Athena Swan Silver application form for departments

Applicant information

When completing your application, please refer to the applicant information pack, which includes full information on criteria, underpinning expectations and question-by-question guidance.

Name of institution	University of Hertfordshire
Name of department	Engineering and Computer Science
Date of current application	30 November 2025
Level of previous award	Bronze
Date of previous award	November 2019
Contact name	Dr Zoe Jeffrey
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Section	**Words used**
1. An overview of the department and its approach to gender equality	2590 approx.
2. An evaluation of the department's progress and success	2335 approx.
3. An assessment of the department's gender equality context	3125 approx.
Covid-19 allowance and Organisation Structure	500 (Section 2 - Covid-19) 750 (Section 1 - Organisational structure)
Future action plan*	
Appendix 1: Consultation data*	
Appendix 2: Data tables*	
Appendix 3: Glossary*	
Overall word count (Please see information on word limits overleaf)	Total Word Count (excluding SAT Tables, Action Plans, Appendices, Action Points, and references) 8050 words

*These sections and appendices should not contain any commentary contributing to the overall word limit

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

1. Letter of endorsement from the head of the departmen

Athena Swan Charter

United Kingdom

10th November 2025

Dear Colleagues,

It is a pleasure to endorse the Athena Swan Silver application for the School of Physics, Engineering and Computer Science (SPECS), Departments of Engineering & Computer Science (ECS). As Dean, I am proud of how our community has embedded equality, diversity and inclusion into every aspect of our teaching, research and leadership. This submission reflects our shared commitment to creating an environment where every individual can thrive and reach their full potential.

ECS received a Bronze Athena Swan award in 2019. Over the past five years, SPECS has undergone a remarkable transformation, growing into a vibrant and inclusive School with equality at its heart. Women now hold over half of the senior management roles within the School Executive Group, a major step forward since our previous submission. Both the Engineering and Computer Science departments have built on their Bronze Awards, working together to promote progression, representation and belonging across all staff and student communities.

Our progress has been driven by a clear focus on enabling people to succeed. Since 2019, the proportion of women in senior academic grades has risen by more than 10%, supported by transparent promotion workshops, mentoring programmes and active participation in the Aurora leadership scheme. Many of those who engaged in these initiatives have progressed into senior academic and management roles, contributing to a stronger, more balanced leadership culture.

Our commitment to equality and inclusion is embedded across the full staff lifecycle, from recruitment to promotion. We have strengthened processes to ensure that all appointment panels are balanced in gender and ethnicity, and that decisions at every stage reflect a consistent and fair application of EDI principles. As we continue to grow, our focus remains on embedding EDI values in every appointment, appraisal and promotion decision to sustain an equitable and inclusive culture.

We have worked purposefully to ensure that leadership at every level reflects our values. In Engineering, the leadership team is now 33% female, with both Head and Deputy Head positions held by women. In Computer Science, women now lead two of five subject groups and play visible roles within the wider School management team. Together, these

developments have reshaped our leadership profile and demonstrated the impact of embedding gender equality in succession planning and recruitment.

SPECS has also strengthened its supportive culture through clear policies, training and communication. Flexible working, parental leave and Keeping in Touch days are now well understood, with line managers proactively supporting colleagues through career transitions and life events. Feedback from staff surveys shows greater satisfaction with work-life balance and with the support available for career development.

Our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Team (EDIT) continues to play a central role in sustaining progress. It brings together colleagues from Engineering, Computer Science and Physics to share practice and ensure that Athena Swan principles are embedded in our wider EDI work. The team has broadened its remit to include race equality, disability inclusion and intersectionality, recognising that gender equality must be considered alongside other protected characteristics. Regular culture surveys, open forums and events such as the International Day of Women and Girls in Science and LGBT+ STEM Day have become hallmarks of SPECS' inclusive community.

Students across the School also benefit from this culture of inclusion. Visibility of women in teaching, research and outreach has increased significantly, helping to inspire and attract a more diverse student body. Our departments have taken targeted action to address degree attainment gaps, particularly among under-represented groups, and to embed inclusive teaching practices that support the success of all learners.

Looking ahead, our priorities for the next five years are ambitious but grounded in the progress we have already achieved. We will:

1. Strengthen the pipeline of women into research leadership, with focused mentoring and sponsorship for those aspiring to Reader and Professor roles.
2. Sustain a gender-balanced leadership culture across the School through transparent progression routes and active succession planning.
3. Broaden our intersectional approach so that ethnicity, disability and gender identity are consistently reflected in policy, practice and culture.

These goals build on the strong foundations we have established. They reflect a shared belief that excellence and equality are inseparable, and that true progress depends on a culture where every voice is valued. I am immensely proud of the collaboration, reflection and commitment shown by colleagues across the School, and particularly within the Engineering and Computer Science communities, in driving this work forward.

