

**MU DEPARTMENT OF BIOLOGY GENDER EQUALITY ACTION PLAN 2019-2022**

Level of priority:



No.	Description of action	Rationale	Responsibility	Start date	Milestones and end date	Success measure	Priority level
<b>3. THE SELF-ASSESSMENT PROCESS</b>							
<b>3.1</b>	Establish the Biology Gender Equality Steering Group (GESG) that will meet three times per academic year, with regular updates communicated to staff	<p>To ensure that the Biology GEAP is fully implemented within the timeframe set out</p> <p>To empower the GESG to drive the culture of equality and diversity within the department</p> <p>To increase awareness of the Athena SWAN Charter principles and GEAP implementation in the department</p>	GESG Chair (lead), HOD, CTOs	Begun: October 2017	November 2022	<p>GESG meets three times per academic year</p> <p>The GEAP will be implemented within the set timeframe</p> <p>Athena SWAN is a permanent item for academic staff meetings, where the GESG Chair gives updates about the self-</p>	

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						<p>assessment process and/or GEAP implementation</p> <p>Technical staff will likewise be briefed during term-time technical meetings by the HOD and the CTOs</p> <p>GESG minutes will be sent to all staff within 2 weeks of each meeting</p> <p>An annual GEAP progress report will be shared with all staff and research</p>	

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						<p>students each December</p> <p>A high proportion of staff surveyed in 2020 (&gt;70%) and 2022 (&gt;85%) will express a strong awareness of Athena SWAN and the Biology GEAP</p>	
3.2	Review GESG membership biennially	To ensure that the Biology GESG is representative of the department in terms of gender, diversity, department role, grade, career stage, caring responsibilities and	SAT Chair (lead), with the HOD and the MU Athena SWAN Project Officer acting in an advisory role	Next review due November 2020	November 2022, when a new GESG will be selected following our application for a Silver Award	The SAT will remain a committee that is highly representative of the Department of Biology, with wide	

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		<p>experience of equality and diversity initiatives</p> <p>To give more staff and research students an opportunity to participate in the SAT</p>				<p>opportunities to participate</p> <p>Levels of diversity on the current GESG maintained</p>	
3.3	Select a new GESG Chair to lead Biology's Silver Award application. If possible this will be a male	<p>To share out gender equality work in the department between women and men</p> <p>To demonstrate gender balance in departmental Athena SWAN leadership</p>	HOD (lead), with the MU Athena SWAN Project Officer acting in an advisory role	November 2020	November 2022, when a new GESG Chair will be selected following our application for a Silver Award	A new GESG Chair will be selected to lead Biology's Silver Award application	
3.4	Capture membership of the GESG as part of the academic WAM	<p>To dedicate staff time as a resource in support of Athena SWAN work</p> <p>To officially recognise staff contributions to Athena SWAN</p>	HOD	July 2019 (in preparation for the new academic year)	November 2022	<p>The WAM modified to capture membership of the SAT</p> <p>&gt;70% of staff surveyed in 2020 and &lt;85%</p>	

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		To prevent “committee overload” for staff				in 2022 will agree that Athena SWAN is a priority area for the department	
3.5	Ensure the Department of Biology will continue to be represented on the MU GESG by the Biology GESG Chair	<p>To ensure appropriate integration of local actions with more global actions plans</p> <p>To share lessons learned, good practice and difficulties experienced in the self-assessment process and/or implementing the GEAP with other departments and institutional stakeholders</p>	SAT Chair (lead)	Begun: SAT Chair a member of the GESG since March 2017	November 2022 and ongoing	The MU GESG will develop a better understanding of how institutional and departmental GEAPs are working on the ground and, going forward, be more equipped to respond to any challenges raised by departments	

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3.6	Nominate an undergraduate representative to the Biology GESG	To ensure that the undergraduate perspective is represented and heard in the Biology Athena SWAN process	GESG Chair	Expressions of interest will be sought from 2 <sup>nd</sup> year class representatives in January 2019, with the nominee chosen by February (start of Semester 2 2018-2019)	From academic year 2019-2020, undergraduate nominations will be made each October until 2022	An undergraduate representative will be included on the SAT	
3.7	Communicate Biology's commitment to Athena SWAN to new postgraduates in the postgraduate student handbook and during departmental inductions by the Postgraduate Co-Ordinator and the HOD	To increase awareness of the Athena SWAN Charter principles and the Biology GEAP among postgraduate students, particularly actions that relate to research students	Postgraduate Co-Ordinator (lead), HOD	September 2019	September 2022	A high proportion of research students surveyed in 2020 (>65%) and 2022 (>80%) will express a strong awareness of Athena SWAN	

