“Ensuring we aren’t placing barriers, whether consciously or unconsciously, in the way of any enquirer or student is fundamental to the mission of the OU. Working to redress the subject areas where we have a critical gender imbalance is something we should all take positive action to change.”

Josie Fraser, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Acting)
WHY DO WE NEED A GENDER ACTION PLAN?

1. Because it’s aligned to our mission statement ‘to be open to people, places, methods and ideas.’
2. We want to make a tangible and sustainable change across our current gender imbalanced subjects, by supporting recruitment, retention and progression to create greater gender equality.
3. We recognise that some students self-identify as non-binary and any approach should ensure we are making positive changes to remove potential barriers to any under-represented groups.
4. Economic benefit – by removing barriers we attract more students UK-wide
5. In Scotland our funding from the Scottish Funding Council (around £25m annually) is dependent on meeting a number of key targets which includes addressing any gender imbalance subjects of more than 25/75% male to female.
6. We also have a legal obligation under the Equality Act 2010, which legally protects people from discrimination in the workplace and in wider society.

“I'm delighted to support this work to tackle gender imbalances, focussing on the whole student journey.

For us to make a positive change we need everyone to be involved, and this is something we want to achieve across the four nations of the OU because it opens up opportunities to under-represented learners and promotes inclusivity.”

Hazel Rymer, Pro Vice Chancellor (Learning and Teaching Innovation) and VCE ‘Gender Champion’
DEFINITIONS & DATA CHALLENGES

Being clear about the language we use - gender vs sex

The UK government defines **sex** as:
- referring to the biological aspects of an individual as determined by their anatomy, which is produced by their chromosomes, hormones and their interactions
- generally male or female
- something that is assigned at birth

The UK government defines **gender** as:
- a social construction relating to behaviours and attributes based on labels of masculinity and femininity; gender identity is a personal, internal perception of oneself and so the gender category someone identifies with may not match the sex they were assigned at birth
- where an individual may see themselves as a man, a woman, as having no gender, or as having a non-binary gender – where people identify as somewhere on a spectrum between man and woman

Challenges with data

The data on gender that the OU uses is based on the format requested by the Higher Education Statistics Agency. Currently HESA records the sex of the student. Although the Equality Challenge Unit recommends the use of the terms 'other' and 'prefer not to say' for people who associate with the terms intersex, androgyne, intergender, ambigender, gender fluid, polygender and genderqueer, HESA do not include a 'prefer not to say' or an 'other' option – currently the legal sex of the student must be returned.
OUR AMBITION

Key targets

TARGETS (Scotland)
By 2019-20 - gap between male and female participation in UG study reduced from 15.4% to 13.6% (need to increase %age of males)
By 2030 - gap between male and female participation in UG study reduced from 15.4% to 5%
By 2025 - 50% reduction in extreme gender imbalance subjects (75: 25)
By 2030 - no subject has an extreme gender imbalance (75: 25)

Good news – in most subjects we’re generally performing better than the rest of the HE sector

But - we have a greater overall proportion of females and in some subjects we have an imbalance of over 80%

e.g. females in computing

HE SECTOR
18%

OU
31%
WHICH SUBJECTS HAVE A CRITICAL (>75/25%) GENDER
IMBALANCE IN SCOTLAND AND/OR ACROSS THE OU?

Subjects with (and close to) an imbalance greater than 25/75%*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>UK</th>
<th>Scotland</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>FEMALE IMBALANCE</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer sciences</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technologies</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maths</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MALE IMBALANCE</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjects allied to medicine</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social studies</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biological sciences</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*2017/18 data on FTEs; 3 October 2018. Based on modules rather than qualifications.
OUR APPROACH

Focus on the student journey

Advertising  Web content  Prospectus  Course content  Tutor support  Alumni/ career support
OUR APPROACH

• **Engage** with our students and graduates to influence strategy and get feedback on progress.
• **Collaborate** with colleagues in all areas, across the OU and align with OU Equality & Diversity strategy
• **Focus** – using school of engineering as a ‘pilot’
• **Showcase** best practice and roll out wider.
• **Leverage** support from key senior stakeholders/VCE to drive positive change
• Work with external ‘experts’—e.g. WISE and Equate Scotland

WISE is a Community Interest Company which provides Business to Business (B2B) services to employers, educators and training providers.
www.wisecampaign.org.uk

Equate Scotland is a publicly funded body that specialises in gender imbalance across STEM subjects.
www.equatescotland.org.uk
ACHIEVEMENTS 2018

