



March 2015

Chemistry Equality and Diversity News

Going for Gold

We are in the throes of putting together our resubmission for an Athena SWAN Gold award. The application is rather long, full of data, commentary and analysis, all of which are helpful in communicating our commitment to gender equality in the department. In fact, taking stock it is very encouraging to see the progress we have made over the years. But, out of all of the sections, it's the one entitled 'A Pen Picture of the Department' where perhaps our culture is best summed-up, viz

"We have cultivated and encouraged a culture of equality over the years. Its essence is a dignity and respect for others that cannot easily be described in a document like this since it is comprised of very many small acts, for instance: offering help to a staff member under pressure, listening carefully to others in meetings; operating a democratic and open system of decision-making; having fully open finances; respecting others' points of views however junior they may be; sharing the workload during times of stress; a vibrant staff-student committee; being positive and encouraging about other people with family responsibilities to work flexibly; being open about pay and promotion; having active and regular discussion about equality issues in the coffee room; welcoming children into the office; just being polite and kind to each other, and so on. The culture this represents allows gender equality to flourish...

...In short, an ethos of equality is embedded in the Department, to copy the phrase from Good Practice in University Departments, 2004, "it's just the way we do things around here."

Thank you to you all for making York the place it is.

Paul Walton, Chair of Equality & Diversity Group

LGBT academics aim to wipe out "don't ask, don't tell" culture

Dave Smith and Verena Görtz (former Dorothy Hodgkin Research Fellow in Chemistry, now working as a lecturer at the University of Lancaster) both contributed to the article by Adam Smith in Research Fortnight on the issues faced by LGBT staff to progress their academic careers:

http://www.researchresearch.com/index.php?option=com_news&template=rr_2col&view=article&articleId=1343792

Helen Coombs

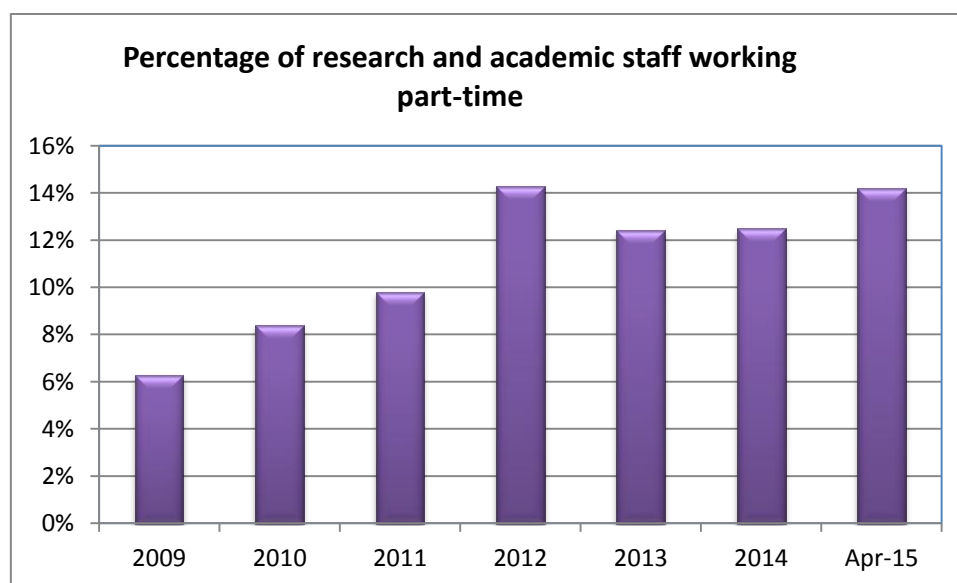
Flexible working options welcomed by Chemistry staff

The Department has promoted and supported flexible working for many years, and is unusual in offering a guarantee to consider staff requests for reductions/increases in hours to suit changes in working and personal circumstances with an expectation that they should be granted. In the last six years, the Department has not turned down any of these requests.

Flexible working generally takes one of two forms: an official amendment to the number of contracted hours a person works (which can be done on a short-term or longer-term basis), or informal flexible working, where there is no contract change but staff take advantage of the flexi-time scheme to suit their needs.

Despite fluctuations in the number of staff employed in the Department; there have not been huge variations in the total percentage of staff working part-time over the last six years, with the average being 19% and a minimum of 16% in 2009 and maximum of 24% in 2012 (which was when total staff numbers were at their lowest).

