Athena SWAN Bronze department award application

Name of university: The University of Sheffield

Department: Molecular Biology and Biotechnology (MBB)

Date of application: 29/11/2013

Date of university Bronze and/or Silver SWAN award: 2009 Renewed 2012

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Athena SWAN Bronze Department awards recognise that in addition to university-wide policies the department is working to promote gender equality and to address challenges particular to the discipline.

Not all institutions use the term ‘department’ and there are many equivalent academic groupings with different names, sizes and compositions. The definition of a ‘department’ for SWAN purposes can be found on the Athena SWAN website. If in doubt, contact the Athena SWAN Officer well in advance to check eligibility.

It is essential that the contact person for the application is based in the department.

Sections to be included

At the end of each section state the number of words used. Click here for additional guidance on completing the template.

1. Letter of endorsement from the head of department: maximum 500 words

An accompanying letter of endorsement from the head of department should explain how the SWAN action plan and activities in the department contribute to the overall department strategy and academic mission.
Dear committee,

It is a pleasure to write a letter in support of our department’s application for Athena SWAN recognition. Though, at the same time it is a sad indictment of where we are, 140 years after Woman of the UK became nationally organised and 95 years since (some) women were allowed to vote.

The information gathering process has been extremely informative and it is pleasing that, as the statistics and stories have been disseminated in staff meetings, so many people recognise the issues and are taking action. In self-assessment meetings both female and male staff/students have freely raised concerns about how we conduct the business of recruitment and training in science. In response, we have taken the first steps to change habits.

While small, the steps we have already taken are not insignificant and provide a foundation to delivering measurable improvement in female representation in the Biological Sciences. For example, we were careful to include as many women as possible on interview committees in several staff recruitment rounds. We run regular workshops in the department for early career woman scientists to meet and discuss the behavioural patterns that make someone successful, how best to present oneself in the job market, how to compete. We also had significant discourse with the Faculty Equality and Diversity Board, and we are pressing Human Resources to provide an opportunity for job applicants to indicate career breaks/leave, enabling us to assess women on their actual, rather than chronological, time in the profession.

We are disappointed that only 2 out of our 11 academic appointments in recent years have been female. A significant contributing factor is that fewer females apply. To counter this, there is an institutional effort to make our advertising more gender neutral (less threatening, emphasising the supporting environment). Our group has also been in direct conversation with the VC, to
encourage him to fund fellowships for people returning from a career break. These would be open to women and men, but as women are more likely to have career breaks we expect to increase the proportion of female applicants. We are also pleased to be supporting 2 women for independent fellowships, one returning from a career break and one after her postdoctoral training. To raise awareness, at all career stages, of female under representation in STEM, we will increase the visibility of female role models, e.g. through inviting more women to give seminars and with a permanent display of successful female scientists who have worked or studied in our department.

We are very conscious that this process is far from the end, but even with our new awareness it will still take years before full professional parity between the genders is reached. It is now among my priorities as HoD to modernise our employment and training practices to empower women (and with them other underrepresented groups) to become productive, long-term career scientists.

We look forward to a world in which gender is not a disadvantage to becoming a scientist.

Yours faithfully

Professor Alastair Goldman
Head of Department

(487 words)
b) an account of the self assessment process: details of the self assessment team meetings, including any consultation with staff or individuals outside of the university, and how these have fed into the submission.

The process towards developing this document began September 2012, soon after I became HoD. Julie Gray, had been well aware of the issues raised by Athena SWAN, and she drew my attention to the problems and the process. I attended a workshop run by external consultants, C-Change, on the issues of recruitment and retention of females in STEM. I went into the workshop thinking “we really don’t have these problems in biology” and came out of it shocked at the depth of the problem, and how local it was.

As a first step towards improving the situation, I set up a committee to start investigating the gender balance and processes in our department. It had good representation of male/female/junior/senior academics, as well as non-academic members (Table in Section 2 A). We joined our sister department, Biomedical Sciences (BMS), to discuss issues and start gathering data to find out what our colleagues thought. In June 2013 we decided the two departments were sufficiently different that we would run separate bids for Athena SWAN recognition.

An early action, January 2013, was to conduct a staff questionnaire on perceptions of gender equality issues. Our analysis of the responses was used to develop three focus groups to be run by C-Change. These ran throughout March 2013 on Promotions and Careers, Inappropriate Behaviour and Language and Postdoctoral and Postgraduate Careers. They were attended by academics, postdocs and postgraduate students, with a good gender balance. Focus group feedback was collated and ideas were fed directly into the Faculty Equality and Diversity Board, in an effort to bring change at a wide level. E.g. we suggested that job application forms should provide an opportunity to list career breaks; an issue that the HR department is considering. We also developed a subgroup to design a new departmental questionnaire aimed at postdoctoral staff, as the first questionnaire was more geared towards academics. This subgroup included Dr Claudine Bisson, a postdoctoral researcher in MBB who has been extraordinarily helpful in gathering information and providing the perspective of her peer group. The results to this second questionnaire have also fed into our Athena SWAN planning.

During this period, a few members of the department attended unconscious bias training. Another eye opener that helped to keep the campaign active.

Awareness of the gender issues in the biologies was raised in staff meetings and informal departmental coffee and cake mornings. Wider awareness of the inequalities, and that the issues were now live for discovery and debate, brought more academics into the process. We were particular pleased to get the involvement of graduate students and postdocs, who took an active role working side-by-side with academics to analyse data from questionnaires and to develop the written application. We next delegated tasks for the writing process, the HoD was delegated to write sections 1 and
2, Roger Anderson led the focus on Section 3, Peter Sudbery formed a sub-group to work on Sections 4 and 5, Rebecca Barnes drafted ideas for Section 6. While the analysis and writing process was underway, in May 2013 Julie Gray and Rosemary Staniforth set up the MBB Woman in Science group. These monthly meetings provide an informal forum for information exchange and discussion around empowering women’s careers in science. They are attended by at least 10 postdoctoral staff and postgraduates. The HoD and other male staff will attend these meetings, but leave early to ensure they are not inhibiting free conversation. Another action that ran concurrently with preparation for the proposal was lead by Stuart Wilson who was alerted to a female scientist, Dr Janet Cronshaw, wishing to return to science after a 5-year career break. Stuart sponsored Janet for a Wellcome Trust Career Re-entry Fellowship, with Julie Gray acting as her return to work mentor. Because the application was unsuccessful, we persuaded Sheffield Women Academic Returners’ Programme (WARP) to extend £10K of unused funds, normally reserved for Sheffield employees returning from maternity leave, to be used as matched finding with the department (£20K), to allow an application by Janet for a Daphne Jackson Fellowship (pending).

In September, the committee met to discuss draft content of the application and further meetings were held to prepare the final document for submission. In early November the draft document was reviewed by the Faculty of Science Equality and Diversity Board who provided constructive feedback. The committee also met specifically to review the Action Plan, to ensure it is both ambitious and achievable and determine whether or not we should apply for a silver or bronze award. We believe we are too early in the processes of change to claim we can demonstrate our actions brought about substantive improvements. There has been improvement to the atmosphere and the sense of opportunity among young female scientists, but we have a long way to go and we decided that a bronze application is more appropriate for now.

(811+56=867 words)

c) Plans for the future of the self assessment team, such as how often the team will continue to meet, any reporting mechanisms and in n.

Our team will continue to meet after submission of the application to review progress on converting the action plan into delivered improvement. Formal quarterly meetings will be chaired by the HoD, while assessing implementation we will also discuss ideas for further actions. We do not want this issue to fade from conscientiousness so we will monitoring closely academic staff attendance on Unconscious Bias training and remind staff in general meetings of the importance of positive actions. Real success will be measured by recruitment of more female academics, equal pay and career progression for females, and more of our female undergraduates, postgraduates and postdoctoral staff progressing up the science career ladder.

(867+110=976 words)
3. **A picture of the department: maximum 2000 words**

a) Provide a pen-picture of the department to set the context for the application, outlining in particular any significant and relevant features.

