



Athena Swan Silver application

School of the Physical Sciences,

University of Cambridge

September 2026

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Section 1: An overview of the department and its approach to gender equality

1.1 Letter of endorsement from the head of the department



School of the Physical Sciences

Professor Nigel PEAKE

Head of School

Dear Athena Swan team,

School of the Physical Sciences, University of Cambridge, Silver Award application

As Head of the School of the Physical Sciences, I am delighted to support this application for a Silver Athena Swan Award. This submission represents the culmination of a strategic, School-wide commitment launched in 2023, bringing together our eight Departments and two Institutes to advance gender equality, foster inclusive cultures, and create an environment in which all staff and students can thrive.

When I became Head of School in 2020, Athena Swan activity was largely conducted at departmental level. At that time, the School held two Silver and three Bronze awards, covering 81% of staff, with a further Bronze award achieved in 2022. While Departments worked hard to develop local initiatives, responsibility for data analysis, action planning, implementation and award applications rested primarily with individual units. Although a School EDI Forum facilitated discussion and the sharing of good practice, there was limited capacity for coordinated strategic action across the School.

The experience of the pandemic demonstrated the effectiveness and value of a collaborative and collegiate approach across our Departments and Institutes in addressing complex challenges. Building on this lesson, I led discussions through the School EDI Forum and Council of the School on the development of a collective approach to advancing Athena Swan principles. Recognising that meaningful change requires both leadership and resource, I supported investment in a dedicated EDI Champion and a senior administrative role to coordinate activity, strengthen accountability and drive delivery of our shared EDI vision. This application is the result of that commitment and partnership.

Gender equality remains a strategic priority for the School. Women continue to be underrepresented across most student and staff populations, although there is variation between disciplines. As an applied mathematician and former Head of Department, increasing the participation and progression of women has been a longstanding personal priority.

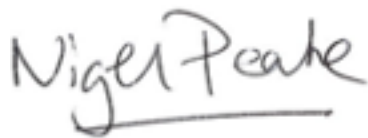
I am pleased that substantial progress has been made during my tenure. The proportion of women academics in the School has increased by seven percentage points, converging on the national HESA benchmark. Of 88 academic appointments made since 2020, 43% were women, including seven senior professorial appointments. The number of women leading School institutions has increased from none in 2020 to 46% today (six of thirteen positions, including joint headships), enriching decision-making, particularly in key School committees, through greater diversity of experience and perspectives. Promotion outcomes remain among the strongest in the University, with no gender differences in success rates and a 100% success rate in the new Teaching and Scholarship promotions pathway introduced in 2023.

These achievements have not been without challenge. Intense international competition for academic talent, the impact of Brexit, salary constraints, housing costs and the prevalence of dual-career partnerships all affect recruitment and retention. To address some of these barriers, I developed School-wide guidance on equitable and transparent opportunities for partner recruitment support and championed the use of School reserves to secure priority candidates.

Despite our progress, significant priorities remain. Increasing the representation of women in some undergraduate programmes, addressing persistent gender awarding gaps, supporting postgraduate recruitment in a challenging funding environment, and improving wellbeing amid increasing workloads all require sustained effort. Through this action plan, the School is committing resources to training, culture change initiatives, recognition of EDI contributions, and the embedding of transparent and inclusive practices across education, research and professional services.

Most importantly, this work is fully supported by senior leadership and embedded within the School's strategic objectives. Principles of equity and inclusivity are central to how we recruit, develop and support our community. Although I will be stepping down as Head of School, continued leadership of this agenda will be a key consideration in appointing my successor, ensuring that gender equality remains a priority for the School in the years ahead.

Yours sincerely,

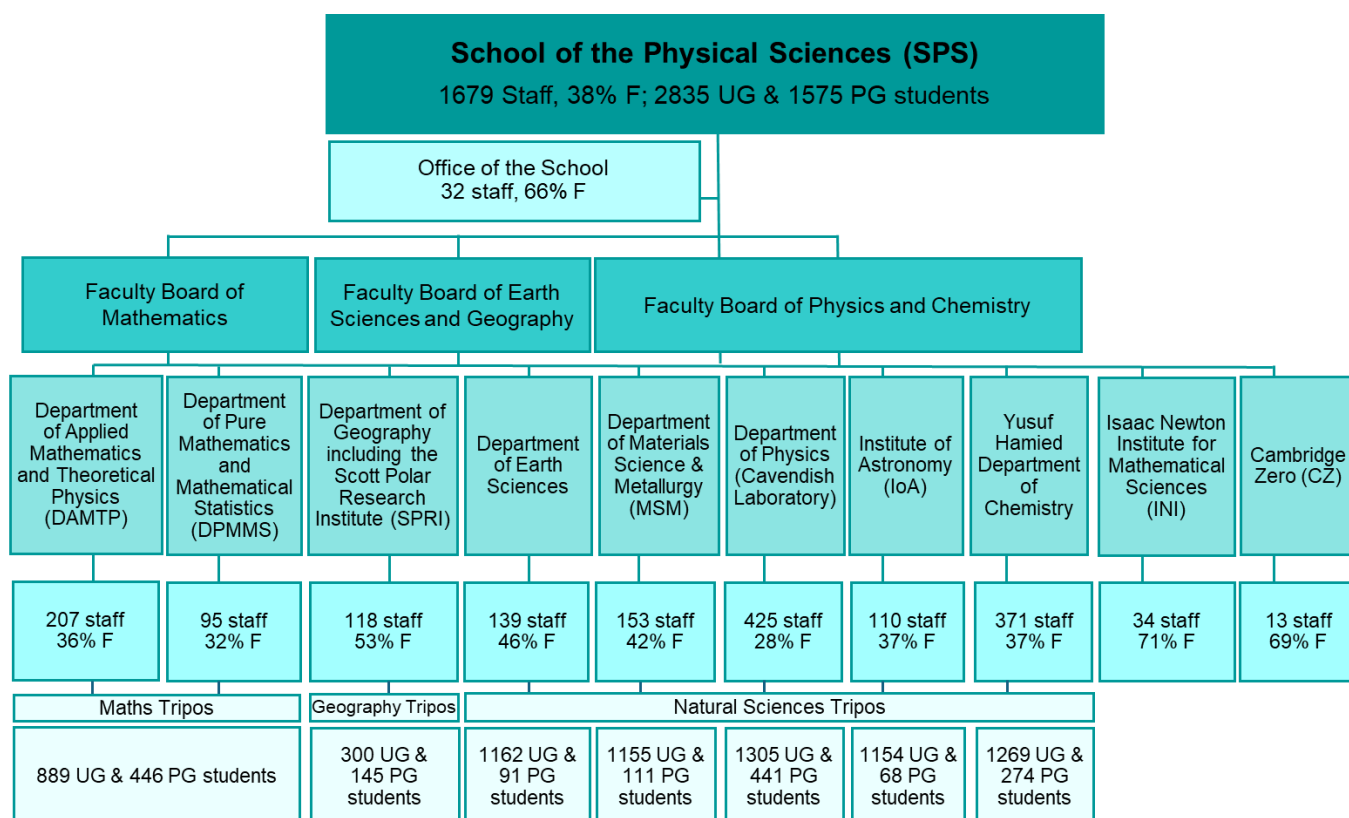
A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Nigel Peake". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Nigel Peake
Head of the School of the Physical Sciences

1.2 Description of the department

The School of the Physical Sciences (SPS) is one of six Schools which collectively make up the academic work of the University; it consists of eight departments as well as Cambridge Zero (from August 2024), the Isaac Newton Institute (INI) and the Scott Polar Research Institute (Figure 1). The School's departments and institutes are supported by the School Office, an administrative team led by the Head of School and Secretary of the School.

Figure 1: Structure of the School of the Physical Sciences



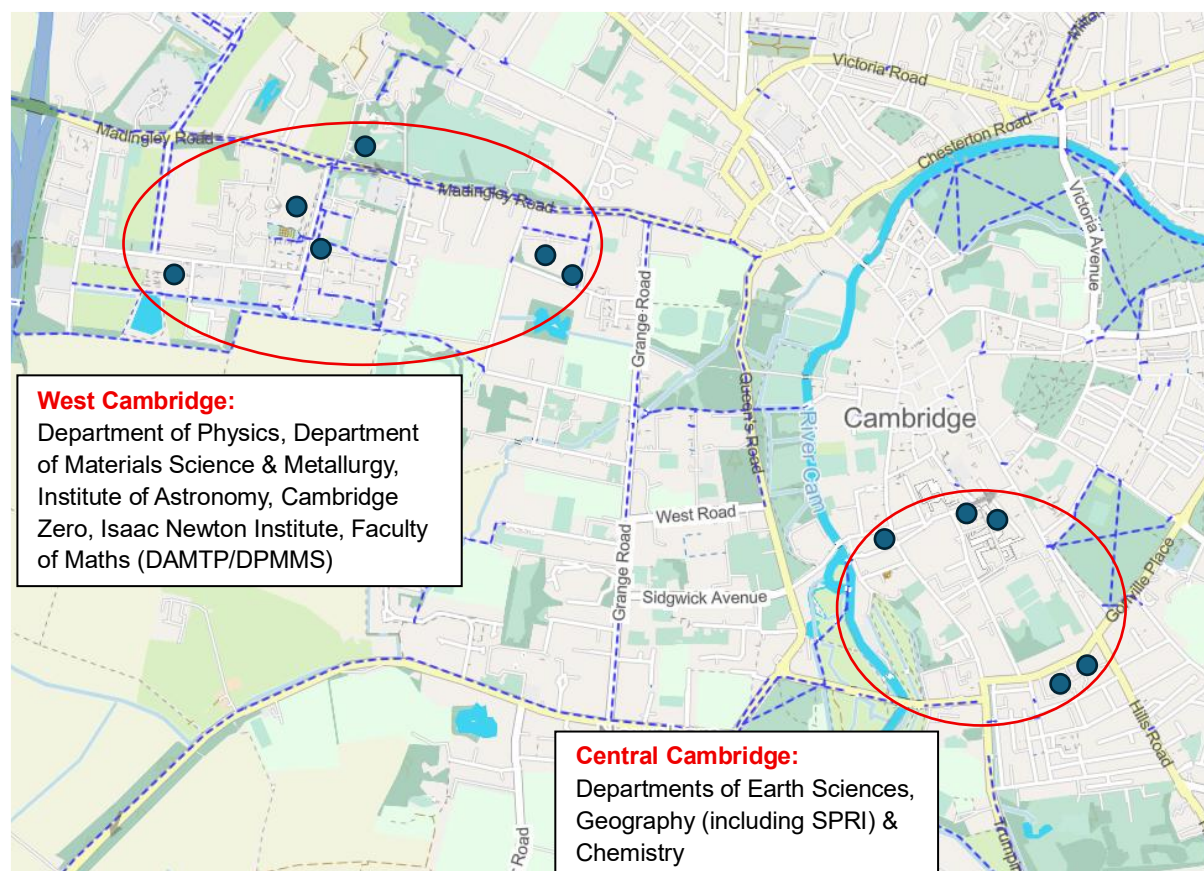
Our Departments and Institutes range in size from Cambridge Zero and the INI which are predominantly PSS to the large experimental Departments (Physics and Chemistry) which together constitute almost half of all staff in the School.

There are three undergraduate courses (Triposes): Natural Sciences, a broad course that gives students the opportunity to study physical and biological sciences from 14 different departments. In the Physical Sciences this includes Physics, Chemistry, Astronomy, Material Science and Metallurgy and Earth Sciences. There are around 550 students in years 1 and 2 of the course and 320 students in year 3 taking Physical Sciences subjects. The Mathematics and Geography courses admit ~255 and ~100 students annually respectively. Across the School, ~350 undergraduates continue to study for a 4th year Masters degree.

Departments offer 22 taught postgraduate Masters-level courses with >400 students annually and admit >310 postgraduate research students each year (85% to study for a PhD).

The Departments are split across two main sites in the west and centre of the city (Figure 2).

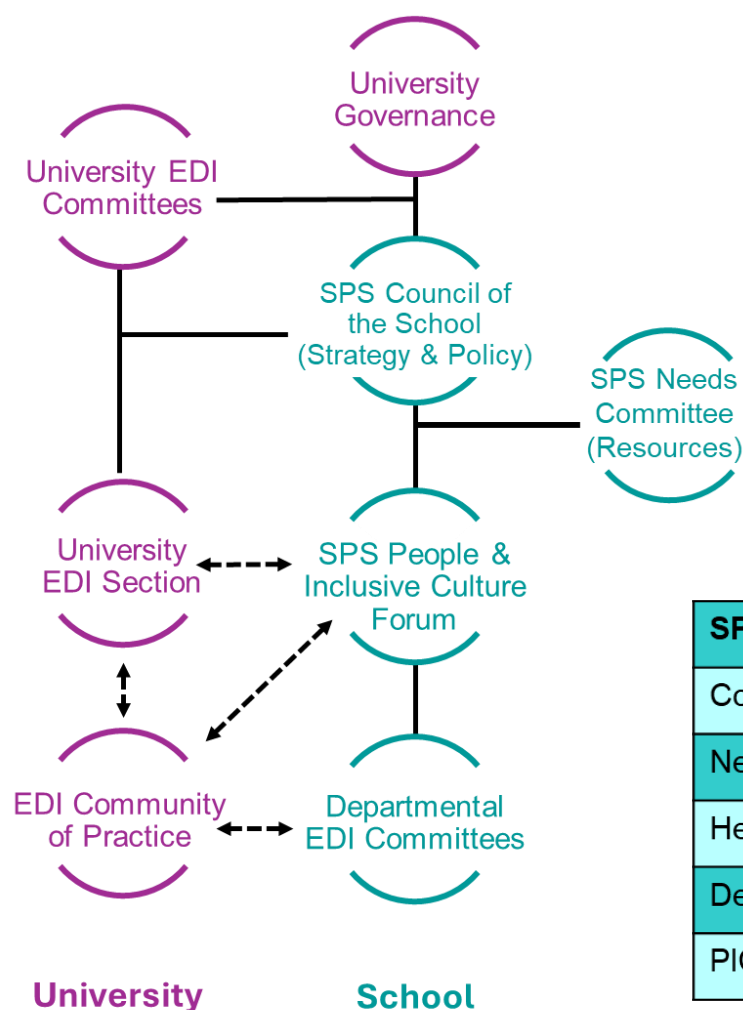
Figure 2: Distribution of SPS Departments across Cambridge



1.3 Governance and recognition of equality, diversity and inclusion work

The Council of the School (CSPS) which meets six times a year is the principal governance committee for the School (Figure 2), chaired by the Head of School. It comprises all the Heads of Departments/Institutions as well as teaching representatives from the three Faculty Boards within the School, the Director of Education and undergraduate and postgraduate student representatives. The School People and Inclusive Culture (PIC) Forum reports into the Council and the School EDI Champion (who chairs the PIC Forum) is both a member of Council and the University Gender Equality Steering Group. The Council sets the overall strategy and plans for the School, and considers recommendations from subcommittees (including resource management). The Council considered, provided feedback and approved the Athena Swan submission and action plan.

Figure 2: Reporting structure and gender representation on key bodies considering EDI matters within the School. The EDI Community of Practice, launched in 2025, is co-chaired by a member of the School. Reporting to University level committees is via the School Equality Champion and the Head of School.



SPS EDI Governance	%F 24/25
Council of the School	50% (n=20)
Needs Committee	43% (n=14)
Heads of Institution	46% (n=11)
Department EDI Chairs	50% (n=10)
PIC Forum	68% (n=22)

People are the central component of the SPS School vision (2023/24), across all student and staff roles to provide an inclusive environment for work and study which attracts a diversity of candidates and allows them to thrive and develop (Figure 3). Continuing to develop, maintain and articulate an inclusive environment for work and study is integral for success in all areas, simultaneously benefiting our students and staff while strengthening our ability to attract, retain and support a diverse community.

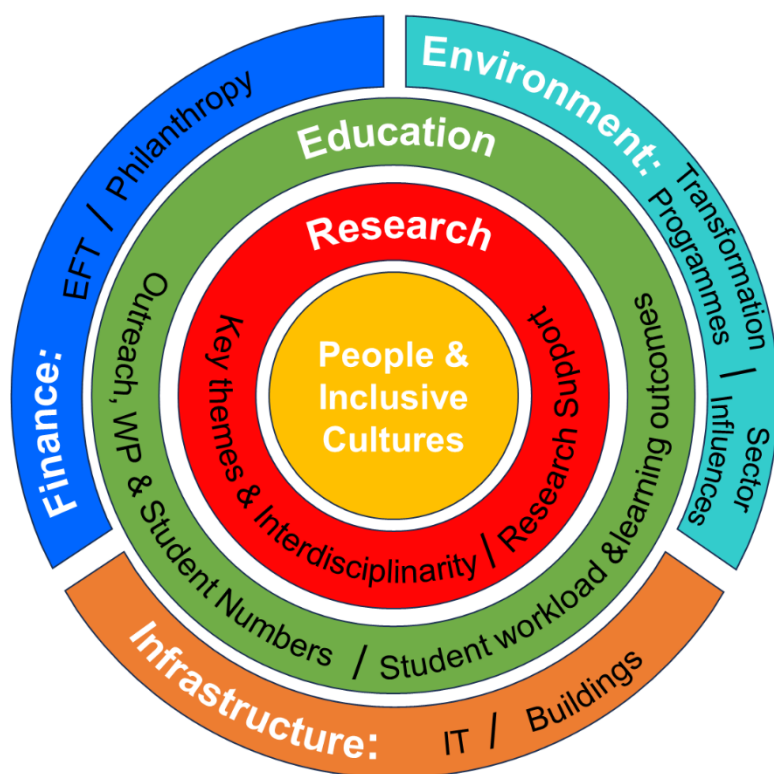


Figure 3: SPS School Vision 2023/24

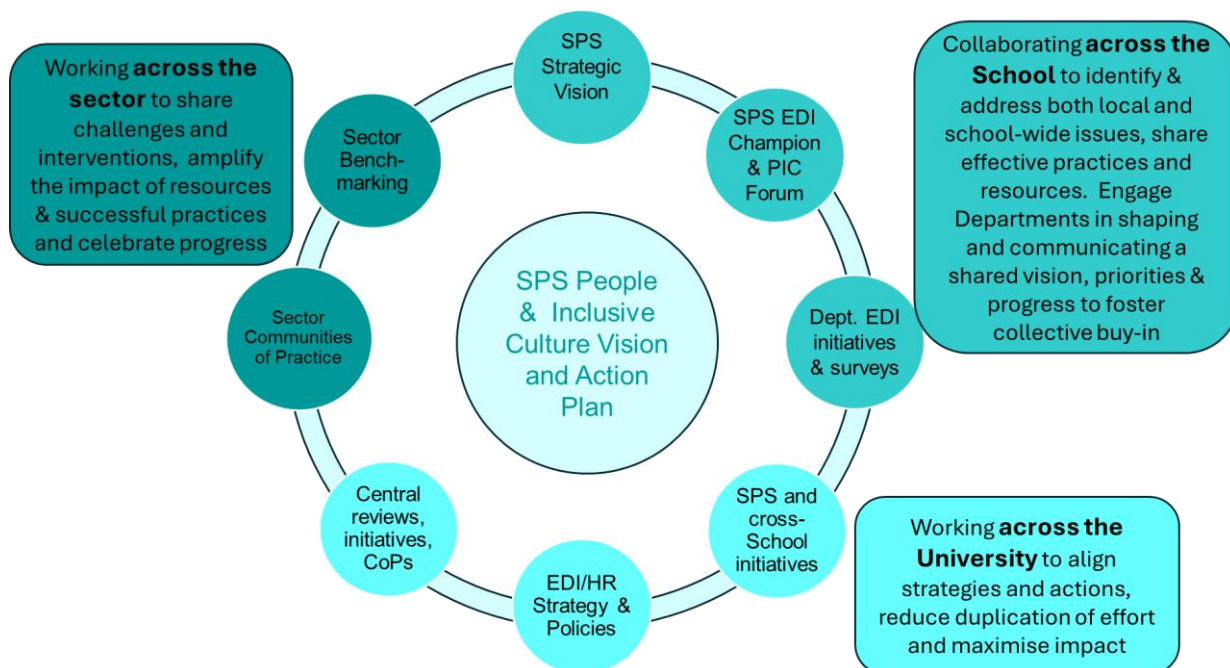
Our ambition is to strengthen and enhance Cambridge's position as one of the leading institutions globally for the best people to pursue their careers in the Physical Sciences

Departments in the School hold two Silver Athena Swan awards (Chemistry, Physics), three Bronze awards (Geography, Astronomy and Earth Sciences) covering 70% of staff in the School. The Faculty of Maths Bronze award (covering both DAMTP and DPMMS) expired in 2024 (coverage in 2024 was 87% of all staff).

The effectiveness of the School's previous devolved approach was reviewed through analysis of departmental action plans, consultation with EDI leads and Advance HE, and a School-wide SWOT exercise. This evaluation identified significant duplication of effort, variable analytical capacity and inconsistent implementation of actions across Departments. Strengths and opportunities highlighted an engaged senior leadership team, a dedicated EDI champion and an established EDI forum alongside supportive governance structures to develop strategies and priorities aligned to wider University actions and policies to drive momentum. Identification, sharing and scale up of good practice from individual units, improved data collection and consistent analysis alongside reduction of duplication of effort and workload were key factors for Departmental engagement. However, it was noted that a School-level approach required cultural change to move away from siloed working practices and could risk loss of engagement and momentum at local levels, alongside the challenges of combining local priorities and disciplinary differences. At a time of significant organisation change within the University alongside increased compliance requirements, low levels of engagement due to high workload pressures were identified as a key risk.

These findings directly informed a number of immediate actions. In November 2023, the School Council approved the development of a School-wide People and Inclusive Culture strategy (see Figure 4). To enable delivery and mitigate some of the identified risks, the Needs Committee approved the creation of an Assistant School Secretary role (see Section 2.4.1).

Figure 4: Outline of the process and partners in the development of a School People and Inclusive Culture vision and action plan.



The School Swan application and action plan, monitoring implementation and evaluating progress are part of this strategy which will also support a programme of continuous organisational performance improvement to deliver positive cultural change which will engage colleagues, build communities, develop talent and improve the student/staff experience.

