at all levels.

The *Attracting Diversity* project remains ongoing however successes from outputs are already being observed. As a result of the in depth data analysis exercise, the Widening Participation unit is working with academic members of staff from areas demonstrated to have gender imbalances to create innovative outreach activities. As part of this work staff from the University have visited local schools and organised activities aimed at encouraging a diverse range of young people to become engaged with these subject areas.

Our work in the Attracting Diversity Project will be fundamental to our work set out in this Gender Action Plan.

5   REGIONAL GENDER GROUP

The University was central to establishing a Regional Gender Group which comprises representatives from the University of Aberdeen, Robert Gordon's University, North East Scotland College, Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeenshire Council, Skills Development Scotland, Aspire North, Aberdeen Science Centre and Scotland's Rural College. The Group has a remit to develop a regional response to address gender imbalance, aligning with the SFC Gender Action plan and Developing the Young Workforce priorities. The Group's vision is to change perceptions, attitudes and participation through promoting a shared understanding of gender issues and gender imbalance with the aim of ensuring that every young person is supported to meet their full potential.

The Regional Gender Group is planning a series of events to promote gender equality unified around the social media hashtag #naegenderlimits. The first event will be involvement in the Skills Scotland career and skills event in November 2017 in Aberdeen. There are plans to hold workshops facilitated by University colleagues and to engage prospective students, their parents/carers and teachers.

6   EQUALITY OUTCOMES

The University published its Equality Mainstreaming Report and Equality Outcomes in April 2017. The full report can be found here: www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/governance/equality-and-diversity-277.php.

The report details the activities the University has undertaken to meet the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty contained in the Equality Act 2010. It also details the University's four Equality Outcomes, with which the GAP is aligned:

Outcome 1
The principles of Equality and Diversity will be a day-to-day consideration within all of the University's activities, both strategically and operationally.

Outcome 2
Staff will have greater understanding of their responsibilities in Equality and Diversity and apply this in their practice to positively advance equality.

Outcome 3
The University will be an inclusive community where staff and students are able to fulfil their full potential in their work or studies.

Outcome 4
The diversity of the University community will be celebrated and recognised so that all staff and students are respected and valued.

7   BOARD DIVERSITY

The University recognised the need to address the gender imbalance on its University Court. Currently, 29% of our court membership is female. This has increased from 26% in 2015 and 19% five years ago, in 2012.

The Court agreed a Diversity Statement of Intent to address this issue, but also to make a commitment to increasing diversity across the protected characteristics. We have implemented this pledge by reviewing and enhancing our Court recruitment and selection procedures to encourage a diverse pool of candidates to express an interest. This will be a long-term project, however, recent amendments to the size and structure of Court were undertaken with the Diversity Statement of Intent a key driver. The changes will mean that there is the potential to see greater change in the diversity profile of Court over the next five years.

8.   GENDER ACTION PLAN

As the preceding sections show, we are committed to equal opportunities and diversity of our staff and student population and we therefore welcome this new initiative led by the Scottish Funding Council to address gender inequality in the student population. It is important to us to understand the societal and structural barriers and to seek to break down such barriers enabling all students to fulfil their potential. We fully recognise the important roles that the University sector has in seeking to combat some of the stereotypes and we wish to play our part in addressing the societal challenges.

The areas for consideration within the gender action plan sit very well with our ongoing activities and the following sections provide a wider context for the actions we have identified for this initial phase of our GAP to demonstrate how these activities sit within our portfolio of equality and diversity initiatives.

Leadership

The drive and ambition of the gender action plan will be promoted across the University by the Vice-Principal People who will ensure timely delivery of the key actions arising from the plan. Responsibility for the oversight and monitoring of progress will be through the Advisory Group for Equality & Diversity (AGED) which will report to the University Management Group. The Vice-Principal People will be supported by the Gender Action Plan Leads, who may also fulfil the role of Athena SWAN Lead within our Schools and Sections.

The institutional commitment to addressing gender imbalance is identified through the Strategic Plan, People theme and also through our commitment to Athena SWAN Charter (see section 3) and our institutional mainstreaming report. The action plans for Athena SWAN and Equality Mainstreaming can be found at web links www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/governance/athena-swan-2267.php and www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/governance/vision-2271.php

Infrastructure

We will seek to develop capacity and motivation of all staff through continual enhancement and development of institutional policies and procedures. This will include revisiting our reward strategy and also ensuring our workload model appropriately reflects the full extent of activities delivered by staff including outreach activities. Our ongoing commitment to mandatory equality and diversity training is seen as paramount to a change in culture to an inclusive environment for all staff and students from different backgrounds.