I confirm that the information presented in this application is accurate and reflects our collective dedication to equality, diversity and inclusion.

Yours sincerely,

Prof. Daniel McCluskey,
Dean of School of Physics, Engineering and Computer Science

2. Description of the department

The Department of Engineering and Department of Computer Science (ECS) are two of the three departments within the School of Physics, Engineering and Computer Science (SPECS). At the time of our last Athena Swan award in 2019, these two departments operated as a single School within the University of Hertfordshire (Herts). With effect from 1 August 2020, the school of Physics, Astronomy and Mathematics (PAM) became a department within a larger School (SPECS).

The management structure of SPECS is shown in Figure 1. Since 2019, this structure has changed and is now composed of 6 Females and 5 males, an increase of 50% female managers in the School Executive Group (SEG). The Engineering department senior management (Figure 2) is now led by one female Head and one female Deputy Head. Among the eight subject groups, leadership is held by seven males and one female, with two deputies (one male and one female). The overall Engineering (ENG) leadership distribution is now 33% female and 77% male, compared to no female at the time of the 2019 Athena Swan (AS) submission.

The Computer Science (CS) Department is led by two male leaders (Head and Deputy Head) who oversee five subject group leaders (two female and three male). This results in an overall leadership gender distribution of 29% female and 71% male. This reflects a 20% increase in female representation in leadership compared with the previous AS submission.

SPECS has an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Team (EDIT), chaired by the Deputy Dean of School (DDoS). Its membership includes the Chairs of the ECS Equality Committee, including the AS Champion, along with EDI representatives and equivalent role-holders from the other departments. Within ECS, the primary decision-making bodies are the Engineering Operations Group and the Computer Science Operations Group, both of which meet monthly. The organisational structure of these committees is shown in Figure 3.(REDACTED)

Figure 1: Management structure of SPECS in Aug 2025 (REDACTED)

Figure 2: Membership of Engineering and Computer Science Operations Group (REDACTED)

Figure 3: Committee organisational structure (REDACTED)

The ECS departments offer a stimulating and inclusive learning community which prepares our students for careers with top organisations. We have a strong teaching and research focus, with excellent facilities, including our brand new 93M building, the SPECTRA (Figure 4).



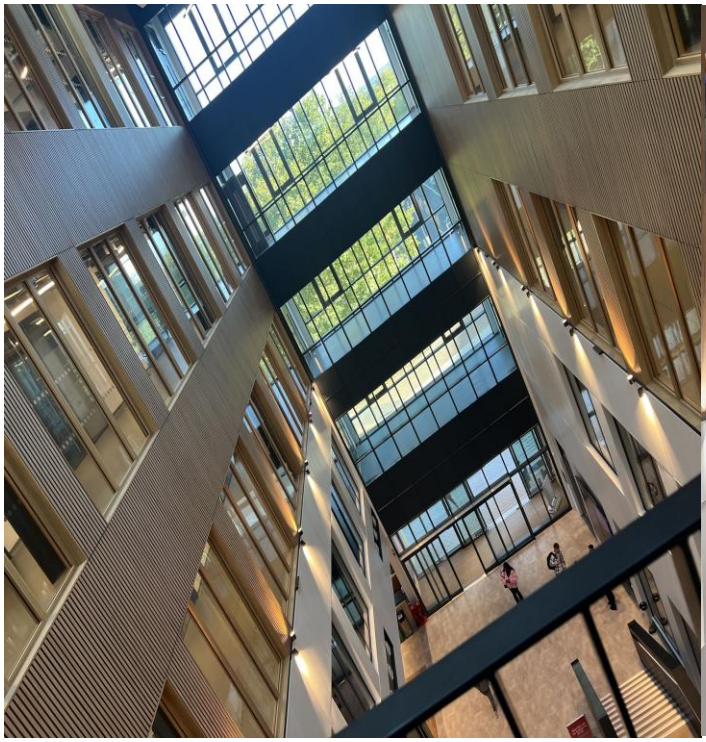




Figure 4: The SPECTRA

Of the 297 staff in ECS in 2023–24 (32% increase since our last submission), CS had 78.9M (77%) and 24F (23%), while ENG had 99.8M (77%) and 29.7F (23%) teaching and research staff. Female representation in ENG has increased by 7%, whereas the gender split in CS has remained similar (Figures 2.1 - 2.4). Both are above the UK Higher Education (HE) sector averages for ENG and CS (HESA 2023/2024). Among professional and technical (PTO) staff, there are 42M (69%) and 19.2F (31%), representing a 30% increase since our last submission.