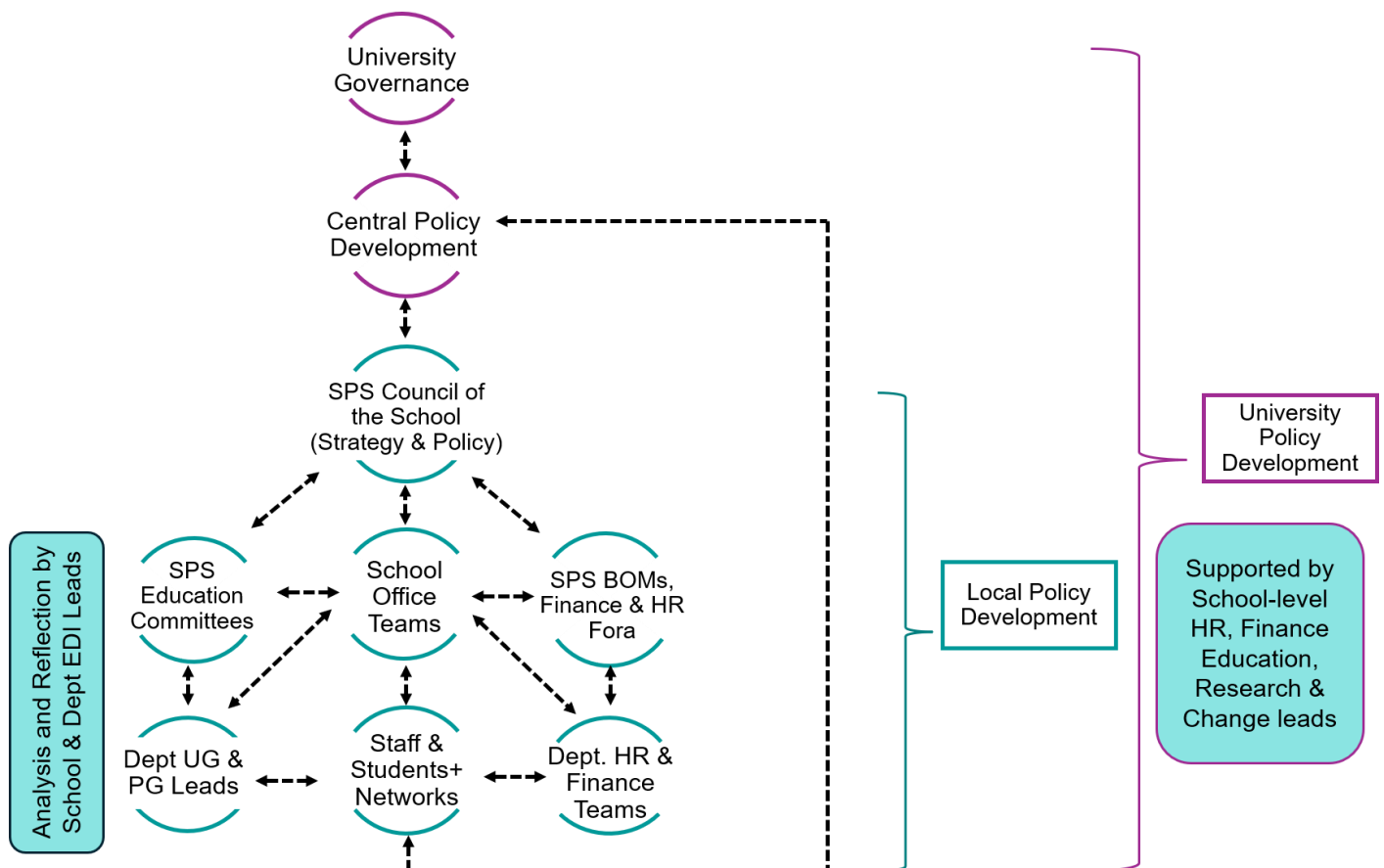
EDI contributions are taken into account in local academic workload models, buy out of time (e.g. School EDI Champion, 0.2FTE) and via recognition and reward. PSS contributions are recognised in regular appraisals and nominations/awards via the Contribution Reward Scheme.

1.4 Development, evaluation and effectiveness of policies

Policy development is largely undertaken by the University's HR Division in response to changing legislation and organisational development. Feedback is encouraged and acknowledged *via* extensive consultation, with draft policies/policy updates widely shared via multiple communication channels (e.g. School and Departmental level committees and fora, staff diversity networks, key issues bulletins, staff hub SharePoint) (Figure 5). The School plays a key role in the two-way flow of information between the University and Departments, collating and synthesising feedback from Departments and reporting back to

colleagues in the central University (particularly *via* the Head of School, School Secretary and HR Lead Business Partner) as well as supporting the introduction of new policies requiring local implementation. Policy development and updates are brought to School Council and a School Change Partner (introduced in 2024) leads on University Organisational Change consultations. Members of the School Office, Business and Operations Managers (BOMs) and academics also sit on working groups developing University policies and revisions on an ongoing basis. The BOMs (Lead Departmental Administrators) meet monthly with the School Office team and informally share issues, solutions and good practice on an ongoing basis. Termly HR Fora (for Departmental HR practitioners) are led by the School HR team, who are embedded within the University's HR Division but work closely with Departmental HR teams supporting local HR practice and casework. The forum features presentations/Q&As with central policy developers and facilitates feedback on policy interpretation, adaptation and evaluation, as well as challenges with policy implementation, at a local level. Effectiveness of policy implementation is currently undertaken at a local level by a combination of Heads of Departments, BOMs, local EDI leads and Departmental/School HR teams.

Figure 5: Policy Development, Implementation, Analysis, Ownership and Reflection at Local and University levels



Examples of new policy development at a local level include embedding EDI into School level indicators of excellence for academic promotion (see Section 2.1.1) and the introduction of partner hiring guidelines led by the Head of School (see Action 1.1).

In Geography and Earth Sciences, **fieldwork policies** were developed to better consider the needs of diverse students and staff and align more closely with the updated University Dignity at Work Policy and Code of Behaviour (2023). The Deputy Head of School for Education (an academic from the Department of Chemistry) led the School's engagement with the **Close the Gap** project and **contextual admissions** (Section 2.2). While Equality Impact Assessments have not been applied consistently across local policy development, additional training has been included in the Action Plan to strengthen practice and embed EDI considerations more systematically.

1.5. Athena Swan self-assessment process

The School EDI Forum, which brings together representatives from all the Departments, has been meeting termly since 2013. At the start of AY24/25, it was renamed the People and Inclusive Culture (PIC) Forum. This reflected a wider shift in the HE EDI agenda toward **inclusion and culture** aiming for meaningful change which happens when people feel they belong, are valued, and can fully participate. A focus on culture aims to address persistent attainment, progression, and wellbeing gaps that demographic initiatives alone haven't solved. The Membership and Terms of Reference were updated and planning for the AS application began in earnest. The PIC Forum is the core of the AS Self-Assessment Team with additional SAT members co-opted specifically for the application to ensure representation and to maximise input and feedback. A dedicated MS Teams Channel and SharePoint site were created to increase transparency and share information, priorities and successful practices.

In preparation for this application, the self-assessment process was informed by:

- Analysis of 5 years of staff and student data from the University Staff and student information systems¹.
- A retrospective determination of priority areas by identifying the key gender equality issues identified within departmental Action Plans over the previous 5 years.
- The SAT then reviewed the areas of action to identify gaps as well as successful initiatives and progress that could be shared. The SAT identified and agreed School-level priorities for the overarching AS Action Plan (2026-30) which would be progressed alongside local initiatives.
- Quantitative and qualitative analysis of 2024 University Culture Survey (20% response rate; 313 responses, 50% F) at School and Departmental levels, benchmarked (where possible) against the University Staff Survey 2019. Student surveys (NSS and PRES) alongside focus groups to capture the student perspective.
- An Enhancing Research Culture project undertaken in 2023/24 with a mixture of survey data (550 responses) and in person interviews (100) undertaken by an external consultant.
- University- and School-level Gender Pay Gap analyses.

¹ Note we have used binary sex for University-held data for staff or students. Results for non-binary staff and students are provided where these are available (combined as Other and Unknown due to limited numbers).

Table 1: Athena Swan SAT

(66% Female, 57% Academic & Research staff, 43% Professional Services staff)

SAT member information has been redacted

[illegible]

The SAT adopted a subgroup approach to reflect on previous actions and progress, as well as developing new action plan priorities. This included a series of workshops to review data, actions and collate impact as well as focus groups to provide feedback on the plans once they were in a well-developed draft format. Actions past and future were then refined before being considered by Departmental EDI Committees, School Education Committees, the HR Forum and BOMs meetings, before approval by the Council of the School which will oversee the AP's delivery and monitor progress at School and Departmental levels.

The School's five-year AP (2026-2031) is designed to achieve comprehensive progress across key priorities through SMART actions with quantifiable outcomes. The AP's success will be assessed over five years, with regular staff and student surveys to measure change.

All priorities and actions have clearly defined owners – the person(s) Accountable has ultimate responsibility for ensuring the action is achieved; the person(s) Responsible has direct responsibility for delivering the action. Partnerships provide a clear understanding of other teams that will contribute to action delivery.

After submission, the PIC forum will actively manage the implementation of the action plan (led by the EDI Academic and Administration Champions). Progress against the action plan will be monitored on an ongoing basis (termly by the PIC forum), data dashboards will be updated annually, and embedded annual reporting to CSPA, including reports from each Department on progress and priorities for the coming year (managed via local EDI Committees). Membership of the PIC Forum will be reviewed and updated to ensure continuity and succession planning for School EDI Champions. The AS framework will inform a broader School People and Inclusive Culture Strategy, integrating an intersectional approach and addressing EDI challenges beyond a gender focus.

Section 2: An evaluation of the department's progress and success

2.1 Evaluating progress against the previous action plan

Departmental Athena SWAN/EDI Action Plans (7) containing 344 actions were reviewed and significant areas of overlap identified. Using an iterative process of manual review and AI analysis, the actions were consolidated into 17 areas (72 actions) under 4 main themes:

- 1) Addressing the under-representation of female staff via recruitment, retention and promotion
- 2) Attracting and supporting a diverse student cohort and enhancing the overall student experience
- 3) Promoting staff wellbeing and developing flexible and inclusive cultures
- 4) Developing EDI infrastructure and communications

There were some Departmental-specific actions (~10%) which did not fit under these themes which remain the responsibility of individual Departments.

The SAT were surveyed to identify which actions had been implemented, ongoing priorities and where there was good practice that could be shared. The key lesson in the review of the action plans was the degree of similarity and shared challenges indicating substantial duplication of effort in undertaking local actions and the opportunity for a more cohesive and collaborative approach moving forward.

2.1.1 RAG rated combined action plan

Figure 6 illustrates that of the 72 actions included in the combined action plan, 4% were Red rated, 33% Amber rated and 63% Green rated. Many of the amber actions are clustered around a lack of monitoring, data collection and evaluating impact. These activities were initially severely impacted during the pandemic and never restarted. We will be introducing a standard framework to evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of key policies and initiatives to enable monitoring of progress against the new Action Plan.

Figure 6: Summary of RAG rated actions

Red: No progress made; action was never undertaken, permanently discontinued

Amber: Partial progress made; action began but is incomplete, or results did not match expectations.

Green: Good progress made; action completed successfully with desired outcomes and impact

		RAG status		
1. Addressing the under-representation of female staff via recruitment, retention and promotion				
1.1 Diverse recruitment strategies			5	
1.2 Induction and appraisal		1	1	
1.3 Career development	1	6	7	
1.4 Workload and grant outcomes		1	1	
2. Attracting and supporting a diverse student cohort and enhancing the overall student experience				
2.1 Outreach			2	
2.1 Monitor and address diversity in student admissions		4	3	
2.3 Addressing gender awarding gaps		1	3	
2.4. Improve student support and resources		2	3	
3. Promoting staff wellbeing and developing flexible and inclusive cultures				
3.1 Staff wellbeing and inclusion			3	
3.2 Culture and fair treatment		2	2	
3.3 Support for caring responsibilities	1	1	2	
3.4 Parental leave		1	3	
3.5 Flexible working			1	
4. Developing EDI infrastructure and communications				
5.1. Data collection & evidence-based decision making			3	
5.2. Communication & engagement		4		
5.3. Broad EDI initiatives	1	1	4	
5.4. National & community engagement		1	2	
		4%	33%	63%

Background and Rationale	Actions	Dept	Examples of impact	RAG
1. Addressing the under-representation of female staff via recruitment, retention and promotion				
1.1 Diverse Recruitment Strategies				
Recruitment is a primary route for increasing the diversity of staff groups. In 2020, the overall proportion of female staff in the School was 34.9% (20.4%F Academic, 27.1%F Research and 50.7%F Professional Services Staff). Proportions of female academic staff in Departments ranged from 13% in Maths to 42% in MSM. The HESA national averages of academic and research staff in SPS subject areas in 2020/21 was 24.3% and 27.8% respectively). Across all staff groups in 2020 the proportion of female applicants was 32.6% with 37.6% shortlisted and 35.3% appointed. When seeking to make appointments in particular to senior named Professorial chairs, departments in the School often encounter the so-called 'two-body problem' relating to the difficulty of both spouses obtaining jobs at the same university or within a reasonable commuting distance from each other. This has been cited to cause a disproportionate number of women to leave the academic workforce worldwide. In the past the approach to this issue within the School has been inconsistent, piecemeal and at a low level.	Improve processes to attract women and underrepresented groups with a particular focus on academic staff.	ALL	A new University Recruitment Policy and Guidance was launched in January 2020 and dedicated webpages set out ED&I requirements and specific guidance across all recruitment stages which encourages applications from under-represented groups and promotes the University as a equal opportunities employer. In SPS, Departments have been proactively encouraging women to apply for academic posts by networking, targeted advertising (including via subject specific women's networks), contacting potential candidates and arranging visits to the Department ahead of recruitment exercises. Subject-specific gender appropriate long and shortlists are actively monitored. The positive impact of diverse recruitment initiatives is seen in all staff recruitment statistics with an increase in female applicants (32.6% to 38.5% in 2024), shortlisted candidates (37.6% to 44.8%) and appointments (35.3% to 42.1%). This upward trend is seen for both Academic and Research Staff. For PSS, the proportions of female applicants, shortlisted and appointed candidates ranges from 53-63% applicants to 50-56% appointments. Inclusive recruitment has contributed to an increase in female academic staff from 20.4% to 26.3%. Over the last 5 years of academic recruitment, the proportion of shortlisted (31%) and successful female candidates (39%) has exceeded the proportion of female applicants (25%). Of 88 academic appointments (2019-2025), 43% were women, including 7 G12 Chairs (28%). 87.5% (7/8) of departments improved their proportion of female Academics, with the % in the other Departments remaining unchanged. Percentage point increases range from 2% in Physics to 11.1% in Geography. Overall, the range of proportion of women academic staff ranges from 20% in DPMMS to 48% in MSM (School average 26.3%).	G

	Develop inclusive job advertisements	ALL	New recruitment webpages, guidance and further particular templates which highlight benefits and EDI commitments introduced e.g. flexible/hybrid working, family-friendly policies, Athena Swan (Silver) and Race Equality (Bronze) Charter awards plus Level 2 Disability Confident employer status. Gender-neutral language checks. In-person University Job Fair run annually since 2024. Updated jobs site launched in 2025 with application tips and relocation information (e.g. immigration support).	G
	Offer childcare funding for interviewees and flexible interview timings.	ALL	Flexible interview timing is offered, particularly for academic recruitments but across all staff types where possible. Childcare funding is offered in some Departments with uptake very low/absent.	G
	Increase dual-career support opportunities.	ALL	SPS partner hiring guidance was developed by the Head of School in 2023 to outline a consistent approach, and to offer the possibility (to be used in limited circumstances) to extend the scope of what can be offered (for example, support in applying for vacancies, coaching, limited funding for a role within the University (with an open recruitment process) for a partner. The guidance has been successfully used to secure a number of high-profile academic appointments (both male and female) in the School.	G
	Collaborate with Colleges for joint appointments	Maths, Chemistry, IoA	In the last 5 years, seven academic roles have been created as joint positions between Departments and Colleges which include a specific focus on promoting women in the discipline as part of the role. This represents a significant financial commitment by the Departments (>£5m). Five of these posts are in Maths, including the Corfield Lectureship, an endowed academic position for a talented mathematician, conducting cutting-edge research who will also encourage young women to study maths and to support the progression of female students and young researchers in their academic careers. These posts have contributed to the increase in proportion of female academics in the School.	G

1.2 Induction and Appraisal				
Inductions and staff appraisals are essential for aligning individual goals with organisational values, fostering professional development, and ensuring continuous improvement through structured feedback and support. 2019 Staff Survey Results: -My local induction gave me the information and knowledge I need to do my job effectively (71%) -I have had a Staff Review and Development meeting (SRD/appraisal) within the last two years (60%) - When I joined the University, I was able to find out relevant information about how the University operates - 72% (+44%) - My probation was well managed 68% (+32) - I have the opportunity to discuss my development needs and performance regularly 55% (+16%) - I know where to find information about training and development 83% (+7%)	Improve induction information and resources	ALL	Both University and Departmental induction processes have been overhauled. For example, induction packs tailored to staff groups, welcome letter from HoD, new induction SharePoint sites. Materials are regularly updated to include EDI and family-friendly policies, bullying and harassment reporting. Welcome events are publicised and pre-arrival information packs sent. Unfortunately, the staff culture survey in 2024 did not include a question on induction so no metrics are available.	G
	Conduct staff review and development (appraisal) or Career development conversations on a regular basis.	ALL	Annual appraisals in place across all Departments for Professional Services Staff. However, completion of appraisals for academic and research staff is more patchy. In the 2024 Culture Survey, 62% staff agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'My line manager supports my career development' in the 2024 Culture survey (52%F, 56%M; 57% Academics, 75% Researchers and 93% PSS).	A

1.3 Career Development:				
1.3.1 Academic Staff Promotion is another important route for increasing the diversity of academic staff at higher grades. In 2019, while the percentage of women professors in the University had risen from 15.3% in 2013) to 23.1%, it was still below the national average of 29% women professors. A university wide priority was to support increases in the number of women applying for senior academic roles. In the Physical Sciences, the proportion of female Professors (Grade 12) in 2020 was 10%. In the 2019 Staff Survey, 39% of staff (all staff groups) agreed that there were sufficient opportunities for career progression and 30% agreed that the career development/promotion processes at the University are fair. In 2020, the annual Senior Academic Promotions scheme was primarily for staff undertaking teaching and research only.	Provide support for academic promotions and monitor success rates by gender.	ALL	The proportion of F Grade 12 academics has increased to 21.3% in 2024. Promotion rates to Grade 10, 11 and 12 in the School are the same between male and female academics (94%) and are significantly higher than the University average of 77%. Over the last 5 years, 33 female and 87 male academics have been promoted on the Academic Career Pathway (ACP) Research and Teaching Pathway (54 to Grade 12, 60 to Grade 11 and 6 to Grade 10). School actions include publicising promotion criteria, including considerations for career breaks, via talks and web materials; providing feedback to unsuccessful promotion candidates within two weeks; access to promotion mentors; annual reviews to identify staff ready for promotion; School-level indicators of excellence that recognise leadership of and a commitment to a positive and inclusive culture. The University offers an Academic Career Pathways CV Mentoring Scheme seeks to encourage and support academics from underrepresented groups to apply for promotion within the University but School level participation data is not available. In the 2024 Culture survey, 34% of staff agreed there were sufficient opportunities for career progression (38%F, 34%M; 46% Academics, 27% Researchers and 28% PSS).	G
	Develop and consult on an alternative to Academic career pathways i.e. a teaching-only pathway, allowing promotion of teaching only staff.	ALL	Members of the School were involved in the development of the University's Teaching and Scholarship academic career pathway (ACP). The first ACP (Teaching & Scholarship) exercise was launched in 2022, with promotions effective 1 October 2023. Between 2023 and 2025, 9 candidates (5F & 4M) have applied for promotion via this route with a 100% success rate (compared to the University-wide success rate of 80%).	G

The University has developed a series of senior leadership programmes (SLP) for academic staff. SLP1 is for staff interested in preparing for a Head of Department (HoD) role, SLP2 is for new and recently appointed HoDs and SLP3 is for experienced HoDs considering other senior University roles.	Leadership training	ALL	For the Academic Senior Leadership programmes, uptake of SLP1 by female participants has increased from 45% in 2020/2021 to 64% in the current year. The SLP2 programme has also seen an increase in uptake by women, from 39% in 2019/2020 to 63% in 2022/2023, although there has been a slight drop to 50% in the current academic year. SLP3 has, on average, an equal split between female and male participants. Diversity is considered at School level when putting forward priority lists for these programmes.	G
	Expand mentoring schemes for academics	ALL	Academic Career Pathways CV Mentoring Scheme seeks to encourage and support academics from underrepresented groups to apply for promotion within the University. Uptake at School level has not been routinely monitored.	A
1.3.2 Researchers: The University Senior Researcher Promotions scheme runs annually for promotion to G11 and 12. Promotion from G7 Research Associate to Grade 9 Senior Research Associate are considered and approved at Faculty Board level. Researchers can apply for contribution increment awards 3 times a year. As the majority of researchers are grant funded, institutions must ensure sufficient grant or Departmental funding to cover the cost of the increments.	Support Researcher Promotions processes Monitor Researcher Increments by gender	ALL	The numbers of Senior Research Promotion (SRP) applications over the last 5 years are small (16 in total). Success rates were 100% for Female applicants (only 2) and 71% for male applicants (10/14). In 3 of the 5 years between 2020 and 2024, fewer Female researchers were awarded increments compared to their Male peers (5 year totals 44 F and 144 M received increments representing 4% and 7% award rates respectively). Lower application rates for SRP and lower success rate for researcher increments for female candidates needs further investigation before the introduction of a new Academic Career Pathway (Research) scheme. ACP-R includes changes to the titles of existing researcher positions, the introduction of new researcher positions at certain grades, and new promotion and pay progression schemes is currently being introduced at the University.	G

	Introduce postdoc committees and specific initiatives for postdoctoral career support.	ALL	In 2020, the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs changed its name to the Postdoc Academy, which has provided a comprehensive series of training and events annually. Some Departments have postdoc committees or postdoc representation on key committees and run events targeted at this staff group. RisingWISE is an established Oxbridge network inspired by EnterpriseWISE: designed by women, for women and delivered entirely by women. Rather than feeding into the competitive nature of advanced professional careers, the universities of Oxford and Cambridge have developed this innovative, collaborative programme building mutual relationships that benefit women in STEMM researching at Oxford, Cambridge and across STEMM industries. Almost 300 women from 56 different STEMM disciplines have passed through the RisingWISE programme. In 2025-26, the School supported an additional 5 places for SPS ECRs (overall, 31 participants from Cambridge, average rating: 9.5/10, 100% would recommend, 50% say it's already changed their future direction). Departments run local postdoc activities but no consistency or data collection across the School.	A
	Fund departmentally supported early-career fellowships to diversify faculty.	Chemistry	Due to the financial challenges across the sector, this initiative has been put on hold.	R
	Expand mentoring schemes for researchers.	ALL	Postdoc Academy mentoring scheme offers postdocs the opportunity to have reflective and developmental career conversations with a mentor from academia or other sectors, including industry and the public sector. Uptake at School level has not been routinely monitored.	A

