

Enabling Mathematics and Statistics ALs to achieve their potential

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Introduction

In April 2014 the Mathematics and Statistics department received a bronze Athena SWAN award and has an action plan which includes research into the Associate Lecture (AL) role. The AL cohort is the largest body of staff within the department and currently there is limited understanding into why ALs undertake the role, if this is gender specific and how we might best support this group of staff through their career journey.

Background

Previous work from the Associate Lectures in Science project (Donovan et al, 2005) showed the OU to be a major employer of women in science and technology teaching at HE level. This project will build on this work with all the mathematics and statistics ALs and will include analysis of gender differences.

As the OU provides employment to such a large sector of the potential HE employment base a greater understanding of why ALs undertake this work, their career journey and career goals will be advantageous, particularly when recruiting ALs to modules where the pool of suitable candidates is sparse.

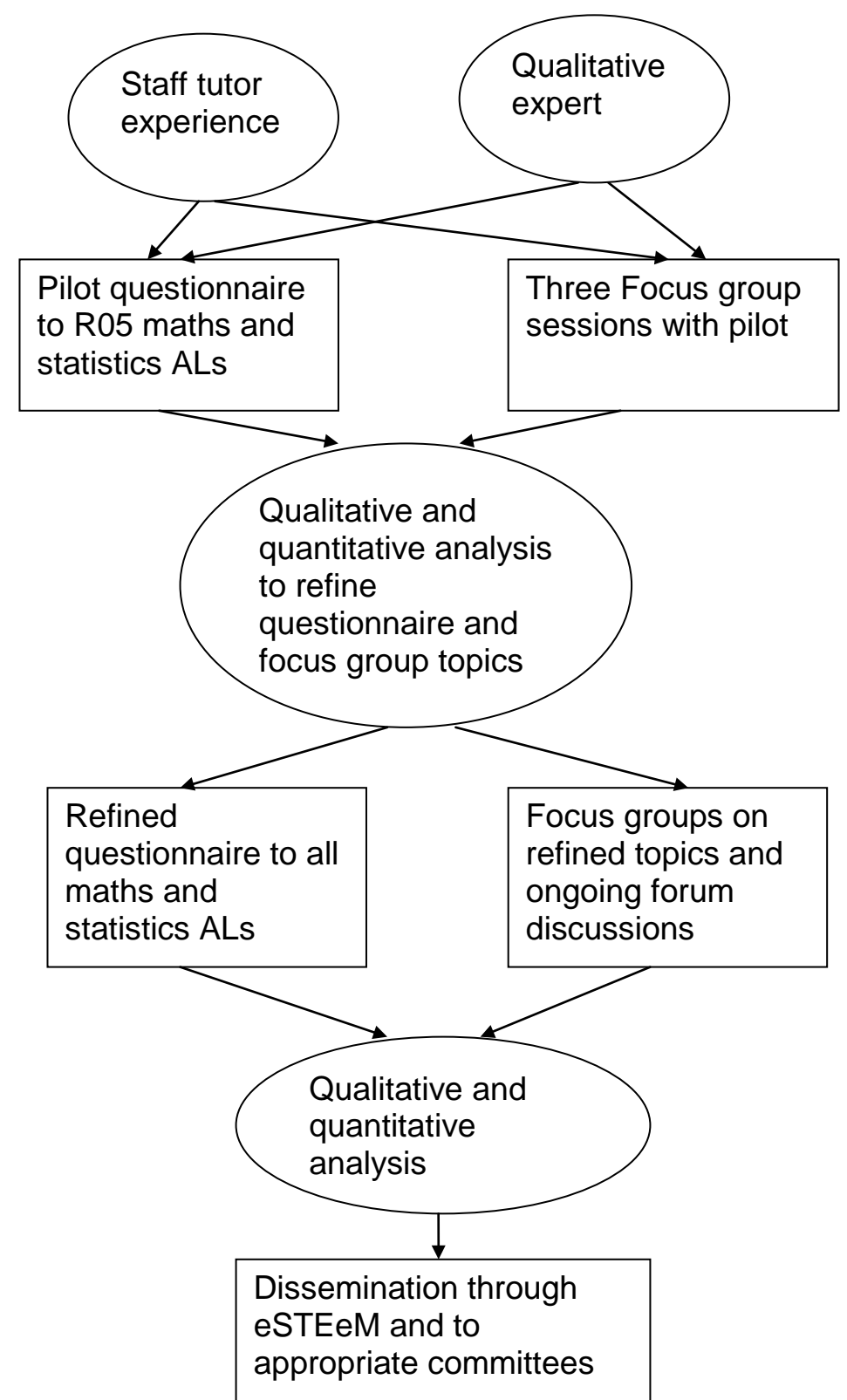
Mathematics and Statistics appears to have a greater proportion of female ALs with 43% female compared to 34% for the whole of MCT. Recruitment of ALs to a new level 1 statistics module in 2013J resulted in an AL cohort of which 52% are female.

Questions of interest

- Why do ALs take up this role and is there is a difference in expectations of the role based on gender and career aspirations within the mathematics and statistics disciplines?
- Do ALs take up the post in a particular point in their career trajectory?
- Do the needs of ALs change throughout their time with the OU and what should we do to support them?

- What career and professional development is needed to provide ALs with the appropriate skills to enable them meet the challenges of their role and therefore have a positive impact on teaching, whilst also furthering their career aspirations?
- How can knowledge from this study be fed into scoping out the implementation of the group tuition policy?

Methodology



References

Donovan, C., Hodgson, B., Scanlon, E. and Whitelegg, E. (2005) 'Women in higher education: Issues and challenges for part-time scientists', *Women's Studies International Forum*, 28 pp247-258.