

Women in HE Conference 2021: Building back better for gender equality in HE

Date: 25 February 2021

Location: Virtual conference platform

Aims of the conference are to:

- share insights and learnings from studies inside and external to Advance HE on the impact of Covid-19 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.

Overview

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 Covid-19.

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

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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.

Programme

Time	Activity
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, Aurora and wider Advance HE work around gender. Ellen Pugh, Senior Advisor, Advance HE, Amanda Aldercotte, Head of Knowledge and Research, Advance HE
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 investigating the personal insights from delegates around the impact of the pandemic on the progression of gender equality in HE. Does your experience match the Advance HE insights? Where have we seen progress and where have we seen negative impacts? Groups will formulate their feedback and agree 2 key questions for the panel.
11:30am	Break Explore the virtual conference platform, resources centre and networking

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12:00pm	<p style="text-align: center;">Conversational panel</p> <p>Chaired panel conversation with questions from the breakout sessions. Each panel member will give a short insight from their experiences before taking questions from the groups above in a more conversational session.</p> <p>Chair:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Alison Johns, CEO, Advance HE</p> <p>Joined by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prof. Michelle Ryan, Professor of Social and Organisational Psychology, University of Exeter • Fiona MacTaggart, Chair, Fawcett Society • Prof. Parveen Yaqoob, DVC and PVC (Research and Innovation), University of Reading • Dr Sarah Liu, Assistant Professor in Gender and Politics, University of Edinburgh
1:00pm	<p style="text-align: center;">Lunch</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Explore the virtual conference platform, resources centre and networking</p>
2:00pm	<p style="text-align: center;">Good practice across the sector - Case study parallel workshops</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insights from an Athena Swan gold award holder - Professor Louise Bryant, Professor of Psychological & Social Medicine, University of Leeds • What is the role of allyship in supporting gender equality in HE? – Dr Eurig Scandrett, Senior Lecturer in Public Sociology, Queen Margaret University • How does job sharing in senior roles really work and how can we encourage more institutions to consider this at all levels? – Prof Parveen Yaqoob and Prof. Dominik Zaum, University of Reading • Key findings from the Aurora Longitudinal study – Dr Sarah Barnard, Lecturer in Sociology of Contemporary Work, Loughborough University and Professor John Arnold, Professor of Organisational Behaviour and Director of Research Impact, Loughborough University
3:00pm	<p style="text-align: center;">Break</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Explore the virtual conference platform, resources centre and networking</p>
3:20pm	<p style="text-align: center;">Academic entrepreneurship: Closing the Gender Gap in University Spinout Companies - insights for building back better</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Simonetta Manfredi, Professor of Equality and Diversity Management, Associate Dean for Research and Knowledge Exchange, Business School, Oxford Brookes University</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Followed by Q&A</p>
3.55pm	<p style="text-align: center;">Concluding remarks</p>
4:00pm	<p style="text-align: center;">Close</p>

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