	Formalise exit interviews to track destinations and build a database of career pathways.	ALL	While exit interviews or questionnaires are carried out in some Departments, this is not routinely done across the School (or University). Career pathway databases have not been created.	A
	Encourage female speakers in seminars and improve visibility.	ALL	While Departments have undertaken actions to raise the visibility of female speakers in seminar and invited lecture series, the data has not been routinely collected. INI programme registration links to an LMS document on best practice for selecting speakers and participants.	A
1.3.3. Professional Services Staff While there are no formal promotion processes for PSS, opportunities for career progression include training, secondments, and annual reward schemes.	Track PSS promotions and reward scheme success	ALL	Between 2020 and 2024 annual contribution rewards for F staff ranged from 10%-21% (average 18%) compared to M staff (7%-18%, average 13%). The percentage of staff moving to a higher grade role (within the University) between 2020 and 2024 was on average 14% annually for F staff and 12% for M staff.	G
	Mentoring for PSS	ALL	The Self Match scheme is the largest professional services mentoring programme available at the University, open to all employees, regardless of role or grade. With over 100 mentors to choose from, since 2021 there have been 612 participants (193 mentors and 419 mentees).	G
	Track training attendance and collect staff feedback to refine programmes.	ALL	All training courses and multi-day programmes have a voluntary feedback form for participants. Current feedback is at 97% satisfaction from the development interventions. Long term evaluation has not currently been undertaken due to resource constraints.	A

1.4 Workload and Grant Outcomes				
There is abundant quantitative evidence that women and men experience differential outcomes from formal and informal workload allocation processes particularly for academics in the allocation of teaching and institutional service duties. In the 2019 staff survey: 57% agreed with the statement 'I am able to strike the right balance between my work and home life'	Improve transparency in workload allocation and ensure fair gender representation. Ensure representation in decision-making processes without overburdening underrepresented groups. Introduce an email management policy.	ALL	SPS Departments have a range of workload models from points based systems including research, teaching, administration and College duties to simpler models of tracking teaching workloads. Across the School there is inconsistency of practice and transparency and none of the models are ideal. The 2024 Teaching Review recognised that issues over work and work culture affect staff as well as students. Currently four strands of work are underway in relation to staff workload as part of the review: - Develop institutional teaching stint principles. - Support Heads of Institution to understand and be empowered to act on workload concerns. - Continue to iterate the need to review and rationalise content. - Aim to address 'on demand' culture. In the 2024 Culture Survey: 54% of staff respondents agreed with the statement 'My current workload is manageable' (57% F vs 51% M; 38% Academic compared to 68% of researchers and 60% of PSS). 22% felt there had been an unmanageable increase (24% F vs 20% M).	A

UK grant allocation shows significant gender disparities, with women underrepresented in applicant pools, particularly for large research grants. While success rates are similar by number, women often receive lower funding values and apply for smaller grants.	Monitor and report research grant income by gender.	ALL	An institution-wide analysis of grant applications to understand gender-based disparities in funding undertaken by the University's Research on Research team was published in 2026. The analysis focuses on three core aspects of the grant application process: application rates, application amounts, and success rates controlled for both disciplinary field and academic seniority. Structural disparities – particularly in seniority and disciplinary distribution – drive gender imbalances in grant funding at Cambridge. The study, covering over 23,000 grant applications between 2015 and 2023, of which 8,346 (36.1%) were successful, showed that women at Cambridge apply for around 10% fewer research grants than men, and when they do apply, their grant applications are on average 7% smaller in value. However, once academic seniority and departmental affiliation are taken into account, these gender disparities largely disappear. In the Physical Sciences, Engineering and Mathematics, women in Grades 11 and 12 (and marginally in Grades 7 and 9) submitted applications at a higher rate than men despite their underrepresentation within those subgroups of the academic population and exhibited success rates comparable to their male counterparts.	G
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Background and Rationale	Actions	Dept	Examples of impact	RAG
2. STUDENT FOCUSSED ACTIONS				
2.1 Outreach				
Social attitudes, not ability, can be a barrier for girls considering physical science subjects. Outreach helps dismantle these barriers by normalising female participation and success in the field. Early exposure to STEM careers and environments increases the likelihood that girls will choose science subjects at A-level and beyond. Currently, only 30% of those taking maths and further maths at A level are female, with only 23% taking A level Physics. Supportive networks and mentorship opportunities foster confidence and belonging, which are critical for retention in traditionally male-dominated fields. STEM SMART (Subject Mastery and Attainment Raising Tuition) a 17-month widening participation programme run by Isaac Physics (launched in 2014), to provide free, complementary teaching and support to UK (non-fee paying) students who have either experienced educational disadvantage or belong to a group that is statistically less likely to progress to higher education. The programme engages thousands of sixth-form students when they are planning their university applications, raising their aspirations and confidence to apply to study STEM degrees.	Expand outreach activities to support under-represented groups	ALL	Independent analysis of pupils' A-levels and UCAS applications showed that STEM SMART students achieved higher A-level grades and secured more places at top universities compared with matched cohorts not on the programme. UCAS found students who engaged the most in the scheme saw their results rise by a grade, were up to four times as successful in achieving A*s as their peers, and were almost twice as successful in securing a place at Oxbridge. Cambridge admissions data demonstrates that high engagement with STEM SMART triples the chances of IMD 1 & 2 students receiving an offer for natural sciences, engineering and chemical engineering & biotechnology and quadruples their chances of being accepted. A snapshot of Cambridge student population in October 2024, revealed a total of 5216 students (4714 undergraduate and 502 postgraduates) had benefitted from using Isaac Physics (38%F). STEM SMART cohort 4 (which began in Jan 2025) launched with 2664 students, 35% of the physicists are women (23% nationally) and 35% of further maths students are women (29% nationally). In the academic year 2023-24 more than 131,000 home students actively engaged with the online Isaac Physics platform. On average across the last two years, 36% of users are women (compared with 23% taking A level physics). During 2024/25 the NRICH website attracted more than 19 million page views from more than 2 million active users. In 2024/25 (1 August 2024 - 31 July 2025) there were over 330,000 unique downloads of the STEP Support Programme assignment modules and support material. The online materials are open access and individual student data is not collected, so we therefore do not have a gender breakdown for users.	G

NRICH (nrich.maths.org) provides free, curriculum linked, research informed resources that support teachers to embed high quality mathematical problem solving—shown by research to be crucial for students’ progression in STEM—into everyday classroom practice. Covering all school stages with a particular focus on primary and GCSE education, the widely used resources offer rich problem-solving contexts, extensive teacher support and professional development, impacting all students, including girls, across compulsory mathematics education to age 16. STEP is an additional mathematics examination, taken at the end of Year 13, which forms part of conditional offers to applicants for mathematics and some related degrees at Cambridge and some other universities. The free STEP Support Programme (maths.org/step) provides a coherent, cost-effective and sustained 18-month programme of pre-application, post-application and post-offer support. The programme enables students to develop advanced mathematical problem-solving skills, build confidence, subject knowledge and techniques, develop the mathematical thinking and reasoning assessed in university admissions interviews and needed in undergraduate study, and prepare for STEP examinations.	Promote female role models in teaching, research, and outreach initiatives.	ALL	Examples include: INI Kirk Distinguished Visiting Fellowships scheme for field-leading figures from under-represented groups within higher mathematical research. Exhibitions and profiles of role models in person events and online material. Female lecturers across all years of undergraduate teaching with a particular focus on year 1. High profile appointments to named chairs including Hannah Fry as Professor of Public Understanding of Mathematics and Sera Markoff as the first female Plumian chair of Astronomy and Experimental Philosophy (established in 1704). The Cambridge Festival is a mixture of online, on-demand and in-person outreach events covering all aspects of the world-leading research happening at Cambridge. >50,000 visitor interactions in 2026 (53% of spotlight speakers were women).	G
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2.2 Monitor and address diversity in Undergraduate (UG) and Postgraduate (PG) admissions

Actions focused on recruitment, selection, and reducing bias in admissions processes.

Undergraduate admissions are administered by the Colleges and the School/Departments have no direct control on the number of places offered nor the final numbers admitted. Students are admitted to one of three undergraduate courses (Triposes): Natural Sciences (NST), Mathematics and Geography. In 2020/21 there were 969 undergraduate students admitted split between three UG courses: Maths: 249 students; (22%F); Natural Sciences (NST): 606 students (43.6%F); Geography: 114 students: (67%F) Geography has a higher percentage of women than the 2020/21 national average (67% vs 59%). However, both Natural Sciences and Maths have percentages of women lower than the national averages (44% vs 50% and 22% vs 37% respectively). In Geography, %F admissions broadly track applications and offers. In both NST and Maths, offers and admissions are slightly lower than proportions of women applicants.	Annually review undergraduate admissions data	ALL	Data (by gender and other characteristics) are reviewed annually at Departmental teaching/Education Committees with challenges also discussed at local EDI committees. In terms of female students, in NST there is slight trend to more offers being made (with successful admissions) through the past 5 years. In Maths, the percentage of female applicants has remained more or less steady (c. 26%, just below the number of student studying Further Maths nationally) while the number of offers and admissions has fluctuated. The proportion of offers has increased over the past 3 years from 19% to 24%, but admissions have not increased at the same pace. In Geography, there was an increase in applications from female students across the five years from 58% peaking at 66% in 2023/24, with a small but consistent increase in percentage of offers made. Numbers of female admissions fluctuated and peaked in 2022/23 at 71%. International student applications have increased across all three courses over the last 5 years with 43% International students admitted in Maths compared to only 13% in Geography and 30% in NST. Both Maths and NST courses demonstrate an increase in BAME students over the last 5 years. For Maths, international students are driving the proportion of female students with a 36:64 Home to International F student ratio for admitted students compared to 68:42 for men in 2024/25. There are no gender differences in Undergraduate completion rates which are >98% over the last 5 years.	A
	Collaborate with Colleges to promote equitable and inclusive admissions practices.	ALL	Colleges carry out undergraduate interviews independent of the Departments. Active liaison with College interviewers and Directors of Studies highlights the importance of EDI and Unconscious Bias training. Some subjects (e.g. Maths) have a dedicated admissions committee with both Department and College membership.	A

			Sharing of best staff recruitment practices via joint academic appointments between Departments and Colleges for roles which alongside teaching and research also have responsibility for the promotion of women in their subject area.	
	Undertake specific actions to address cohort diversity challenges	ALL	Recognising the very small proportion of Black students in their undergraduate programme, the Department of Geography established a scholarship in 2021 for home fees students of Black and mixed Black heritage. Departments host Open days, Oxbridge conferences, and regular outreach events encouraging diverse attendance.	A
	Revamp undergraduate admissions materials to improve clarity and accessibility.	ALL	Student facing webpages with updated language and content and a more diverse range of photos have been introduced across the School.	G
Postgraduate admissions are overseen by Departments. As for UG students, the total number and proportion of female PG students vary between Departments. In 2020/21 there were 268 students on Taught PG Masters level programmes (PGT) (33%F). Proportions of female students ranged from a high of 70% in Geography to an average of 16% across the two Maths Departments. In 2020/21 there were 350 PGR students in the School (both doctoral and Masters-level researchers) (33%F). Proportions of women range from a low of 17% in Astronomy to a high of 77% in Geography.	Annually review postgraduate admissions data. Increase recruitment of women for postgraduate programmes with targeted advertising, and full scholarship funding (often underwritten by the Department) where possible.	ALL	In 2024/25 there were 405 students on Taught PG Masters level programmes (PGT) (30.6%F). Numbers of students have steadily increased with the introduction of new and expansion of current PGT courses particularly in Maths and Physics where the proportions of F students are lower. Overall, the proportion of female PGT students in the School has remained between 30 and 34% over the last 5 years with no clear trends at School or Departmental level. Percentages of female students varies by Department and year (12%F to 80%F) but numbers vary widely with some Departments having >100 students per year and others with <5 (Mean %F over last 5 years is 30%, Median is 24%). There has been an increase in the proportion of international students over the last 5 years, with an increase in Asian and Chinese students, particularly female students, but the numbers of black students remain low. In 2024/25 there were 323 PGR students in the School (both doctoral and Masters-level researchers)(38%F). The vast majority of our PGR students (87%) are admitted to PhD programmes (5 year mean - 295 PhD vs 45 Research Masters students). For the last 5 years, at School level, for all PGR students, more female students on average were admitted (36%) than applied	G

			(31%). The average percentage of female doctoral students admitted over the last 5 years ranges from 65% in Geography to 19% in Maths. In Maths, there has been a strong trend with an increasing percentage of offers made to female applicants; this trend is repeated in admissions, with a steady rise from 14% (2020/21 and 2021/22) to 27% (2024/25). In Chemistry, the percentage for female students has been steadily increasing in both admissions, offers and those admitted (44-49%). In Physics, there have been small and steady increases in the percentage of offers made to female students and those admitted across the 5-year period (29-33%). For Geography, IoA and MSM there have been significant fluctuation in percentages applying, being made offers and being admitted. All of these Departments have relatively small numbers of doctoral students.	
	Internship schemes to encourage progression to research-focussed careers (open to undergraduate and Master's level students)	ALL	Over the last 5 years, SPS has offered 55 paid internship opportunities for women, non-binary and widening participation students (78% F). Multiple schemes exist across the School including: Philippa Fawcett Internships scheme for women and non-binary students; Cambridge Mathematics Open Internships programme which targets students from groups that are currently underrepresented in the field (paying particular attention to ethnicity) and / or who have experienced some form of educational disadvantage and a School-level widening participation internship scheme (from 2024).	G

	Enhanced recruitment messaging to highlight part-time doctoral study and improved engagement with high-quality women applicants to MPhil, CDT, and PhD programmes.	ALL	Websites highlight commitments to diverse student cohorts, widening participation and contextual admissions. Specific scholarships for women and students from lower socio-economic backgrounds are promoted. An example of effectiveness is the MPhil in Data Intensive Science introduced in 2023 where applications from female students increased from 35 to 38% and admissions increased from 36% to 45% (compared to HESA PGT benchmarks of 35% in Physics). At Departmental level, this is particularly well demonstrated in Chemistry and Maths where specific actions undertaken to increase female and Widening Participation PhD student numbers have been very effective. These include: • Prioritising fully funded scholarships for women and widening participation students • Encouraging more female attendees at Graduate Open Days • Highlighting profiles of women in the department on websites and PG admissions materials • Recognising and surfacing the risk of selection bias, encouraging careful consideration of CVs and cover letters from minoritised applicants who may 'undersell' their achievements. 2.2 Leading on contextualised admissions which recognises that not all applicants will have had equal access to educational and social opportunities. • Participation in the Close the Gap project to identify ways to shrink the historical offer gap between UK-domiciled White applicants and those of Black, Bangladeshi, or Pakistani British ethnicity There are no gender differences in postgraduate completion rates which are >98% over the last 5 years.	A
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2.3 Addressing Gender Awarding Gaps

Actions aimed at improving academic performance, reducing awarding gaps, and enhancing teaching and learning

Combined results for the School for the three undergraduate courses in Maths, Geography and Natural Sciences show an awarding gap between male and female students. In the School, the 5-year average for female students achieving firsts is 24.2% vs 35% for male counterparts. Only 6% of Black students achieve Firsts compared to an average of 26% across all ethnicities. In SPS there are gender and ethnicity awarding gaps in the number of students receiving first class degrees for 2 out of the three undergraduate courses (NST and Maths). At the individual course level, there is no awarding gap in Geography (5-year mean, 66%F). However, for Maths (5-year mean, 20%F) and NST (5-year mean, 28%F in year 3 Physical Sciences subjects) there are persistent gender awarding gaps for students attaining Firsts. The awarding gap narrows when Firsts and 2.1s are combined (Good Honours degree). The gender awarding gaps in NST and Maths are significantly reduced/disappear when good degree results (Firsts and 2.1s combined) are considered. 5-year average for female students achieving firsts/2.1 is 71% vs 73% for male counterparts.	Annual analysis of undergraduate attainment data by gender and other characteristics	ALL	Data (by gender and other characteristics) are reviewed annually at Departmental teaching/Education Committees with challenges also discussed at local EDI committees. Despite significant activity to address awarding gaps including diversification of assessment methods, and refinement of teaching strategies to support all students, including women and non-binary individuals, the awarding gaps persist. Maths, Physics and Chemistry have undertaken substantial data analyses to quantify observed awarding gaps and identify mitigating actions including course reforms, varying forms of assessment, using scaffolded exam questions and specific support initiatives for women students. There is a need to improve understanding of awarding gaps and attainment trends for female/Black students	A
	Diversify assessments to address awarding gaps and gender differences.	Depts involved in Maths and NST courses	A wide range of interventions have been put in place including: curricula reform, closed book exams, use of essays/coursework rather than just final year exams.	G
	Highlight female academics and researchers through teaching, communications, events, and online profiles to inspire students and normalise diverse representation.	ALL	Displays of diverse role model profiles on websites, photographic exhibitions and in lectures. Enhancing representation of female lecturers across the 3-4 years of the course and particularly in year 1 (especially in Maths and Physics) Targeted events for Female and non-binary students across the year See also 1.1 above	G

However, the ethnicity gaps persist with 44% of Black students achieving Firsts/2.1 compared to an average of 66% across all ethnicities.	Improve study support, exam preparation and performance	ALL	Improved student inductions with specific EDI presentations (all) Examples of specific interventions include: • Weekly study hour for female students, example sheets and mock exams alongside a weekly Postgraduate Café • Scaffolded exam-style questions in early-year teaching • Dedicated Mary Cartwright room for women and non-binary students for study and socialising • Webtools to clarify expectations for students before they arrive including soft study skills, providing academic, practical, and pastoral information. • Videos made by and with current undergraduates who speak from their experience to aid and ease the transition to studying at university, demystifying many aspects of Cambridge styles of learning and traditions.	G
2.4. Improve Student Support and Resources				
Rising number of students declaring a disability (14% increase between 2023 and 2024 alone). 6,360 students declared in 2023/24, an increase of 95% since 2018/19. This results in an increased demand for Support Services with a significant rise in students seeking mental health support. A 2022 University strategic review of Mental Health, backed by an initial £4.7 million in funding, highlighted the need for: - More consistent service delivery across colleges. - Better data collection to monitor student wellbeing. - Stronger links with NHS services to manage complex cases.	Transformed central University student support services at both UG and PG levels	ALL	• Mental Health & Wellbeing Plan 2020-25 launched with streamlined governance structures. • Increased investment in counselling and wellbeing services across colleges and departments • Integrated Mental Health Provision with better coordination between central services, Colleges, and external providers like the NHS. This includes a Stepped-Care Approach, Suicide Safer Strategy and Guidance, Out of Hours support and NHS Partnership. • The University and Anglia Ruskin University launched the University Mental Health Student Service (UCARMHSS), offering psychological support tailored to student needs. This service is inclusive and respectful of diverse backgrounds. • Introduction of the Postgraduate Wellbeing Service (2024) which supports postgraduate taught (PGT) and research (PGR) students with challenges that may be affecting their life, studies, or research.	A

	University-wide Teaching and Disability reviews (2023-25)	ALL	In 2023, the University commissioned a Review of Teaching. This Review aimed to understand, and address, student concerns about excessive workload and its effect on their wellbeing, as well as to review sustainability of the supervision system. The Review completed in April 2025 and published a series of recommendations. The SPS DHoS Education and Deputy Director of Education were key members of the committee and task & finish group leading on and delivering the review. Review of the University of Cambridge's Approach to Provision for Disabled Students was carried out in 2024 to develop a more cohesive, joined-up approach across University. A new Pathways to Inclusive Practice programme (2025-2028) pulls together related recommendations from the Review of Teaching, and the Review of the Approach to Provision for Disabled Students and incorporates commitments made within the Access & Participation Plan 2025-29.	G
Well informed and trained academic/research supervisors are better equipped to support their research groups. Awareness of challenges faced by members of their groups (around gender, ethnicity, mental health, disability) results in a more productive and inclusive working culture. Postgraduates and PDRAs have highlighted the value of training for research supervisors in surveys and consultations.	Provide support and training for postgraduate and PDRA supervisions. ED&I training for staff, supervisors, and demonstrators.	ALL	New guidelines and training courses undergraduate and postgraduate supervisors from the Cambridge Centre for Teaching and Learning. Training Framework and local wellbeing events; enhanced communications: Reach Out campaign; accessibility audit; MHA training; Currently 82% of all staff have completed online EDI training (92% of Academic Staff, 91% of PSS but only 68% of Researchers.	A
It is important for the next generation of researchers to encounter EDI training at the beginning of their careers so that EDI is embedded as a natural part of their professional careers.	EDI inductions and new training initiatives for PGRs	ALL	All new PGR students review local Departmental inductions which include EDI briefings. A new cross Departmental training programme, building on lessons learned from CDTs, has been introduced for all UKRI funded students in the first instance. The INI and Newton Gateway organised the first Solve for X modelling camp for the Martingale scholars in July and plans to support this as an annual event going forward. The Martingale Foundation supports students from lower socio-economic backgrounds to pursue graduate studies in mathematics (with	G

			Cambridge Maths a founding programme partner). The INI and Gateway also held a two-day communications training workshop for ECRs in October and a week-long graduate training workshop covering science communication skills, industry engagement and knowledge exchange, EDI and ethics, peer support, and networking, including with some of the Institute's international academic visitors. From 2026, this training workshop will primarily be attended by second year students of the UK-wide Maths-focussed EPSRC CDTs.	
Female students make up approximately 39% to 46% of physical science cohorts in the UK, depending on the specific field (~30% STEM). Studies show that nearly half of female students in STEM subjects doubt their abilities. This can be driven by internalised gender stereotypes, lack of visibility, and a culture that equates brilliance with masculinity. Interventions to close this gap involve empowering environments that celebrate critical thinking and encourage risk-taking without the fear of failure.	Identify ideas for support for underrepresented students through surveys, feedback mechanisms, and discussions Establish mentoring schemes Develop training Improve networking opportunities & resources for students	ALL	All Departments run student surveys, review feedback and implement actions alongside participation in national surveys. Student mentoring schemes are run in a number of Departments which include undergraduate buddy systems, female mentoring for postgraduates, facilitated peer support groups. Informal networking opportunities with free refreshments have been introduced for female undergraduate students which are well attended with positive feedback. A range of workshops and career preparation networking events have been run and female students encouraged to attend external career-focused events. Mental health and care-related discussions have been incorporated into graduate fieldwork training, ensuring flexibility in research design and a psychologically safe environment. Financial support is provided by Departments for active student societies supporting female and non-binary students for example the Emmy Noether Society (Maths) and Cambridge University Women in Physics Society (CUWPS).	G