Influencing the Influencers

Outreach activities with primary and secondary schools and the wider community are a key strand to our strategy, and have been prioritised across the University. Key influencers identified are

parents and guardians who we need to reach out to on a regular basis with a view to understanding in greater detail the barriers and challenges associated with coming to University for certain disciplines. We will also engage closely with teachers and school careers advisors. Our engagement with Equality Challenge Unit project on "Attracting Diversity" supports our endeavours in this area. Our current students undertake equality and diversity training as part of the induction they receive when they arrive at University, and this, along with other activities throughout their time at Aberdeen will educate our students to enable them, once alumni, to be able to influence others.

Awareness Raising

We make a significant contribution to public engagement activities to challenge stereotypes and our many activities in this area are detailed in our Outcome Agreement. Examples include working with the Aberdeen Science Centre, hosting British Science Week, Techfest and our annual May Festival. Many of these events have a strong science focus and in all of those we work closely with primary and secondary schools on subjects that have a gender bias.

Encouraging Applications

We revamped our student prospectus and our website in the recent past. These enhancements have ensured that we remain sensitive to stereotypes and we will continue our work in this area. In addition, we monitor closely the gender split of applications, retention and completion rates.

Supporting Success

Our teams within the Centre for Academic Development, Staff Development & Training Unit, Graduate School and the Training & Documentation Team provide a suite of programmes to support our staff and students, enhancing their development and providing opportunities for them. Alongside supporting our success we seek to celebrate success. A recent event saw the celebration of the launch of new portraits of our three female Vice-Principals which we consider important to support gender equality and raise aspirations. We have also been delighted to celebrate our successes with our recent Athena SWAN awards for seven out of 12 of our Schools.

GAP DEVELOPMENT, STRUCTURE AND REVIEW

The GAP was developed by a working group who brought expertise in gender equality, widening participation and strategic planning to the process. Wider consultation was conducted with:

- Heads of the prioritised Schools
- Athena SWAN Leads in the prioritised Schools
- Advisory Group on Equality and Diversity
- Working Group on Widening Participation
- Gender Equality Steering Group

In line with the guidance received from the SFC on the development of the GAP, our GAP is structured using the 5 themes of:

- Infrastructure
- Influencing the Influencers
- Raising Awareness and Aspiration
- Encouraging Applications
- Supporting Success

Data presented in the GAP refers to 2016/17 Scottish-domiciled students.

The GAP was approved by the University's Senior Management Team (SMT) on 17 July 2017. It will be reviewed regularly through the Equality and Diversity governance structures, engaging relevant groups and formally monitored by the Advisory Group on Equality and Diversity. An annual report on achievements/progress will be presented to SMT and to the University Management Group.

9   FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information on the development and progress of the GAP can be gained from Professor Margaret Ross, Vice-Principal for People Strategy by telephone on 01224273180 or by e-mail on m.l.ross@abdn.ac.uk

SECTION 1: INFRASTRUCTURE

Action / Activity	Rationale	Outcome/ Success Measures	Time Frame		Who
1.1 Devise and publish an annual timetable of business to be considered at AGED	A published timetable of business will ensure productivity is continued and local actions are met, whilst raising awareness of planned GAP actions	Produce a timetable of business detailing ongoing and new actions, deadlines, events related to the GAP	August 2017	July 2020	Equality and Diversity Adviser
1.2 Monitor, assess and report on the implementation of the Gender Action Plan	Annual assessment of the impact of the GAP will ensure the action plan is effective and necessary changes can be made within an effective period of time, to ensure actions are having the desired impact.	Standing agenda item at Equality group meetings and other key institutional meetings such as Widening Access Participation Group. Annual progress report to SMT/ UMG Gender Equality Steering Group and Advisory Group on Equality and Diversity	August 2017	July 2020	Vice Principal People
1.3 Include Athena SWAN School action plan progress as KPIs and establish annual reporting of Athena SWAN School's progress.	All Schools at the UoA are actively investigating and addressing gender inequalities within their staff and students populations via Athena SWAN. A mechanism is required to ensure that School Plans are progressing and impact of implementation of plans is subsequent monitored.	KPIs include Athena SWAN actions with progress updated quarterly by Athena SWAN School SATS. School SATS produce an annual progress report for GESG and AGED.	August 2017	June 2018	Director of Planning/Heads of Schools and Athena SWAN Officer.
1.4 Introduce mandatory unconscious bias training across the Institution	To reduce unconscious bias in decision making, particularly during selection, recruitment and admissions processes	Unconscious Bias Training confirmed and in place for those involved in selection recruitment and admissions.	September 2017	July 2020	Director of HR
1.5 Annual monitoring of gender balance on UoA core committees	There has been a positive increase in female representation in influential committees. Efforts	Produce annual monitoring reports	Introduce from 2017	Ongoing thereafter	Athena SWAN Officer