More significant changes have been seen over this period in the categories of staff who are working part-time, with a steady increase from 5% of academic staff to 18% (from the start of next term) and the number of male academic staff working part-time increasing from 1 to 3. The percentage of research staff working part-time has also increased steadily from 6% to 11% since 2009.



Year	Total Number of academic & research staff	Number of academic & research staff working part-time
Aug-09	112	7
Aug-10	107	9
Aug-11	98	10
Aug-12	91	13
Aug-13	105	13
Aug-14	120	14
Apr-15	120 (predicted)	17

More female staff (39) currently work part-time than male staff (6), with support staff being the category most likely to work-part-time (27% of support staff work part-time).

The changes reflect the fact that part-time working is completely accepted in the Department and that staff feel comfortable in asking for changes to their contracts, knowing that they can change their hours to suit particular situations in their working and personal lives.

The number of formal contract changes requested (both increases and decreases in hours) has increased year on year, with three times as many requests from 1 August 2014 to date as there were in the period 1 Aug 2012 to 31 July 2013. Some members of staff have had numerous changes as their circumstances have altered. (For example, I reduced to 75% from full-time when my youngest son started school, then increased to 80% after a few years, then up to 85% and finally back to full-time soon after he started at secondary school).

Recording instances of informal flexible working is not easy, as there are so many local working arrangements agreed between staff and their line managers, but as well as school drop-offs and pick-ups, arrangements have been agreed to allow for care for elderly relatives and managing fatigue for staff returning after long term sickness absence. The Department is very lucky to have Adrian Whitwood preparing the teaching timetable, as many academic and teaching staff have benefitted over the years from Adrian's personal care and attention to incorporating the needs of individuals into the timetable. If you are working flexibly for any particular reason then please let me (helen.coombs@york.ac.uk) know, as the more instances we have of staff taking advantage of the informal flexi-scheme the better.

For more information on the flexible working schemes in Chemistry see: <http://www.york.ac.uk/chemistry/internal/staffinfo/hrinfo/flexwork/>

Helen Coombs

Additional Paternity Leave: a father's perspective

Recent changes in the law now allow fathers to take a share of maternity leave, previously an area of gender inequality! Charlie is a senior scientist for a pharmaceutical company, and is married to Kirsty Penkman, Senior Lecturer in Chemistry. In 2013 he shared Kirsty's maternity leave, and here he shares his thoughts on the process.



With the change in legislation allowing either parent to take time off work to be the care provider for a baby after 6 months, we decided to investigate this new 'additional paternity leave' to see if it would suit us. It seemed a great opportunity: it allowed Kirsty not to take so much time away from work, for me to really get to know my daughter, and for our daughter to develop at her own pace in her first year before having to start nursery.

It transpired that I was the first father within my company of 500 employees to take up the opportunity of sharing my wife's maternity leave. The process for requesting the leave and liaising between the University of York and my company was very straightforward and fully

supported. In fact, my employer was keen to understand the process and impact on the organisation. Due to holiday entitlements and Kirsty's term dates, I took 3.5 months off, and cover was arranged for my commitments and responsibilities to be taken on by colleagues. With that, I left to learn all about caring for an 8 month old baby, and with a plan for all the things I thought I could complete around the house.

The time caring for my daughter was absolutely brilliant; really getting to know her personality, routine, likes and dislikes was very rewarding. What surprised me was the change in role compared to the earlier months. From brief encounters on an evening or morning, or shared time with my wife at weekends, I was finally, frighteningly, totally in charge. I had been warned by some work friends what not to do (or more accurately what their husbands consistently did wrong each weekend: missing meal times, naps and generally not setting their clocks to "baby time"). Fortunately for me, Kirsty went back part-time, so I was not left to plan and execute a whole week of full-time entertainment, meals and washes. But it was an amazing opportunity to dedicate time to build a strong bond with my daughter, to understand her better and to be a part of her rapid developments. In addition, I now appreciate the balancing act of parenting while trying to maintain a career, and that you do not get anything you planned to do in the house actually done!



Having pioneered the additional paternity leave at my company, there have now been other fathers at work who have since taken the opportunity to share the maternity leave. Within our circle of friends we had also set a precedent, with many of them unaware this was an option for parents, and one father immediately arranged his own leave, which meant that we were off together, having dads' lunches in the pub,

discussing the merits of bananas, raisins or bread sticks with happy, messy babies on our laps.