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						and the Biology GEAP	
3.8	Include information about Athena SWAN in undergraduate student handbooks	To introduce undergraduate students to the Athena SWAN Charter principles.  To emphasise Biology's local leadership in advancing gender equality	1 <sup>st</sup> -4 <sup>th</sup> Year Co-Ordinators (lead), SA	September 2019	September 2022	Biology students will have an understanding of the Athena SWAN Charter principle and the department's commitment to gender equality	
3.9	Emphasise Athena SWAN and the GEAP in our Quality Review (QR) process (in 2019).	To embed gender equality into our quality assurance/quality enhancement processes  To show leadership on gender equality issues at a departmental level	HOD (lead), SAT Chair	Begun November 2018: QR working groups established	February 2019:  A chapter will be included about Biology's Athena SWAN structure, self-assessment process and actions in the	Gender equality will be embedded into our quality assurance/quality enhancement processes  A model will be developed that other	

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					<p>self-assessment report</p> <p>As far as is possible, data on staff and students will be disaggregated by gender in the report</p> <p>April 2019:</p> <p>Session organised with the external and interview peer reviewers specifically on Athena SWAN</p>	departments in MU can follow	
3.10	Schedule class surveys and focus groups with undergraduates about their experiences of the	To ascertain whether undergraduate students perceive/have experience of gender	HOD	November 2018	Begun: Class survey conducted in	We will have a deeper understanding of how	



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	<p>Department of Biology, including gender equality issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This work will be conducted as part of the QR process (see <b>Action 3.9</b>)</li> </ul>	<p>equality issues in the department</p> <p>To get feedback from male and female students about the curriculum and assessment in the department. Our data shows that a higher percentage of female students in Biology achieve high honours, even though there are no gender differences in the average number of CAO points for male and female entrants. Interestingly, males do as well as females in Year 3</p> <p>To include any further actions related to</p>			<p>November 2018</p> <p>Focus groups held in early February 2019</p> <p>GESG to agree on any further actions related to undergraduate students in April 2019</p>	<p>undergraduates experience the department and, if any gender-based issues arise, we will put in place appropriate actions</p>	

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		undergraduates in the GEAP if required					
3.11	Distribute biennial 'culture surveys' to staff and research students	<p>To measure the impact of the GEAP and identify if other actions, or changes to existing actions, are needed</p> <p>To support future Athena SWAN applications</p>	GESG Chair (lead), Director of HR, MU Athena SWAN Project Officer	Next survey due May 2020	Survey due in May 2022 prior to application for Silver Award	<p>Response rates to increase to &gt;75% by 2020 and &gt;85% by 2022 across all categories (with a particular focus on the participation of male research students, who will be encouraged by their PIs to participate)</p> <p>The surveys will provide critical data and facilitate a regular evaluation of</p>	

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						staff and research student perceptions of gender equality in several key areas (including workloads, career development, promotion, work-life balance, care-related leave etc.)	
3.12	Contribute directly to the MU Women and Science Strategy and the Women in Science Working Group	To offer practical experience and advice on advancing women's representation in STEM  To align departmental and institutional work	GESG Chair	Begun: The GESG Chair sits on the Women in Science Working Group and will feed into monthly meetings from February 2019	September 2019	Departmental and institutional work on gender equality will be aligned  The Biology perspective and	

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		<p>on advancing gender equality</p> <p>To ensure the Biology perspective is represented and heard at an institutional level</p>				<p>local experience will be represented and heard in the university strategy to increase women's representation in STEM</p>	
3.13	<p>Contribute to enhancing gender equality initiatives in STEM research bodies nationally including Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) and the Irish Research Council (IRC)</p>	<p>To align departmental and sectoral work on advancing gender equality</p> <p>To allow Biology staff, who have vast experience in applying for/receiving research funding from these bodies, to offer advice and feedback on gender issues in research funding</p>	<p>GESG Chair (lead), HOD, PIs</p>	<p>Begun November 2018: GESG Chair made a submission to the SFI 2020-2025 consultation process, which included gender equality issues in research funding in the sciences</p>	<p>November 2022</p>	<p>Submission made to SFI</p> <p>GESG Chair will attend annual IRC-SFI summits</p>	