In terms of student numbers, we now have 6,152 students (2023–2024), an increase from 3,077 at the time of our last award. Most students are male (77% in CS and 89% in ENG). The overall gender profile shows a slight increase in female students, rising from 18% to 23% in CS and from 10% to 11% in ENG although this remains lower than HESA gender split in the UK sector (see Appendix Table 1 and Figures 2.27 - 2.30, 2.32, and 2.33). PGT courses in ECS have grown substantially, with large international cohorts comprising 827 (22%) female and 2,979 (78%) male students since our last award.

An area of excellence is the research environment, which has expanded since our last award. There are now four research centres (Figure 3): Centre for Networks and Security Research, Wolfson Centre for Biodetection Instrumentation Research/Biodetection Technologies Hub/WCBIR, Centre for Engineering Research and Centre for AI and Robotics Research. A total of 32 Computer Science staff (6F, 26M) and Engineering staff 35 (7F, 28 M) submitted to REF2021, a significant increase compared to the figure of 28 (7F, 21M) in Computer Science and 15 (0F, 15M) all male in Engineering (in REF2014).

Student input to the management of the department is via the Programme Committee meetings, which are held twice a year chaired by the programme leaders and attended by module leaders and student representatives. There is also student representation on the SPECS EDIT through Associate Dean Education and Student Success (ADESS) providing a pathway for students to raise any EDI issues.

All ECS academic and PTO staff are based at the College Lane SPECTRA (Figure 4) site in Hatfield. Administration is split across the central hub and SPECS, with administrative support for quality assurance and examinations run centrally.

3. Governance and recognition of equality, diversity and inclusion work

Figure 5 shows how the SPECS EDIT fits into UH's EDI governance structure, as an SBU EDI teams. Over the coming five years, the SPECS EDIT will continue to meet quarterly implementing the new Action Plan given in Section 3.

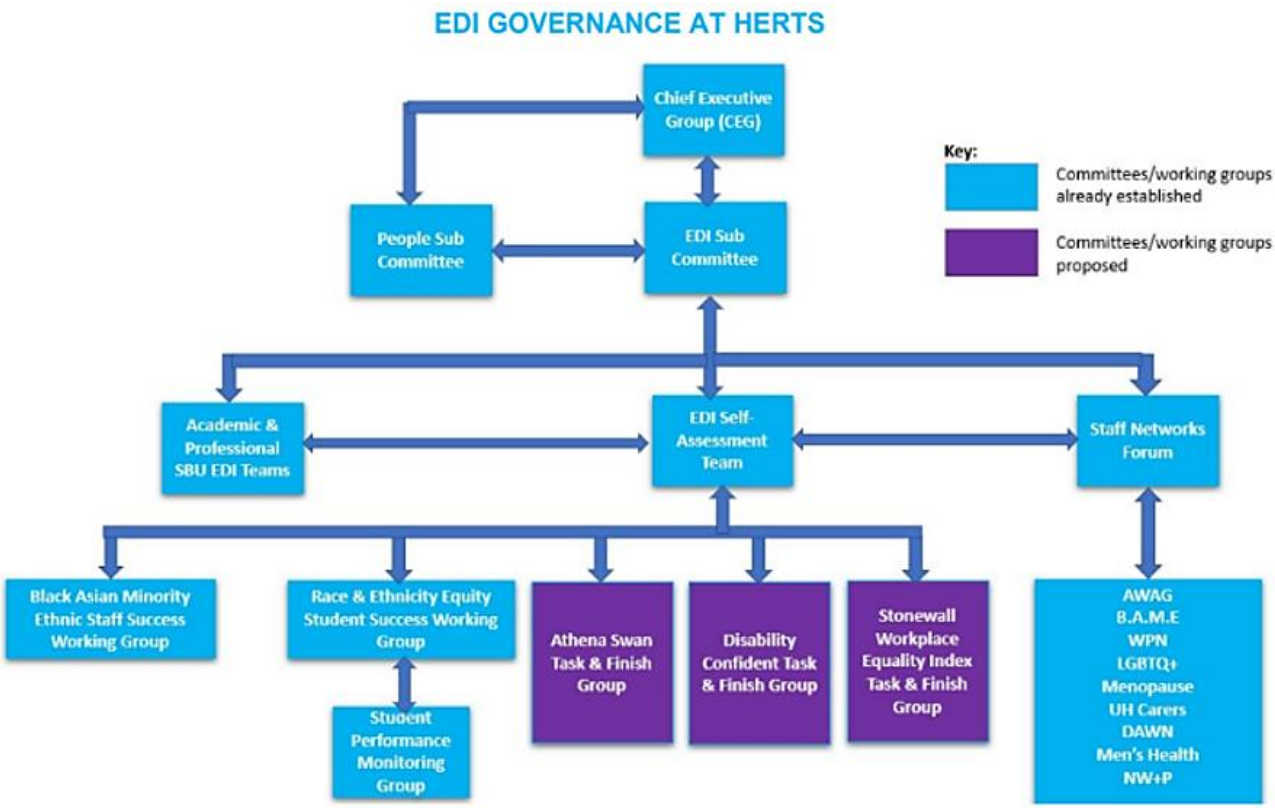


Figure 5: Structure of EDI Governance at UH.