The Department of Molecular Biology and Biotechnology (MBB) at the University of Sheffield was formed by the merger of the previous departments of Biochemistry, Genetics, Microbiology and Biotechnology. These departments had strong traditions in research, most notably evidenced in the Nobel Prize awarded to Sir Hans Krebs for his work in the Department of Biochemistry. MBB has maintained a high profile in research, and was ranked third in the UK in the 2008 RAE. Currently the Department's research is organised into four main areas: Biochemistry and Genomics, Cell Biology and Genetics, Molecular Microbiology and Structural Biology.

The Department has a strong research training programme, with approximately 100 PhD students and around 30 postdoctoral staff.

The Department also has a strong focus on undergraduate teaching, and was ranked fourth in the UK for biological sciences, by the Times Good University Guide 2013. All academic staff are expected to contribute to undergraduate teaching. As well as three-year BSc degrees, the Department offers four-year “integrated master’s” programmes for the degree of MBiolSci, and approximately 30% of students graduate with MBiolSci degrees. In 2012, the Department's MBiolSci Biochemistry programme was one of the first degrees to be accredited by the Society of Biology. The Times newspaper’s league table of graduate first destinations ranked Biology at Sheffield third among UK universities. The proportion of our graduates proceeding immediately to PhD study is typically 30% or more, and data from earlier years indicate that this figure significantly underestimates the proportion of graduates who eventually undertake PhDs.

Following a period of retrenchment in staff numbers and fairly steady student numbers, the Department has recruited nine new academic staff over the last two years, including two on teaching-only contracts, and significantly expanded undergraduate numbers.
Student data

i) Numbers of males and females on access or foundation courses – comment on the data and describe any initiatives taken to attract women to the courses.

N/A

ii) Undergraduate male and female numbers – full and part-time – comment on the female:male ratio compared with the national picture for the discipline. Describe any initiatives taken to address any imbalance and the impact to date. Comment upon any plans for the future.

We offer twelve undergraduate (UG) subject titles within the molecular biosciences, each of which is taken full time as a three-year (BSc) or four-year (MBiolSci) programme:

- Biochemistry
- Genetics
- Microbiology
- Molecular Biology
- Medical Biochemistry
- Medical Genetics
- Medical Microbiology
- Biochemistry and Genetics
- Biochemistry and Microbiology
- Biochemistry and Molecular Cell Biology
- Genetics and Microbiology
- Genetics and Molecular Cell Biology

Students are completely free to transfer between these subject titles at the end of Level 1 and, depending upon their choice at Level 2, have a more limited range of transfer options at the end of Level 2. Significant numbers of students make such transfers, once they better understand what the programme titles mean at university level, and the statistics given here therefore combine all subject areas.

Our annual recruitment of first year students was in the range 100-130 over the period 2009-10 to 2011-12, and has increased sharply since that time. In two of the three comparison years shown in Fig. 3.1, the frequency of females in UG Level 1 was close to the Russell Group averages for similar courses. In 2009-10, the frequency was 43%, the lowest in the Russell Group that year. This represented a fall from 52% in 2008-09, and we are not aware of any reason why this dip should have occurred, other than random variation.
Fig. 3.1: Percentage of first year undergraduates who were female, comparing MBB to the Russell Group average for similar courses (JACS codes: C4=genetics, C5=microbiology, C7=molecular biology). Russell Group figures are HEIDI data based on institutional HESA student returns and have been rounded to the nearest 5 due to HESA’s compliance with the Data Protection Act (1998). HEIDI data are not available for academic year 2012-13. The number of first year females is superimposed on each MBB bar.

Students have freedom to transfer (in either direction) between the BSc and MBiolSci programmes once they enter the Department, and the overall proportion of students graduating with an MBiolSci degree is typically lower than the frequency of MBiolSci students in first year. In the three years for which data are shown, it is noticeable that females were consistently less likely than males to be registered for an MBiolSci degree in first year (Fig. 3.2A), but more likely than males to graduate with an MBiolSci degree (Fig. 3.2B). For graduates in 2011-12, this may represent a difference in the persistence of MBiolSci intentions since, when most of these graduates entered the Department in 2008-09, the proportions of females and males registered for MBiolSci programmes were 30% and 34%, respectively. For students graduating in 2009-10 and 2010-11, however, the higher proportion of females graduating with an MBiolSci degree may simply reflect a higher proportion who had been registered for an MBiolSci programme in their first year (female vs male frequencies in 2006-07 and 2007-08 for first year MBiolSci students were 44% of females vs 37% of males and 42% of females vs 28% of males, respectively). It should be noted, however, that the numbers of students graduating with MBiolSci degrees are very small.
iii) Postgraduate male and female numbers completing taught courses – full and part time - comment on the female:male ratio compared with the national picture for the discipline. Describe any initiatives taken to address any imbalance and the impact to date. Comment upon any plans for the future.

We offer three postgraduate taught MSc programmes, which accepted their first intakes in the years indicated:

- Mechanistic Biology: 2011-12
- Micro Brewing: 2011-12
- Human and Molecular Genetics: 2013-14

In 2011-12, a total of 5 females and 5 males entered the Mechanistic Biology and Micro Brewing programmes. All completed successfully. In view of the
small numbers of students and the recent introduction of the programmes, they will not be considered further.

iv) Postgraduate male and female numbers in research degrees – full and part time - comment on the female:male ratio compared with the national picture for the discipline. Describe any initiatives taken to address any imbalance and the impact to date. Comment upon any plans for the future.

The Department has a fluctuating PGR student population of 100-140, with annual recruitment in recent years of 23-34. Almost all these students are studying full time.

In two of the three comparison years shown in Fig. 3.3, the frequency of first year PGR females was close to the Russell Group averages for similar courses, and in 2011-12 was among the highest in the Russell Group. Nevertheless, the low annual intake of PGR students is associated with fluctuations below, as well as above, the Russell Group averages shown in Fig. 3.3. For example, institutional data for 2012-13 indicate that only 46% of the 28 first year PGR students were female.

Significant numbers of our overseas PGR students come from countries where the interpretation of gender equality may differ from that in the UK and EU. It is thus of interest to compare the proportions of females among first year PGR students of different geographical origin. Fig. 3.3B compares the percentages of females among UK/EU students and overseas students. There is no shortfall in the representation of overseas students. It should be borne in mind, however, that the numbers involved are very small (only 8 new UK/EU PGR students were recruited in each of 2009-10 and 2011-12).
v) **Ratio of course applications to offers and acceptances by gender for undergraduate, postgraduate taught and postgraduate research degrees**

- comment on the differences between male and female application and success rates and describe any initiatives taken to address any imbalance and their effect to date. Comment upon any plans for the future.

Our UG programmes all have the same standard entry requirement of AAB at A-level or equivalent. We offer places to all applicants who are predicted to
achieve within two grades of this requirement, and most offers specify AAB. Fig. 3.4A shows that there is no deficit in the offers made to females, and in two of the three years there was also no deficit of female acceptances. Fig. 3.4B shows that the proportion of females applying for MBiolSci programmes was lower than the proportion of males in two of the three survey years. Overall, 38% of female applications were for MBiolSci programmes, compared with 40.4% of applications from males. This small percentage difference is numerically sufficient to account for most of the shortage of MBiolSci females already noted in first year (see 3(ii) and Fig. 3.2A).

Postgraduate research applications are dealt with on a more individual basis than UG applications. Nevertheless, Fig. 3.5 shows that the frequency of offers to females is roughly in line with the frequency of applications. There is also no significant deficit in the number of females accepting an offer from the Department.
vi) **Degree classification by gender** – comment on any differences in degree attainment between males and females and describe what actions are being taken to address any imbalance.

Degree performances of females and males in the years 2009-10 to 2011-12 were similar, but Fig. 3.6A shows that the proportion of females graduating with lower second, third or pass degrees was consistently lower than the proportion of males. Moreover, in two of the three years, the proportion of first class degrees was higher among females than males. Averaged over all three years, 32% of females were awarded first class degrees, compared with 21% of males.