Background and Rationale	Actions	Dept	Examples of impact	RAG
3. Promoting staff wellbeing and developing flexible and inclusive cultures				
3.1 Staff Wellbeing and Inclusion				
Fostering staff wellbeing and inclusion is essential for creating a healthy, productive, and equitable workplace. These actions not only support individual employees but also enhance organisational performance, retention, and morale. 2019 SPS Staff Survey Results: I am supported in managing any stress experienced in my role, so as not to impact on my work or wellbeing 39% I am aware of what support is available to me in terms of health and overall wellbeing 60% I feel the University cares about my health and wellbeing 47%	Promote wellbeing services, appoint Wellbeing Advocates and support their work.	ALL	Despite work to address staff wellbeing including local Wellbeing Advocates, active promotion of workplace and research cultures (e.g. on front page of websites) and a new Staff Wellbeing SharePoint site with sources of support (including crisis support), resources, training and a regular events calendar, wellbeing is still an issue of concern for staff. Examples of Departmental activities include a wellbeing focus group where all staff groups are represented, craftermoons, funded access to Cambridge Botanical Gardens, social gatherings to celebrate staff contributions. In the 2024 Culture survey: 48% of respondents in SPS agreed with the statement 'My mental health and well-being are supported in my department' (57%F, 44%M; 39% Academics. 41% Researchers and 53% PSS). 41% responded positively to 'I feel confident asking for mental health and/or wellbeing support at work' (48% F. 39%M; 33% Academic, 36% Researchers and 48% PSS).	G
	Apply for funding to make facilities (e.g., telescopes, buildings) wheelchair accessible.	IoA, Geography, Chemistry, Earth Sciences	Departments have conducted a comprehensive assessment of buildings and grounds, aiming to enhance accessibility for individuals with disabilities. As well as improvements to car parks, building accessibility several major projects have been progressed. At the IoA, refurbishment of the 36" telescope which opened in 1955 and is still one of the largest in the UK, can now be used as part of our outreach programme, which attracts several hundred visitors each week, and is available for use by staff, students and visitors with mobility issues. In Geography, installation of a lift in the main building has improved access and in Earth Sciences a major project is underway to install a lift in the Sidgwick museum to ensure accessibility for staff, students and members of the public.	G

	Develop fieldwork, conference, and seminar best practices (including a code of conduct (and sharing this with visiting speakers)).	ALL	Best-practice guidance about ensuring a diverse range of speakers and panels at conferences was developed and communicated across the University. INI programme registration also links to an LMS document on best practice for selecting speakers and participants Departments of Geography and Earth Sciences have both introduced a Fieldwork Code of Conduct specifically citing expectations of high standards of behaviour for students and staff which apply in the field as they would working anywhere else in the University. Guidance is also provided on reporting procedures.	G
3.2 Culture and fair treatment				
2019 SPS Staff Survey results indicated room for improvement in staff satisfaction of how they, and others, were treated. I believe that individual differences (e.g. culture and background) are valued in the University 71% I believe that individual differences (e.g. culture and background) are valued in my area of the University 72% I am treated with fairness and respect 80% If I have an issue with being treated fairly in the workplace, I am confident that the University will take appropriate action 53% I am aware of the procedures for reporting bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct 77% In the last 12 months I have witnessed what I consider to be bullying behaviour, harassment or sexual misconduct 17% In the last 12 months I have personally experienced what I consider to be bullying behaviour, harassment or sexual misconduct 13%.	Improve awareness and reporting of bullying, harassment, and microaggressions	ALL	In the 2024 Staff Culture survey (SPS): 92% agreed with the following 'How much professional and personal courtesy do you feel people at Cambridge show you?' (93%F, 91%M; 85% Academic, 96% Researcher, 94% PSS) When asked how satisfied SPS staff were with the way bullying and harassment complaints were addressed in their department, 24% Agreed-Strongly agreed (26%F, 23%M), with 28% indicating that they didn't know. In terms of how comfortable staff felt in raising concerns about bullying and harassment if they had witnessed or experienced it within their department, 66% Agreed-Strongly agreed (no gender difference). If staff had witnessed or had been personally subjected to discrimination, harassment or abuse, 89% (somewhat-yes) said they would know where and how to report the incident (88%F, 93%M). This represents an increase from 77% in 2019. It was noted that a lower proportion of research staff were satisfied with how bullying and harassment were addressed, would feel comfortable about raising concerns and would know how to report. Some Departments have carried out additional EDI/wellbeing surveys which allow trends to be tracked over time.	A

Cambridge Breaking the Silence campaign was launched in 2017 to promote zero tolerance of sexual misconduct. The campaign, which includes an anonymous reporting tool, highlights prevention, support and reporting for those who have been affected by harassment or sexual misconduct.	Develop policies on unsupportive language and behaviour, publicising them widely.	ALL	New University Dignity at Work Policy and Code of Behaviour from 2023. Geography and Earth Sciences Fieldwork Codes of Conduct in accordance with the above policies and the Breaking the Silence campaign. Staff student relationships policy launched in 2024.	G
	Introduce anonymous reporting tools and clear misconduct procedures.	ALL	University Breaking the Silence anonymous reporting tool and supporting webpages and resources were refreshed and relaunched in 2025 Some Departments have local anonymous reporting tools (e.g. IoA)	G
	Organise EDI events, workshops, and seminars	ALL	Multiple events run across Departments by HR and EDI teams for example, Breaking the Silence, Dignity at Work, where do you draw the line, neurodiversity awareness. Numbers and attendance at events were not routinely collected and analysed.	A

3.3 Support for Caring Responsibilities

The Returning Carers Scheme (RCS) is an annual fund designed to support all employees, originally aimed at academic and research staff, who can evidence that their career / work-life has been, is being, or will be, disrupted owing to taking a break of at least three months or working part-time/reduced hours (equivalent to three months or more). 2019 Staff Survey results: I am aware of the following schemes available to carers: - Returning Carers Scheme 68% - My Family Care 25% - The SPACE Network 7%	Support for staff returning from extended leave	ALL	Since the pandemic, the Returning Carers Scheme is now open to all staff. Since 2021, SPS staff across all Departments have been awarded ~£150k from the RCS (10% of the £1.5m awarded across the University) but with only 8% of total applicants (27, 78%F). In SPS, support included Research Support (7 awards for technicians, research assistants/PDRAs), funding for consumables/lab costs (10 awards), research visits/conferences/networking (13 awards), Training/Coaching (3 awards). New return to work programme offered by University Childcare Services from 2026. 87% of staff reported in the 2024 University Family Leave Survey (FLS) that they received the support they needed from the University when they returned to work after family leave.	G
	Organise SPACE events and promote wellbeing programmes.	ALL	SPACE events were significantly impacted by the pandemic. In response to challenges identified for unpaid carers, SPACE is evolving into two separate networks: Carers@Cambridge and Parents@Cambridge from 2026/7.	R
	Offer emergency support for attending critical meetings via <i>My Family Care</i> . Provide childcare at conferences, symposia, for KIT days, and flexible fieldwork participation.	ALL	The University ended its partnership with My Family Care in 2020, after a review indicated the scheme was not providing sufficient support for staff, and a Paid Dependent's Leave policy was adopted instead. This provides employees with up to 5 working days' paid leave in any rolling 12-month period, in recognition of the challenges to employees when care arrangements for dependents break down unexpectedly. The INI encourages diverse engagement and provides funding schemes for programme participants to remove barriers to participation (childcare, carer funding, accessible/family friendly accommodation, support for participants from developing countries). Departments with fieldwork commitments exercise flexible participation for parents with young children.	G

	Ensure postgraduate students receive equivalent support when taking caring leave.	ALL	Comprehensive webpage collating University and College support for student parents with a dedicated childcare support fund and support for return to study has been published and promoted by SPS Departments. Additional postgraduate student family leave benefits introduced by one of the main PhD funders in the School (EPSRC) from 2025.	A
3.4 Parental Leave				
In SPS, between 2020 and 2024 there were 212 instances of family leave recorded (40% Maternity/Adoption leave; 42% Paternity leave and 18% Shared Parental Leave (SPL - 5F, 33M).	Regularly publicise maternity/paternity/shared parental leave policies through newsletters, email, and HR-led presentations.	ALL	Uptake of SPL has risen at the University. In 2019 it comprised 20.5% of family leave taken (as a percentage of those taking maternity, adoption, and SPL leave) rising to 23.6% in 2023. In SPS, SPL uptake has increased from 14% in 2021 to 22% in 2024. In response to feedback, from October 2024, the University has increased its enhanced paid family (maternity and adoption) leave from 18 to 26 weeks at full pay and enhanced paid paternity leave provision from two to 12 weeks at full pay. Uptake and length of leave periods will be monitored.	G
	Support for academics and researchers returning from extended leave.	ALL	To date, Departmental support has been inconsistent across the School. Departments of Physics and MSM have developed additional checklists and examples of sources of support, particularly for academic and research staff whose roles are not typically covered during leave. This includes for example reduced teaching loads on return for Academic staff.	A
	Pilot a contract extension scheme for researchers on parental leave.	IoA	This has been successfully integrated from pilot to policy in the Department.	G
	Advocate for increased nursery provisions	ALL	A new nursery, the Chris Abell Nursery, was opened in 2022 increasing the number of University nurseries to four.	G

3.5 Flexible Working:				
2019 SPS Staff Survey Results: I am satisfied with the support and flexibility offered to help me balance my work and home life - 63% (up 28% from last survey). I am happy with the availability of the University's childcare provision 23% - I have made a formal request to work flexibly and I am satisfied with the outcome- 89% (up 8% from last survey)	Publicise flexible working policies and embed discussions on flexible working during appraisals.	ALL	The University's approach to flexible working was adapted to support the adoption of home and hybrid working over the period of the Covid Pandemic. A University Hybrid Working Policy, together with managerial guidance, was launched in 2023. The University's Flexible Working policy was reviewed and updated at the same time. In the 2024 Staff Culture Survey, 84% of female respondents, and 82% of male respondents in SPS agreed with the statement, "My department enables flexible working".	G

Background and Rationale	Actions	Dept	Examples of impact	RAG
5. EDI INFRASTRUCTURE ACTION SUMMARY				
5.1. Data Collection & Evidence-Based Decision Making				
Collecting EDI data enables institutions to identify inequalities, meet regulatory expectations, design evidence-based interventions, respond to feedback and create fairer, more inclusive environments for students and staff. Lack of easy access to staff and student data means that individual Departments have to request data from multiple parts of the central University to analyse alongside their own Departmental records. Data collection and analysis normally falls to 1 or 2 individuals in each Department and represents a significant workload commitment. Benchmarking across Departments is not transparent. There is a need for consistent collection and analysis of Departmental EDI data across the School	Collect accurate data on ethnicity, gender, and disability across staff and students	ALL	From 2025, the Assistant School Secretary has been collecting, collating and analysing staff and student data at a School and Departmental level with the aim of producing accessible dashboards for all EDI data to introduce consistency across Departments and avoid duplication of effort across multiple Departments. The University did not hold ethnicity data for 13.0% of all staff in 2023. This comprised a nondisclosure rate of 5.4% (individuals who actively chose not to disclose their ethnicity) and a further 7.6% of staff whose ethnicity was unknown because it had not been collected (e.g. when originally appointed). In SPS, the comparative figures for 2024 are 14% unknown ethnicity (6% preferring not to say) suggesting there is more work to be done to improve the disclosure processes during recruitment and during employment Work is required to improve disclosure rates for ethnicity and other characteristics such as disability and sexuality.	G

to inform the development of actions for improving inclusion. Collecting feedback from staff and students is important to understand not only issues and challenges but where progress has been made.	Regularly conduct EDI-focussed surveys, focus groups, and reviews	ALL	All SPS Departments have conducted one or more separate staff surveys in the last 5 years. A University Culture survey ran in 2024 (20% response rate in SPS). This was much lower than the 54% response rate to the 2019 staff survey. Some Departments have run their own additional surveys and focus groups. Feedback indicates a high level of survey fatigue. In 2023/24, following a pilot study in Physics, a wider culture review was undertaken with an additional 5 Departments in the School by an external consultant. The Enhancing Research Culture Project used survey and interview data to provide snapshots of department and research group environments in six departments within SPS (Chemistry, DAMTP, DPMMS, IoA, MSM, Physics). 550 survey responses from academic staff, postdoctoral researchers, and postgraduate students were analysed using listwise deletion. Respondents indicated their level of agreement with a set of six statements based on perceptions of their department and research groups. All the scores were more positive than negative (ranging from 2.8-3 on a 4 point scale with 4 being strongly agree). In addition, 101 interviews were completed with 28 academics, 29 postdocs and 44 Postgraduate students to provide qualitative data. Recommendations have been incorporated into the future action plan.	G
	Promote EDI and unconscious bias training		Currently 82% of all staff have completed online EDI training (92% of Academic Staff, 91% of PSS but only 68% of Researchers. 65.4% of all staff had completed the online Implicit Bias training. All staff who have responsibility for recruitment and appointments are required to undertake the ED&I training, or equivalent. Training is expected to be repeated at least every 3 years, and the modules were updated in 2025 to reflect changes in legislation. New online modules are anticipated from 2026/27.	G

5.2. Communication & Engagement				
2019 SPS Staff Survey Results: I feel informed about what is happening in the University 56% I feel informed about what is happening in my area of the University 72% The communications I receive are relevant and clear 58%	Improve inter- and intra-departmental communication Maintain termly staff meetings, newsletters and intranet updates Develop a communication strategy for gender equality awareness.	ALL	Within SPS there is now a Teams Channel and SharePoint site for the PIC Forum with examples of good practice, local action plans and AS application information including data sets. This channel is regularly used to provide updates and share local events and workshops open to all. To foster collective learning, share knowledge, and joint problem-solving., multiple Communities of Practice have been set up in the last five years. This includes an EDI CoP (co-chaired by an SPS staff member). CoPs break down siloed ways of working, connect colleagues, build confidence, and foster collaboration across the University. In the last term alone, there were 2,654 unique members of staff involved in CoPs, 15 CoP events with >730 bookings and 2 new CoPs validated (now 15 CoPs in total). In a 2024 survey, respondents agreed or strongly agreed that being in a CoP had a positive impact on them as an individual by providing: access to resources and best practice (84%); peer support (83%); increased knowledge and skills (80%); an increased sense of belonging (74%). Many of our Departments now have weekly newsletters for staff as well as displaying key information on screens and via posters. These complement improved University communications via weekly key issues bulletins, and a staff hub SharePoint site. A transparent, School-wide EDI communication strategy has not yet been developed.	A
	Submit annual reports internally and externally, acting on feedback.	ALL	EDI reporting varies between Departments with some submitting formal reports to the Department to verbal updates at key committees and staff meetings.	A

5.3. Broad EDI Initiatives				
Departments in the School hold 2 Silver Athena Swan awards (Chemistry, Physics), 3 Bronze awards (Geography, Astronomy and Earth Sciences). The Faculty of Maths Bronze award (covering both DAMTP and DPMMS) expired in 2024. Physics and Astronomy hold Juno Champion and Practitioner awards respectively.	Embed Athena SWAN principles into Departmental activities and ensure the Athena SWAN Committee meets termly.	ALL	All Departments have their own dedicated committee focussing on EDI matters or EDI is a standing item in all key committee agendas. Departments have been working on award submissions and progressing EDI work largely independently.	G
	Maintain and strengthen EDI Committee membership ensuring turnover for fresh ideas	ALL	SPS EDI Forum Terms of Reference refreshed in 2024 and renamed People and Inclusive Culture Forum to reflect a broader focus and promote wider engagement. Local EDI committee membership has also been refreshed and remits updated.	G
	Promote gender balance in committees and academic leadership roles.	ALL	In 2020, 21% of academic staff in the School were female (15% G12 Professors). This can lead to an unequal burden on minority groups to address diverse representation on committees. Even though proportions of female academic staff have improved (26.1% in 2024, 21% G12 Professors), appropriate gender representation rather than gender balance has been prioritised for committees but can still be challenging in some Departments with lower numbers of female staff.	A
	Participate in the University review of the Head of Department role to encourage senior women's participation.	School	The senior leadership team in the School have been involved in the review of the HoD role. HoS has encouraged female participation in Academic leadership training (see Action 2.3.1) and female Heads of Department have increased from 0% in 2020 to 46% in 2024/25.	G
	Engage in the University's Gender Pay Gap (GPG) review.	School	Analysis shows the GPG in the School is not an equal pay issue and is driven by distribution of gender across the pay spine (all roles), significantly impacted by academic staff pay. Efforts in increasing the number, proportion and seniority of women across the School is driving down the GPG (Total pay gap reduction from 24% in 2018 to 16% in 2024).	G

	Develop a strategy for gender equality, race equality, and intersectionality.	ALL	While some analysis of race and intersectional challenges have been considered in some Departments there has not been development of strategic plans at a local or School level.	R
5.4. National & Community Engagement				
Despite ongoing efforts, Physical Sciences subjects still face significant EDI challenges, particularly relating to gender. Much of the work remains fragmented, insufficiently evidenced, and difficult to sustain, with many initiatives constrained by limited scale, scope and funding. Addressing these challenges requires national collaboration across the sector to coordinate efforts, share evidence, scale effective interventions, and embed EDI principles into mainstream practice, ensuring sustainable and meaningful change.	Establish a national role for best practice in EDI in collaboration with other organisations in the sector	INI	The Isaac Newton Institute is a national and international visitor research institute specialising in long-term thematic residential programmes, bringing together researchers across the full breadth of mathematical and cognate disciplines. More recently, INI is aiming to establish a national role as facilitator and centre for best practice, engaging with the wider community to share learning and develop best practice around EDI. All INI programmes now have a designated budget for EDI events, and events are now listed on the Diversity in Mathematics webpage INI is a partner in the 2025 EPSRC funded national EDI+ Hub (as a maths centre of excellence). Specific interventions include: INI EDI Days, 2025 brought together representatives from UK University Maths Departments, Learned Societies, mathematical infrastructure Institutes, funders, the new EPSRC EDI+ Hub and others working to improve diversity in the mathematical sciences. The event focussed on forming a community, building a repository to share best practice, and discussing the design and topics of future meetings. The aim is to host a similar event at least every two years. The Institute hosts an EDI day annually for graduate students across the UK and Solve for X modelling camp for all UK Martingale scholars (widening participation PG researcher students). The Ramanujan Fellowships scheme, funded by the Simons Foundation, which offers the opportunity for promising early career researchers living and working in low- and middle-income countries to attend an INI programme for one to three months.	G
	Hold a conference series with equality as a core theme.	MSM, Physics, Chemistry	FemInCam, a conference celebrating emerging women in science and leaders in electronic materials across the departments of Materials, Physics, Chemistry, Electrical Engineering Chemical Engineering, was held in 2023. The meeting showcased cutting-edge research, discussion of unique career experiences, and EDI challenges within the academic and scientific communities. A report was shared summarising the learnings from the event.	G

	Engage with the wider community to share best practices and learning.	ALL	The School was involved in a number of bids for the EPSRC funded EDI Hub call. SPS SAT members were directly involved in the development of EDI priorities, University-level Swan (Silver) and REC (Bronze) renewal applications.	A
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2.2 Evaluating success against the department's key priorities

A summary of key impacts, evaluation and lessons learnt by priority theme are as follows:

2.2.1 Addressing the under-representation of female staff via recruitment, retention and promotion

At School level, women are underrepresented in academic (26%F) and research staff (29%F) populations while there is an even gender split in the PSS population (51%F). Addressing the representation of female staff in academic positions has been a key priority over the last 5 years.

2.2.1.1 Increase in female academics in leadership

We have seen a significant **increase in female leadership** including Heads of Institutions. In 2020, all nine SPS Heads of Institution were male. Over the last 5 years this has increased to 46%F (6 out of 13) impacting the diversity of backgrounds and opinions within the strategic and decision-making committees of the School. The increase evidences embedded cultural and structural change, demonstrating reduced barriers to women's progression into senior leadership.

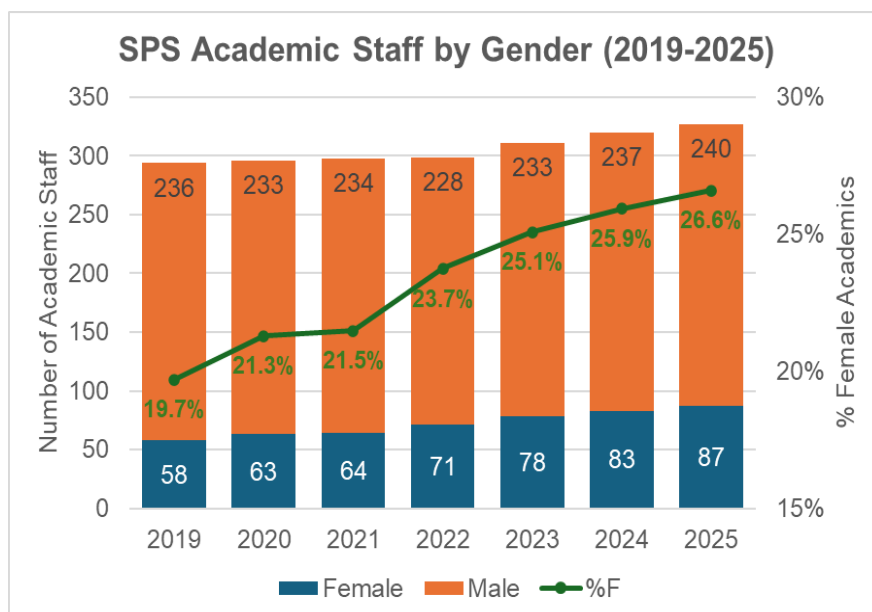
Data on **Senior Leadership programmes**, designed to develop senior leaders explore the complex leadership skills required either within their current role or with progression into a more senior role in the future, indicate that in SPS women are participating in senior leadership development at rates that exceed their overall representation within the academic workforce. Delivered by Advance HE, 24 SPS staff have participated over last 5 years (33%F). In addition, new programmes which represent **strategic School investment at critical career stages** have been delivered in collaboration with the Schools of Biological Sciences and Technology - from 2024/25, Grade 9-10 Leadership Development for Academic Group Leaders (5 from SPS, 40%F) and Grades 10-12 Leading Researcher programme (10 from SPS, 40%F).

The figures suggest that leadership development activity is operating as an effective intervention, strengthening the medium- to long-term leadership pipeline, particularly for senior roles where women have historically been underrepresented.

2.2.1.2 Increase in the proportion and seniority of female Academics via recruitment and promotion

The data highlights a sustained increase in the number and proportion of female Academics achieved *via both recruitment and promotion (Figure 7)* with 87.5% (7/8) of departments improving the proportion of female Academics over the last 5 years. The remaining Department remained unchanged due to low turnover of academic positions over this period. Percentage point increases in F Academics range from 2% in Physics to 11.1% in Geography. Overall, the proportion of women academics ranges from 19% in Maths to 48% in MSM.

Figure 7 illustrates the 7.1% increase in Female Academic staff between 2019 and 2025 (NB 2025 figures are included here but the main data window is 2020-2024).



In SPS, Departments have been proactively encouraging women to apply for academic posts *via* networking at conferences, targeted advertising (including via subject specific women's networks), inviting potential candidates to apply, arranging visits to the Department ahead of recruitment exercises and active monitoring of subject-specific gender appropriate long and shortlists. Over the last 5 years of Academic staff **recruitment**, the positive impact of diverse recruitment initiatives shows an increase in female applicants (32.6% to 38.5% in 2024), with the proportion of shortlisted (31%) and successful Female candidates (39%) exceeding the proportion of Female applicants (25%). Of 88 appointments (2019-2025), 43% were women, including seven G12 Chairs (28%) (**Figure 8**).