4. Development, evaluation and effectiveness of policies

Local policies address the operational aspects of SPECS environment and community. Staff participate in university-wide policy development and apply UH policies to support both staff and students. For example, the recent institutional change distinguishing technical staff from professional staff, who were previously categorised together, resulted from collaboration between the Technician Commitment Steering Group, HR colleagues and SPECS staff. This distinction more accurately reflects the differing job roles and supports equitable pay grading, especially beneficial for women in technical roles. SPECS actively encourages colleagues to pursue institutional roles and membership of key committees, including the Staff Council, Health and Safety Engagement Committee (HSEC), People Committee, and Board of Governors. Although these roles are not created within SPECS, the School's commitment to staff development and inclusion enables colleagues to seek opportunities to contribute meaningfully to the wider University community.

New or amended institutional policies and regulations are considered by the relevant working party Standing Working Party on UPRs (academic) or Corporate UPRs Advisory Group (CUPRAG), with recommendations to the Secretary and Registrar twice a year.

5. Athena Swan self-assessment process

Please provide an overview of who was involved in the preparation of this application, how it was prepared, and what plans are in place to support the department's future gender equality work.

SPECS EDIT serves as the self-assessment team (SAT) for ECS, meeting quarterly and chaired by DDoS/ADESS:

- Established in 2020 following the merger ECS and PAM.
- AS Champions and EDI Representatives have formally recognised workload allocations.
- AS is a standing agenda item at the SEG, chaired by the Dean; the ADESS attends SEG meetings alongside the Dean.
- The ADESS, AS Champions, and EDI Representatives serve on the University-level UH EDIT Committee, which meets quarterly.
- Since August 2025, the School appointed the SPECS EDIT Lead (0.5 FTE), reporting to the ADESS.
- The Lead develops, implements, and monitors actions across Athena Swan (AS), Race Equality Charter (REC), Disability Confident (DC), and LGBTQ+ initiatives.
- AS Champions and EDI Representatives report to the SPECS EDIT Lead.

ECS SAT membership is reviewed regularly to ensure appropriate representation from each department reflecting the School profile, which comprises 72% academic and research staff and 28% PTO staff (Table 1). The SAT is composed of individuals from diverse backgrounds, with a gender distribution of 56% female, 39% male, 5% transgender, and 5% non-binary, representing a slightly higher proportion of female members compared with the School overall. Ethnic diversity within the SAT includes 72% identifying as White and 28% as BAME. The team recognises the importance of intersectionality in understanding inequalities, particularly in relation to gender. A formalised review of SPECS EDIT membership has been introduced as a new action (Action 2.7).

The committee is composed primarily of full-time staff, and most members identify as primary carers. There are currently unfilled posts for student members on the committee due to graduation of previous students. Student perspectives from UG, PGT and PGR to the EDIT are currently incorporated through the ADESS, who liaises regularly with student representatives and Programme Committees. To strengthen student engagement in our self-assessment processes, we will continue to invite student members to join the committee with incentives (New Action 2.7).

Table 1 (Continued): SPECS EDIT membership as of November 2025. Roles* are included in the SPECS EDIT Terms of Reference (ToR). Note, individual characteristics such as gender are not specified in this table to maintain privacy.

The SPECS EDIT has undertaken a self-assessment process by considering staff and student data produced by HR (see Appendix 2) and data from the SPECS culture survey sent to all ECS staff and PGR students (see Appendix 1).The culture

survey takes place every two years locally in SPECS, so there have been two surveys since the last Athena Swan submission (in 2021 and 2023), providing us with the means to benchmark and track our progress in key areas of gender equality. In 2025, supplementary face-to-face (one-to-one) surveys (see Appendix 1), were conducted in ECS to give further depth to core AS questions. The survey includes the core AS questions, plus several additional questions chosen to explore a range of gender related issues within ECS.

Activities requiring a budget, such as events organised in the past year to celebrate International Day of Women, Girls in Science, and STEM, Pride Day (Figure 6), are proposed and approved by the DDoS. Other promotional activities carried out including the discover engineering project (Figure 7), a fully funded (£61K) by Royal Academy of Engineering residential summer school to inspire students from black or black/mixed ethnic backgrounds to consider careers in Engineering (4 days, July 2024, 42 students, 50% female).



Figure 6: London Pride and LRC light up.