Essentially the same pattern of females outperforming males is seen in the data for BSc graduates (Fig. 3.6B). Among MBiolSci graduates, however, first class degrees were awarded to 50% of males and only 34% of females. These figures must be treated with some caution, because only 32 females and 20 males graduated with MBiolSci degrees over these three years, out of a total of 125 females and 124 males.

Further monitoring will be carried out to determine whether there is indeed a shortage of first class degrees among female MBiolSci graduates (Action 3.1). Unlike earlier years, the fourth year is assessed largely through project work that cannot be marked anonymously. We will therefore also monitor the grades of male and female students in non-anonymous assessments (Action 3.2).
Fig. 3.6: Degree profile of graduating female and male MBB students. Panel A presents combined data for all graduates. Separate data are also shown for BSc (Panel B) and MBiolSci (Panel C) graduates. Figures above the bars show total numbers of graduates.
Staff data

vii) **Female:male ratio of academic staff and research staff** – researcher, lecturer, senior lecturer, reader, professor (or equivalent). Comment on any differences in numbers between males and females and say what action is being taken to address any under-representation at particular grades/levels.

Over the years 2009-10 to 2011-12, the proportion of research staff who were female was 47% (Fig. 3.7). In contrast, the proportion of female academic staff was only 14%. This low proportion of female academic staff is of long standing, and the low turnover and replacement of academic staff has given little opportunity to address it.

![Percentage of staff](image)

**Fig. 3.7:** Percentage of female and male MBB researchers and academic staff for the academic years 2009-10 to 2011-12. Figures above the bars show total numbers of staff in each category.

Fig. 3.8 summarises the proportions of females at different career stages in MBB, from undergraduate students to professors. The shortages of females at early career stages (UG, PGR and Researcher) were all relatively small, but there was strong under-representation of females in all academic staff grades.

A significant number of new academic appointments has been made in the period 2012-13, and Section 4 describes how we have attempted to ensure that our appointment procedures are not biased against female applicants.
Fig. 3.8: Profile of MBB female students and staff for the academic years 2009-10 to 2011-12. Figures above the bars show total number in each academic staff group.

viii) **Turnover by grade and gender** – comment on any differences between men and women in turnover and say what is being done to address this. Where the number of staff leaving is small, comment on the reasons why particular individuals left.

Turnover of research staff is greater than for academic staff, mostly reflecting postdoctoral workers reaching the end of fixed-term contracts. In two of the three years shown in Figure 3.9, the turnover among female research staff was lower than among males. Academic staff turnover during the same period involved one female professor and one female senior lecturer, who volunteered for a one-off opportunity to take voluntary severance.

Fig. 3.9: Turnover of staff by grade and gender
4. Supporting and advancing women's careers: 5000 words in total

Key career transition points

a) Provide data for the last three years (where possible with clearly labelled graphical illustrations) on the following with commentary on their significance and how they have affected planning.

i) Job applications and success rate by gender and grade – comment on any differences in recruitment between men and women at any level and say what action is being taken to address this.

The gender balance of academic applications, short list and appointments for academic positions is shown in figure 4.1 and for researchers in figure 4.2. In the period 2012-2013 there were three rounds of academic appointments: two for lecturers with research and teaching responsibilities and one for teaching only. Notably, the gender ratio of the applications for the teaching position was less heavily male dominated (56%M:44%F) compared to the research and teaching positions (81%M:19%F), and both of the teaching appointments were female.

![Figure 4.1 Gender of applications and appointments by percentage in 2011-12 and 2012-3. Superimposed figures show absolute numbers. No academic appointments were made in 2010-2011](image)

Overall the gender balance of the short list reflected the gender balance of the applications, suggesting the short listing procedure is not gender biased. However, in 2011-12 the appointments were exclusively male, despite 25% of the applicants and short-listed candidates being female.
The gender balance of applications for the researcher positions were male dominated, to a much lesser extent than the academic positions. In general, there was a higher proportion of females short-listed and appointed compared to the proportion of female applicants.

Figure 4.2 Gender balances of researcher applications, short lists and appointments for the last 3 years by percentage. Superimposed Figures refer to absolute numbers

Through this analysis we have identified two key issues concerning the recruitment of academic staff: firstly there is a low proportion of female applicants, and secondly previous rounds of appointments have been biased towards males. We want to address potential areas of gender imbalance in our recruitment process and we will accomplish this by:

1. working with UoS Human Resources (HR) department to produce a revised general template for advertisements, making them more appealing to potential female applicants and emphasising family-friendly policies. (Action 4.1).
2. adding a section to our application forms so that applicants can explain career breaks. This will help us take into account medium-term as well as short-term impact on their career opportunities. (Action 4.2)
3. strongly encouraging all staff involved in advertising, short listing or interview panels to undergo unconscious bias training. (Action 4.3)
4. ensuring that during the recruitment process the gender balance of the short list matches that of the overall applicant list. In line with faculty policy, a minimum of 20% female applicants must be short listed (Action 4.4)
5. making informal approaches to suitable female candidates outside the department whilst also advertising new positions widely within the department. (Action 4.5)
6. Supporting internal candidates through coaching and mentoring during the application process. (Action 4.6)
(ii) Applications for promotion and success rates by gender and grade – comment on whether these differ for men and women and if they do explain what action may be taken. Where the number of women is small applicants may comment on specific examples of where women have been through the promotion process. Explain how potential candidates are identified.

All members of staff in MBB undergo an annual appraisal (Staff Review & Development Scheme, SRDS), where potential promotion opportunities are identified. Over the last three years there have been two applications for promotion from male academics (one successful and one unsuccessful) and no applications from female academics. Exceptional contribution awards (ECAs), awarded to post-doctoral researchers based on their SRDS performance, have been awarded as follows; two in 2010 (1F/1M) one in 2011 (M) and four in 2012 (3F/1M).

(79 words)

b) For each of the areas below, explain what the key issues are in the department, what steps have been taken to address any imbalances, what success/impact has been achieved so far and what additional steps may be needed.

(i) **Recruitment of staff** – comment on how the department’s recruitment processes ensure that female candidates are attracted to apply, and how the department ensures its short listing, selection processes and criteria comply with the university’s equal opportunities policies.

Job adverts for academic positions are composed by the HoD and include information from HR highlighting the ‘excellence through inclusion’ policy and promoting the university’s Athena Swan Bronze award. New posts are advertised widely. Applicants are long-listed based by a panel of senior academic staff and short-listed by the broader academic community. All shortlisted applicants are invited for interview involving a short presentation, a tour of the department to meet academic staff, and a formal interview. Interview panels are chaired by Pro Vice Chancellor for Science Prof. Tony Ryan (who is also chair of the University Equality and Diversity committee), and are comprised of academics from MBB, a representative of a cognate department, the Faculty Director of Research and a representative from HR (whose role is to ensure the process occurs in line with the University’s guidelines, including their equal opportunities policies). We strive to equalise the gender balance on interview panels and to increase female representation we invite a female academic from cognate departments. All of our interview panels in the last three years have contained at least one female member of staff but the ratio has never exceeded 33%. We will also commit to having no less than 33% of staff on interview panels being female and shall aim for 50% in the long term. (Action 4.6).

(220words)
Support for staff at key career transition points – having identified key areas of attrition of female staff in the department, comment on any interventions, programmes and activities that support women at the crucial stages, such as personal development training, opportunities for networking, mentoring programmes and leadership training. Identify which have been found to work best at the different career stages.

We lose female staff members during the crucial transition point from post-doctoral researcher to junior academic. Whilst we are actively making changes to increase our appeal to female academics from outside the department by changing our recruitment strategy, we will also focus on the development of our current post-doctoral staff. Some of the changes we will introduce will foster the careers of all early career stage scientists. However, since attrition of post-doctoral career progression affects females disproportionately, we expect these steps to specifically prevent the loss of female talent.