Audit by Equate Scotland – Review of STEM online course descriptives, prospectuses and STEM ad campaigns. RESULTS: Recommendations being implemented

Review of Gender Action Plan – by Equate Scotland RESULTS: Recommendations being implemented

Roundtable - of key stakeholders within OU to discuss how we embed OUiS action plan across OU. RESULTS: Recommendations being implemented

Gender imbalance workshop by Equate - on engineering student journey from enquiry to graduation and beyond. RESULTS: Changes to student facing communications, including module content

Coaching session by Equate – RESULTS: Careers & Employability staff trained in coaching techniques for women returners in STEM

Digital marketing
Independent review of previous gender campaigns by Equate Scotland. New campaigns developed targeting:
1. Females interested in computing (Scotland)
2. Engineering campaign (UK) upweighted to females in Scotland
RESULTS: Computing - 1% decrease; engineering +6% increase in females. As at 19 Feb

Associate Lecturer workshop by Equate Scotland Nov ‘18 - RESULTS: 100% of delegates have better understanding and feel more confident in identifying instances of unconscious bias/gendered language

Promoting OU success in sector
National Gender Action Plan Conference
RESULTS: OU Presentation on OU approach at HE sector conference, Napier University

OU support for Equate STEM women returners’ programme RESULTS: 62.5% of the 40 women had achieved a positive destination (Feb ’18)
ACHIEVEMENTS 2019

Roll out best practice to other faculties
- Presentation at Module Team Chair Induction 3 April
- Presentation at STEM staff tutor conference 25 March
**RESULTS:** Interest from other schools

New digital marketing campaigns targeting:
1. Females into science,
2. Females into technology
3. Females into engineering
4. Females into maths
5. SIMD20 men into computing
6. Males into psychology
**RESULTS:** Initial campaign results evaluated June

Student champions
**RESULTS:** OU in Scotland student to join Equate Scotland student group

Equate STEMinist Campaign
Promoted the Scottish campaign to OU students and alumni.
**RESULTS:** Engagement stats being collated
Promoting OU success
**RESULTS:** Case study featured in SDS best practice guide for employers/HE sector.

Inspirational webinars – Produced by Careers & Employability
**RESULTS:** Webinars included in course content
Virtual ‘diversity’ careers fair 9-12 April – Delivered by Careers & Employability with Equate Scotland hosting a virtual ‘booth’

Curriculum creation & training for module writers
- Workshop for engineering module writers March 29
**RESULTS:** 100% of delegates more confident about identifying examples of bias/gendered language.
- 100% would recommend the workshop
- Other schools/faculties requesting workshops

**“Really thought provoking. I learned a lot that can be applied in my day-to-day life.”**
**“Made me recognise the choice of language. How it’s communicated and received”**
*(delegate feedback)*

Brand guidelines for photography –
**RESULTS:** Gender imagery guidance now included.

Tone of Voice Guidelines -
**RESULTS:** Gender language guidance now included.

Student Consultation
Student Voice ran virtual focus group Apr/May to obtain feedback on Gender Action Plan. (Rachel Foster)
**RESULTS:** Recommendations reviewed and response by July. Presented to the Equality Diversity and Inclusion Steering Group on 2 July 2019

SEE SLIDE 11
MORE ACTIONS PLANNED 2019

Student Consultation
Recommendations to be implemented and annual consultation to be scheduled to track progress and get continuous feedback.

Further research
• Undertake research on links (‘intersectionality’) between gender and/or disability and/or those eligible for grants to study (low income)

Curriculum creation & training for module writers
• Working with Academic Professional Development to identify opportunities to embed/expand training across OU.

Apprenticeships
Promotion of Equate services & recruitment resources to employers.

Learning Designer Process
Discussing options to include guidance and two stage workshop

Personas
Review personas and consider creating new ones for under-represented students for wider roll out across OU.

Careers & Employability
Working with Equate Scotland to promote internships, expand networks, coach women returners and produce inspiring webinars

Progression phonecalls
to imbalance groups
STUDENT CONSULTATION

Summary of feedback

• The GAP document – clarity over language used; include definitions of gender vs sex
• Student recruitment – promoting inclusivity
• Subject choices – ‘taster’ courses
• Better idea of how the OU works – variety and more engaging content
• Case studies – ensure inclusive representation
• Student support – promote support of under-represented groups
• Intersectionality – what other issues impact on success
• Curriculum – remove gendered language
• Coaching/mentors/role models – create buddy/mentoring system
• Induction/tutorials – suggestions for improvements to provide more support
• Careers support – encourage students to consider career pathways

“Smaller modules, taster courses so you’re confident in choice”

“…better taste of how OU works using variety of content…”

Female maths student found “Talks by female mathematician/statistician about their careers and a brilliant female tutor” reassuring.