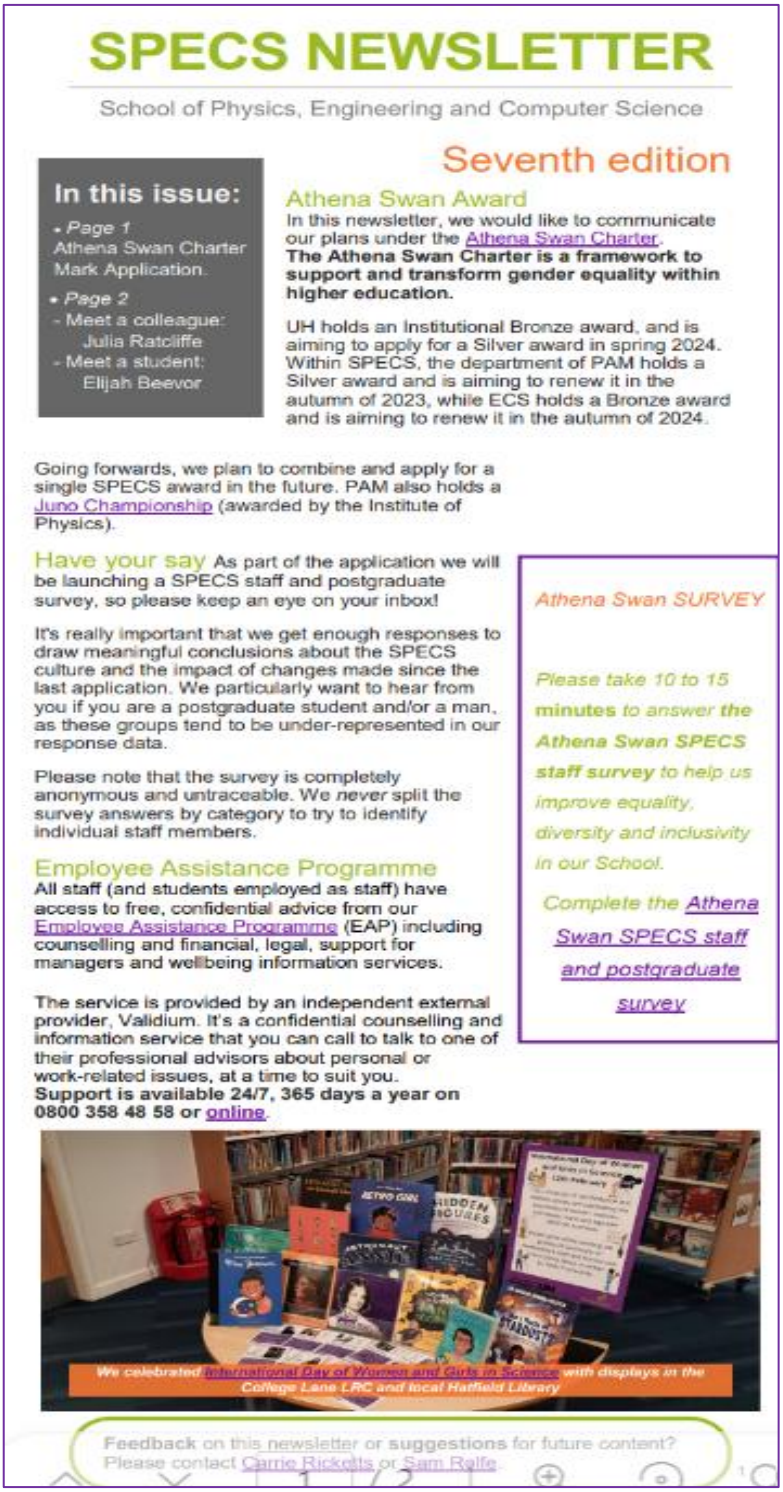


Figure 7: Discover Engineering project: black/mixed ethnic background (42 students, 50% female).

The PAM Equality Committee, part of SPECS EDIT, communicates with the department and School through a termly SPECS newsletter, which includes updates from ECS (Figure 8). Introduced by PAM to promote engagement with EDI activities and good practice, the newsletter has now been extended across the School, following the departmental merger, contributing to improved participation in Athena Swan surveys and increased awareness of gender-based initiatives.

The newsletter features EDI news, upcoming activities, guidance on inclusive teaching and research, reminders about support services, and feedback requests It also includes links to bite-size surveys designed to gather views on specific gender

issues. These shorter surveys enhance our understanding of gender equality within the department and complement the more comprehensive culture surveys.



SPECS NEWSLETTER

School of Physics, Engineering and Computer Science

Seventh edition

In this issue:

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  - Meet a colleague: Julia Ratcliffe
  - Meet a student: Elijah Beevor

Athena Swan Award

In this newsletter, we would like to communicate our plans under the Athena Swan Charter. **The Athena Swan Charter is a framework to support and transform gender equality within higher education.**

UH holds an Institutional Bronze award, and is aiming to apply for a Silver award in spring 2024. Within SPECS, the department of PAM holds a Silver award and is aiming to renew it in the autumn of 2023, while ECS holds a Bronze award and is aiming to renew it in the autumn of 2024.