Figure 8: Grade 12 Professorial appointees in the last 5 years

Anti-clockwise from top left:
Hannah Fry, Sarah Hall, Ulrike Tillman,
Sera Markoff, Rachael Garrett, Mariana
Rossi and Hiranya Peiris (centre).



There are currently two Academic Career Pathways: **Research and Teaching** – academic staff who combine research and teaching and **Teaching and Scholarship** - for staff whose principal responsibility is teaching, curriculum development, and educational scholarship rather than externally funded research. **Promotion success** rates to Grade 10, 11 and 12 in the School are the same between male and female academics (94% of submitted applications) and are significantly higher than the University average of 77%. In this period, 33 female and 87 male academics have been promoted on the Research and Teaching Pathway (54 to Grade 12, 60 to Grade 11 and 6 to Grade 10). Since the Teaching and Scholarship Pathway was introduced in 2023, all nine SPS candidates have been successfully promoted, two at Grade 12 and 7 to Grade 11 (56% F), compared to University success rate of 77% at Grades 10-12.

Equal success rates suggest fairness in decision-making processes, while highlighting the importance of complementary actions to address who applies for promotion and at what stage. Promotion success rates reflect the calibre of staff appointed, support to apply from HoDs, and effective implementation of School-specific indicators of excellence that recognise leadership of, and a commitment to, a positive and inclusive culture, adviser to underrepresented groups, active engagement in championing and implementing change and acting as a role model in promoting the University's value of mutual respect.

2.2.1.3 Reduction of the Gender Pay Gap

The increase in female representation in the academic staff population has had a demonstrable impact on reducing the gender pay gap in the School. The overall University mean gender base pay gap and total pay gaps have decreased year on year between 2018 and 2023 (from 18.1% to 15.3% and 19.8% to 17.1% respectively). Within SPS the figures are encouraging, with the base pay gap reducing from 22.9% to 16.2% and the Total Pay gap from 24.1% to 16.9% over the same period. School level analysis shows the GPG is not an equal pay issue and is driven by distribution of gender across the pay spine (all roles), significantly impacted by academic staff pay. Our efforts in increasing the number, proportion and seniority of women across the School are driving down the GPG (**Figure 9**). Some Departments have made more progress than others and so the GPG needs monitoring over time.

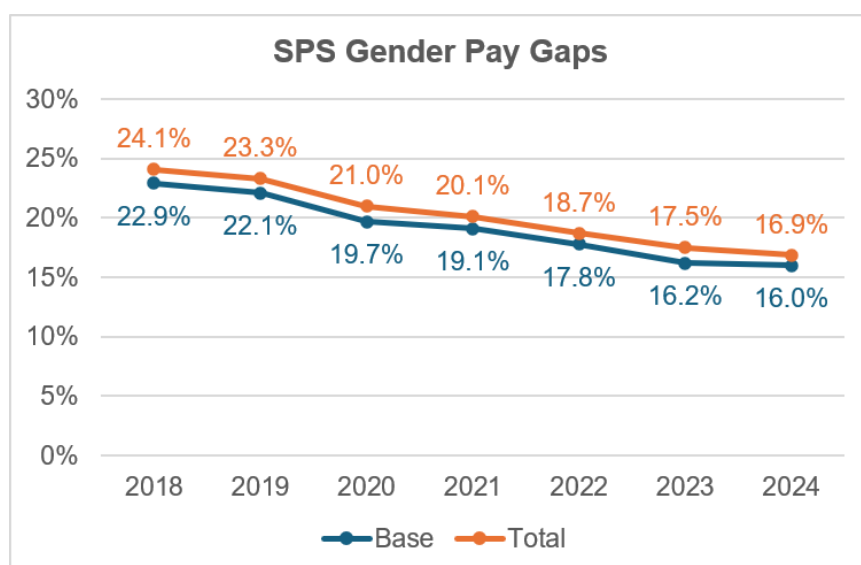


Figure 9: Gender Pay Gap data for the School showing decreases in both the base (6.8%) and total (7.1%) pay gaps.

Improvements in senior representation, fairness of promotion outcomes, and leadership pipeline development suggest that change is being driven by structural and cultural transformation, rather than isolated initiatives having broad impact, at both Departmental and School level. While the 2024 School average of women in academic positions is 26.3% converging on the 2023/24 HESA benchmark of 26.6%, efforts to increase the proportion of women must continue.

2.2.2 Attracting and supporting a diverse student cohort and enhancing the overall student experience

Across the School, proportions of female students at undergraduate and postgraduate level are below national benchmarks, with the exception of Geography. Gender awarding gaps are also present for 2 of the 3 undergraduate degrees. The School and Departments have undertaken significant activity to address these challenges.

2.2.2.1 Impact on undergraduate students

Our Departments have an extensive **outreach and public engagement** portfolio. The School has provided financial support for key programmes which have the potential to impact the diversity of student cohorts and increase the numbers of female students including:

STEM SMART (Subject Mastery and Attainment Raising Tuition) a 17-month widening participation programme run by Isaac Physics (launched in 2014), to provide free, complementary teaching and support to UK (non-fee paying) students who have either experienced educational disadvantage or belong to a group that is statistically less likely to progress to higher education. The programme engages thousands of sixth-form students when they are planning their university applications, raising their aspirations and confidence to apply to study STEM degrees. The School has provided significant funding support for the programme. Independent analysis of pupils' A-levels and UCAS applications showed that STEM SMART students achieved higher A-level grades and secured more places at top universities compared with matched cohorts not on the programme. UCAS found students who engaged the most in the scheme saw their results rise by a grade, were up to four times as successful in achieving A*s as their peers and were almost twice as successful in securing a place at Oxbridge.

While primarily a widening participation scheme, a higher proportion of female students than national subject averages have benefitted. A snapshot of Cambridge student population in October 2024, revealed a total of **5216** students (4714 **undergraduate** and 502 **postgraduates**) had benefitted from using Isaac Physics (**38%F**). STEM SMART cohort 4 (which began in January 2025) launched with **2664** students, 35% of the physicists were women (23% nationally) and 35% of further maths students were women (29% nationally).



The **STEP Support Programme** provides a coherent and sustained 18-month programme of pre-application, post-application and post-offer support (330k unique downloads of materials in 2024/25). The programme enables students to develop advanced mathematical problem-solving skills, build confidence, subject knowledge and techniques, develop the mathematical thinking and reasoning assessed in university admissions interviews and needed in undergraduate study, and prepare for STEP examinations. Over the last 3 years, the proportion of women participating has been higher (29%) than the percentage of women in the UK studying further Maths (27%).

The **Cambridge Maths School** opened in September 2023, founded by the Eastern Learning Alliance in partnership with the University (35% female students). In August 2025, its first cohort achieved outstanding A-level results, with 53% of grades awarded at A*, compared with an average of B- across England. SPS's **Millennium Mathematics Project**, supports events in the school including a Girls Enjoy Maths Summer School. Independent analysis by the Observatory for Mathematical Education found that maths-specific schools increase attainment and progression in STEM while widening participation. Over a 10-year period, female students, those from under-represented ethnic groups, and students from disadvantaged backgrounds progressed to mathematically intensive STEM degrees at higher rates than comparable peers, while maths school students were also more likely to achieve top A-level grades and gain places at leading STEM universities.

SPS Departments lead activities during the **Cambridge Festival** which is a mixture of online, on-demand and in-person events covering all aspects of the world-leading research happening at Cambridge. In 2026, there were >50,000 visitor interactions and 53% of spotlight speakers were women.



Over the past 5 years, there has been some movement on undergraduate female student numbers. In NST, there is a slight trend to more offers being made (with successful admissions). In Maths, the percentage of female applicants has remained static (c. 26%, just below the number of Female students studying Further Maths nationally, 27%). The proportion of offers has increased over the past 3 years from 19% to 24%, but admissions have not increased at the same pace. In Geography, there has been an increase in applications from female students across the five years from 58% peaking at 66% in 2023/24, with a small but consistent increase in percentage of offers made. Evaluation of this data suggests that initiatives to attract and support female students to successfully apply must continue.

2.2.2.2 Role models and awarding gaps

Increasing female role models throughout the higher-education pipeline can foster positive outcomes for female students, enhancing confidence, engagement, and progression. Higher Education Policy Institute's (HEPI) analysis of first-class degree awarding at Oxford and Cambridge found that a lack of female academics and particularly low female representation in STEM courses correlated with larger awarding gaps favouring men².

In SPS, there has been a sustained increase in the number of women academic role models (see Section 2.2.1). This includes the creation of 7 new positions jointly with Colleges with a specific focus on promoting women in the discipline (57% with women-only Colleges - Newnham and Murray Edwards) (**Figure 10**). Five of these posts are in Maths including the Corfield Lectureship, an endowed academic position for a talented mathematician, conducting cutting-edge research whose remit also includes encouraging young women to study maths and to support the progression of female students and young researchers in their academic careers. Across our Departments, women academics and researchers have been highlighted through teaching, communications, events, and online profiles to inspire students and normalise diverse representation.



Figure 10: Joint Department and College appointments in SPS.

Clockwise from top left:
Amy Bonsor, Holly Krieger, Maria Ubiali, Maria Bruna, Zoe Wyatt, Jenny Zhang, Rita Texiera da Costa

Departments have undertaken multiple actions to increase the visibility of role models. Examples include:

- Kirk Distinguished Visiting Fellowships scheme for field-leading figures from under-represented groups within higher mathematical research (34 fellows since 2019, 97%F)
- Exhibitions and profiles of role models (Figure 12). Examples include Faces of Materials featuring slides of Academic and PSS displayed on screens around MSM, Inspiration podcast series in Physics, Women of Mathematics exhibition featuring researchers from across Europe, inclusion of photos and biographies with lecture

² [‘No magic bullet’: An investigation into the first-class degree gender awarding gap at Oxford and Cambridge and how to address it - HEPI](#)

handouts, updated web content with role model profiles and videos, features in alumni magazines, Instagram stories.

- Female lecturers across all years of undergraduate teaching with a particular focus on year 1
- Mary Cartwright room in Maths, a dedicated social and study space for female and non-binary students

Figure 12: Celebrating Role Models in SPS



Student survey data were used to evaluate the effectiveness of these initiatives. While awareness of role models improved locally, University-wide survey data indicate that only 52% of female students agreed they had access to role models they identify with. This finding suggests that visibility initiatives require broader and more systematic implementation. Consequently, the School's future action plan includes a coordinated framework for showcasing diverse role models across all Departments.

Analysis of attainment data identified persistent awarding gaps in Mathematics and NST. Individual Departments have undertaken significant activity to address awarding gaps including diversification of assessment methods, curriculum and course reform, refinement of teaching strategies to support all students, and targeted academic support sessions for women (and non-binary) students. In-depth analyses to track students across all years of the degree have been undertaken in Maths (2019 and 2025) and Chemistry (2024/25). The evidence suggests that isolated interventions are insufficient and that a coordinated School-wide approach using evidence-based and research-led awareness to increase understanding of the gender and ethnicity awarding gaps and to identify causes and potential interventions may be required. As a result, we will establish a cross-School awarding gaps group to evaluate interventions systematically and identify transferable approaches across Departments.

2.2.2.3 Impact on Postgraduate Research students:

The percentage of female research postgraduate students (37%) is lower than the national average (40.1%). Successful actions to address Female student representation include:

2.2.3.1 Access to PG study

Between 2020 and 2024, 55 paid internship opportunities for women, non-binary and widening participation students (78% F) have been offered by SPS to encourage progression to research-focussed careers.



2.2.4.2 Funded Scholarships

Schemes which provide **fully-funded scholarships** to increase PGR participation by under-represented groups include: Parasol Foundation Scholarships³ (3 Masters-level scholarships for women in Astronomy per year); Martingale Foundation⁴ postgraduate scholarships in Mathematics for individuals from low-socioeconomic backgrounds (Masters then PhD study - 25%F in cohort 1). Six Widening Participation fully-funded PhD studentships have been awarded over the last 2 years as part of the School's financial commitment to the EPSRC Doctoral Training Programme (67% F).

The impact of a focus on increasing admission of women PGRs can be seen at School level with more female students made an offer (35%) and admitted (36%) than applied (31%) over the last 5 years. At Departmental level, this is particularly well demonstrated in Chemistry, Physics and Maths. Effective actions to increase female and Widening Participation PhD student numbers include:

- Prioritising fully-funded scholarships for female and widening participation students with early offers to secure candidates
- Encouraging more female attendees at Graduate Open Days through targeted advertising
- Highlighting profiles of women in the department on websites and PG admissions materials
- Recognising and surfacing the risk of selection bias, encouraging careful consideration of CVs and cover letters from minoritised applicants who may 'undersell' their achievements.
- Leading on Contextualised Admissions which enables students to provide additional information alongside their academic achievements in recognition that not all applicants will have had equal access to educational and social opportunities.
- Participation in the Close the Gap project to identify ways to shrink the historical offer gap between UK-domiciled White applicants and those of Black, Bangladeshi, or Pakistani British ethnicity

Ongoing work is required to match or exceed the national benchmark and apply lessons learnt across all Departments.

³ [Reaching for the Stars | Murray Edwards College](#)

⁴ <https://martingale.foundation/scholarships/>

2.2.3. Promoting staff wellbeing and developing flexible and inclusive cultures

2.2.3.1 Support for caring responsibilities and flexible working

The **Returning Carers Scheme (RCS)** is an annual fund designed to support staff who can evidence that their career / work-life has been, is being, or will be, disrupted owing to taking a break of at least three months or working part-time/reduced hours (equivalent to three months or more). The scheme was extended during the pandemic to include all staff, including professional services.

“Having funding available for career network rebuilding for an extended time after returning from maternity was valuable in re-establishing relevance within my research networks. At an 800+ delegate international conference, I was able to rebuild existing connections and make new ones. I was invited back to this event as a plenary speaker 2025.” **F Academic**

Applicant Gender	20 Female	6 Male	
Staff Type	16 Academic	5 PSS	5 Researcher
Reason	10 Parental Leave	2 Caring Responsibilities	14 Covid disruption
Type of Support	16 Research Support (staff, equipment, consumables)	13 Networking/ Collaboration (Conferences, Lab visits, inviting collaborators)	2 Training (Coaching and job-specific training)
Award values	University £1.13m	SPS £149K (13%)	

“This support has been invaluable to my career advancement. In science, in-person meetings and seminar invitations are key to enable discussion and build relationships. My scientific networking resulted in several invitations to key conferences for the academic year 25-26, and enabled me to submit an ERC consolidator grant.” **F Academic**

A new Dependants Leave policy was launched in 2019, which provides employees with up to 5 working days' paid leave in any rolling 12-month period, in recognition of the challenges to employees when care arrangements for dependents break down unexpectedly. Since its introduction, over 900 staff have benefitted from this policy.

2.3.2 Addressing incidences of inappropriate behaviour

In 2023, the University published an updated Dignity at Work Policy and a new Code of Behaviour for staff. Within SPS, **Fieldwork Codes of Conduct** were introduced to embed these policies, setting out expectations so that staff and students are able to carry out their fieldwork free from any kind of harassment, victimisation, bullying or sexual misconduct. In 2025, the University **Breaking the Silence** campaign which promotes zero tolerance of sexual misconduct and highlights prevention, support and reporting for those who have been affected, was updated and relaunched. While awareness of how to report incidences of bullying, harassment or sexual misconduct has increased from 77% in 2019 to 89% in 2024, the staff survey results indicate that more work to improve confidence in reporting and tackling incidences of misconduct is required.

2.4 Developing EDI infrastructure and communications

2.4.1 Leadership and Resourcing

Professor Nigel Peake has been Head of School since 2020 and is a **high-profile ally** for EDI work within the School and wider University. As an active member of the School EDI/PIC Forum, he is involved at all levels of work, from listening to ideas and developing guidance to approving School resourcing. Under his leadership, support for EDI activities has increased significantly, including funding for the School EDI Champion role (0.2 FTE), the creation of a new Strategic Project Manager position (Assistant School Secretary from 2024) to lead the development and implementation of a PIC strategy, and the approval of funding for a range of EDI initiatives (Figure 11).



Figure 11: (L-R) Prof. Nigel Peake, Head of School; Prof. Harriet Allen, Dr Max Van Wyk de Vries, EDI Champions; Dr Vivien Gruar, Assistant School Secretary.

The Assistant School Secretary, a former University EDI Consultant and Departmental BOM actively collaborates with SPS Departments and central ED&I Section to establish initiatives, templates, policies, tools and partnerships to expand and embed good practices across the School. She is currently undertaking a year-long Data Fellowship to improve the collection, analysis, visualisation and availability of EDI data, and will be responsible for regular surveys and focus groups to assess progress and identify new actions. In collaboration with the academic EDI Champion, a broader PIC strategy will be developed to support a programme of continuous organisational performance improvement to deliver positive cultural change which engages colleagues, builds communities, develops talent and improves the student/staff experience.

Section 3: An assessment of the department's gender equality context

3.1 Culture, inclusion and belonging

The School has established systematic processes for collecting, monitoring and evaluating equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) data and the implementation of relevant policies. We have collected and analysed all mandatory Athena Swan datasets across the student and staff lifecycle. Wherever numbers allowed, data were disaggregated by sex and examined through an intersectional lens, including ethnicity, nationality, career stage to identify differential experiences and outcomes.

Alongside quantitative analysis, we have evaluated the effectiveness and implementation of key institutional and local policies through staff and student surveys, committee scrutiny at School and Departmental levels, focus groups, interviews, and culture reviews. We analysed findings from the University-wide Culture Survey (2024), local Departmental surveys, and a bespoke Enhancing Research Culture Project.

Review of the evidence highlighted several recurring themes. Women remain underrepresented in many student and staff populations, gender awarding gaps persist in parts of the undergraduate provision, and survey findings demonstrate less positive experiences among women and some minority groups. These findings have informed the priorities set out below and provide the basis against which future progress will be monitored and evaluated.

Priority 1: Our students

3.1 Attraction and admission of a diverse student cohort

3.1.1 Undergraduate students

In 2024/25 there were 886 undergraduate students in the School split between three Undergraduate streams (Triposes): Maths, 252 students (21.8%F); Natural Sciences (NST), 534 students (45.6% F); Geography, 100 students (66% F). These percentages have changed little over the past 5 years. Geography has a higher percentage of women than the 2023/24 national average (65% vs 55%). However, both Natural Sciences and Maths have percentages of women lower than the national averages (45% vs 53% and 21% vs 35% respectively). In Geography, %F admissions broadly track applications and offers. In both NST and Maths, offers and admissions are slightly lower than proportions of women applicants. International student applications have increased across all three courses over the last 5 years with 37% International students admitted in Maths compared to only 13% in Geography and 30% in NST. For Maths, international students are driving the proportion of female students (increasing from 34% to 51% over the last 5 years female compared to an increase of 24% to 34% for male students). The proportion of BAME students has remained static in Geography (~14%) but have increased in Maths and NST cohorts by 14% and 9% respectively since 2020. For Maths students by gender, there is a higher proportion of Female BAME students (49%) than white students (47%) compared to 44% BAME and 47% White Male students. White students by gender (both M and F populations) remain in the majority for Geography and NST in 2024/25.

Outreach activities will continue and expand to include further engagement with the Cambridge Maths School and a dedicated Maths stream within STEM SMART. Closer working with the Colleges, which are responsible for undergraduate admissions, with sharing of EDI practices and priorities, as well as continuing to appoint and celebrate female role models, aim to increase the percentage of female students applying for and admitted to, NST and Maths degree courses.

3.1.2 Taught postgraduate students (PGT)

Our PGT student numbers have increased significantly over the last 5 years (52%) due to the introduction of a range of new interdisciplinary MPhil courses and targeted expansion of current courses. Percentages of female students varies by Department and year (12%F to 80%F) but numbers vary widely with some Departments (Maths and Physics) having >100 students per year and others with <5 (Mean %F over last 5 years is 30%, Median is 24%) resulting in ~30%F which is significantly lower than the Physical Sciences national benchmark of 54%). There has been an increase in BAME student proportions over the last 5 years (predominantly Asian and Chinese students), especially female students when data is broken down by gender (15% increase vs 8% increase for Female and Male BAME students respectively). The numbers of black students remain low.

3.1.3 Postgraduate Research Students (PGR)

Most PGR students (87%) are admitted to PhD programmes (5 year mean - 295 PhD vs 45 Research Masters students). The School has seen a 4.3% increase in the proportion of female doctoral students admitted over the last 5 years, particularly in the three largest Departments (see Section 2.2.4.2). In Chemistry, the proportion of female applicants, offers, and admissions have increased by 11%, 13% and 5% respectively. In Maths, the proportion of F applicants has remained constant at ~18% while offers and admissions have increased by 12% and 13% respectively. In Physics, there has been a 3% increase in F applicants, a 5% increase in offers, and a 4% increase in admissions over the last 5 years. We will continue our efforts to secure philanthropic postgraduate funding, share best practice for targeted attraction and admission of under-represented groups across Departments in the School, and note any lessons which could be applied in an undergraduate context.

3.1.4 Gender awarding gaps

In 2 of the 3 undergraduate courses in the School (NST and Maths), gender awarding gaps in students awarded a First-Class degree persist (11% more M than F students awarded a First in NST, with the gap in Maths at 14% in 2024). Female students are also in the minority within these courses (32% in NST Physical Sciences subjects and 21% in Maths). Next steps are highlighted in Table 3:

HEPI gender awarding gaps findings ²	SPS Actions
The tendency for final-year examination-based assessment methods to determine the overall grade for undergraduate degrees disadvantages women from reaching the first-class bracket because they are generally less likely to take risks	Evaluate the impacts of curricula reform and inclusive education initiatives. Sharing successful approaches, analyses, and findings from departmental reviews in partnership with the University Centre for Teaching and Learning

Many courses with significant awarding gaps have gender imbalances in both the student cohort and the teaching staff which can have a knock-on effect as role models are important for building confidence and encouraging aspiration	Continue efforts to increase female representation in student and staff populations
The potential for combative and competitive supervisions	Work closely with Colleges to actively share priorities and good practice initiatives

3.1.5 Student support

Multiple UK-based studies indicate that female university students are more likely than their male peers to experience mental health and wellbeing issues. In Cambridge, since 2022, there has been significant investment in transforming student support services, particularly around wellbeing and mental health support. University-wide Teaching and Disability reviews (2024-25) have led to specific actions including an inclusive teaching Hub and Pathways to Inclusive Practice programme. In our Departments, student mentoring, networking events for women and non-binary students and mental health first aiders have been introduced.

Significant investment in student wellbeing services was evaluated through survey data, service feedback and institutional reviews. While the infrastructure supporting students has expanded substantially, survey findings indicate that less than half of female students feel their mental health and wellbeing are adequately supported. This evidence suggests that availability of support does not automatically translate into positive experiences. Our future actions therefore focus on awareness, accessibility and perceptions of support, particularly among groups reporting less positive outcomes.