	continue to reach the 40% target for the governing body.				
1.6 Introduce a mechanism to record outreach work as part of the academic workload model	Outreach work is currently not recorded as part of the workload model for academic staff. It is important to ensure we continue to raise the profile of outreach activities across all areas and specifically in the areas with a challenging gender balance.	Workload model revised to reflect outreach work	September 2017	December 2017	Director of HR
1.8 Review the uptake of online equality and diversity training for staff as KPI	A KPI to monitor the uptake of the online equality and diversity training was implemented in 2014. Since then, the uptake has risen by 54% (84% of staff have completed the training as at 1 July 2017). This was not solely due to the introduction of the KPI as other interventions have also been implemented. We aim to achieve 100% completion by 1 July 2018.	Uptake of the training continues to increase, with an expectation of achieving the target of 100% uptake.	December 2017	July 2018	Director of Planning/ Equality and Diversity Adviser
1.9 Annual monitoring of gender data at the subject level.	It is important to have institutional data relating to participation, completion rates, progression and ensure appropriate progress in each area.	Report to be submitted to AGED to monitor progress and to ensure appropriate actions are in place.	August 2018	Ongoing on an annual basis	Vice Principal People/Equality & Diversity Adviser
1.10 Ensure appropriate staff attend training in relation to violence against women	The Mental Health Working Group has discussed this issue and recommended that training opportunities be explored.	Internal and external experts identified and training commissioned and delivered	July 2018	Ongoing	Equality and Diversity Adviser/ Head of University Counselling Service/AUSA
1.11 Review the institutional reward strategy with a focus on the annual promotion criteria.	Improve the application rate from female staff on all three academic career tracks	Review promotion criteria. Deliver information sessions specifically for female staff. Provide additional coaching sessions for staff to support career progression	August 2017	December 2017	Director of HR

SECTION 2: INFLUENCING THE INFLUENCERS

Action / Activity	Rationale	Outcome/ Success measures	Time Frame		Who
2.1 Invite parents / guardians to take part in a focus groups to discuss perceptions of the four prioritised subjects and challenge gender stereotypes	Parents and carers have a considerable influence on the study and career choices young people make. Engaging with parents and carers can help to provide young people with enhanced opportunities.	Focus groups held and report produced and analysed	September 2017	September 2018	GAP School Leads/ Widening Participation Officer
2.2 Develop an outreach activity or resource for local schools (primary and secondary) designed to break down barriers and change misconceptions about gender stereotypes in the four prioritised subjects	Engaging with local schools is a key priority for the University's involvement in the Attracting Diversity project. A resource would pave the way for engagement.	Activities/resource produced and used to engage local schools	September 2017	December 2018	GAP School Leads/ Widening Participation Officer/SRAS/Public Engagement with Research Unit
2.3 Engage with Careers Advisors within local schools to determine what they require from the University to support pupils in making career decisions e.g. electronic case study material/role model biographies	Careers Advisors in local schools can support the University in its goal to address gender imbalances by providing accurate and engaging information to pupils about the four prioritised areas	Information received from Careers Advisors and appropriate materials produced	August 2017	December 2018	Head of Careers/Widening Participation Officer
2.4 Develop a plan for engaging with local and national science attractions/festivals/organisations/events	Promoting the University and the courses it offers is an important aspect of increasing diversity	Plan/calendar of events produced and activated	Ongoing	Ongoing	Vice Principal External Affairs/Director of External Affairs
2.5 Develop a 4th year UG careers session to advise all undergraduates of opportunities for career progression to Masters level study.	More needs to be done within Schools to advise students and Personal Tutors of career progression opportunities, especially Masters level credits and progression to Masters level study.	4th year UG career session developed and embedded in School calendar. Uptake of progression opportunities monitored.	January 2018	June 2018 with ongoing monitoring	GAP School Leads

	Develop a 4th year career session and embed this in the School calendar. Monitor uptake of progression opportunities				