Going forwards, we plan to combine and apply for a single SPECS award in the future. PAM also holds a Juno Championship (awarded by the Institute of Physics).

Have your say As part of the application we will be launching a SPECS staff and postgraduate survey, so please keep an eye on your inbox!

It's really important that we get enough responses to draw meaningful conclusions about the SPECS culture and the impact of changes made since the last application. We particularly want to hear from you if you are a postgraduate student and/or a man, as these groups tend to be under-represented in our response data.

Please note that the survey is completely anonymous and untraceable. We *never* split the survey answers by category to try to identify individual staff members.

Athena Swan SURVEY

Please take 10 to 15 ***minutes*** *to answer* ***the Athena Swan SPECS staff survey*** *to help us improve equality, diversity and inclusivity in our School.*

Complete the Athena Swan SPECS staff and postgraduate survey

Employee Assistance Programme

All staff (and students employed as staff) have access to free, confidential advice from our Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) including counselling and financial, legal, support for managers and wellbeing information services.

The service is provided by an independent external provider, Validium. It's a confidential counselling and information service that you can call to talk to one of their professional advisors about personal or work-related issues, at a time to suit you. **Support is available 24/7, 365 days a year on 0800 358 48 58 or online.**

Feedback on this newsletter or suggestions for future content? Please contact Carrie Ricketts or Sam Rolfe

Figure 8: Example of the SPECS EDI newsletter.

Feedback from our previous application highlighted the need to strengthen our evaluation and ensure a clearer focus on objectives rather than processes. In response, we have incorporated “Main Learnings” in Section 2.1 and ensured that

gender-related actions in our new action plan are defined with measurable outcomes rather than process-based indicators.

Over the next five years, SPECS EDIT will continue to meet quarterly to advance the School's EDI strategy and monitor progress against agreed actions. EDI will continue to be a standing item on the SEG agenda, where gender-related targets and actions are reviewed and progressed monthly. With the Chair of SPECS EDIT reporting directly to SEG, regular oversight of delivery will be maintained. Ensuring that action plans are appropriately resourced to support meaningful and sustained change will remain a key priority.

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

1. Evaluating progress against the previous action plan

1.1 Method of implementing the action plan

The 2019 Bronze award has 27 actions. Implementation of the action plan is a standing SPECS EDIT agenda item. Actions are assigned to sub-groups or individuals, who report back to the AS Champions, ensuring the action plan is updated. Success was assessed by checking evaluation measures against staff and student data and responses to surveys. The assessment shows 67% were evaluated as green (good progress), 29% were amber (partial progress) and 4% were red (No progress) (Figure 9).

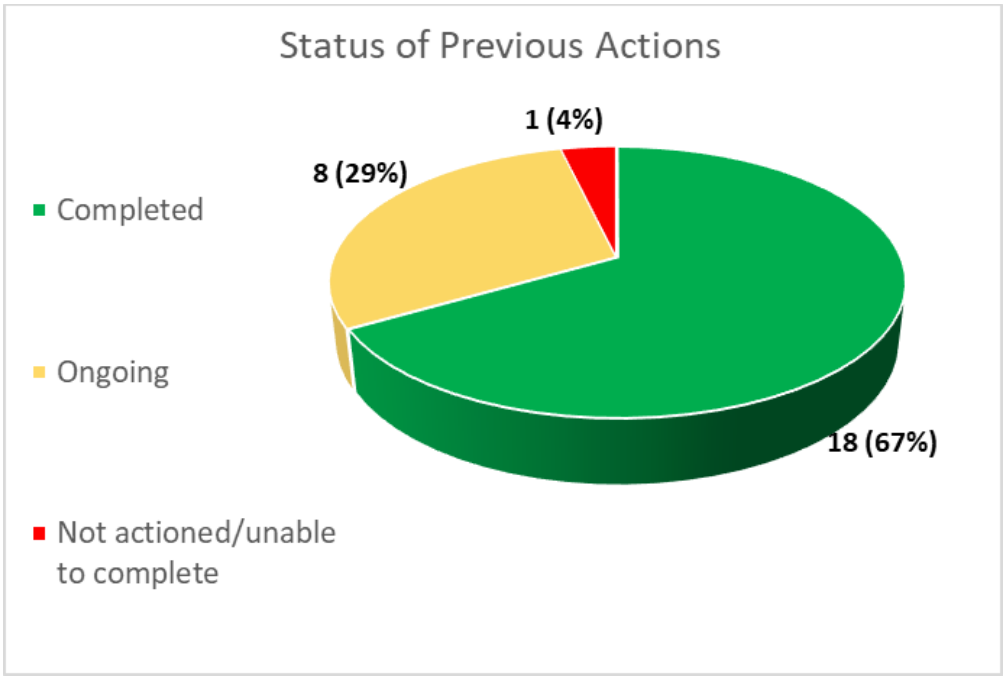


Figure 9: Status of previous AS 2019 actions

1.2 Reflections on 2019 Bronze Award action plan

Progress has been positive. However:

- Lockdown (March 2020-June 2021) significantly impacted sector working (AP 3.4, 4.1,4.2, 5.3, 5.6, 5.11, 5.12, 5.13, 5.14, 5.18).
- Staff changes, restructuring delayed oversight of actions.
- Some of the actions were evaluated using different questions including AP 5.15.