There are multiple University and Faculty mentoring and support programs including Impact (for female academics at grade 8), Future (for senior academic women mentored by PVCs and senior member of staff), Researcher mentoring scheme (for all early career researchers), Speed mentoring (for female PhD students and Postdocs), Student mentoring schemes, GROW scheme (for technical and admin staff). Five academics in the department act as mentors in the Researchers Mentoring scheme, but it is disappointing that so far only four researchers have taken part. We will facilitate and enhance the uptake on mentoring schemes by our female scientists (Action 4.9).

Our focus groups found that the MBB post-doc community wanted to be more actively involved in departmental decision-making processes. To address this issue post-docs are now actively encouraged by the HoD to attend and contribute to staff meetings and to sit on relevant departmental and faculty level committees. The postdoctoral researcher (female) who chairs the MBB research network is already a faculty representative on the Faculty Researcher Development Group. This committee is involved in discussing, developing and promoting professional development activities for researchers, as well as providing a voice for the postdoctoral community at faculty and university level. It also contributes to University policy development related to postdoctoral researchers. In addition, our monthly HoD coffee and cake mornings enable the flow of information from senior to junior staff members, and are an arena to celebrate our successes and announce any new academic posts in the department.

The MBB Research Network (MBBRN) has recently been established by a group of post-docs within the department, led by a female post-doc. Its central aims are to encourage communication and collaboration between researchers within the department, to act as a voice for early career researchers at departmental and faculty levels, and to promote training and professional development opportunities available to post-docs across the university. The MBBRN has already been successful in establishing a departmental seminar series for post-docs to disseminate their research. With support from the self-assessment committee, it plans to increase the visibility of post-docs within the department by refurbishing the photo board to
include post-docs (Action 4.7), assisting the department in improving the induction process for post-docs (Action 4.12), and holding a joint away-day with other researcher societies from the wider faculty (Action 4.7). The main contact points for the MBBRN are through its website (contained within the departmental web pages), regular informal coffee meetings and a monthly e-newsletter.

As a direct outcome of our self-assessment focus groups focused on career progression and development, it was felt that a departmental support group specifically aimed at women should be created to discuss and address gender issues (Action 4.8). The MBB Women in Science (MBB WinS) group is led by a female academic and takes the form of monthly coffee meetings promoting discussion surrounding career progression of female scientists and the barriers, perceived or real, to success. The high attendance at these meetings (>25 people) has been a real surprise and a testament to how important these issues are to women in the department. The HoD and Director of Research also attend when possible to join in the discussion and provide information and advice. Feedback from these meetings has revealed a number of issues that will be addressed in further workshops and discussion groups, including how to:

a) realistically assess academic potential  
b) recognise success criteria in job applications  
c) raise awareness of independent research fellowships (IRFs)  
d) remove the taboo surrounding discussing maternity leave for early career researchers  
e) raise awareness of university policy regarding maternity leave, career breaks and flexible working

To reach a wider audience and promote further discussion, an MBB WinS webpage and Facebook page have been created as a central resource aimed particularly at young female members of staff, and this has a prominent link on the departmental homepage (Action 4.9). It will also have links to departmental, university and national support groups and resources regarding career progression, maternity planning, networking and other mentoring opportunities. For example, the Springboard for Women programme, Women@TuOS (the University of Sheffield Women’s network), Parents in Academia coffee mornings and Parent2parent (support and networking for parents) are highlighted.

(782 words)

Career development

a) For each of the areas below, explain what the key issues are in the department, what steps have been taken to address any imbalances, what success/impact has been achieved so far and what additional steps may be needed.

(i) **Promotion and career development** – comment on the appraisal and career development process, and promotion criteria and whether these take into consideration responsibilities for teaching, research, administration, pastoral work and outreach work; is quality of work emphasized over quantity of work?
Appraisal and promotion are evaluated in our SRDS system, which has recently changed so that all academic staff are now reviewed directly by the HoD. This has improved understanding of expectations, particularly amongst more junior members of staff who were originally reviewed by a different member of the professorial staff each year. A survey of our post-doctoral staff showed that last year SRDS uptake was approximately 70% and that of participants, only half were satisfied with the experience. Consequently, the SRDS for post-doctoral staff has been improved by organising for a staff member who is not their Principal Investigator (PI) to conduct the meeting, thus ensuring that the staff member’s career development is reviewed independently of the interests of their PI’s research group. This action has had very positive feedback since it was introduced for the 2012-2013 academic year. It is also clear to us that for full SRDS uptake, PIs need to support the process and encourage participation of their post-doctoral staff. We will highlight at staff meetings that SRDS is not simply a tick-box process and that it is for the all-round improvement of that member of staff’s personal/professional development and well-being (Action 4.10a).

Our self-assessment activities and, in particular, the career development and promotion focus group had one clear message regarding how career progression can be improved: the promotion process should be made more transparent, with explicit criteria. In our staff survey, more than half the staff (57% F and 67% M) felt that MBB values and rewards the full range of skills and experience including pastoral work, outreach work, teaching and administration in performance appraisals. However, less than half (28% F and 45%M) agreed that it counted towards promotion.

In addition, evaluation of our post-doc survey paints a very mixed picture of our success in nurturing academic ambition in our younger women. Of greatest concern, our post-doctoral survey reports that 62% of males (8/13) but only 13% of females (1/8) intend to apply for a lectureship or fellowship as their next post. Since mobility is key for the key researcher-academic transition, it is worrying that 78% of females (7 /9) but only 31% of males (4/13) prefer to remain in Sheffield when their contract ends.

In order to address the lack of clarity in our promotion criteria and improve our appraisal system, in addition to the progress we have already made and the action points already outlined in a(i), we will carry out the following:

1. The self-assessment committee will assign a working group to re-draft the SRDS paperwork to include clear, point-by-point questions relating to career progression for post-docs (Action 4.10b). At SRDS, we will encourage suitable candidates to apply for Independent Research Fellowships (IRFs) and ensure that in all stages of postdoctoral training they are aware of the requirements for a competitive IRF application and have realistic plans in place to meet these requirements. We will also encourage uptake of professional development opportunities. We recognise that the choice of professional development activities sought by researchers may vary according to future career intentions. (Action 4.10c).

2. Update staff job descriptions including those for university teacher, lecturer, senior lecturer, reader and professor and include these in the SRDS pack with clear guidelines to help staff members gauge their performance (Action 4.10d).

(545 Words)
(ii) **Induction and training** – describe the support offered to new staff at all levels, as well as any details of any gender equality training. To what extent are good employment practices in the institution, such as opportunities for networking, the flexible working policy, and professional and personal development opportunities promoted to staff from the outset?

After many years without new academic appointments in the department we have recently hired 11 new lecturers over four rounds of recruitment (2012:1 and 2013:3). Each new academic was assigned a mentor from the professorial staff and provided with an induction pack containing information about the department and wider university. However, feedback from the new academics has highlighted the strengths and weaknesses of the our established induction system and identified areas where we can improve in the future. In particular, new staff commented on a lack of information on internal University processes and policies, and legal requirements for establishing a new research group (e.g. Health and Safety requirements). In order to address these shortcomings we will completely overhaul our induction process in consultation with University HR and Health and Safety departments. MBB will continue to assign a mentor responsible for the induction process to each new member of staff. A new induction pack will be prepared to guide the process and provide a reference for the new staff member. The new induction pack will highlight areas identified as current weaknesses, including information on flexible working, support for parental leave and updated links to additional information provided on the University webpages (Action 4.11).

There is a well-established faculty-level induction for post-doctoral staff which is currently run 3 times a year. We need to increase the uptake of this induction by researchers as currently only 18% of Postdocs have attended the Postdoc induction (Action 4.12). However, there is a need to improve the departmental induction process for researchers, specifically to foster a stronger community spirit within the department. Currently the PI and his/her group are responsible for inducting new staff, but this can often lead to isolation of researchers, especially when groups are small or with very few other post-docs. We will improve this process by appointing post-doctoral advisors at the departmental level, one for each area of our science (Biochemistry, Genetics, Microbiology), who will be responsible for meeting with the post-doc after their arrival and organising a coffee meeting with post-doc representatives (MBBRN) and MBB WinS representatives (Action 4.12).