SECTION 3: RAISING AWARENESS AND ASPIRATION

Action / Activity	Rationale	Outcome/ Success measures	Time Frame		Who
3.1 Monitor gender balance of internal and external speakers at key lectures and seminars within the four prioritised areas	Maintain a balanced representation of female and male seminar speakers and formally record this with a specific focus on the gender of speakers for the four priority Schools.	Speakers to have a 60:40 gender split	Ongoing	Ongoing	Heads of Schools/GAP School Leads/ Public Engagement with Research Unit
3.2 Review websites of the four prioritised areas to assess where improvements could be made to content to provide balanced gender representation and information on career paths.	Ensure males and females have balanced representation in undergraduate prospectus pages and featured case studies are gender balanced.	Websites reviewed and appropriate changes made	September 2017	December 2017	GAP School Leads/ Web/communication Officer.
3.3 Explore the opportunities to promote gender equality in the marketing, promotion and content of open days	Open days represent a key date in the diary in relation to promoting the University and the study options it offers.	Exploratory discussions undertaken with suggested actions developed with engagement from GAP School Leads	January 2018	May 2018	Director of Student Recruitment & Marketing
3.4 Seek to obtain external funding to support outreach activities.	Enhance our portfolio of offerings in outreach prioritising activities the four schools.	Identify opportunities for grant applications in this area	August 2017	Ongoing	Director of External Affairs
3.5 Develop a strategy for extending outreach with Schools (primary and secondary).	To build on the extensive outreach activity with special focus on the four priority subjects.	School outreach programme in place to support addressing the gender imbalance	December 2017	March 2018	Vice Principal External Affairs

SECTION 4: ENCOURAGING APPLICATIONS

Action / Activity	Rationale	Outcome/ Success measures	Time Frame		Who
4.1 Establish focus groups and informal meetings to investigate reasons why the four disciplines are more attractive to one gender	Currently only 14.4% of applications to Computing Sciences and 25.6% to Physics are from female Scottish-domicile students, and 15.1% to Education and 20% to Psychology are from Scottish-domicile male students.	Focus group active and well attended. At least an annual 1% increase in applications from female students to computing sciences and Physics, and 1% increase in applications from males to Education and Psychology	September 2017	Annually	AGED
4.2 Improve online, physical and social media showcasing, with a particular emphasis on women.	Prospective students use social media and online searches to gather information about their chosen university and area of study	Audit of current university posts on social media undertaken and reviewed and changes recommended	January 2018	May 2018	Head of Communications/ School GAP Leads
4.3 Explore why part -time and distance learning PGT programmes are less attractive to women	Currently only 33.3% of applications to part-time and distance learning Computing Sciences are from females student	Analysis undertaken and action plan developed	January 2018	January 2019	School GAP Leads/ Widening Participation Officer
4.4 Explore alternative routes into Teacher Education and create an online access course.	There are currently low student numbers on the Summer School Access Programme and few alternative route into Education studies.	At least 10 students registered on the online course by 2019. At least 1 new alternative route option developed and launched by Sept 2020	January 2018	February 2019	Education Athena SWAN SAT/AGED
4.5 Improve the representation of males on UG Teacher Education Programme by hosting a focus group with male students and developing an action plan	Only 24.4% of UG students on the teacher Education programme are male	By 2020 an additional 5% of the UG cohort should be male.	January 2019	May 2020	Education Athena SWAN SAT/AGED

SECTION 5: SUPPORTING SUCCESS

Action / Activity	Rationale	Outcome/ Success measures	Time Frame		Who
5.1 Explore why fewer women obtain first class degrees in Computing Sciences	Currently 0% of women obtain firsts in Computing Sciences compared to 30%of men.	Analyse pass rates by gender down to course level and develop further actions.	July 2017	July 2018	School of Natural and Computing Sciences Athena SWAN SAT/AGED
5.2 Build close links with the incoming AUSA sabbaticals to promote the equality priorities, including the GAP	AUSA could support the University in the implementation of the GAP by convening focus groups, and providing guidance regarding communication with students	AUSA integral to the implementation and review of the GAP	July 2017	Ongoing	Equality and Diversity Adviser/ Widening Participation Officer
5.3 Promote the GAP across the University, including to Personal Tutors, Programme Selections, Administrative Staff, hold 'lunch and learn' sessions to support awareness-raising	Personal Tutors are a key source of support for students on academic and non-academic matters	Awareness-raising sessions held	September 2017	December 2017	Vice-Principal for People Strategy/ Equality and Diversity Adviser