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<b>4. A PICTURE OF THE DEPARTMENT</b>							
<b>4.1 Student Data</b>							
4.1.1	Collate, analyse and report all of the student data relevant to Athena SWAN applications on a biennial basis, in conjunction with relevant units	To continuously monitor trends and take any additional actions, as needed.  To support future Athena SWAN applications.	GESG student data team	Requests for the following data (previous two years of data) will be made in May 2020:  Applications, offers, acceptances and registrations on the Certificate in Science  Undergraduate students and average grades/completion rates  Applications, offers, acceptances and	Repeat process in May 2022 in preparation for Silver Award application	All the data collated, analysed and reported to the GESG and Biology staff  The implementation of additional actions related to students, if required	

No.	Description of action	Rationale	Responsibility	Start date	Milestones and end date	Success measure	Priority level
				<p>registrations for all postgraduate courses</p> <p>Average grades/completion rates in taught postgraduate degrees</p> <p>Completion rates in research degrees</p> <p>Data analysed in June 2020</p> <p>Report presented to GESG and Biology staff in July 2020</p> <p>GESG to agree on any further actions for</p>			

No.	Description of action	Rationale	Responsibility	Start date	Milestones and end date	Success measure	Priority level
				students in July 2020			
4.1.2	Work with the FSE and the MU Access Office to identify ways of increasing female recruitment to the Certificate in Science, including outreach activities with local women's groups and networks linked to the Kildare and Wicklow Education and Training Boards	When females apply they have a slightly higher success rate in terms of being offered a place on the course, therefore more females need to be encouraged to apply	Biology Mature Student Co-Ordinator (lead), Certificate in Science Co-Ordinator, FSE Dean, Access Office, with the MU Athena SWAN Project Officer in an advisory capacity	Initial meeting between various stakeholders held in December 2018	Set of proposals for ways of widening female recruitment agreed with FSE and the Access Office in January 2019  Local groups and networks identified and contacted in January 2019  Promotional materials prepared and any outreach activities	An increase in the proportion of female applicants to >40% by 2022	

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					<p>undertaken in March-April of each year</p> <p>Applications open in March and close in May each year</p> <p>Data monitored annually by the Access Office and reported to the Biology GESG in June</p>		
4.1.3	Ensure that at least one female and one male staff member is present at MU open days/evenings, by keeping separate rosters for female and male staff	<p>To give a balanced and representative view of the department (48% of academic staff are female) to prospective undergraduate and postgraduate students</p> <p>To share out outreach activities equally</p>	SA	February 2019 postgraduate open evening	Annual (open days/evenings held in February, April, June and November)	A female and male member of staff will be present at all open days/evenings	



No.	Description of action	Rationale	Responsibility	Start date	Milestones and end date	Success measure	Priority level
		between female and male staff					
<b>4.2 Academic and research staff data</b>							
<b>4.2.1</b>	Collate, analyse and report all of the staff data relevant to Athena SWAN applications on a biennial basis, in conjunction with relevant units	To continuously monitor trends and take any additional actions, as needed  To support future Athena SWAN applications	GESG staff data team	Requests for the following data (previous two years of data) will be made in May 2020:  All staff by grade, contract function and contract type  Departmental leavers by staff category and gender  Recruitment and promotion.	Repeat process in May 2022 in preparation for Silver Award application	All data collated, analysed and reported to the GESG and all staff  The implementation of additional actions related to staff, if required	

No.	Description of action	Rationale	Responsibility	Start date	Milestones and end date	Success measure	Priority level
				<p>Flexible working and uptake of care-related leave</p> <p>Representation of staff on external and internal committees</p> <p>Seminar speakers and chairs</p> <p>Data analysed in June 2020</p> <p>Report presented to GESG and Biology staff in July 2020</p> <p>GESG to agree on any further actions for staff in July 2020</p>			