3.1.6 Capturing the student voice

The School encourages feedback from students in a number of ways:

- Surveys (both local, University wide and national e.g. NSS, PRES)
- Student participation in Committees at Department and School level (UEC, PEC, NSTMC, CSPA)

NSS and PRES results suggest that female students are less positive than their male peers across a range of issues. Of particular concern are lower satisfaction scores about the opportunities for PG students to engage with other students and the wider research community and levels of support. Through consolidated surveys and focus groups we will engage with student populations, particularly female students, to identify and co-create targeted actions.

Priority 2- Our cultures

3.2.1 Understanding existing cultures

An **Enhancing Research Culture Project** was undertaken in 2023/24 using survey and interview data to better understand and improve Department and Research Group environments in six departments within SPS (Chemistry, DAMTP, DPMMS, IoA, MSM, Physics). Run by an external academic consultant, 550 survey responses from academic staff, postdoctoral researchers, and postgraduate students were analysed using listwise deletion. Respondents indicated their level of agreement with a set of six statements based

on perceptions of their department and research groups. Most participants agreed or strongly agreed that their departments (76%) and research groups (85%) had generally supportive environments. However, multivariate analyses indicated that for multiple measures, women, BAME, and LGBTQ+ respondents had worse perceptions of environment than the respective majority groups (men, white and non-LGBTQ+), and those differences were not explained by variation across departments or by differences in roles (e.g., being a postgraduate student and not a member of academic staff). Across Departments, interviews (28 academics, 29 postdocs and 44 Postgraduate students) identified three themes for continued conversations and action:

- Addressing incidents of poor behaviour and fear of reporting
- Working toward understanding diversity within and among underrepresented groups highlighting the importance of an intersectional approach to understanding culture and awareness that positive aggregate results can mask inequalities experienced by specific groups
- Encouraging departments to understand that how they address EDI is as important as whether they address EDI (meaningful change, not box-ticking exercises)

Additional surveys were used to supplement these findings. The response to the **University-led Culture survey in 2024** was 20.1% in SPS (50%F,39%M, 10% Prefer not to say, <1% other). While this was greater than the average across the other 5 Schools (16%), non-response bias represents a limitation and may mean that the views captured are not fully representative of the wider population, particularly when results are broken down by Department.

Actions to address poor behaviour, workload and mental health/wellbeing, alongside increasing visibility of EDI activities and opportunities to get involved needed to be included in our future action plan.

3.2.2 Advancing inclusive behaviour

The external climate remains challenging for EDI interventions and positive cultures. The national and global political landscape, including the impact of new legislation and a backlash against EDI activities, has intensified concerns around inclusivity, freedom of speech, and the wellbeing of our community.

Survey results informed the evaluation of the effectiveness of policies intended to create a safe and inclusive environment. Following introduction of revised Dignity at Work policies and the refreshed Breaking the Silence campaign, awareness of reporting routes increased from 77% to 89%. However, only around a quarter of survey respondents in 2024 reported confidence that concerns would be addressed appropriately. Increased awareness has not yet translated into equivalent improvements in trust and confidence, providing a clear focus for future action. As a result, future actions focus on transparency, leadership accountability, line manager capability and role modelling by senior staff as well as investment in training and support for individuals rather than awareness-raising alone.

3.2.3 Trans and non-binary inclusivity

In light of the supreme court ruling on the definition of a woman, the Emmy Noether Society for female and non-binary mathematicians at Cambridge published a statement to re-emphasise their values. This was supported across the Faculty by a one-day event to celebrate trans students and staff. Sufficient access to suitable toilet facilities including gender-neutral toilets were reviewed and implemented across all Departments. Local policies and practices will be reviewed for trans- and non-binary inclusion.

Our society is for women and non-binary students studying mathematics and adjacent subjects. We do not adopt a binary notion of gender and are, and always will be, inclusive of trans women and non-binary students.

3.2.4 Wellbeing Support, Caring responsibilities and whole-life balance

Staff wellbeing and workload remain significant challenges across the sector, with increasing teaching demands, research expectations, administrative responsibilities and student support placing sustained pressure on academic and professional services staff. Across the University, instances of sick leave due to mental health/stress rose by 37% between 2019 to 2023 with instances for female staff rising by 50% over this period. Female staff accounted for 68.1% in 2019 to 74.7% in 2023 of all working days lost to stress/mental health reasons. In SPS, less than half (48%) of SPS respondents to the 2024 Staff Culture Survey agreed their mental health and well-being were supported in their department with only 41% responding that they would feel confident asking for mental health and/or wellbeing support at work.

Guidance on flexible working has been revised, and a new policy on hybrid working was developed in the aftermath of the pandemic. From October 2024, paid family leave provision was increased from 18 weeks for maternity and adoption leave to 26 weeks and paid paternity leave from 2 to 12 weeks. A review of the Returning Carers Fund demonstrated demand across academic, research and professional services staff, with recipients reporting improved opportunities to rebuild research networks, attend conferences and accelerate career recovery after periods of leave. These findings informed the decision to expand return-to-work support through additional School-level funding and a School-wide framework for staff going on and returning from extended leave.

Priority 3: Our Staff

Staff data has been analysed by staff category (Academic, Research and Professional Services Staff). Data have been reviewed to identify where gender interacts with ethnicity, career stage, contract type and staff category to identify disparities in outcomes and experiences. Findings will be considered annually by School governance groups and used to evaluate the effectiveness of recruitment, promotion and career development policies, informing targeted interventions where inequalities persist.

3.3.1 Academic Staff

In SPS, 97.5% of Academic Staff are in Grades 9-12 with 96% on permanent contracts. Academic and Research Staff groups have been split for most analyses by sex, as the challenges for these two groups differ by seniority and contract status. As highlighted in Section 2.1.1, significant progress has been made in the proportion and seniority of female academic staff with an overall 7% increase in proportion of female academics between 2019 and 2025 (Figure 13: 29 more female vs 4 more male academics over the same period). The number of Grade 10 Academic positions is lower than at Grade 9, 11 and 12 as the majority of academic staff apply for promotion to Grade 11 Professor roles directly from Grade 9 Assistant/Associate Professor positions.

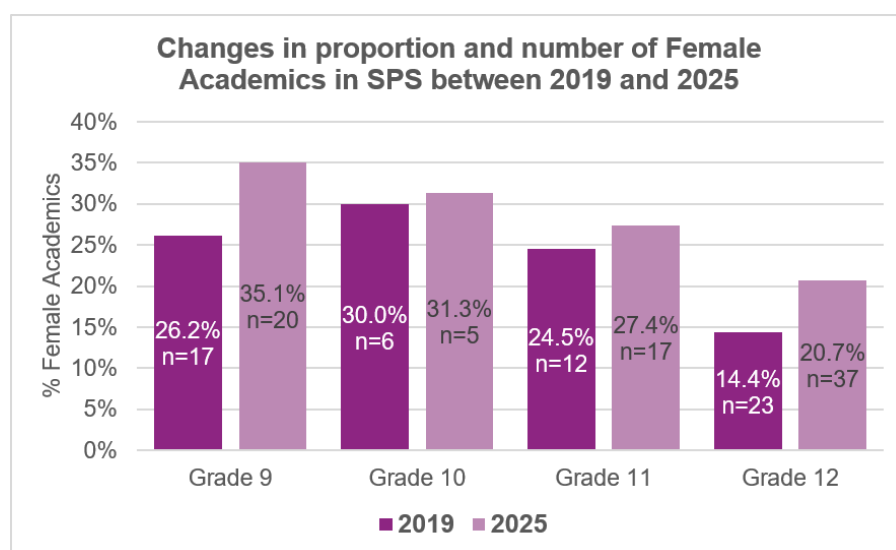


Figure 13: Increase in proportions of Female Academics at all grades between 2019 and 2025

3.3.2 Research Staff

In SPS, 80% of all Research Staff are Grade 7 (Research Associates/postdocs) or Grade 5 Research Assistants with >80% of these grades on fixed-term contracts reflecting reliance on grant-funded research (£~140m per annum). Over the last 5 years the grant funding landscape has become more competitive, uncertain, and financially constrained contributing to an increase in the proportion of researchers on fixed-term contracts. Members of the School have been actively involved in a University-wide review of Fixed Term contracts (FTCs). Initial outputs include updated guidance on the use of Fixed-Term and Open-Ended with Limited Funding Contracts (in 2026) clarifying a limited list of justifications for using a FTC and maximum duration of sequential FTCs (4 years).

The University is introducing a new Academic Career Pathways (Research) scheme to create a coherent progression and career development scheme for research staff. ACP(R) was developed to provide transparent, fair, and equitable routes to career progression and advances the University's dual commitments to 'value all our researchers' (Research Culture Institutional Action Plan) and to 'provide clear and transparent merit-based recognition, reward and promotion pathways' (Researcher Development Concordat). The scheme will be supported by a new annual Contribution Reward Scheme which replaces the current Researcher Contribution Increment Scheme.

The percentage of Female research staff has remained largely static (27-29%) over the last 5 years. Recruitment data suggests that slightly more female researchers are appointed than apply (with the difference between proportion of F appointments and applicants between 1 and 7% over the last 5 years). There has been an increase in percentage of BAME research staff from 23% in 2020 to 33% in 2024 (accompanied by an increase in female BAME researchers from 21% to 29%). As with BAME academic staff, the majority of BAME research staff are of Asian origin (68% and 82% respectively) with <2% of Black ethnic origin. Recruitment data illustrates that the proportion of BAME applicants for research positions reached a high of 79% in 2024 with 54% shortlisted and 43% appointed. Evaluation of Academic data identified inclusive academic recruitment as a major driver of progress which informed the decision to extend successful academic recruitment practices to researcher recruitment where progress has been slower.

The Research Culture Survey (2024) indicated research staff are much less aware of EDI activities, leadership and processes around poor behaviour. A School-level Postdoc Working group will be implemented (with academic and research staff membership) to highlight and address postdoc concerns.

3.3.3 Professional Services Staff (PSS)

Our PSS staff population has remained ~50:50 by sex over the last 5 years. Women are more highly represented in Clerical Assistant staff (>80%) but significantly under-represented in Technical Assistant staff category (18%). We will work with the Technician Commitment team to identify and implement initiatives to increase diversity in SPS technical roles.

Female PSS are more likely to be rewarded with contribution increments or move to a higher-grade role than their male peers (25%F vs 17%M and 29%F vs 26%M respectively). There is no formal promotion process for PSS and achieving a higher grade inevitably means moving to another role within the University. Key areas of action for this staff group will target wellbeing, workload stress, career development and training.

Priority 4: Our EDI activities and impact

The School recognises that effective EDI work requires robust evaluation alongside implementation. Our focus over the next five years will be to strengthen our capacity to monitor outcomes, evaluate interventions, and demonstrate impact. The processes involved in collating, cleaning, anonymising, and analysing equality data are largely manual, time-consuming, and resource-intensive for both the central EDI team and individual Departments. This duplication of effort, coupled with constrained resources and, in some cases, limited analytical capacity at departmental level, results in delays, increased workload pressures, and reduced ability to generate timely and actionable EDI insights.

A series of Power BI dashboards are being developed to visualise Staff and Student EDI data by sex (and, where possible, intersectional characteristics) which can be filtered by Department. The development of dashboards will improve access to equality data, facilitate more timely analysis, and support evidence-based decision making at Departmental and School levels.

A key priority is the establishment of a consistent framework for evaluating culture and inclusion across the School. Currently there is a range of frequency of staff surveys across the School with some Departments carrying out annual surveys and others relying on University-wide surveys which have variable frequency. Locally run surveys tend to have much improved response rates, so future surveys will include a consistent set of School-wide questions to enable longitudinal monitoring of culture and evaluation of the impact of interventions across departments.

Monitoring of training uptake was negatively impacted by the pandemic and is inconsistent. Consequently, future surveys will include measures to evaluate whether training improves capability and understanding of expected behaviours, reporting processes and inclusive practices. Results will be analysed by gender identity and relevant intersectional characteristics to identify differential experiences and monitor the effectiveness of actions arising from gender-focussed, research culture and wellbeing initiatives.

Improved accessibility of quantitative and qualitative data should support broader engagement with EDI activities and integration into the core work at Departmental level. We identified the clear need to improve communications to increase clarity on the importance of EDI as an integral component of academic excellence in attracting talented students and staff, improving research quality through diverse perspectives and enhancing the teaching and student experience. We will also strengthen mechanisms for evaluating policy implementation. Annual review processes will assess awareness, uptake and perceived effectiveness of key policies and initiatives, including recruitment and promotion processes, wellbeing provision, reporting mechanisms, fieldwork conduct requirements, and career development programmes. Findings will be reported through School governance structures and communicated to staff and students through regular "You Said, We Did" updates, annual EDI reports, a standard Policy Evaluation Framework, and School-wide engagement events.

These measures will enable the School to move beyond activity-based reporting towards a stronger evidence-based approach focused on measurable outcomes, continuous improvement, and accountability. By systematically evaluating both culture and policy impact, we will be better positioned to identify and address gender-based and intersectional inequalities and to create an inclusive environment in which staff and students of all gender identities can thrive.

3.5 Key priorities for future action

- 1. We will enhance attraction and support for students from diverse backgrounds**
 - 1.1 Support for Undergraduate Students
 - 1.2 Support for Postgraduate (PG) Students
 - 1.3 Support for All Students
- 2. We will advance positive cultures of inclusion and belonging**
 - 2.1 Improve the awareness and effectiveness of interventions to address bullying, harassment, discrimination, sexual misconduct and victimisation. Increase confidence in the response to incidences of inappropriate behaviour.
 - 2.2 Signposting existing support and enhancing provision to improve staff wellbeing
 - 2.3 Collaborate across and outside the University re: Research Culture
- 3. We will promote diversity in our staff population by attracting, recruiting and retaining talent, targeting areas of underrepresentation**
 - 3.1 Active inclusive recruitment processes
 - 3.2 Retaining talent through career progression
- 4. We will improve EDI reporting, communications, sharing of good practices and evaluation of impact**
 - 4.1 Effective collection and sharing of data to facilitate impact evaluation
 - 4.2 Development of a People and Inclusive Culture Action Plan
 - 4.3 Resourcing, Recognition and Reward
 - 4.4 Improve EDI Communications

Section 4: Future action plan

Action plan

- The order of presentation of the priorities does not reflect any order of importance to the School.
- This report uses the term 'BAME' to categorise staff who identify as Black, Asian or of other minority ethnic backgrounds. This aligns with HESA classifications and terminology to enable comparisons with national data sets, yet the University acknowledges the limitations and the contested nature of these terms in relation to the self-definitions of people from racially minoritised backgrounds.
- Progress will be monitored by gender and, where data permit, by ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, nationality and career stage to identify differential and intersectional impacts.
- Evaluation will consider the experiences of women, men, non-binary people and those of other gender identities where disclosure rates permit meaningful analysis.

The AP aligns with the following overarching University strategies and Action Plans:

Strategy	Timeframe	Ownership
People Strategy	2024-2027	Human Resources Division
Athena Swan Silver award AP	2024-2029	Central ED&I Team
Race Equality Charter Bronze AP	2025-2030	Central ED&I Team
Research Culture Strategies and Priorities	2024-2027	Research Culture Steering Committee
Access and Participation Plan	2025-2029	Education Services
Being LGBTQ+ in Cambridge AP	Ongoing	Central ED&I Team
Disability Confident AP	Ongoing	Central ED&I Team
Technician Commitment AP	2024-2027	Learning & Organisational Development Team

No.	Actions	Rationale	Responsibility & Partnerships	Timeframe for outputs and outcomes
1	We will enhance attraction of and support for students from diverse backgrounds			
1.1	Support for Undergraduate Students			
1.1.1	Addressing undergraduate student awarding gaps: Sharing analyses, findings and expertise across Departments and with the Cambridge Centre for Teaching and Learning who are leading the University action to use evidence-based and research-led awareness and understanding of the gender and where possible ethnicity awarding gaps.	Combined results for the School for the three undergraduate courses in Maths, Geography and Natural Sciences show an awarding gap between male and female students. At the individual course level, there is no awarding gap in Geography (5 year mean, 66%F). However, for Maths (5 year mean, 20%F) and NST (5 year mean, 28%F in year 3 Physical Sciences subjects) there are persistent gender awarding gaps for F students attaining Firsts (14% gap in Maths and 11% gap in NST in 2024/25). The awarding gap narrows when Firsts and 2.1s are combined (Good Honours degree) (6% difference in both Maths and NST results in 2024/25). Maths, Physics and Chemistry have undertaken substantial data analyses to quantify observed awarding gaps and identify mitigating actions including course reforms, varying forms of assessment, using scaffolded exam questions and specific support initiatives for women students. While many interventions have been tested, the gaps persist. Actions including curriculum and assessment reforms, clarification of expectations before students arrive, student support initiatives, collaborating with College colleagues (Action 1.1.2), and promotion of role models will be evaluated using evidence-based and research-led methods to increase awareness and understanding of the gender and, where possible, ethnicity awarding gaps.	Deputy Head of School for Education supported by SPS Undergraduate Education Committee Chair, Departmental Teaching Committees	Outputs: School-wide group created to review awarding gap analyses and recommendations as well as sharing insights into curriculum reform in 2026/27. Annual evaluation of curriculum and assessment interventions, including impact on awarding gaps by gender and ethnicity. Successful interventions shared and adopted across relevant Departments from AY2026/27. Outcomes: Decrease the gender awarding gap in NST and Mathematics courses by 2-5 percentage points by 2030. See also Action 1.1.3.

1.1.2	Engagement with Colleges on EDI initiatives and student support through sharing of good practice guidance that is tailored to include School and Department specific practices.	At the University, all undergraduate students belong to a college. While departments are primarily responsible for academic teaching and research, colleges provide much of the day-to-day support that shapes a student's university experience including accommodation, welfare, academic guidance, and social opportunities. Colleges organise supervisions (small-group teaching sessions), which are a distinctive feature of a Cambridge education. They also appoint Directors of Studies who monitor students' academic progress, advise on course choices, and coordinate supervisions. Good practice in working more closely with College Directors of Studies have been identified including sharing updates on EDI activities, a cover sheet on good practice in supervision documents tailored by year of study, curriculum reviews, discussing student challenges, and active management of Student Support Documents (SSDs) between Departments and Colleges.	Deputy Head of School for Education supported by Chair NSTMC, Chair UEC and Departmental Teaching leads	Outputs: Good practice guidance developed and implemented across all SPS Departments by October 2027. Outcomes: Student surveys and focus groups reflect improved student experience and increase in positive perceptions of inclusion and support (see Action 1.3.2). Survey for supervisors developed and run annually to gauge opinions, with feedback incorporated into future supervision briefings (by Oct 2028).
1.1.3	Continue to highlight diverse role models including development of School-wide examples of good practice	Promotion of photos and bios of diverse current (and alum) staff and students through displays, outreach, seminar speakers, student lecture handouts and showcasing contributions to the subject in undergraduate lectures. 52% Female students and 62% of male students agreed they had access to role models that they can identify with in the 2025 Student Culture survey (only University wide results available).	SPS EDI Champion supported by Departmental EDI leads	Outputs: Develop a framework of guidance, support and examples of good practice to ensure all departments are able to effectively showcase role models by October 2027. Outcomes: >10% increase in positive responses to access to role models in Student Culture Survey 2028/29 (see Action 1.3.4).

1.1.4	Enhance and expand effective outreach activities, sharing best practice between programmes	Outreach helps dismantle barriers for girls in STEM by normalising female participation and success in the field. Early exposure to STEM careers and environments increases the likelihood that girls will choose science subjects at A-level and beyond. In 2024-25, Geography has a higher percentage of women than the national average (65% vs 55% nationally). However, both Natural Sciences and Maths have percentages of women lower than the national averages (45% vs 53% and 21% vs 35% respectively). In Geography, %F admissions broadly track applications and offers. In both NST and Maths, offers and admissions are slightly lower than proportions of women applicants. Flagship STEM SMART and Isaac Physics widening participation initiatives have now secured funding for the next five years. Activities are expanding to cover Maths (including the appointment of a Senior Project Mathematician to develop a mathematics for university stream within STEM SMART) which will complement the ongoing work of MMP and NRICH outreach programmes in Mathematics. Collaboration between STEM SMART and STEP support delivered via MMP. Broader local outreach activities e.g. via the Cambridge Festival, open days, targeted school events, collaboration with the Cambridge Maths School, to encourage girls to engage with the physical sciences.	Deputy Head of School for Education supported by Directors of STEM SMART and MMP and local outreach coordinators	Outputs: Senior Project Mathematician appointed to STEM SMART by 2027 Annual programme of outreach events publicised across the School from Oct 2027. Outcomes: 5% increase in students participating in STEM SMART annually Increased proportion of women applying for NST and Maths courses by 3-5% over next 5 years, with more students achieving offer conditions and being admitted (1-3 percentage point increases in F admissions).
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1.2	Support for Postgraduate (PG) Students			
1.2.1	Continue PG access and participation initiatives and Scholarships for Master's level and PhD students and collating examples of best practice locally and nationally.	Internships/placements: The SPS STEM widening participation intern scheme invites undergraduates from outside the University to come and experience life at Cambridge for 8-week placements. This runs alongside similar subject specific schemes in Maths and the IoA. Over the last 5 years, 55 paid internship opportunities for women, non-binary and widening participation students (78% F) have been offered to encourage progression to research-focussed careers, with many interns continuing on to PG courses in Cambridge and elsewhere. Stormzy UG Scholarships awarded to Black undergraduate students (81 between 2018-26) have resulted in more than double the number of applications from black students in this period. Lessons from the Stormzy effect, the Close the Gap toolkit (a resource developed by Oxford and Cambridge to improve ethnic and racial representation in UK postgraduate research) and resources published by the Equator project in the Geosciences are being collated.	Chair SPS Postgraduate Education Committee supported by Departmental Postgraduate Education Committees	Outputs: Consolidation of lessons learned from within and outside the University into one overarching inclusive doctoral recruitment checklist to be shared and implemented across the School by Oct. 2027 Outcomes: Increase WP internship opportunities from 17 to 25 per year (>75%F) Applications, Offers and Admissions of Black students (10%, 2%, 2% in 2024/25) increased to 20%, 5% and 5% respectively by 2030.
1.2.2	Setting of clear expectations for Departments across the School to embed implementation of the Code of Practice between PI and students Adoption of good practice initiatives across the School	The numbers of students declaring mental health issues is increasing year on year. Of the ~2600 PG students in the University declaring a disability in 2023/2024, 61% were female. The Code of Practice for Research Students sets out what doctoral, MSc, and MPhil by thesis students can expect, and also what is expected of them. There is a separate Code of Practice for taught Master's students. Building upon the Codes of Practice, research groups in Chemistry collaboratively produce annual Group Expectation Documents (GEDs) with a focus on inclusivity and a better understanding of their working culture which is discussed and agreed by all group members.	Chair SPS Postgraduate Education Committee supported by Departmental Postgraduate Education Committees	Outputs: Sharing of Group Expectations Documents and implementation by other SPS Departments by October 2028. Codes of Practice for postgraduate students highlighted in inductions and student handbooks in all Departments by October 2026. Training completion rates available from 2026/27 to establish a baseline for improvement.