Student Voice ran a virtual focus group in May 2019 to obtain feedback on our Gender Action Plan.
KEY PEOPLE & HOW TO GET INVOLVED

Get in touch

Let us know about any activity you’re involved in that is helping to redress any gender imbalance subjects. We’d love to know about it so we can add it to our list of achievements.

Caroline MacLeod, Marketing Executive, is helping to keep track of all the activity across the OU.

There are lots of colleagues across the whole OU who are taking action to redress gender imbalance. Too many to acknowledge here – so we’ve just highlighted a few key people.

Flying the flag for OU in Scotland activity and feeding back to the Scottish Funding Council on our progress is Kate Signorini, Depute Director (Strategy, Planning & Resources)

Clem Herman, Professor of Gender and Technology, and Chair of Gender Equality Group on VCE is Liz Marr, Pro Vice Chancellor (Students)

Email caroline.macleod@open.ac.uk
FAQs

Responses to some frequently asked questions

If we make STEM more attractive to women, won’t we make it less attractive to men?
Our efforts to eliminate gender bias are about opening up access to STEM courses for more people. This will not deter men from pursuing these roles but the work we are doing is to encourage women, and men from non-traditional backgrounds, or those who do not identify with masculinized language or marketing to feel equally able to engage. STEM is not a gendered interest, so our marketing activities and curriculum should not be gendered.

How do we know there is an untapped group of talent?
Research from the Royal Society of Edinburgh (2018) tells us that 70% of women leave the STEM sector, this in itself is a loss of talent and expertise that the OU could support back into the workplace. In the last 5 years there has been a 5% increase in the number of women working in technology in Scotland (SDS, 2018). Work to increase gender representation in technology is working and tapping into a pool of talent that is both interested and competent.

How can we make a difference? It is a society-wide problem.
Occupational segregation is caused by historic and generational inequality that has gendered sectors in unnecessary ways. However, society is made up of individuals, and it is the responsibility of all of us to play our role to change it. Furthermore, the OU has a commitment to equality and diversity and this work is crucial to meeting OU’s mission of social justice.

Maybe, girls/women are just not interested in STEM?
Evidence tells us that boys and girls have an equal interest in science, until they reach the age of 6. At which point, girls begin to identify words such as "brilliant" and "clever" with boys rather than their own gender (NYU and Princeton, 2017). These are cultural influences rather than a cause of "natural talent or interest", by eliminating these inequalities and gender biases, we can open up STEM to all who are interested and have an ambition to succeed in these sectors.
ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

• Continuing with our engagement with professional bodies and industry
• School relationships/YASS – using our relationships with schools to influence parents/teachers. Exploring how we can develop resources to enable teachers to teach STEM (e.g. primary school where many teachers don’t have science background/knowledge)
• Gender Governance group (SFC led with representatives from Further and Higher Education sector) – share experiences
• Surface existing case studies/success stories and obtain new ones
• Consider how we could include gender bias training for students (future managers/recruiters)
• Marketing & attracting internships/placements for OU students in STEM;
• Learning design and embedding employability content within the STEM curriculum;
• Marketing STEM vacancies to OU students via Opportunity Hub;
• Developing connections with 40 STEM SMEs, contributing to webinars and 1-2-Many resources for students including Confident Diversity;
• Connections to Scottish Students Women’s Network;
• Development of social media campaigns around employability and live twitter conversations and contributions from STEM employers in Scotland using the OU Careers and Equate hash tags #OUcareerconfident
• Coaching to women returners
• Communication plan will be developed to raise visibility across OU of our successes – to include papers, conference presentations etc
• Gender Action Plan (for Scottish Funding Council) to be updated July 2019 – ‘supporting success’ section to include careers advice and industry links (and other activities listed in other sections). Include our external engagement team activity to show that our focus on SIMD20/40 is wider than purely digital.
• Apprenticeships – Business development Unit to promote the services of Equate Scotland and ensure employers are encouraged to use apprenticeships as an opportunity to improve gender imbalance
• Athena Swan – the OU will actively participate and input into the redevelopment of Athena Swan
• Establish how we might utilise bursaries to improve gender imbalance.