No.	Description of action	Rationale	Responsibility	Start date	Milestones and end date	Success measure	Priority level
4.2.2	Establish a mentoring programme for all academic and research staff, with a specific focus on women's careers	The data from the 2015 academic promotions round shows the need to support more women staff to apply for promotion	HOD	<p>Begun: Call mentors sent out in October 2018)</p> <p>Call for interested mentees to be sent out in January 2019</p> <p>Mentees will be "matched" with a more experienced member of staff who will offer guidance, advice, peer review etc. by May 2019</p>	Mentors and mentees will be asked to provide feedback on the programme in October 2020	<p>Future surveys will show that more academic staff feel that they have been encouraged to apply for promotion:</p> <p>2018: 42% of females agreed and 55% of males (excluding N/A)</p> <p>2020: 70%&gt; eligible females and males will agree</p> <p>2022: 85%&gt; eligible females and</p>	

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						males will agree	
<b>SECTION 5: SUPPORTING AND ADVANCING WOMEN'S CAREERS</b>							
<b>5.1 Key career transition points: Academic staff</b>							
<b>5.1.1</b>	HOD to widely distribute academic job advertisements to all staff and ask them to share with their professional networks, including the Women in Technology and Sciences (WITS) LinkedIn page	Females are less likely to apply for lecturer positions than males, however, they are more likely to be appointed when they apply	HOD	November 2018	Ongoing	An increase in the proportion of female applicants for academic job posts	
<b>5.1.2</b>	Continue to ensure that all new Biology staff undertake department induction	To welcome new staff at department level  To allow staff to establish themselves into their role quickly and receive necessary	HOD (lead), PIs, CTOs, SA	Annual (as new staff join the department)	Annual	100% of new staff will complete department induction each year	

No.	Description of action	Rationale	Responsibility	Start date	Milestones and end date	Success measure	Priority level
		support at department level					
5.1.3	Strongly encourage all new staff to participate in university induction	To welcome new staff at institution level  To allow staff to establish themselves into their role quickly and receive necessary support at university level	HOD (lead), PIs, CTOs, SA	Next university induction (2019)	Annual	100% of new staff will complete university induction each year	
<b>5.3 Career development: Academic staff</b>							
5.3.1	Training and career development opportunities will be communicated to all staff and the HOD will encourage participation	77% of males surveyed compared to 50% of females agreed that the department actively encourages them to take up training opportunities, however one-third of women were neutral on this  To ensure that the department, as far as it	HOD (lead), SA	Begun: November 2018	Ongoing	By the 2022 staff survey, females will feel as encouraged to participate in training opportunities as males  2018: 77% of males agreed	

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		practical, fully supports staff to participate in training relevant to their role and/or that aids career progression				and 50% of women  2020: >80% of males and >70% of females  2022: >85% of males and females	
5.3.2	Noticeboards in both buildings will display information for research students about outreach opportunities, university supports (e.g. counselling services, career development centre etc.)	To ensure that research students in the department are aware of the various opportunities and supports available to them	Postgraduate Co-Ordinator	February 2019 (Semester 2 of current academic year)	Ongoing	The 2020 survey will show that >70% research students have an awareness of the opportunities and supports available to them  This will rise to >85% by 2022	

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5.3.3	The annual PhD progress form and follow-up meeting with a student's advisor and assessor will be amended to include sections on work-life balance and also career development	<p>In the student survey, 46% of females and 50% of males stated that they could not strike a balance between their research responsibilities and their home life. This view was reiterated by PhD students at the focus group</p> <p>100% of male students compared to 77% of females agreed that their supervisor was supportive of their career development</p>	Postgraduate Co-ordinator	April 2019	Annual	<p>Future surveys will show an increase in the numbers of students who agree that they are able to balance their research responsibilities and their home life</p> <p>2018: 20% of males and 31% of females agreed</p> <p>2020: 50%&gt; of males and 60%&gt; of females</p> <p>2022: 75%&gt; of males and females</p>	