	Increased awareness of the Codes of Practice, expectations of behaviour, and clarification of responsibilities should lead to improved wellbeing outcomes Training is available for UG and PG supervisors <i>via</i> the Centre for Teaching and Learning (completion rates per Department/School not routinely provided). PRES 2024/25 scores for 'My supervisors provide feedback that helps me direct my training and development needs as a researcher' was lower in SPS than the University or Russell Group averages.	Outcomes: Annual completion of supervisor training modules monitored with annual increases of completion rates above the baseline once established. >90% awareness of Code of Practice in student culture surveys (reviewed by PEC from 2028) alongside measures of confidence and perceptions of support See Action 1.3.2
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1.3	Support for All Students			
1.3.1	Student Attraction and Recruitment Develop innovative options and collate best practice for targeted attraction of under-represented groups across Departments including women and black students Collaboration with Colleges on Access and Participation plan for UG admissions Identify new sources of funding for PG study	It is the Colleges, not Departments who admit undergraduate students. In 2 of the 3 undergraduate courses (NST and Mathematics), while numbers of international students applying and proportion of admitted BAME students has increased, the proportions of female applicants: admitted students has remained constant (~46%:43% in NST and 26%:21% in Maths). In Geography the majority of applicants are home students (>90%) and the proportion of F applicants: admitted students is ~62%:61-70%. For all postgraduates, the proportion of F applicants at School level is stationary at 32% with admissions at 33%. There is significant variation at Departmental level with F admissions ranging from 12% to 80% for PGT students and from 17% to 77% for doctoral PGR admissions. Overall, PGR numbers have decreased by 10%, but doctoral F PG students have increased by 4.3% in the last 5 years to 37%. Over this period, BAME Female PG students increased by 15% (compared to a 9% increase in BAME Male counterparts). The impact on the doctoral student cohort is substantial from 20% in 2020/21 to 43% Female BAME students in 2024/25. Some larger Departments have seen significant increases in %F doctoral student admissions (Chemistry, Maths, Physics). Finding new sources of funding for PG students is critical as nationally available funding has declined significantly. This is a School priority to enable Departments to make early fully funded offers especially to candidates from under-represented groups. Successes to date include Parasol Foundation funding for Female Masters students, collaborations with industry, Cambridge Colleges, not for profit organisations, and matched funding with UKRI Doctoral Landscape Awards.	Deputy Head of School for Education supported by Undergraduate Admissions Committee, NSTMC, UEC, Department EDI Committee Chairs. Careers Service, and SPS Head of Development (Philanthropy)	Outputs: Improved Departmental websites to include standardised core information for prospective students on all courses (UG & PG) including a 'Why Cambridge' narrative with Unique Selling Points for courses. Experiences and career journeys of underrepresented researchers showcased through digital platforms and career destinations (with the Careers Service) and highlighted in annual EDI reports by Departments. Student numbers by diversity characteristics reported annually to the Council of the School Outcomes: For the NST and Maths undergraduate courses aim for 3-5% increase in applications and 1-3% increase in admissions of female students. For Departments with <50% F PG students increase applications from F PG students by 3-5% and admissions by 1-3percentage points by 2030 to match or exceed national average (currently 40%). >30 new scholarships funded in next 5 years with at least 25% of these awarded to under-represented students.

1.3.2	Enhance provision for students declaring a disability and advancing a culture of inclusive education Leadership of Pathways to Inclusive Practice pilots Promote engagement with the Inclusive Education Hub	59% of all students declaring a disability at the University are female, with overall numbers of students declaring a disability doubling between 2019 and 2024 (a sector wide trend). National evidence also suggests late disclosure amongst female neurodivergent students. Alongside a sector context of changing legislative, regulatory and external requirements, University reviews focussing on teaching and support for disabled students were initiated to address concerns around overwork contributing to poor mental health and wellbeing amongst students and supervisors, as well as enhancing provision of student support. The new Pathways to Inclusive Practice programme (2025/26) pulls together recommendations from the Review of Teaching (2025), the Review of the Approach to Provision for Disabled Students (2024) and the Access & Participation Plan (2025-29) to deliver inclusive education designed to meet the requirements of the widest possible range of students. Examples of recent actions include a streamlined Student Support Document (SSD) process by the University Accessibility and Disability Resource Centre (ADRC); a new framework for disabled PG students to put in place reasonable adjustments through to a bespoke adjusted mode of assessment to the PG viva process. In 2024/25 satisfaction ratings (good or very good) for the overall ADRC service was 76% and advisory support 80%. A new, consolidated course – Inclusive Teaching and Learning for All Students was launched in 2025 for academic staff supporting students with a disability (>450 completions to date) and a PG Research specific module will be launched in 2026.	Deputy Head of School for Education supported by Chairs SPS and Departmental Postgraduate Education Committees	Outputs: At least one SPS-led pilot Pathways to Inclusive Practice intervention delivered between 2026-2028. Tools, outputs and examples from pilot interventions will be shared and trialled across multiple SPS courses. Promote the upcoming Inclusive Education Hub of dedicated resource to help departments understand and adopt inclusive teaching practices from October 2026. Outcomes: Student surveys and focus groups reflect improved student experience and increase in positive perceptions of inclusion and support (see Action 1.3.4). Assess whether the impact of increased student support impacts the gender awarding gap (see Action 1.1.1). 5% increase in good/very good ratings for the ADRC service and advisory support by 2030. 5% increase in uptake of Inclusive Teaching and Learning training course annually.
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1.3.3	Improve awareness of sources of student support including communication of multiple routes for support in Departments as well as within and outside the University. Collate and share best practice across the School via emails, PIC forum and School Education Committees Agree reporting of training uptake with central University colleagues	Student support services were reviewed in 2022 resulting in a more consistent service delivery across colleges, better data collection to monitor student wellbeing and stronger links with NHS services to manage complex cases. Student facing policies have been updated in response to recent legislative changes including harassment and sexual misconduct support (OfS Condition E6) and Academic freedom of speech. All sources of student support have now been consolidated in one set of webpages. As well as training for staff (see Action 2.1.1), a new package of training for students will be introduced, covering topics like consent, boundaries and healthy relationships. The 2024 Student Culture Survey found that only 46% of female students and 51% of male respondents agreed with the statement: "My mental health and well-being are supported at Cambridge". 35% of students replied 'Don't know' when asked about their satisfaction with how bullying and harassment are addressed.	Deputy Head of School for Education supported by School Committees (UEC and PEC)	Outputs: Share best practices on publicising of sources of student support including local wellbeing advocates and mental health first aiders, the stepped approach from the University from counselling to NHS referrals by end AY 26/27. Outcomes: Baseline for student training uptake measured in 2028/29 survey. Increase in proportion of students feeling their mental health and wellbeing is supported to >70% in Student Culture Survey in 2028/29. Raise Staff awareness of when and how to refer students to the Mental Health Advisory Service (baseline measured in staff culture survey 2028)
1.3.4	Increase opportunities for student feedback and monitor student experience by course with a particular focus on new/expanded courses and experiences of female students. Develop a common set of questions for Student Culture surveys to be run at least biennially. Run diverse cross-School focus groups for UG, PGT and PGR students to identify intersectional differences in experience.	Student feedback at course level is reviewed at Departmental level and any changes relating to EDI reported at local EDI Committees. The School has launched a range of new interdisciplinary MPhil courses resulting in a 53% increase in PGT student numbers. Feedback for these new courses will be closely monitored at School level. The University undertakes regular Education Monitoring Reviews which examine student numbers and experiences. NSS and PRES results suggest Female students are less positive than their male counterparts over a range of issues. PRES2025 score for 'My institution values and responds to feedback from research degree students' was lower for Female respondents and both University and Russell Group averages.	School Undergraduate and Postgraduate Committee Chairs, supported by Departmental Teaching Committees and NST Management Committee	Outputs: Student Culture Survey question set identified and implemented across the School, which can be disaggregated by gender and other relevant characteristics by 2028/29. Annual School-wide focus groups in collaboration with student societies for women and non-binary students (from 2027). Outcomes: NSS, PRES and local surveys used to compare results on an annual basis via School-level Education Committees and biennial Education Monitoring Reviews. Gender differences in positive responses reduced/absent by 2030.

2	We will advance positive cultures of inclusion and belonging			
2.1	Improve the awareness and effectiveness of interventions to address bullying, harassment, discrimination, sexual misconduct and victimisation. Increase confidence in the response to incidences of inappropriate behaviour.			
2.1.1	Equip individuals to confidently challenge poor behaviour. Recognising that creating a positive culture is a shared responsibility there will be three strands of activity: Providing training and support for senior staff, those new to leadership roles (accountability) and line managers (capability) to understand their responsibilities in supporting the University's expectations of positive behaviour, and to enable them to handle complaints effectively Additional support for individuals via, for example training sessions in constructive feedback, crisis support, Where Do You Draw The Line?, Active Bystander, Diversity Fresco, and Emotional Culture Deck. Build confidence in the University's response to incidences of inappropriate behaviour by: - Ensuring strong support structures for complainants and respondents	While 89% of staff (84% University) stated they would know where and how to report incidences of discrimination, harassment or abuse, interviews from the 2024 Enhancing Research Culture project in the School suggested respondents (especially postdocs and PhD students) were concerned about the potential impact on their career development. In the 2024 Staff Culture Survey, only 26% of all female staff and 32% of all male staff said they were satisfied with how inappropriate behaviour incidents were addressed in their Department. At School level these figures were 25% and 23% respectively and range from 5% to 38% across our Departments. 66% of staff in the School stated that they would feel comfortable in raising concerns around inappropriate behaviour if they witnessed or experienced it (Range 50%-88% in Departments vs 62% in the University). 89% of staff (84% University) stated they would know where and how to report incidences of discrimination, harassment or abuse. At University level, the Dignity at Work Policy for staff was updated in 2023 and revised in 2025 and a new University Managers Guide was launched in 2026.	Head of School supported by Heads of Departments, Business & Operations Managers, and Lead HR Business Partner	Outputs: Multiple, safe and accessible reporting routes highlighting both formal and informal reporting processes, escalation pathways and mediation options widely published (e.g. posters, regular emails, events). Leadership and line management training events delivered at University, School and Departmental level annually. Five open training sessions for individual staff delivered annually. Publish high level summary of outcomes of investigations annually. Outcomes: >50% of all staff to state that they are satisfied with how inappropriate behaviour incidents are addressed in their Department in the 2028 Staff Survey. 80% of staff feeling comfortable in raising concerns around inappropriate behaviour if they witnessed or experienced it in the 2028 Staff Surveys. Add in new survey questions to measure confidence in reporting concerns, that concerns will be taken

	- Applying fair and transparent disciplinary procedures			seriously and how concerns are handled. Increase confidence that concerns will be taken seriously and addressed fairly by at least 15 percentage points by 2030. > 95% of staff know where to access support and reporting mechanisms. See Student Action 1.3.3
2.1.2	Embed expectations of behaviour as part of staff inductions and embed consistency of practice across all staff groups and Departments.	Staff and student policies have been updated to align and comply with the Equality Act 2010, OfS Condition E6 (from Aug 2025), Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023 and Employment Rights Act 2025. University Dignity at Work Policy updated (2023 and 2025) and Staff Code of Behaviour introduced. Staff student relationship policy launched in 2025. A number of SPS Departments have refreshed their induction processes in the last 2 years with regular local events, enhanced induction packs and new SharePoint resources.	Heads of Departments supported by Business & Operations Managers, HR Business Partnering Team and HR Managers	Outputs: Prioritise expectations of behaviour in induction meetings and via regular emails, posters etc. Best practice collated and shared across Departments to ensure consistency of induction quality across the School in 2026/27 Outcomes: Effectiveness of inductions measured via future staff surveys (from 2028). Set clear targets for improvement over the lifetime of the action plan.
2.1.3	Set high expectations for completion rates of new online EDI training modules to be launched in 2026/27, particularly targeting the research staff population. Invest in prevention of bad behaviour through training and awareness. (see Action 2.1.1)	New mandatory sexual harassment in higher education training module (from October 2025). New mandatory Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom training (from January 2026). Currently 82% of all staff have completed online EDI training (92% of Academic Staff, 91% of PSS but only 68% of Researchers. 65.4% of all staff have completed the University's online Implicit Bias training.	Heads of Departments supported by Business & Operations Managers and HR Business Partnering Team	Outcomes: >95% completion of sexual harassment in higher education module by 2028 >95% completion Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom training module by 2028 >90% completion rates for new EDI training modules by 2030 across all staff groups.

2.2	Signposting existing support and enhancing provision to improve staff wellbeing			
2.2.1	Promote support systems for staff to discuss and manage workload-related stress Clear expectations to be set and workloads managed, where possible, through continuous conversations and regular appraisals. Integration of health and wellbeing as part of our working environment for all staff, by offering a more coordinated and accessible range of health and wellbeing services	Workload challenges across the sector are increasing, particularly in light of financial uncertainty, increased compliance and legislation requirements and increasing student numbers. Nationally, in the Supporting Staff Wellbeing in Higher Education report, over three quarters (79%) of respondents said they need to work 'very intensively,' 'often' or 'always'; Half (52%) said they experience unrealistic time pressures 'often,' or 'always'; 62% reported regularly working over 40 hours a week. In the University Culture survey (2024), only 54% of SPS respondents reported their workload was manageable (38% for Academic staff), with 22% reporting an unmanageable increase in the last 1-2 years. No clear gender differences in respondents who disagreed their workload was manageable (28%F, 27%M). Following a University-wide survey in 2025, teaching stint principles were updated in 2026 to support Heads of Institution with workforce management (as workload allocation models vary and are often divisive). New SharePoint pages and videos have just been launched to support stress management conversations. New Staff Review and Development processes are available for PSS and will be launched for academic and research staff in 2026. 48% SPS respondents to 2024 Culture survey agreed with the statement (A) 'My mental health and well-being are supported in my department' and 41% agreeing with (B) 'I feel confident asking for mental health and/or wellbeing support at work'. There were a lower proportion of men who agreed with these statements (A: 57%F vs 44%M and B: 48%F vs 39%M). 'Supporting Your Mental Health and Wellbeing at Work' training and Staff Wellbeing Fair, took place during Mental Health Awareness Week 2026.	Heads of Departments, Business and Operations Managers	Outputs: Monitor and share Departmental and Sector good practice in workload management ensuring they are widely understood by all staff, provide a transparent basis for discussion, and are used to support managerial and collegial decision-making rather than acting as rigid accounting tools (from AY 2027/28). Run focus groups to investigate why men feel less supported and feel less confident about asking for mental health and wellbeing support, and identify interventions. Departments review wellbeing and workload data and report actions taken through School governance structures Outcomes: >10 percentage point increase in positive survey responses to these wellbeing questions and decrease in differences by sex to <5 percentage points by 2030. Completion rates for Staff Review and Development conversations measured in future staff surveys alongside measures to assess workload perceptions, work-related stress, work-life balance and wellbeing. 5-10% increase in the number of survey respondents reporting their workload is manageable across all staff groups.

2.2.2	Develop a range of support mechanisms for staff going on or returning from long-term leave including School-level funding. Build on University-wide plans to support parents and carers	At University level, among the 2024 Culture Survey respondents, 43% were parents and/or carers, with around 400 staff taking family leave annually. The 2024 Family Leave survey (FLS24) found 64%F and 67%M staff felt supported upon returning to work, while 42%F and 22%M returners struggled to readjust. For SPS Respondents (n=32), 53%F and 71%M felt supported upon returning to work, while 50%F and 21%M returners struggled to readjust. The University Returning Carers Scheme provides up to £10,000 for staff whose career has been or is likely to be impacted by periods (>3months) of leave/part time working. To date, 17 SPS staff have benefitted from over £70k. Applications are likely to increase with the extension of the number of weeks of paid maternity (26 weeks) and paternity/co-parenting leave (12 weeks). In 2026 the University launched a Return to Work Programme, a blend of in person and online sessions providing support, confidence and clarity in managing work and family responsibilities. To date, Departmental support has been inconsistent across the School. Some Departments have developed additional checklists and examples of sources of support, particularly for academic and research staff whose roles are not typically covered during leave (which includes teaching relief on return, upgrading of a G7 Research Associate to G9 to support research/lead group activities during PI absences, a policy to extend FTCs for researchers after long-term leave). School of Biological Sciences has established a roving researcher programme which provides postdoc support during periods of leave. In 2026/27, this scheme will be extended with pilots in SPS Departments with funding support from the national EPSRC EDI+ Hub.	Head of School, supported by Assistant School Secretary, HoDs, Head of University ED&I team	Outputs: Develop a School wide policy re: additional support options for staff on extended leave by 2026 and roll out a checklist. Complete an EIA on the policy (see Action 4.1.3). Provide support for line managers to ensure School-wide capabilities in supporting staff returning from leave via CSPA, HR Fora). Agree School funding support for returning staff building on available University support to provide an inclusive and combined support package (see Action 4.2.3). SPS roving researcher piloted and evaluated in >2 Departments by 2028. Promote Carers@Cambridge and Parents@Cambridge networks, hosting annual events in the School. Outcomes: Measure uptake and staff satisfaction on returning to work via Family Leave survey with >70% of F SPS respondents feeling supported on their return by 2030.
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2.2.3	Improve wellbeing support for staff so that they feel able to give and/or ask for support. Training will include: Wellbeing Advocate Training; Mental Health First Aiders (MHFA)/I-Act Mental Health, and Wellbeing Training for Managers. Run resilience workshops and expand the number of wellbeing advocates.	Across the University, instances of sick leave due to mental health/stress rose by 37% from 2019 to 2023. Instances for female staff rose by 50% over the same period. Female staff accounted for 68.1% in 2019 to 74.7% in 2023 of all working days lost to stress/mental health reasons. Nationally, more than half of respondents to the Supporting Staff Wellbeing in Higher Education report, (59%) feared they would be seen as weak if they sought support for their wellbeing; 61% of respondents would not approach their manager for support, as they believed they did not have the necessary skills or knowledge. In the 2024 culture survey, 48% of SPS respondents agreed their mental health and well-being were supported in their department with only 41% responding that they would feel confident asking for mental health and/or wellbeing support at work. Over the last 2 years more than 400 line-managers have received mental health and wellbeing training in the University (School specific data not yet available). In mid-2026, the University launched a Staff Wellbeing Action Plan outlining 5 pillars of wellbeing and roles and responsibilities for the institution, senior leaders, line managers and individuals.	School EDI Champion supported by Departmental EDI leads, Business and Operations Managers, University Staff Wellbeing team	Outputs: Clearer signposting of support through School and Departmental webpages by 2027/28. Support implementation of the University Mental Health and Wellbeing Action Plan 2026 across the School. Outcomes: >65% of survey respondents agree their mental health and well-being are supported in their department and >60% feel confident in asking for mental health and/or wellbeing support at work. Increase in number of Wellbeing Advocates across the School from 37 to >60 by 2030.
2.2.4	Targeted guidance and initiatives to support staff experiencing menopause or living with endometriosis	The Institute of Astronomy (IoA) at the University of Cambridge joined the Endometriosis Friendly Employer scheme in March 2025. New University menopause guidance has been developed for staff and line managers.	Assistant School Secretary supported by Departmental EDI leads, HR managers and Wellbeing Advocates	Outputs: Active promotion of University menopause guidance, providing important tips and guidance for line managers of affected staff. Promote University-led events and training. Build on lessons learned at the IoA and network events to encourage consistency of practice across the School via Wellbeing Advocates.

				Outcomes: Measure confidence in awareness and provision of support in future staff surveys (baseline established in 2028).
2.2.5	Increase awareness of neurodiversity (including gender differences) through events & training	Neurodivergent traits often present differently by gender, with males more frequently diagnosed due to overt, externalizing behaviours and females often underdiagnosed or diagnosed later due to internalising traits and "masking" behaviours. A number of SPS Departments have run events and training on neurodiversity awareness, but there is an opportunity to organise School-led events to reach a broader audience and engage the most effective trainers. Events focused on the meaning of neurodiversity and exploring a range of neurodivergent conditions, but some also covered reasonable adjustments and included case studies highlighting lived experiences of neurodiversity in the workplace.	School EDI Champion supported by Assistant School Secretary, HR Business Partnering Team and Departmental EDI leads	Output: Run at least one neurodiversity awareness event per year, including exploration of gender differences, open to all members of the School. Outcome: Measure confidence in awareness and provision of support in future staff surveys (baseline established in 2028).
2.2.6	Increase awareness of, and support for, trans and non-binary inclusivity	Departments have reviewed and where necessary increased availability of gender-neutral toilets and changing facilities, ensure signage is inclusive and accessible. Training on trans inclusion, respectful language, pronoun use, and legal responsibilities have been offered at School level. Trans and non-binary celebration events have been held for student and staff in some Departments. The needs of trans and transitioning staff were considered as part of the University's LGBTQ+ review (2023) with identified challenges in systems for changing names, pronouns, and with family leave policies. Actions were incorporated in the University Athena Swan Action Plan 2024-2029.	Lead HR Business Partner supported by Assistant School Secretary, Departmental EDI leads and local HR Managers	Output: Run at least one trans awareness event per year open to all members of the School. Support implementation of University-wide LGBTQ+ review AP Outcome: Measure confidence in awareness and provision of support in future staff surveys (baseline established in 2028).

2.3	Collaborate across and outside the University re: Research Culture			
2.3.1	Collaborate within the University to develop and collate Research Culture activities which positively impact women. Apply for funding for interventions and activities Collate examples of impactful practices for REF2029 SPRE statements at University and Unit of Assessment levels	Systemic barriers and biases throughout academia leads to a loss of diverse talent resulting in a UK professoriate that is 69.2% male and 89.1% White (Advance HE 2024). In SPS, the figures are 79% male and 76% White in the Grade 12 Professors category. Improving research culture is a priority for the University and the first research culture action plan was launched in January 2021. The University Research Culture team are undertaking a Research Culture Scoping Project surveying departments and collecting good practice examples. Conversations allow departments to raise areas of challenge in research culture, to showcase activities and initiatives to improve research culture, and to think about next steps. In Phase 1, 33% of Departments involved were from the Physical Sciences. The Enhancing Research Culture fund (provided by Research England) supports projects that contribute to a positive research culture at the University. To date, 2 projects have been supported in SPS. The University Diversity Fund (UDF) was launched in 2019 to fund projects across the University that aim to address inequalities, increase the representation of underrepresented groups and facilitate implementation of good practice at local levels. To date 9 projects have been supported in SPS to address race, disability, sex and intersectional challenges. RisingWiSE is an award-winning enterprise programme for women in STEMM delivered in partnership between the University of Cambridge and the University of Oxford. In 2025/26, SPS funded an additional 5 places for researchers in the School.	SPS EDI Champion supported by Assistant School Secretary, Departmental EDI leads	Outputs: Collate and share impacts and lessons learned from University Diversity Fund and Enhancing Research Culture projects across the School with 1-2 new projects funded annually SPS REF2029 Units of Assessment supported to develop Strategy, People, and Research Environment (SPRE) submissions, identifying and sharing impactful practices. Outcomes School level funding agreed for at least an additional six places for SPS researchers on the RisingWiSE programme for the next 3 years.