(370 words)

(iii) **Support for female students** – describe the support (formal and informal) provided for female students to enable them to make the transition to a sustainable academic career, particularly from postgraduate to researcher, such as mentoring, seminars and pastoral support and the right to request a female personal tutor. Comment on whether these activities are run by female staff and how this work is formally recognized by the department.

All PG students undergo rigorous induction to the department and as well as their supervisor, are assigned two advisors to act as mentors throughout their PhD. A student can, at any time, request a change of supervisor or advisor, including opting
for a female mentor. We understand that this policy has not been made explicit to our PhD students so we aim to highlight this during forthcoming induction sessions (Action 4.13). All PG students benefit from induction meetings once which facilitate the sharing of information related to researcher development and support PG students to undertake their yearly training needs.

The MBB PG Society was established in 2012 and is currently lead by a female PhD student. The society disseminates information about UoS training courses for PG students and organises social events, coordinated via its Facebook page. In addition, from 2014 a PG away weekend is being established in conjunction with the BMS PG Society, to provide career development advice and training, as well as to encourage peer-support networks. External female speakers will be invited to talk during the retreat to increase visibility of female role models.

PG students are invited to attend the Post-Graduate-Staff Committee meetings, where key issues regarding PG courses and training can be raised. This is also a forum for encouraging the development of social networks within the postgraduate community, which reinforces the informal support structure for students by fostering advice sharing and collaborations. The committee is well attended by female students and members of staff.

The more informal environment of MBB WinS (Women in Science) has particularly attracted female PG students, enabling them to address key issues facing young female researchers in a supportive environment. The sessions are also very well attended by female academics at various points in their careers (e.g. professors, readers, post-docs, fellows etc.), adding to the range of potential role models and mentors.

(311 words)

### Organisation and culture

a) Provide data for the last three years (where possible) with clearly labelled graphical illustrations) on the following with commentary on their significance and how they have affected action planning.

(i) **Male and female representation on committees** – provide a breakdown by committee and explain any differences between male and female representation.

At present there are 9 main decision making committees within the department and as the department currently has only a small number of female academics (5/28), ensuring female representation on all committees risks overloading individual members of staff. However, committee membership is considered as part of MBB's work allocation model (see below) and we strive to ensure that administrative workload is equitably distributed.
Figure 4.3 Gender balance of all administrative committees in MBB in 2011-12, 2012-13 and 2013-14. Superimposed figures refer to absolute numbers. Safety committee staff members include technical staff.

Figure 4.4 Gender balance of all teaching committees in MBB in 2010-11, 2011-12 and 2012-13. Superimposed figures refer to absolute numbers.

The key decision making body in the department is the Departmental Advisory Committee, which is chaired by the HoD (male) and additionally includes 3 male and 4 female members of staff. Our research and teaching activities are overseen by the Research Committee and Teaching Committee, respectively. The Research Committee consists of 8 senior staff members, including, since 2011, one female professor. The Teaching committee is chaired by the Director of Studies and includes the Chairs of the
three major disciplines represented in MBB; Genetics, Microbiology and Biochemistry, as well as the HoD, the four undergraduate year tutors, the departmental Admissions Officer and the teaching laboratory manager. Of these, one year tutor, the Admissions Officer and the teaching laboratory manager are female (3/11).

(ii) Female:male ratio of academic and research staff on fixed-term contracts and open-ended (permanent) contracts – comment on any differences between male and female staff representation on fixed-term contracts and say what is being done to address them.

The majority of Research staff in the department are employed on fixed-term contracts due to the nature of research grants awarded (Figure 4.5). After four years Fixed-term staff are automatically rendered open-ended Fixed Term Employees (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2002). Due to mobility among research staff the proportion of Research staff making the transition to open-ended contracts is small but there is no evidence for gender bias in our appointments to open-ended contracts. In contrast, the majority of academic staff are employed on open-ended contracts and, as a result, the female:male ratio reflects the overall gender balance within the department.

Figure 4.5 Breakdown of Research staff on fixed-term and open-ended contracts. Superimposed figures refer to absolute numbers.
b) For each of the areas below, explain what the key issues are in the department, what steps have been taken to address any imbalances, what success/impact has been achieved so far and what additional steps may be needed.

(i) **Representation on decision making committees** – comment on evidence of gender equality in the mechanism for selecting representatives. What evidence is there that women are encouraged to sit on a range of influential committees inside and outside the department? How is the issue of ‘committee overload’ addressed where there are small numbers of female staff?

As with all staff, the representation of women on decision-making committees tends to increase with seniority. When questioned, all staff felt that their inclusion on decision-making committees was due to their having the correct experience and background and not their gender. Our academics are also active on external decision-making committees. For example, one of our female lecturers was a member of the Royal Society International Travel Grants Panel for 4 years. One of our senior lecturers has served on the Postgraduate Research Committee for Medicine, the Postgraduate Research Committee for Science, the University Biosafety Committee. She currently serves on the University Research Ethics Committee and as a member of Senate, and was Scientific Director of a University spin-out company (Bioserv UK Ltd) from 2009-2013. At the national level, she served on the Council of the National British Society for Immunology for 5 years and is an Editorial Advisor for the Biochemical Journal. We provide her with additional secretarial help to assist her with these numerous roles. Of the three female professors in the department, one has sat on two Faculty committees including the Leverhulme Research Fellowships and Awards Panel and the Mass Spectrometry Facility Manager Search and Interview Committee. At the national level,
she was a member of the theme Panel Committee for the Biochemical Society, a member of the Royal Society/Wolfson Infrastructure Grant Panel in 2012, a member of F1000 Research Editorial Board and a member of the Cytoskeleton Editorial Board. In line with these aspirations she has recently moved departments and taken up a role as deputy HoD. A second female professor has a very large administrative role associated with decision-making committees at all levels (departmental, faculty, University and National). She currently coordinates the departmental REF response as well as being a member of the Faculty REF committee. She is a member of the University Senate and, since 2012, has been elected to the Senate Budget committee. She sits on the University Equality and Diversity Board (from 2012) with focus on the Civic Strand, on the University Biosafety Committee and on the University Management Teams for UoS 5 and 7 REF submissions. She is a Core member of BBSRC Committee B (2010 - present), a member of NERC Peer Review College (2013 – present) and sits on advisory Editorial Boards of New Phytologist and Biochemical Journal. She commented to the self-assessment team that she would rather be included on these committees than ignored. She has now been awarded sabbatical leave to further advance her already impressive research record.

(ii) **workload model** – Describe the systems in place to ensure that workload allocations including pastoral and administrative responsibilities (including the responsibility for work on women and science) are taken into account at appraisal and in promotion criteria. Comment on the rotation of responsibilities, e.g. responsibilities with a heavy work load and those seen as good for an individual’s career.

MBB operates a Work Allocation Model (WAM) that records the time spent carrying out pastoral, administrative, outreach and external activities. WAM is assessed annually and the load is adjusted according to each academic’s efforts in each of these areas. For example an academic with a highly successful research output and research fundraising may contribute less to teaching and administration and vice versa. However, all academics contribute to a greater or lesser extent to teaching, administration and pastoral care. We value all contributions and this is evidenced by the promotion of Professor Anderson to a personal chair on the basis of his sustained excellence in teaching and his heavy burden of administration as Director of Studies.

(iii) **Timing of departmental meetings and social gatherings** – provide evidence of consideration for those with family responsibilities, for example what the department considers to be core hours and whether there is a more flexible system in place.

MBB implements the university wide policy that all meetings should take place within core hours (09:30-16:00). Where possible, staff meetings and away days are arranged outside school holidays as this makes attendance easier to staff with family
commitments. In line with this, departmental seminars which traditionally took place at 5pm have for some years now been rescheduled to 1pm. The effect of self-assessment activities has been to reinforce the application of this policy and highlight the fact that a significant proportion of the staff (20% of males and 35% of females) are still unaware of this policy. We will therefore clarify departmental policy to all staff in our induction material, departmental handbook and on a new page of our departmental website relating to equal opportunities and family-friendly policies (Action 4.14).