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						>90% of research students will agree that their supervisor and the department are supportive of their career development by 2022	
5.3.4	Guidelines will be provided to research students in the postgraduate student handbook about working outside of core hours and taking annual leave. Students will be advised that they can expect the same entitlements (to work approximately the same hours and take the same	In the student survey, 46% of females and 50% of males stated that they could not strike a balance between their research responsibilities and their home life. This view was reiterated by PhD students at the focus group	Postgraduate Co-Ordinator (lead), HOD	September 2019	The HOD and the Postgraduate Co-Ordinator will also meet with PhD students at the start of the new academic year to outline expectations  It will be communicated to all PIs by	All new and current students will be aware of the policy (levels of awareness will be measured in future surveys)  Future surveys will show an increase in the numbers of students who	



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	leave) as a postdoctoral researcher				the HOD each September	<p>agree that they are able to balance their research responsibilities and their home life</p> <p>2018: 20% of males and 31% of females agree</p> <p>2020: 50%&gt; of males and 60%&gt; of females</p> <p>2022: 70%&gt; of males and females</p> <p>PIs/supervisors will be fully informed of the policy</p>	

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<b>5.5 Flexible working and managing career breaks</b>							
5.5.1	Provide HR with feedback from the biennial staff surveys on how the new maternity and adoptive leave policies are working on the ground at departmental level (if applicable)	To share feedback, any difficulties and lessons learned with the institution and other departments	GESG Chair	When next academic staff member takes maternity or adoptive leave	Ongoing	HR and the Department of Biology will develop an understanding of how the new policies are operating and be more equipped to respond to any challenges raised by departments	
5.5.2	Establish a policy to put in place PhD supervision structures when staff take maternity or adoptive leave	Although PhD students in our department have an advisor and assessor in addition to a supervisor, in general, staff on maternity leave have continued to supervise PhD students. While the numbers of	Postgraduate Co-Ordinator	When next academic staff member takes maternity or adoptive leave	Prior to a supervisor going on maternity or adoptive leave, a meeting will be held with the research student,	The need for staff to continue to supervise research students while on leave will be minimised	

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		academic staff in Biology who have taken maternity leave over the past number of years is very small, we recognise that this is a problem			<p>supervisor, advisor and assessor to establish a plan of action for the student's research progress and career development throughout the period of leave</p> <p>In the absence of a co-supervisor the advisor and assessor will meet with the PhD student every 6-8 weeks to provide extra support until</p>	Future surveys will show that research students will feel better supported when their supervisor goes on leave	

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					<p>the supervisor returns to work</p> <p>A “catch up” meeting between the four individuals will be held when the supervisor returns</p>		
5.5.3	<p>Invite HR to give an information session to staff on MU policies related to care-related leave and flexible working, equality, dignity at work, bullying, harassment, grievance and disciplinary processes</p>	<p>Although a majority know where to find the documents, surveys and focus groups with Biology staff reveal a general unawareness of the detail of HR policies, with female staff reporting higher levels of unawareness than men. Anecdotally it seems that staff only</p>	HOD (lead), SAT Chair	September 2019 (new academic year)	Next information session held in September 2022, if required (measured by 2022 staff survey)	Future surveys will show that staff have a greater awareness of the detail of various HR policies and would know what to do if a problem arises	

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		source these policies if a specific issue arise				More staff will avail of paternity and parental leave entitlements	
<b>5.6 Organisation and Culture</b>							
<b>5.6.1</b>	Continue to ensure equal representation of women and men on the department's formalised Working Groups and Steering Committee (comprising Working Group Chairs)	Gender balance was a key criteria for the HOD in selecting members and chairs of these committees	HOD	Begun: November 2018	November 2022	All Working Groups and the Steering Committee remain gender-balanced	
<b>5.6.2</b>	Ensure our departmental webpage has a dedicated section on our Athena SWAN activities and regularly updated with details of relevant events, the	To communicate the aims and achievements of Biology Athena SWAN to staff, students and webpage visitors	SA (lead), SAT Chair	Begun: March 2018)	Ongoing	Webpage regularly updated and active	