2.3.2	Embed EDI and Inclusive cultures into the new Rokos School of Government from the outset	As of March 2026, women remain under-represented in top political roles, with women leading as Head of State or Government in only 28 countries. While female representation in parliaments has slightly increased to 27.5%, women occupy only 22.4% of cabinet positions globally. A new Department will be set up in SPS from AY2026/27 (Rokos School of Government). The SPS EDI Champion has written guidelines for embedding EDI principles in the set-up of the School of Government from the outset, including recruitment of senior leadership as well as academic and professional services staff, student recruitment and support, and governance processes.	Head of School supported by the Secretary of the School, School EDI Champion, Lead HR Business Partner	Outputs: School level guidance and practices shared with interim Academic and operational leadership. EDI representative identified in the RSG at an early stage to champion and embed an inclusive culture. Outcomes: >30% F academics and students within the first three years of the new School to provide both role models and a more balanced cohort of future leaders in the student body (compared to 26% of academics and 33% of postgraduate students in SPS in 2025/26).
2.3.3	Provide support for technical staff as part of the University's Technician Commitment strategy and support implementation of the Technician Commitment Action Plan for the University 2024-27.	The University is a signatory to the national Technician Commitment, a sector-wide initiative, sponsored by the Gatsby Foundation and the Science Council, to help address key challenges facing technical staff working in Higher Education. The University Technician Commitment Action Plan priorities include visibility, recognition, career development, sustainability and evaluating impact. In 2026, new guidance was launched to help recognise the contributions of technical professionals embedded in research. The fair attribution guidelines and statement of expectations outline best practice for researchers, principal investigators and technical managers in ensuring clarity of authorship, acknowledgements, and recognition of technical and specialist support staff in research outputs. In SPS, while the proportion of female technical assistant staff has increased from 15.3% in 2019 to 18.1% in 2024, more work in this area is required to address under-representation of female and BAME technical staff. Build on UK sector examples (such as the Tech Talent Charter) to identify initiatives for implementation in SPS.	Technician Commitment Lead supported by Assistant School Secretary and HoDs	Outputs: Sharing and implementation of fair attribution guidelines across the School by October 2026. Collect data and share case studies (e.g. for REF29 including SPRE statements) Training delivered by the Technician Commitment team to technical staff in the School (>2 events per year). Outcomes: Work with the Technician Commitment team to identify and implement initiatives to increase diversity in SPS technical roles. Increase proportion of Female technical staff to >25% by 2030.

2.3.4	Engage with National EDI+ Hub (based at Leeds University) focussed on the Physical Sciences	The mission of the EPSRC funded EDI Hub+ (launched in 2025) is to drive systemic change, to deliver an Engineering, Physical and Mathematical Sciences (EPMS) research and innovation system that is equitable and inclusive for everyone. It is widely recognised that the EPMS community faces many EDI challenges, particularly in relation to gender, ethnicity, and disability. While work is ongoing to address these EDI challenges, much of it is uncoordinated, poorly evidenced, and fails to become embedded in mainstream practice. The INI is a partner organisation for the Hub+ and in 2025 organised a two-day event to bring together representatives from UK University Mathematics Departments, Learned Societies, Mathematics Infrastructure Institutes, funders, the EPSRC EDI+ Hub, the Academy for the Mathematical Sciences, and others to explore current EDI challenges in the mathematical sciences.	Assistant School Secretary supported by EDI+ Hub Advocates	Outputs:. Identify 3 or more EDI Hub+ Inclusion Advocates by 2027. Host an event for the EDI+ Hub to share best practice within the sector by 2028. Outcomes: Awareness of and engagement with EDI+Hub resources measured via Staff Culture survey (baseline established in 2028).
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3	We will promote diversity in our staff population by attracting, recruiting and retaining talent, targeting areas of underrepresentation			
3.1	Active inclusive recruitment processes			
3.1.1	Increase proportions of women academics and researchers via inclusive recruitment practices Collate good practice examples and share an inclusive recruitment checklist across the School (via HR Fora, Academic Staff meetings, websites etc)	We have made progress on academic recruitment at School level over the last 5 years, shortlisting and appointing more female candidates than apply and raising the proportion of female academic staff overall from 21% to 26% (additional 23 women). Good practices include identifying and contacting potential candidates <i>via</i> networking @ conferences and improved marketing; ensuring Boards of Electors for Professorial positions carry out a broad search and identify a diverse candidate list; reminding selection panels about the impact of bias (e.g. Royal Society short video before shortlisting and interviews), inclusive recruitment checklists, use of gender decoder for adverts, SPS partner-hiring guidelines, joint positions with Colleges. Recruitment of F researchers across the School has not seen the same level of progress, with applicants only increasing from 25%-27% and appointments increasing from 28% to 31%. The overall population of female researchers has only increased from 27% to 29%. Some of the lessons learned from academic recruitment should be applied to researcher recruitment to increase this important pipeline for future academic positions.	Heads of Departments supported by Business and Operations Managers, HR Business Partnering Team and HR managers	Outputs: Good practices in academic recruitment become embedded across all Departments for all staff groups from 2026/27. Recruitment outcomes will be reviewed annually across all stages of the recruitment pipeline (application, shortlisting, appointment) using intersectional analysis (see Action 4.1.1). Outcomes: Increase overall proportion of women academics to >30% by 2030. Increase proportion of women researchers to >35% by 2030.

3.1.2	Increase diversity of applicant pools across all staff groups Build upon sector initiatives to increase diverse pools staff e.g. invite the Blackett Lab Family to run an event focused on black individuals in Physics. Continue to participate in University job fairs promoting careers, particularly for PSS roles, to communities in the east of England.	Black candidates represent only 3% of applications with 2% being recruited. For black women the figures are 2.5% applicants with 1.5% successful. Asian and Chinese female candidates represent 30.6% and 9.7% of applicants and 28.2% and 10.7% of successful recruitments. White F applicants are more likely to be successful in recruitment exercises (49.3% recruited vs 46.4% applicants). The INI is an ongoing partner and co-host of the annual Black Heroes of Mathematics Conference, which celebrates the contributions and careers of Black role models in the field.	Departmental Business & Operations managers supported by HR Managers, Departmental EDI leads	Outputs: At least two events showcasing black physical scientists run annually from AY2026.27 Outcomes: Increase proportions of F black staff both applying to and being successful in recruitments to >5% by 2030. PSS applications from black F candidates increased to >3% (proportion of black constituents in East Anglia is 1-3%). Also see Action 3.1.1
3.2	Retain talent through career progression			
3.2.1	Develop a School learning and development strategy to enable all colleagues to reach their potential and develop their skills in line with the changing needs of the organisation; Embed leadership and line-management training	To date, only a limited number of training events have been run across the School with most training offered either centrally or by individual Departments. Work has commenced with the University Learning and Organisational Development (LOD) team to develop an overarching training plan for the School. This recognises the individual needs of Departments but aims to reduce duplication of effort and maximise the return on training interventions. In-house training capacity has been increased (with LOD team and HR) to deliver, for example, Lego Serious Play for team development, emotional culture deck training for difficult conversations and developing high trust teams. Currently piloting a series of bitesize training in one Department which could be rolled out across the School. Promote University Management Development programme launched in 2026 to support the onboarding and strengthening of the management development of first line managers.	SPS LOD consultant supported by SPS Lead HR Business Partner, Assistant School Secretary	Outputs: Learning and development strategy developed over 2026/27 with a priority list of training needs for the School to include: - Consolidation of shared purpose through joint workshops - Sharing of training opportunities and experiences of external providers - School-wide shared calendar of events Outcomes: >5 School-led events delivered annually. Introduce a staff survey question to allow baseline data on access to and value of training opportunities to be established. Progress monitored over time (from 2028). See also Action 2.1.1

3.2.2	Career Development: Encourage career development conversations for all staff (Staff Development and Review/appraisal); Extend support for under-represented groups in Academic Career Progression (ACP) promotion exercises; Support the implementation of the New Academic Career Pathways scheme for researchers (ACP-R), and Reward Progression schemes for Academics and Researchers to be launched in 2026/27; Introduce School-level working group to highlight and address postdoc concerns; Participate in University-level review of Fixed Term Contracts and implement recommendations.	The 2024 Staff Culture Survey found that only 32% of female staff (38% male) at the University level agreed that there were sufficient opportunities for career progression at the University. In SPS, more female (38%) than male staff (34%) agreed with the same statement. Academic staff were more likely to agree (46%) than Researchers (27%) or PSS (48%). A key theme from the qualitative analysis of the Staff Culture Survey was the need to create and support networks and mentorship programmes for female Academic staff, particularly in male-dominated fields. Promotion rates for Academic staff on the Research & Teaching and Teaching & Scholarships pathways are the highest in the University. A new promotions process for research only staff will be implemented in 2026/27. Mentoring and coaching for Academic staff at multiple levels has been integral to SPS and SBS-led leadership schemes (15 participants in last 2 years, 40%F) alongside the University Senior Leadership Programmes (24 SPS (33%F) staff over last 5 years). 46% of Heads of Department in the School are female. Annual appraisals in place for Professional Services Staff. However, completion of appraisals for academic and research staff is patchier across Departments. 62% staff agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'My line manager supports my career development' in the 2024 Culture survey (52%F, 56%M; 57% Academics, 75% Researchers and 93% PSS).	Heads of Departments supported by Departmental Business & Operations managers, HR Business Partnering Team and HR Managers	Outputs: Career Development Review process and guidance reviewed and updated for all staff groups by end 2026. ACP-R launched October 2026. Data will be monitored for applicants and success rates tracked by sex. Annual workshop series providing additional support for female and BAME ACP applicants, in addition to the CV Mentoring Scheme, from 2026. Targeted one-to-one guidance, to support female staff to progress through the Academic Grade 12 bands as part of the revised process. Fixed Term Contract review results and actions published in 2026/27. SPS Postdoc Working Group in place by October 2027 Annual monitoring of ACP application and success rates by gender, ethnicity and Grade, with findings reported to CSPA (see Action 4.1.1) Outcomes: >5% increase in agreement with sufficient opportunities for career progression for academic and PSS and by >10% for research staff by 2030. Increased proportions of academics (>70%) and researchers (>80%) reporting their line manager supports their career development
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		The Research Culture Survey (2024) indicated research staff are much less aware of EDI activities, leadership and processes around poor behaviour.		in future staff surveys. Research staff awareness and engagement increased by >10% across key questions in 2028 Staff Survey.
3.2.3	Promotion and implementation of Employer Value Proposition (EVP) programme to support recruitment, retention and career development of staff.	In the 2024 Culture survey, 65% of staff responded their contributions are valued and 61% would recommend their part of the University as a great place to work (Female respondents more positive than male peers). At University level, Talent Attraction, Reward & Recognition, MyCareer and Performance and Development have been integrated into a single, over-arching Employer Value Proposition (EVP) programme. These activities will impact on our ability to attract and retain staff (see Actions 3.1.1 and 3.2.2). The MyCareer workstream aims to deliver better support to Professional Services colleagues around planning their career development. This has a particular impact on female staff who make up >50% of this staff group. The University offers employees a wide range of competitive benefits which include: financial, relocation and accommodation, travel, family friendly and lifestyle, as well as health and wellbeing benefits. An Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) will be piloted in 2026/27 to enhance the current staff support offer. An EAP is a confidential, external and independent employee benefit that provides support for personal and work-related concerns, as well as overall wellbeing.	Lead HR BP supported by HR Business Partnering Team and local HR managers	Outcomes: Staff responses in feeling valued and recommending their local area improved by >10% by 2030. See Action 2.3.3, 3.1.1 and 3.2.2 outcomes.

3.2.4	Develop a School-level pay gap action plan considering both gender and ethnicity to understand the drivers at School level and further reduce the Gender Pay Gap (GPG) over the next 5 years.	The overall University mean gender base pay gap and total pay gaps have decreased year on year between 2018 and 2024 (from 18.1% to 15.0% and 19.8% to 16.7% respectively). University level analysis shows the GPG is driven by distribution of gender across the pay spine (all roles), and academic staff pay in particular rather than differences in pay within the same grade. Within SPS the figures are encouraging with the base pay gap reducing from 22.9% to 16.5% and the Total Pay gap from 24.1% to 17.8% (2018-2024). The SPS GPG is primarily driven by the distribution of employees and the reduction in the overall Pay Gap is primarily due to the improvement in the Academic Pay Gap.	Head of School supported by Assistant School Secretary	Output: SPS GPG Action plan developed by end 2026. Interim reports produced annually, with a final report produced for the University in 2030. Outcomes: A further 5% decrease in the SPS GPG by 2030 in line with the University-wide action.
4	We will improve EDI reporting and communications			
4.1	Effective collection and sharing of data to facilitate impact evaluation			
4.4.1	Improve data collection, analysis, and sharing through the implementation and use of Power BI dashboards to inform equality initiatives and monitor action plan progress.	The processes involved in collating, cleaning, anonymising, and analysing equality data are largely manual, time-consuming, and resource-intensive for both the central EDI team and individual Departments. This duplication of effort, coupled with constrained resources and, in some cases, limited analytical capacity at departmental level, results in delays, increased workload pressures, and reduced ability to generate timely and actionable insights. Over the last year, the Assistant School Secretary has undertaken a Data Fellowship to enhance the collection, analysis, and accessibility the School's EDI data. A series of Power BI dashboards are being developed to visualise Staff and Student data by sex which can be filtered by staff type and Department.	Assistant School Secretary	Outputs: Completion of initial dashboards by sex with wide access across Departments (2026/27) with annual updates. Addition of new dashboards by ethnicity, gender identity, disability and other protected characteristics by AY2027/28 including intersectional analyses where sample sizes allow. Forecasting models of student numbers and associated income available by 2027. Outcomes: Estimated time saving across Departments to exceed 30 days per year. See also Action 4.4.2

4.1.2	Undertake Staff Culture surveys at least every 2 years Develop a core set of common questions to be used in all SPS staff surveys to improve consistency and benchmarking. Customisation of additional questions by Departments agreed in collaboration with the School.	Currently there is a range of frequency of staff surveys across the School with some Departments carrying out annual surveys and others relying on University-wide surveys which have variable frequency. Questions also vary between surveys making it difficult to benchmark/track progress. Response rates to University-wide surveys has been low (SPS 2024 survey completion rate was ~20%), with improved rates seen when surveys are run locally (33%-54%).	HoDs supported by EDI Champion, Assistant School Secretary, PIC Forum and Departmental EDI leads	Outputs: Core set of questions agreed for all SPS surveys to be run from AY26/27. Surveys at Departmental level to be run at least every two years with annual surveys encouraged. Survey findings and resulting actions communicated through timely "You Said, We Did" reports. Outcomes: Completion rates >50% for all Departments.
4.1.3	Provide training on the University's Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) process to support departmental evaluation of local policies	The University EIA template and guidance was updated in 2025. Completion of EIAs on policies at Departmental level is inconsistent.	Central EDI team and Business & Operations Managers	Outputs: Annual EIA training run from 2026/27 with consistency of practice across the School. EIA examples shared through the PIC Forum and completion rates tracked centrally. Outcomes: All new School-level policies and major initiatives supported by an EIA. Increase in Departmental use of EIAs by 50% by 2030.

4.2	Development a People and Inclusive Culture Action Plan			
4.2.1	Alongside the Swan Action Plan, develop additional actions that are focussed on other protected characteristics. Align activities with the University People Strategy and play an integral role in enacting University EDI-focussed actions. Decrease non-disclosure rates for other protected characteristics such as ethnicity, gender identity, and disability to enable effective intersectional data analyses	The School is actively contributing to and supporting the implementation of the following University action plans: - Disability Confident Level 2 requirements - 2024 LGBTQ+ Review Action plan - 2024 Athena Swan Silver Action Plan - 2025 Bronze REC Action Plan - 2026 Staff Wellbeing Action Plan Between 2020 and 2024, 7.6% of SPS staff preferred not to disclose their ethnicity with a further 6.6% of staff whose ethnicity is unknown (e.g. not collected at time of appointment). This is higher than the University-wide rate of 13% staff with no disclosed ethnicity. Reducing non-disclosure rates requires building trust, improving data collection practices, and demonstrating the value of disclosure. Staff are more likely to disclose sensitive personal information when they understand why it is being collected, how it will be used, and that it will be handled securely.	School EDI Champion supported by the Assistant School Secretary, Departmental EDI leads, HR Business Partnering team and central EDI team	Outputs: People and Inclusive Culture Action Plan developed between 2026 and 2028. Active participation in delivery of University-level actions through collaboration with owners of University actions and delivery of initiatives and impact at School/Departmental levels. Active promotion of the University campaign to increase staff ethnicity, gender identity and disability disclosure rates in 2026/27. Outcomes: Non-disclosure of ethnicity reduced to less than 10% of all staff by 2030. (see also Ethnicity pay gap action 3.2.3) >10% increase (from 65%) in staff feeling their contributions are valued via the 2028 Staff survey

4.3	Resourcing, Recognition and Reward			
4.3.1	Introduce School-level awards for inclusive culture contributions	In the 2024 Culture Survey, only 52% of staff felt able to contribute ideas to how their department could take action on equality and diversity issues. Currently, contributions to inclusive cultures are recognised in School promotion processes and University-wide schemes exist to recognise the contributions of PSS. Wider recognition of staff in driving meaningful progress in inclusive cultures within the School will support broader engagement with EDI activities across a range of staff and student groups, collection of good practice examples and provide feedback on the values of the School. Some Departments have community awards, but this is not standard practice.	Head of School, EDI Champion, HR Business Partnering Team	Outputs: School-level awards introduced at annual School EDI/inclusive culture celebration event from 2027/28 with collation of case studies (see 4.4.1 below). Outcomes: >70% of staff feel able to contribute to EDI issues in future staff surveys. >70% of staff feel their contributions to EDI activities are recognised and valued.
4.3.2	Introduce dedicated SPS budget and annual support plan for EDI and inclusive culture activities	Currently, individual Departments provide budgets for local EDI activities, and the University Diversity Fund provides an additional opportunity to support activities. The School will support additional funding on an annual basis to facilitate EDI activities such as training and events (Action 3.2.5) and support for leave (Action 2.2.1).	Head of School supported by Assistant School Secretary	Output: Annual budget approved by the School Needs Committee from 2026/27. see also Actions 2.2.2 and 3.2.1
4.4	Improve EDI Communications			
4.4.1	Establish effective EDI communication channels including effective feedback loops. Develop PIC webpages at School level with clear signposting to the EDI Community of Practice, relevant central information and sources of support as well as showcasing collated best practice guidelines and case studies.	Only 32% of SPS respondents to the 2024 Culture survey believed action would be taken on survey results. Contacts for EDI Communications have now been identified in all Departments and an EDI Community of Practice (co-lead by a member of the SPS AS SAT) was launched in 2025/26. HRBPs to build EDI conversations into regular catch ups with Departments.	Assistant School Secretary supported by Departmental Communication contacts, HR Business partnering team, EDI+ Hub advocates, EDI CoP leads	Outputs: Annual School level EDI event in AY2027/28 (see 4.3.1 above). Information shared with and from EDI Community of Practice and national EDI+ Hub ‘You said, we did’ survey communications from 2028 Outcomes: >50% respondents agree action will be taken on survey results

4.4.2	Develop a standard framework to evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of key policies and initiatives affecting staff and students. Template to assess: • policy awareness • uptake • implementation • user experience • equality impacts • intersectional impacts • unintended consequences	To date, the School PIC forum has operated as the principal method for sharing Departmental challenges, local actions, implementation of policies and examples of good practice. Annual Planning round meetings with Departments include discussion of challenges and plans re: EDI, culture and inclusive environments. However, there is a need for a more systematic evaluation of awareness and impact including intersectional analyses to identify differential impacts across staff and student groups. Collaboration with colleagues across the University is ongoing to increase effectiveness of information exchange and maximise opportunities for impact evaluation.	School EDI Champion supported by Assistant School Secretary, HR Business Partnering Team, HoDs and BOMs	Outputs: Develop and adopt a reporting template and timeframe to be used by departments to demonstrate alignment with the School's AS (and PIC) action plans from 2027. Submissions to be widely shared and a repository of good practices created in 2027/28. Reporting, review and identification of actions at local level by Departmental EDI committees and at School level via CSPS. Identification of barriers to access or participation and any unintended impacts of new policies (via consultation and surveys). Outcomes: 100% Departments complete annual reviews and implement actions arising from identified gaps. Increased staff and student awareness of key policies and confidence in their effectiveness (see Action 4.1.2) Increase in % staff completing mandatory training (see Action 2.1.3) Annual RAG rating of Action Plan to monitor progress (>70% Green by 2030). See Actions under 4.1
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Appendix: Glossary

Acronym	Definition
ACP	Academic Career Pathway
ADRC	Accessibility and Disability Resource Centre
AP	Action Plan
AS	Athena Swan
BAME	Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnicity
BOM	Business and Operations Manager
CDT	Centre for Doctoral Training
CoP	Community of Practice
CSPS	Council of the School of the Physical Sciences
CZ	Cambridge Zero
DAMTP	Department of Applied Mathematics and Theoretical Physics
DHoS	Deputy Head of School
DHoSE	Deputy Head of School Education
DPMMS	Department of Pure Mathematics and Mathematical Statistics
ECR	Early Career Researcher
EIA	Equality Impact Assessment
EVP	Employee Value Proposition
FTC	Fixed Term Contract
GPG	Gender Pay Gap
HEPI	Higher Education Policy Institute
HESA	Higher Education Statistics Agency
HOD	Head of Department
HOS	Head of School
HRBP	HR Business Partner
INI	Isaac Newton Institute
IoA	Institute of Astronomy
LGBTQ+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer+
LOD	Learning and Organisational Development
MMP	Millenium Maths Project
MSM	Department of Materials Science and Metallurgy
NSS	National Student Survey
NST	Natural Sciences Tripos
NSTMC	Natural Sciences Tripos Management Committee
OfS	Office for Students
PEC	Postgraduate Education Committee
PG	Postgraduate
PGR	Postgraduate Research Student
PGT	Postgraduate Taught Student
PIC	People and Inclusive Culture
PRES	Postgraduate Research Experience Survey
PSS	Professional Services Staff
RCS	Returning Carers Scheme
REC	Race Equality Charter
SLP	Senior Leadership Programme

SPACE	Supporting Parents and Carers
SPRI	Scott Polar Research Institute
SPS	School of the Physical Sciences
SRD	Staff Review and Development
SSD	Student Support Document
STEM SMART	STEM Subject Mastery and Attainment Raising Tuition
STEP	Sixth Term Examination Paper in Mathematics
UEC	Undergraduate Education Committee
UG	Undergraduate
WP	Widening Participation