(130 words)

(iv) Culture – demonstrate how the department is female-friendly and inclusive. ‘Culture’ refers to the language, behaviours and other informal interactions that characterise the atmosphere of the department, and includes all staff and students.

Our self-assessment activities included the creation of a focus group aimed directly at addressing the issue of departmental “culture”, in relation to language, behaviour and the general atmosphere in the department. It was generally believed that overtly sexist behaviour was a thing of the past and in our survey over 90% of both male and female staff agreed that our department was a great place to work. However, our survey revealed that departmental policy with relation to culture could not be taken for granted. The following survey results, as a whole, convey a negative message that needs to be addressed and suggest that a significant number of female staff have witnessed behaviour they find unacceptable in the department.

a. 57% of female staff did not know or disagreed with the statement “My Department has made it clear to me what its policies are in relation to gender equality (e.g. on discrimination; parental leave; carer’s leave; flexible working)”

b. 50% of female staff did not know or disagreed with the statement “My Department makes it clear that unsupportive language and behaviour are not acceptable (e.g. condescending or intimidating language, ridicule, overly familiar behaviour, jokes/banter that stereotype women or men or focus on their appearance).”

Not only will departmental policy be reinforced to existing staff and to new appointees (Action 4.15), we will also ensure that a clear course of action is available if a member of staff witnesses discriminatory behaviour. We will therefore nominate a departmental equality and diversity officer who will be the point of call for staff members who need to report issues, with the power to ensure a change in culture will come about where needed (Action 4.16).

For the good of departmental culture and to foster a confident attitude in our younger female staff members and students we aim to increase the visibility of prominent female role models. This will be achieved firstly by improving the balance of female speakers in departmental seminars. In the first instance we will aim to achieve 33% female speakers, with the long-term goal of 50%. We will also prepare an exhibition on
eminent female scientists from our department to complement existing material on eminent males, such as Professor Sir Hans Krebs (Action 4.17).

We will also foster community spirit, by organising social activities at family friendly times and including family-inclusive sporting events, for example, rather than evening meals or drinks (Action 4.18).

(401 words)

(v) Outreach activities – comment on the level of participation by female and male staff in outreach activities with schools and colleges and other centres. Describe who the programmes are aimed at, and how this activity is formally recognised as part of the workload model and in appraisal and promotion processes.

The department has a strong commitment to outreach activities and recognises them in its Work Allocation Model. MBB contributes to the joint Faculty of Science and Engineering Discover STEM program and regularly hosts visits from schools to take part in specially designed laboratory classes. One of the key aims is to attract Widening Participation (WP) students, who may be less likely to apply to university for reasons of social deprivation, income or absence of parental participation in higher education.

Two highlights of our current outreach program include initiatives driven by female members of the department, Science Brainwaves and Atom Labs. Science Brainwaves was founded by a female postgraduate and has subsequently been chaired by two other female postgraduates from the department. Atom Labs were recently awarded £26k from the University’s wider participation fund to purchase a specially designed portable fluorescence microscope and a series of events entitled ‘Atoms to Organisms’. The group, composed of PG students and post-docs, seeks to engage school children and the general public in all aspects of molecular biology.

(210 words)

Flexibility and managing career breaks

a) Provide data for the past three years (where possible with clearly labeled graphical illustrations) on the following with commentary on their significance and how they have affected action planning.

(i) Maternity return rate - comment on whether maternity return rate in the department has improved or deteriorated and any plans for further improvement. If the department is unable to provide a maternity return rate, please explain why.

In the last 3 years, 5 members of staff (2010-2011:2, 2011-2012:2 and 2012-2013:1), all at post-doctoral level, have taken maternity leave and 4 of them have returned to work successfully. It is difficult to comment on whether the situation is deteriorating or improving based on these small numbers. Awareness of departmental and university policies and, more importantly, awareness of support networks that can
help plan a career break successfully will form the basis of our action plans (including actions 4.8, 4.9, 4.15) put in place to retain female researchers. As well as external sources of support such as the University’s Parents2Parents network and the University’s Women Academic Returners’ Programme (WARP), we will establish a formal departmental procedure with regards to supporting women through maternity leave (Action 4.19).

(127 words)

(i) **Paternity, adoption and parental leave uptake** – comment on the uptake of paternity leave by grade and parental and adoption leave by gender and grade. Has this improved or deteriorated and what plans are there to improve further.

There have been only 2 applications for paternity, adoption or parental leave in the department over the last 3 years. This suggests that paternity leave is taken outside formal channels. As part of our package of updating departmental policies we want to improve awareness of family-friendly policies and encourage staff to declare leave of this kind through formal university channels (Action 4.20).

(62 words)

(ii) **Number of applications and success rates for flexible working by gender and grade** – comment on disparities. Where the number of women in the department is small applicants may wish to comment on specific examples.

All applications for flexible working have been successful in the last three years. There is some evidence of male flexible working as well as female, but this constitutes a minority (0:1 M/F in 2010-2011, 1:5 M/F in 2011-2012, 1:7 M/F in 2012-2013). Most applications are from post-doctoral staff although, notably, flexible working applications have been made by two members of the professorial staff in the last 3 years, including one male.

(71 words)

b) For each of the areas below, explain what the key issues are in the department, what steps have been taken to address any imbalances what success/impact has been achieved so far and what additional steps may be needed.

(i) **Flexible working** – comment on the numbers of staff working flexibly and their grades and gender, whether there is a formal or informal system, the support and training provided for managers in promoting and managing flexible working arrangements, and how the department raises awareness of the options available.

The nature of academic positions is that they afford a considerable amount of flexibility with respect to working hours and thus flexible working among staff is informal. Within our postdoctoral community, 80% of women and 60% of men felt that taking parental leave would affect career progression; however the majority felt that their PI would fully support them if they wanted to work part-time due to parental responsibilities. These uncertainties will be addressed by drafting and publicising departmental policy on family-friendly policies, and in order to tackle any
misconceptions head-on, case studies from academics who have successfully worked flexibly during their career will be presented as part of the MBB WinS initiative (Actions 4.8, 4.9, 4.15).

(ii) **Cover for maternity and adoption leave and support on return** – explain what the department does, beyond the university maternity policy package, to support female staff before they go on maternity leave, arrangements for covering work during absence, and to help them achieve a suitable work-life balance on their return.

Until recently, maternity cover for research staff and support on return was informal and generally left to PIs to organise. For academic staff, administrative and teaching duties are generally successfully covered during leave, but the supervision of research staff and PhD students during extended periods of leave is considerably more problematic. This is due to the often highly specialised nature of any member of staff’s research but, in some cases at least, may result from underestimating the impact a new family will have on an academic’s ability to manage their research projects.