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	implementation of priority actions etc						
<b>5.6.3</b>	Encourage all Biology staff to use the Athena SWAN logo in their email signatures and public presentations and, if possible, to emphasise this in funding applications	To publically display the Department of Biology's commitment to the Athena SWAN Charter principles	SAT Chair	December 2018	Each December until 2022 (to coincide with the GEAP implementation progress report)	<75% of staff using the Athena SWAN logo in their email signatures and public presentations by 2022  Athena SWAN emphasised in all funding applications where possible	
<b>5.6.4</b>	Include details on where to find MU policies relevant to research students (e.g. equality and diversity policy) in the postgraduate handbook. This will be	The survey and focus group with research students reveal a general unawareness of the detail of these policies, particularly among female students	Postgraduate Co-Ordinator	September 2019	Ongoing (included in the handbook each year)	In September 2018, a dedicated Moodle page was also created by the department to	

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	emphasised at department inductions for research students					host this information  Future surveys will show that research students have a greater awareness of the detail of HR policies relevant to them and would know what to do if a problem arises	
5.6.5	Encourage all eligible academic staff to run for election and/or to put themselves forward for influential internal committees if vacancies arise	While the proportion of academic females and males on internal committees is generally balanced, 77% of males compared to just 50% of female staff surveyed agreed that they are	HOD	Next academic year 2019-2020	Ongoing	Academic committee membership as a whole will remain gender balanced	

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		encouraged to sit on committees					
5.6.6	Host and fully finance an annual Phyllis Clinch Lecture	To further enhance the visibility of women role models in the global discipline of Biology	SAT Chair (lead), All staff and research students will be invited to suggest potential speakers	May 2019	May 2022	Lecture held annually	
5.6.7	Organise a social reception open to all staff and students following the annual Phyllis Clinch Lecture	The logistics of the department being co-located across two adjacent buildings places a limitation on everyday social interactions that might be achieved informally through a shared coffee room. Postgraduate survey to that postgraduate survey and focus group suggest	SA	May 2019	May 2022	Social reception for all staff and postgraduate students held after the annual Phyllis Clinch Lecture	



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		that research students in particular would like more social gatherings in the department; this was also raised at the staff focus group. They enjoy the social interactions that take place as part of our annual Research Day and after Postgraduate-Postdoc Committee seminars					
5.6.8	More female academic staff will be encouraged to host/chair a BI420 seminar	Over the past two years, 43% (10/23) of academic chairpersons for BI420 were female	BI420 Module Co-Ordinator	September 2019	September 2022	50% of academic chairpersons for BI420 each academic year will be female	
5.6.9	Audit the Biology webpage twice a year to ensure that all genders are equally represented	Content on the Biology webpage is periodically updated or changed; we will ensure that any changes do not result in	SA	Each February and September	Ongoing	All genders are equally represented on	

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		the underrepresentation of either gender				the Biology webpage	
5.6.10	The outreach committee will be formalised as a department committee. As far as possible, it will be gender-balanced and include academic, research and technical staff representatives	<p>The surveys and focus groups suggest that staff and students generally enjoy participating in outreach activities and would like to be informed of outreach opportunities in advance</p> <p>While outreach participation by academics is gender balanced, the data suggests that among technical staff females are undertaking a disproportionate share of outreach work compared to males</p>	Outreach Committee Chair	Begun: Committee formalised in November 2018	<p>Ongoing (membership reviewed each year)</p> <p>The committee will send out an annual call seeking data on all outreach activities undertaken by staff and postgraduate students in the previous year (June 2019-2022)</p> <p>The committee will report the</p>	<p>Outreach committee formalised and membership balanced by gender, grade and department role</p> <p>Detailed data on staff and student participation in outreach activities by gender will be shared with the SAT and support future Athena SWAN applications</p>	

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					<p>above data to the GESG annually (July 2019-2022)</p> <p>The committee will collect information about future outreach activities and will support the planning of those activities, sharing information about outreach opportunities to all staff and students (ongoing)</p>	<p>Any significant gender and/or grade imbalances, if they occur, will be addressed by 2022</p>	

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5.6.11	Outreach will be formally recognised in the WAM for academic staff	<p>To dedicate academic staff time as a resource in support of outreach activities</p> <p>To officially recognise academic staff contributions to outreach</p> <p>To prevent some staff having to undertake a disproportionate amount of outreach</p>	HOD	July 2019 (in preparation for the new academic year)	Rewarded annually 2019-2022	Outreach formally recognised in the WAM for academic staff and shared among all staff	