

Women in HE Conference 2021

Building back better for gender equality in HE 25 February 2021, Virtual

The last decade has seen progress in all areas of gender equality in HE and in our wider society, there has been positive impacts from making organisations publish their gender pay gaps, greater gender diversity in senior roles and on boards. However gender based violence and harassment is still an issue for all and progress is still slower than it should be. This progress is also at risk of being compromised with the arrival and ongoing impacts of Covid19?

The pressures of home working, burdens of unpaid caring responsibilities, job vulnerability and adverse impacts on promotion opportunities that have arisen as a consequence of the current global pandemic risks sending the progress made into reverse.

The gendered impacts of these issues have been shown to impact more on women than men across all sectors, including HE through a number of studies including:

- A national study conducted by [Fawcett Society, the Women's Budget Group, QMUL and LSE](#) illustrating the impact of lockdown measures on women's, particularly BAME women's, ability to progress their careers.
- Equality research into HE professional and services staff - for example, [Vitae's](#) research into the impact of lockdown on UK researchers highlighted that 4 in 10 had reduced capacity due to caring responsibilities, and 70% anticipated less capacity due to these responsibilities if more than six months of social distancing was required.
- The [2020 Women in the Work Place Study](#) conducted in the US focussed on the impact of Covid-19 and, similar to UK studies, found that the crisis had a more significant impact on BAME women; the study not only highlighted that burn out is a real issue, but that this and other factors combined may place many organisations at risk of losing women in leadership roles.

Moving forward, there is a danger that we focus on the undoubtedly negative impact that Covid-19 has had on women's equality and conflate remote working with increased childcare and domestic responsibilities as well as poor mental health and wellbeing. Yet remote working is not new and has been a key tool pre Covid19 to support women's equality and career progression. This alongside better technological options offers immense possibility to allow and enable women to better balance the personal and the professional and enable participation in opportunities vital for success and thriving.

Now is the time for a discussion around how we reflect on the what has happened through the pandemic but work together to avoid regression and harness opportunity – to 'build back better' for gender equality.

The Advance HE Women in HE conference 2021 will take a look back at the insights we have gained from our work on gender equality over the course of the last 12 months through the Athena Swan Charter, the publication of the 5 year Aurora longitudinal study and the findings of our recently launched [survey](#) into the impact of the shift to greater home working through Covid19 on gender. We will use these insights and those of others from within and outside of the sector through our invited guest speakers and contributors to consider solutions and options for gender progression at this time of huge challenge for all in HE.

Aims of the conference are to:

- Share insights and learnings from studies inside and external to Advance HE on the impact of Covid19 for women - where have we lost ground and why?
- Use these insights to gain a better sense of what works for gender equality more widely
- Offer opportunities to discuss and consider options and solutions that enable us to maintain and achieve growth in progress, or 'build back better' harnessing the changes for positive benefit
- Connect a community of connected peers that can aid and support each other during times of change and challenge

Programme

- 9:30am Platform opens & informal networking**
- 10:00am Welcome**
Alison Johns, Chief Executive, Advance HE
- 10:05am How has the last year impacted on gender equality in HE?
Recent Advance HE research and survey findings and insights from
Athena Swan Charter awards.**
Ellen Pugh, Senior Advisor, Advance HE and colleagues
- 10.35am Q&A**
- 10.45am Breakout Groups**
**How have you responded to the impact of Covid19 on gender equality
in your institution?**
Facilitated group discussion on personal insights, does your experience match the Advance HE insights? Formulate feedback and questions for the panel.
- 11:30am Break**
**Explore the virtual conference platform, resources centre and stands
+ optional networking**
- 12:00pm Conversational panel**
Chaired panel conversation with questions from the breakout sessions
- Prof. Shearer West, Vice Chancellor, University of Nottingham
 - Prof. Michelle Ryan, Professor of Social and Organisational Psychology, University of Exeter
 - Additional HE and other sector panellists tbc
- 1:00pm Lunch**
**Explore the virtual conference platform, resources centre and stands
+ optional networking**
- 2:00pm Good practice across the sector**
Case study parallel workshops
- Athena Swan Gold Award winner

- Allyship
- Job sharing in senior roles

3:00pm	Break Explore the virtual conference platform, resources centre and stands + optional networking
3:30pm	Guest Speaker & Q&A
3.55pm	Concluding remarks
4:00pm	Close