Our survey findings reinforce this analysis. Only a third of staff agreed that they felt supported after returning to work after an extended period of absence, for example, sickness, maternity leave or other caring responsibilities, so clearly this is an area that we can improve upon. Other self-assessment activities in the department highlight the need for a more active involvement of the department in providing support cover during leave and return to work. The self-assessment committee will identify a working group responsible for drafting a document containing recommendations and guidelines with respect to planning a career break. This will base itself primarily on current HR policy but will be further informed by available case studies within the university (Action 4.21). In addition, MBB WinS will ensure that staff are made aware of both national and university schemes that are in place to support them through career breaks, both financially and through mentoring schemes. From January 2014, an HR advisor will be available for 1:1 meetings within the department to address any issues related to contract, redeployment/maternity. (Action 4.22)

(270words)

Total Section 4 word count: 4978
5. **Any other comments: maximum 500 words**

Please comment here on any other elements which are relevant to the application, e.g. other SET-specific initiatives of special interest that have not been covered in the previous sections. Include any other relevant data (e.g. results from staff surveys), provide a commentary on it and indicate how it is planned to address any gender disparities identified

**Causes for concern**

- Low proportion of existing academic staff are female. This is the focus of our whole action plan and we are determined that taken together these actions will increase the proportion of female staff.
- Low proportion of female applicants for research and teaching posts advertised leading to no female appointments being made for research and teaching posts *(Actions 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 4.10)*
- Post-doctoral researchers are not getting sufficient career mentoring *(Action 4.10)*
- Induction for new members of staff is not providing necessary advice on establishing a laboratory *(Action 4.11)*

**Results of Surveys**

- **Career progression**
  - SRDS not functioning well for researchers *(Action 4.10)*
  - Internal female candidates not encouraged to apply for academic posts *(Action 4.5)*
  - Maternity leave and return not well managed *(Action 4.21)*
  - Promotion criteria not widely understood *(Action 4.10)*
  - Markedly lower proportion of female post-doctoral researchers compared to male, intending to apply for Independent Research Fellowships or academic positions. *(Actions 4.7, 4.8, 4.9, 4.10, 4.17)*
  - Low proportion of researchers felt PIs supported career progression *(Action 4.10)*

**Departmental culture, language and behaviour**

- Almost universal agreement that the department is a great place to work; but a high proportion of female staff are:
- Unaware of department policies for maternity leave, carer's leave or flexible working *(Action 4.19)*
- Unaware that unsupportive language and behaviour is not acceptable within the department *(Actions 4.8, 4.15, 4.16)*

**Highlights**

- Self-Assessment Team established and meeting regularly. Widespread involvement of senior and junior academic staff, post-doctoral researchers and post-graduates in preparation of Bronze award application
- Focus groups conducted by external facilitator, staff and additional postdoctoral surveys carried out that informed our analysis and action plans
- Departmental Women in science (WinS) network established led by female academic. Already meeting regularly and web site hosted
- Research Network (MBBRN) for post docs established and led by a female researcher
- Post-graduate society established and led by a female post-graduate. Plans for a post-graduate away day well advanced
- Staff Appraisal (SRDS) for researchers changed so that appraiser is not PI to allow independent career advice. This has led to a very positive response. All academic staff now appraised by HoD to ensure realistic advice on career progression is provided
- Appointment of post-doctoral researchers shows no evidence of gender bias
- In the latest round of academic recruitment for University teachers both appointees were female
- Monthly coffee and cake mornings to enable the flow of information from senior to junior staff members
- HoD support for a returning female scientist through Daphne Jackson scheme
- Sheffield University Alumnus office survey shows that since 1989 10% of MBB PhD graduates have been appointed to academic posts compared to national average of 2.5% *(Royal Society – The Scientific Century 2010)*. Importantly, the gender ratio of those obtaining academic posts is similar to the gender ratio of the PhD graduates. This shows that we have successfully fostered career
progression in our female graduate students over the lifetime of the department in its present form

