Aberystwyth University

Case Study 1

Women in Research Network (developed by Dr Marie Neal, Research Development Officer, Research Business and Innovation) (Case Study of Effective Practice: Diversity and Equality (Concordat Principle 6), Recognition and Value (Concordat Principle 2), Support and Career Development (Concordat Principle 3-4)

Background

In my research support role I support all researchers and help to provide the best environment that I can for research to flourish. Whilst exact figures are not presented here, it is indisputable that there are far fewer women than men in STEM subjects at all levels (from undergraduate to professor levels). In addition, fewer women make grant applications for research funding despite success rates being similar for men and women. This prompted me to set up a women science researchers group, which first met in March 2016 to discuss research and research support requirements. It was agreed at this initial meeting to hold regular informal "afternoon tea" sessions, where women researchers could raise and discuss research related issues.

In addition to these bi-monthly meetings, between January and August 2018 I contacted women in STEM and asked to meet with them individually to discuss their research careers at Aberystwyth University, from their first day in post to the present, informally discussing their recruitment, working environment, and promotion prospects. The findings were written up in a report which was shared with the PVC

for Research, Knowledge Exchange and Innovation, the Acting Director of HR, the Strategic Lead for Equality and Diversity and the Director of Change Strategy.

I'm continuing to run these bi-monthly informal sessions targeted at researchers in STEM and focused on grant applications. In addition, together with other research staff, HR and members of other service departments we've also set up monthly all-discipline women researcher meetings. We have different agendas for each meeting with relevant guest speakers and open discussions. The first of these was in September 2018 when the Vice Chancellor talked to our Women Researchers Network. These meetings are now held monthly and we have had between 15-45 attendees at each.

Feedback taken at these meetings, and from the one-to-one discussions has flagged up issues facing women researchers at all career stages and these fed and will continue to feed into the AURCG action planning. Indicative examples of collated views, including heartfelt personal opinions, from our meeting on 26th September include:

- Recognition that out of hours work is a matter of choice
- Part-time working needs to be considered impact on REF submission
- Need for mentoring
- Need for training, such as unconscious bias and assertiveness
- Return to work after long periods of absence and need for flexible working
- Women feel they are more likely to take on pastoral care roles which take a lot of time and therefore reduce time available for research