1.3 Green Actions

Green Actions: AP 3.1, 3.1, 3.3, 3.4, 4.1, 4.3, 4.4, 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.6, 5.7, 5.8, 5.10, 5.11, 5.12, 5.18, 5.19

There is an increase participation and raised awareness of the impact of the School's EDI initiatives and progress amongst staff and students (Action 3.1). In 2023 culture survey, 70.9% (n = 56) of staff are aware of Athena Swan work and 40% of staff agree that Athena has a positive impact. In 2025, supplementary face-to-face (one-to-one) surveys, 80.2% (n = 26) show staff are aware of and agree that AS work has a positive impact. The SPECS EDIT remit has been broadened, to encompass a wider EDI agenda. Meetings incorporate AS, Race Equality Charter. BAME staff KPIs and objectives. KPI progress is monitored as part of the People Strand in the new Vice Chancellor strategic plan (2025-2030)

There are opportunities for CPD in EDI-related activities for champions and EDIT members such as quarterly forums, annual away day and CPD for SPECS EDIT Chairs, EDI Leads, AS Champions and HRBPs (Action 3.3).

KEY LEARNING: ECS Engagement is critical to the progress of actions to maintain momentum and change. EDI must be central in strategic planning (SPECS business plan).

Visibility of women on outreach and recruitment activities (Action 4.1, 5.18) The number of female academics has increased since our last submission. We have more than three female academics on ECS open days as well as female student proctors. The school and departments monitor outreach activities with dedicated staff appointed for the roles.

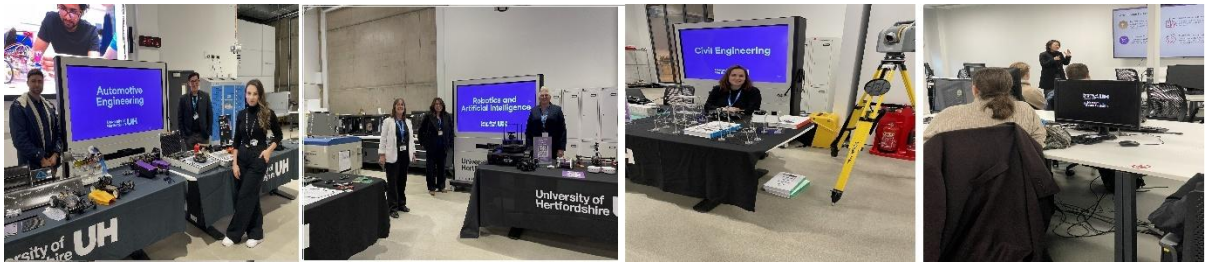


Figure 10: Women participation in 'open day' events in ECS.



Figure 11: Women Rise Conference and Outreach activities and open days in ECS

Improving Trans awareness (Action 5.12) Several events and awareness sessions have been put in place by our LGBTQ+ Network including Transgender Awareness Week 13th -19th November 2025 and Transgender Day of Remembrance 20th November 2025 to increase the visibility of trans and non-binary people and promoting a more equal and inclusive community for our LGBTQ+ students, including those with non-binary identities.

Support female staff progression and promotion process (Action 4.3) More women (>10%) in senior roles and grades as of Sept 2023. Annual workshops run for EQUATE, associate and full professorship, readership. Culture survey in 2023 indicated more women understood progression processes compared to 2019.

Unconscious bias, E&D, Recruitment and Promotion Manager training (Action 5.1) Mandatory promotion training for managers has been in place since 2020; Unconscious Bias training for all staff has been offered by iHASCO (an external provider) since 2021; central E&D training for panel chairs has been in place since 2022 and the Canvas Recruitment and Selection module was introduced in 2023 for interview panel members. Training is monitored by line managers and part of appraisal discussion. Attendance data is also available to HR and the Dean who acts for non-compliance.

Increase number of female applicants, and subsequently staff, in ECS (Action 5.2) The target is continuously met for the past three years. (Note that there was a pause of recruitment in 2020 during COVID). The number of female academic applications have increased in ECS by 10% since our last submission from 60 (11%) to 169 (17%) in 2020-21 and then to 365 (21%) in 2023-24 (see figure 2.19).