496 Words
## Action Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Description of action</th>
<th>Action taken already and outcome at November 2013</th>
<th>Further action planned at November 2013</th>
<th>Progress Log</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Timescale</th>
<th>Start date</th>
<th>Success Measure</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Continue the Self Assessment process</td>
<td>The Committee has been formed and has met regularly to prepare this document</td>
<td>Continue to meet every two months. The Committee should include one post-doctoral researcher and one PhD student at all times. The Committee will communicate progression and challenges on Action Plan at Staff meetings and Faculty Equality and Diversity (E&amp;D) Committee.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Self Assessment Committee</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Dec 2013</td>
<td>Committee meets and monitors progress on the action points listed here</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Formation of working groups</td>
<td>It has been decided that two working groups should be set up to implement changes in the SRDS and induction processes, and in departmental policy</td>
<td>Establish these groups and a plan for them to achieve their goals</td>
<td></td>
<td>Self Assessment Committee</td>
<td>Formation of groups by Mar 2014</td>
<td>Dec 2013</td>
<td>Groups established and implement the tasks assigned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action</td>
<td>Description of action</td>
<td>Action taken already and outcome at November 2013</td>
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<td>3.1</td>
<td>Monitor degree classifications among female MBiolSci students</td>
<td>A discrepancy has been noted in the grades awarded to male and female students</td>
<td>Continue to monitor this, especially as compared to the research project portion of the BSc degree</td>
<td>Teaching Committee</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Jun 2014 after awarding of degrees</td>
<td>Review of degree classifications by the teaching Committee</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Assess our marking of undergraduate research projects</td>
<td></td>
<td>Look into the grades awarded to male and female students by male and female staff, and consider blind assessment methods to address any problems we uncover</td>
<td>Teaching Committee</td>
<td>Report by Sep 2014</td>
<td>Jun 2014 after awarding of degrees</td>
<td>Report by the teaching Committee to the Self Assessment Committee on this subject</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Increase job applications from qualified female candidates</td>
<td>HR is currently reviewing a general template for advertisements</td>
<td>Adopt new template for job advertisements, removing biased language and emphasising family-friendly policies, as soon as it becomes available.</td>
<td>HoD, HR</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Dec 2013</td>
<td>Increase in the number of qualified female applicants</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Ensure career breaks are not a disadvantage during the shortlisting process</td>
<td>Add the option on our job application forms for applicants to explain career breaks due to family, medical or other reasons.</td>
<td>HoD, HR</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Dec 2013</td>
<td>Increase in the proportion of shortlisted candidates who have taken career breaks</td>
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<td>Action</td>
<td>Description of action</td>
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<td>4.3</td>
<td>Minimise unconscious bias during the recruitment of new staff</td>
<td>We have invited all academic staff to attend unconscious bias workshops in late 2013; 8 people have signed up and 6 have already participated at the time of submission</td>
<td>Strong expectation that all staff who may be involved in advertising, short listing or sitting on interview panels for academic appointments to have attended an unconscious bias workshop. Further action will be taken if there is not a good participation rate.</td>
<td>Self Assessment Committee, HoD, HR</td>
<td>To be reviewed Jun 2014</td>
<td>Dec 2013</td>
<td>Increased attendance of unconscious bias training by members of staff involved in the recruitment process</td>
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<td>4.4</td>
<td>Maximise the number of shortlisted female candidates for academic posts</td>
<td>Applicants are currently long-listed based on their research track record by a panel of academic staff overseen by the HoD and short-listed by the broader academic community within the department based on the wider CV.</td>
<td>Monitor the gender balance of short lists. Where it is not consistent with the gender balance of the applicants, review applications from females. Aim to ensure a minimum of 20% females are shortlisted (Faculty agreed target) for each position where less than 20% of applicants are female.</td>
<td>HoD, HR</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Dec 2013</td>
<td>Gender balance of short list matches gender balance of applicant pool</td>
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<td>4.5</td>
<td>Increase job applications from qualified female candidates</td>
<td>When new positions become available we make informal approaches to suitable female candidates outside the department and communicate information about the position widely within the department.</td>
<td>Publicise new posts throughout the department via email, through the MBB Research Network (MBBRN) and though the MBB Women in Science group. Make proactive approaches to suitable internal and external female candidates. Ensure that enough time is allowed in the recruitment process for these contacts to be made. Offer mentoring &amp; coaching support for our internal candidates to prepare job applications.</td>
<td>HoD, HR</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Dec 2013</td>
<td>Higher proportion of applications from qualified female candidates</td>
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<td>4.6</td>
<td>Improve gender balance of interview panels</td>
<td>Every interview panel contains at least one female member; on occasion we have invited a female member from a cognate department to ensure this.</td>
<td>Ensure that all appointment panels contain at least 33% female members. Aim for 50% as pool of available female academics increases</td>
<td></td>
<td>HoD</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Dec 2013</td>
<td>At least 33% of all appointment panels to be female</td>
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<td>4.7</td>
<td>Improve career development resources for early career researchers and increase their visibility in the department</td>
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<td>Post-docs are encouraged to attend staff meetings and to sit on appropriate departmental and faculty level Committees. Monthly HoD coffee and cake mornings. The MBB Research Network (MBBRN) has recently been established by a group of post-docs within the department and is currently led by a female post-doc. Post-docs are encouraged to attend the University’s Springboard for Women programme. Introduction of talks from post-docs in the departmental seminar series.</td>
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<td>Establish an annual faculty-wide away day for early career researchers in consultation with the post-doc community. HoD and principal investigators actively encourage Postdocs to take part in away day and professional development programme. Update the photo board to include post-docs.</td>
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<td>MBBRN and HoD</td>
<td>Ongoing Photo board refurbishment by Mar 2014</td>
<td>First away day is planned to take place in Apr 2014</td>
<td>The away day takes place and the other activities continue</td>
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<td>4.8</td>
<td>Create a departmental support group to discuss and address gender issues</td>
<td>MBB Women in Science (MBB WinS) has been set up and meets on a monthly basis</td>
<td>MBB WinS will use feedback to address topics of interest to young researchers</td>
<td>Self Assessment Committee</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Already underway</td>
<td>MBB WinS continues to hold monthly meetings, shares successes of the approach with other departments at Faculty E&amp;D Committee and at Women@TUOS Committee meetings.</td>
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<td>4.9</td>
<td>Underline career development resources available for female researchers via a portal on the departmental homepage</td>
<td>MBB WinS webpage and Facebook page has been created as a central resource aimed particularly at young female members of staff, and this has a visible link on the departmental homepage</td>
<td>Create links to the Faculty &amp; University researcher development programme and support <em>Think Ahead</em> (eg. Crucible and SURE programmes, Researcher Mentoring, Intensive academic writing programme) Produce videos of female researchers who have benefited from professional and career development opportunities to share and disseminate impact of involvement. Enhance researchers awareness of these pages by including links in induction resources and mentioning them during inductions.</td>
<td>Departmental web support team</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Already underway</td>
<td>This page already exists on the homepage Further development of the page and monitoring of page views Increase uptake of development opportunities as monitored by Researcher Development Manager.</td>
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<td>4.10</td>
<td>Raise awareness of promotion criteria and their interpretation</td>
<td>A draft of a revised SRDS form for postdoctoral researchers has been designed. Sessions have been organised to help postdocs understand the SRDS process and take full advantage of its aim towards professional development.</td>
<td>a) Highlight the importance of SRDS at staff meetings b) Appoint a working group to assess the SRDS process, finalise the forms to be used and provide ongoing training and discussions among SRDS reviewers. c) At SRDS, encourage postdoctoral scientists to take up professional development opportunities. d) Include discussion of criteria for promotion at SRDS. Make job descriptions for academic positions available to staff</td>
<td>HoD, line managers, SRDS/induction working group</td>
<td>Review of the SRDS process by Sep 2014</td>
<td>Dec 2013</td>
<td>Updated SRDS process Increase in applications for fellowships and promotion from female staff; increase in postdoctoral staff continuing academic careers Increase in uptake of professional development opportunities for postdoctoral researchers.</td>
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<td>4.11</td>
<td>Improve induction process for academic staff</td>
<td>Assign a mentor to each new staff member</td>
<td>Assign a mentor to each new staff member</td>
<td>Self Assessment Committee, HR, SRDS/induction working group</td>
<td>Production of a staff induction pack by Sep 2014</td>
<td>Dec 2013</td>
<td>New staff receive quality mentoring and an action pack</td>
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<td>4.13</td>
<td>Strengthen the induction of PhD students</td>
<td>Doctoral Development Program. Existing rigorous induction process for each year group. Well-established post-graduate society.</td>
<td>Inform students as part of their induction that they can, at any time in their PhD, request a more suitable advisor. Highlight the MBB WinS society as a useful source of support at induction.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Self Assessment Committee, SRDS/induction working group</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Dec 2013</td>
<td>Increased satisfaction with the induction process, measured by survey.</td>
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<td>4.14</td>
<td>Clarify departmental policy regarding family-friendly scheduling</td>
<td>The department operates the university wide policy that all meetings should take place within core hours. Where possible, staff meetings and away days have been arranged outside school holidays. Departmental seminars have been rescheduled to 1pm</td>
<td>Add a new page of the departmental website</td>
<td>HoD, HR, departmental policy working group</td>
<td>Nomination of the working group by Mar 2014. Production of materials by Sep 2014.</td>
<td>Dec 2013</td>
<td>Increased awareness of these policies as measured by a staff survey</td>
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<td>4.15</td>
<td>Increase awareness of departmental and university equal opportunity policies</td>
<td>Ensure that all new appointees are fully briefed about the department's equal opportunity policies, and that existing staff are aware of these policies via a new section in our SRDS.</td>
<td></td>
<td>HR, Self Assessment Committee, SRDS/induction working group</td>
<td>Ongoing; SRDS materials to be prepared by Jun 2014</td>
<td>Dec 2013</td>
<td>Improved induction and SRDS materials. Increased awareness of equal opportunities policies as measured by a staff survey</td>
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<td>4.16</td>
<td>Ensure a clear course of action is available in cases where a member of staff witnesses discriminatory behaviour</td>
<td>Nominate a departmental equality and diversity officer</td>
<td>HR, Self Assessment Committee</td>
<td>Nomination by Jun 2014</td>
<td>Dec 2013</td>
<td>Delineation of the role and nomination of an officer</td>
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<td>4.17</td>
<td>Increase the visibility of female role models</td>
<td>Get a better balance of female speakers in departmental seminars</td>
<td>Seminar organisers; Self Assessment Committee</td>
<td>Production of the exhibition by Sep 2014</td>
<td>Seminars starting with the 2014-15 academic year</td>
<td>33% female speakers in the departmental seminar series, with a long-term goal of 50%; production of the exhibition</td>
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<td>4.18</td>
<td>Ensure that all members of staff can take part in informal networking and social activities</td>
<td>Increase social activities at family-friendly times. Consult with staff to determine the best solution. Inform staff well in advance of planned social events to facilitate childcare arrangements if necessary.</td>
<td>Self Assessment Committee</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Dec 2013</td>
<td>Increased attendance at such events</td>
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<td>4.19</td>
<td>Establish a formal departmental procedure to support staff through a career break</td>
<td>Staff currently have access to external sources of support – e.g. Parents2Parents, Parents in Academia, and WARP</td>
<td>Establish a formal departmental procedure</td>
<td>HoD, HR, departmental policy working group</td>
<td>Departmental procedure by Jun 2014</td>
<td>Dec 2013</td>
<td>Production of the document and increased satisfaction of staff returning from career breaks as measured by a staff survey</td>
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<td>4.20</td>
<td>Increase new parents taking paternity leave through official channels rather than ad hoc arrangements</td>
<td>Low rates of applications suggest that paternity leave is taken without applying for it through formal channels.</td>
<td>Strongly encourage staff to declare leave of this kind through formal university channels in induction and SRDS materials</td>
<td>HR, departmental policy working group, SRDS/induction working group</td>
<td>Materials by Jun 2014</td>
<td>Dec 2013</td>
<td>Increased satisfaction of staff returning from family leave as measured by a staff survey</td>
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<td>4.21</td>
<td>Make available a document containing recommendations and guidelines with respect to planning a career break</td>
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<td>Identify a focus group responsible for drafting the document</td>
<td>Self Assessment Committee, departmental policy working group</td>
<td>Document by Sep 2014</td>
<td>Dec 2013</td>
<td>Formation of a focus group and production of guidelines</td>
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<td>4.22</td>
<td>1:1 meeting with HR representative within the department to discuss maternity and related issues</td>
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<td>Self Assessment Committee</td>
<td>From January 2014</td>
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<td>Appointments available</td>
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Abbreviations used: HR: University of Sheffield Human Resources Department; HoD: Head of Department; IRF: Independent Research Fellowship; MBBRN: MBB Research Network; MBB WinS: MBB Women in Science; SRDS: Staff Review and Development Scheme; WARP: Women Academic Returners’ Programme