Was it worth taking the time off? Most definitely, I got to spend precious time with my daughter, really getting to know her and be there for her, something that cannot be got back and now means I have a better, deeper relationship with her. As for my work, the important things moved along in my absence and everything else waited for me to return. Within half a day back at my desk the 3 ½ months felt as if they had only been a weekend's interruption. I am lucky that this enlightened change in the law gave me this incredible opportunity; there is much to gain and nothing to lose.

Charlie Heise

Further change to shared maternity/paternity leave from 5 April 2015

The Additional Paternity Leave arrangements described above by Charlie Heise are set to change, for babies born or adopted after 5 April 2015. Eligible parents of children born or adopted after this date will be entitled to Shared Parental Leave and Statutory Shared Parental Pay. The leave must be taken before the baby's first birthday (or within one year of adoption), and flexibility in arranging the leave is built in, with parents having a right to up to three separate 'blocks' of leave – though employers may agree a higher number.

Parental leave - how will you share yours?

If your baby is due from 5 April 2015, mums can end their maternity leave after 2 weeks and split up to 50 weeks of shared parental leave with dads, any way they like.



Both parents take 25 weeks at the same time.



Mum takes 44 weeks, Dad takes the first 6 weeks at the same time.



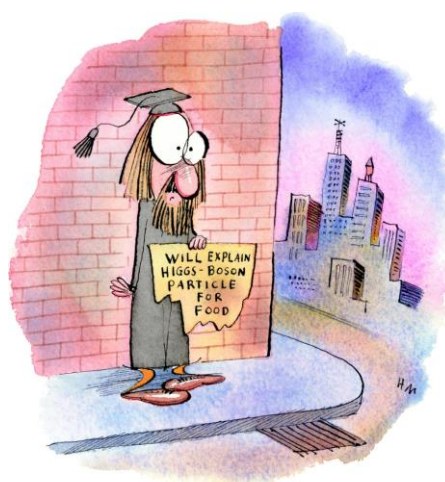
Mum takes the first 12 weeks, then Dad takes the remaining 38 weeks.

Start planning your **#sharedparentalleave** at www.gov.uk/sharedparentalleave

Catherine Jardine

Career development support for postdocs

The annual performance review is now also used in Chemistry as an opportunity for a detailed discussion about personal and career development, for postdocs on fixed-term contracts as well as staff on open contracts. Specific advice on employability is built into the process, and postdocs are encouraged to look into fellowship schemes and other funding opportunities.



Valuable insight into different aspects of career development for PDRAs is also given in the Researchers' Forum, meetings of which are organised by a representative from among the Chemistry postdocs*, and cover topics of professional and personal interest to the researchers' community. Among topics discussed at the fora so far are issues regarding scientific ethics, and the implications of maternity/paternity for postdocs' careers.

The recent Researchers' Forum, held on 4 March, focused on applications for personal fellowships. Despite the acknowledged difficulty in achieving success in this highly competitive arena, encouragement was provided as well as some important tips for improving the chances of success. Special categories of fellowship were also mentioned, such as the Royal Society's [Dorothy Hodgkin Fellowships](#) for early-career scientists who

require a flexible working pattern due to personal circumstances such as parenting or caring responsibilities (NB. **not** exclusively for women!).

The forum included talks from postdocs who had made successful fellowship applications, and also importantly provided contact information for people in the department who can help with the development, writing and submission of fellowship applications. Research Facilitator Andy Goddard will be sending out regular information about fellowship opportunities and deadlines.

Christian Roth

[cartoon credit: Hal Mayforth]

***Current postdoc representatives in Chemistry are:**

Barbara Procacci	Researchers' Forum organiser; Communications Group
William Unsworth	Board of Studies
Alexandra Olaru	Graduate School Board
Christian Roth	Research Committee
Ruth Purvis and Katie Read	Equality & Diversity Group
and Postdoc Champion (academic staff) – Martin Fascione	

Sexism in research grant funding awards

A growing body of research suggests that sexism is, and remains, rife in the peer-review processes for funding awards. The fight to secure grant funding is already tough, with overall only 30% of applications successful, but statistical analysis suggests that the already challenging process is skewed against women, with female applicants needing to be two and a half times more productive than males to receive the same competence rating.



At the postdoc fellowship level, female applicants were found to be on average 20% less successful than their male counterparts, and it is thought that this early-career discrimination influences progression later on. Although in Europe half of all Bachelor's degrees are awarded to women, only 10% of professors are female, and women hold only 20% of Medical Research Council or Wellcome Trust grants.

Unconscious bias is clearly at play in the differential between men and women in competence rating, both in funding applications and in peer review for journal publications. When double-blind peer reviewing was introduced for academic journals, there was a significant increase in female-first-authored papers (+ 7.9%) and a 33% increase in the representation of female authors generally.

The challenge is on to find ways to reduce or remove the biases that make a tough job even tougher for those already in a minority.

<http://www.theguardian.com/higher-education-network/blog/2014/apr/15/sexism-disadvantage-women-academics>

Catherine Jardine and Eliza Bonello

Gender and university research fellowships

Sir Paul Nurse, President of the Royal Society, discusses in his blog changes that will be introduced to Career Development Award processes including University Research Fellowships, Sir Henry Dale Fellowships and Dorothy Hodgkin Fellowships (and to other Royal Society selection panels) to address gender imbalance. Changes include:

- Reviewing promotional material and application forms
- Encouraging more applications
- Dispelling misunderstandings
- Awareness of Unconscious Bias
- Consideration of diversity data

The second part of the discussion summarises the analysis into what happened last year to try and understand that year's particularly poor outcome -- only 2 of the 43 University Research Fellowships being awarded to women. Read in full at:

http://blogs.royalsociety.org/in-verba/2015/02/26/gender-and-university-research-fellowships/?utm_source=social_media&utm_medium=hootsuite&utm_campaign=standard

Helen Coombs and Emma Dux

“Don't call me a lady!”

Athene Donald recently discussed on her blog her dislike of being described as a 'lady' or 'woman' scientist, stating that in her mind, her gender is not of any relevance when being introduced as a speaker.



“Since it still seems surprising to some to find, for example, a female physicist giving a seminar, such people appear to feel obliged to refer to it. I can't help feeling that those who choose to stress my gender in introductions probably think, misguidedly, they are somehow complimenting me because of my rarity value. From where I stand, it doesn't feel that way.”



In today's world we should not be in a situation where someone's gender is needed to be stated along with their profession. At one point men who went into the nursing profession were a rarity but surely we are now at the point where they are professionally labelled as a 'nurse' rather than a 'male nurse'.

Athene Donald's blog can be found at <http://occamstypewriter.org/athenedonald/>

Emma Dux

Men as change agents for gender equality

“Countries with more gender equality have better economic growth. Companies with more women leaders perform better. Peace agreements that include women are more durable. Parliaments with more women enact more legislation on key social issues such as health, education, anti-discrimination and child support. The evidence is clear: equality for women means progress for all.”

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon

A new report by the Government Equalities Office (GEO), based on a seminar that took place in June 2014, discusses ways the government is engaging with men and boys in the campaign for gender equality. The report looks at men’s role in achieving gender equality, the benefits of gender equality for all of society and methods of engaging and involving men in these issues, as well as some of the challenges involved.

Speakers in the report repeatedly reference the importance of recognising the multiple and diverse experiences of individuals, and the impact of issues including race, sexual identity and sexual orientation, religion and socio-economic background on individual experiences.

Read the full report here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/men-as-change-agents-for-gender-equality>

Eliza Bonello

How to stand out at a conference

Hilda Bastian (editor of PubMed Health and PubMed Commons, and academic editor for PLOS Medicine) recently posted a feature on her blog about how women and other minority groups in the sciences were failing to be heard and stand out at conferences.



She argued that at many conferences, there is an endless unbroken string of male voices, especially for major lecture sessions but also with the questions and comments following. To counteract this, she has given several bits of advice for women and minority groups to help prevent this, and to help get yourself noticed.

1. Ask questions – Hilda recommends scribbling down and sorting several potential questions during a talk, so if one gets asked by someone else then there are still others to use.
2. Use of Twitter – if you have a great thing to say, make sure you say it rather than just tweeting it. This way, others might tweet what you say. Twitter can be used as a useful way to connect with other people at the conference.
3. Make sure people know who you are and where you’re from. It makes it easier for people to track you down if they are interested in your work.

4. Break down the “GOBSAT” status quo (“good ol’ boys sitting around a table”) – take notice of how people cross-reference others. If you feel the work of other female scientists is relevant and deserves the attention, mention it.
5. Use of cards and print-outs with links to your poster etc. If you are interested in someone else’s work you can give them a note on one of your cards or flyers.
6. Making eye contact with your audience when speaking. Don’t rely on your notes too heavily. Hilda’s opinion is that the only notes needed are to aid with timing or reminders about things like looking up, slowing down etc. All key data and points should be on the slides, not your notes.
7. Body language – remember that giving a talk or presenting a poster is a form of performance. Give careful consideration to your body language, as you want to give an impression of confidence and that you deserve to be there discussing your work.
8. Presenting and personal style – some of the advice others give might not work particularly well for you, or provide the impression you want to give. Develop your own personal style: you will feel a lot more confident if you are not attempting to be someone you are not.
9. Support for others – make sure other people are not being left out at events.

Hilda’s post can be found at <http://blogs.plos.org/absolutely-maybe/>

Emma Dux

White Rose Women in Leadership report

A report from the White Rose University Consortium – ‘White Rose Women in Leadership Initiative: Absent talent in UK HEIs?’ - explores the institutional and societal barriers to achieving leadership positions encountered by women at the White Rose Universities.

The report looks at the serious under-representation of women at leadership levels in academia – they make up less than 21% of the professoriate and only 17% of Vice Chancellors, despite the fact they are predicted to be in a majority among academics by 2020 (although the same projections show that women will not be fairly represented at professorial level until 2070 at the earliest)

<http://www.whiterose.ac.uk/news/news-absent-talent-in-uk-heis/>

Helen Coombs

15 years of the Athena SWAN initiative, but still a long way to go



Athene Donald reflects in her blog on the 15 years since the founding of a “modest initiative”, the Athena Project, funded by HEFCE back in 1999, and looks back at all that has been achieved. The founding group of women – Julia Higgins, Nancy Lane and Caroline Fox – sought ways to make the money HEFCE granted them reach as far as possible. The first phase of the project sought to identify and encourage good practice around gender issues, and to induce culture change for women in academic science. From 2002-2007, the focus moved more to the development of tools and methodologies, and this second phase gave rise to the Athena SWAN awards.

Now that Athena SWAN is an “established brand” being expanded beyond the sciences to encompass other disciplines, Donald points out that it is important not to let the process become just a “tick-box exercise in order to get the necessary seal of approval”. Her key points are -

- The need to ensure that gender equality really is embedded in every academic science department and that all researchers encounter a genuinely level playing field.
- Equality requires not only the leadership talking the talk but putting cash on the table too.
- **Funders** need to do more to consider whether their own processes are unintentionally disadvantaging certain sections of the community.
- **Universities** need to consider whether the criteria they deploy when appointing and promoting individuals are still fit for purpose or whether they are reinforcing a culture that may have suited traditional, male career paths but no longer reflect the way many individuals live their lives.

<http://occamstypewriter.org/athenedonald/2015/01/11/weve-come-a-long-way-but/>

Catherine Jardine

Dress for success? The fightback against “pinkification”



An outstanding success by fundraising site ‘Kickstarter’ has been the launch of ‘Princess Awesome’ – a range of dresses for girls that feature mathematical symbols, robots and ninjas, which has become by far the highest-funded children’s clothing project in Kickstarter’s history. The creators, Eva St Clair and Rebecca Melsky, were aiming to provide clothing for “a different kind of girly girl -because girls shouldn’t have to decide between dresses and dinosaurs, or ruffles and robots”.

St Clair says “This matters for so many reasons. When people meet a little girl in a pink, sparkly dress, they talk to her about how sweet and pretty she looks. If she’s wearing a dress with robots or trains on, they’ll talk to her about them instead – that is, about technology or engineering. That opens up her mind, her world and her future.”

The gendering of products targeted at children has been the subject of much media debate in recent years, notable talking points being:

- Waterstones supporting a national campaign supported by publishers and authors to stop children’s books being labelled as for boys or for girls;
- The launch by Lego of a range of female scientist figurines;
- London toy emporium Hamley’s reorganising its store after mothers complained that having a pink-coloured floor for girls and a blue floor for boys amounted to “gender apartheid”;
- The withdrawal last November of Mattel’s Barbie book “I Can Be a Computer Engineer”, which featured an IT-technician Barbie making several technical blunders before turning to her male colleagues for help.

It is notable, however, that many such U-turns and rearrangements by the commercial sector have arisen as a result of consumer pressure. Feminist campaigner Caroline Criado-Perez said “The reaction of the Kickstarter community in this story shows how sick parents are with only being able to buy products that force their children into ridiculous gender stereotypes. I find this tale incredibly inspiring.” We should all take heart, and not lose faith in our collective ability to effect change.

Catherine Jardine