Access to CPD for staff (particularly women) (Action 5.6) Increase in women feeling able to take advantage of CPD opportunities (over 70%). In 2023 staff survey, 82.1% agree that line manager supports their career development (80% of F, 88% of

M). 87.1% of staff feel able to take advantage of CPD opportunities (93.3 of F, 92% of M).

Aurora Programme and its impact on career progression (Action 5.7) Aurora has been advertised to all staff annually over the last five years. At least three senior female managers who participated were promoted or changed roles, due to the tailored learning to address gender related barriers to leadership progression.

Appraisal process and benefits to staff (Action 5.8) In 2023 survey, 71.5% found their last appraisal a positive experience overall (1.5% improvement). In 2025, HR have introduced an online new appraisal process: Performance and Development Reviews (PDR). It is designed to be more transparent and address E&D issues such as lack of engagement with EDI (noted in the previous Athena 2019 submission).

KIT days awareness for Staff on Maternity/adoption/shared parental leave (Action 5.11) Keep in Touch (KIT) /Shared Parental in Touch (SPLIT) days are optional for staff to take. All managers are trained in providing Herts guidance on maternity and KIT days. There were small number of staff on maternity/adoption/shared parental leave (5.8%) in the 2023 survey took advantage KIT/SPLIT days. KIT/SPLIT days are continuously offered for those who wish to take them.

1.4 Amber Actions

Amber Actions: AP 4.2, 5.4, 5.5, 5.9, 5.13, 5.15, 5.16

Despite positive outcome in the amber actions, these are not always driven by the output or success measure that we identified within our action plan. The success measure required a response to a very specific survey question/s that were not used in the next iterations of the surveys, so we were not able to directly measure success.

Monitor the degree attainment of UG and PGT men (Action 4.2)

The male degree attainment gap is continuously addressed by the ECS departments, and it is part of action plan in the business action plan. In Computer Science UG, women continued to outperformed men in attaining good degree (1st and 2nd Upper) in the years 2019-20, 2020-21, 2021-22 and in 2022-23. In the latest data 2023-24, men have outperformed women in attaining good degree for the first time in five years as seen in Figure 2.34. Similar, degree attainment for UG Engineering is observed where women have continued to outperform men (Figure 2.35) since our last AS submission in 2019. For PGT in Computer Science, the degree attainment gap improved in 2020-21 and 2021-22 with men slightly outperforming women in 1st and 2nd Upper respectively. However, the performance dipped again in 2022-23 and 2023-24 (Figure 2.36). The gap has closed between men and women in attainment for good degree in the latest data 2023-24 for PGT in Engineering, showing the same number of students attaining 1st. Men also

outperformed women in 20202021 with more attaining 2nd Upper than women compared to 2019-20, 2021-22 and 2022-23 (Figure 2.37). The school is aware of this issue, and the deputy dean and associate dean of academic quality have been addressing it through a Student Attainment Working Group as a separate action to AS submission. However, changes will be continuously monitored as part of Access and Participation Plan (APP).

KEY LEARNING: ECS departments recognise improving and stabilising gender gap in degree attainment is a gradual process. Whilst there has been improvement, it is not stable. Monitoring degree attainment by Student Attainment Group and Access Participation Plan will continue.

Integrate E&D, BAME and AS work and support into promotion and progression criteria (Action 5.5) E&D work is included in the appraisal process. In 2023 survey, only 39.3% of staff agree that EDI work is recognised in applications for progression and 39.3% do not know.

Monitor impact of changes to workload model and transparency in relation to staff experiences. (Action 5.17) 2023 survey shows decrease in number by 13.6% of staff who do not agree that the workload model is fair and transparent. Herts has now introduced a new workload model which is yet to be evaluated from 2025.

1.5 Red Actions

Amber Actions: AP 5.14

Build staff confidence and raise awareness of support in relation to reporting unfavourable treatment. Action 5.14

In 2023 survey, 64.3% agree about feeling comfortable reporting unfavourable treatment (33% of F and 20% M disagree). In follow up 2025 face-face survey (n= 26) 69.2% know how to report, 27% of F do not know about dignity and respect advisors.

KEY LEARNING: ECS departments recognise that improving and building staff awareness of support for reporting incidents, requires regular communications about the bullying and harassment policy and processes. The milestones in our previous action plan were not achieved due to COVID and lack of oversight. Recommendation going forward are actions will be allocated to individual staff with another staff member having responsibility for monitor completion and reporting to SPECS EDIT.

2. Evaluating success against department's key priorities

2.1: Key Priority 1: Increase proportion of women at senior level

The last submission in 2019 identified higher proportion of men (7M, 78%) to women (2F, 22%) at senior management structure. Over the course of the previous action plan, we made progress moving from 22% to percent to 54% (Figure 1) of women at senior management level. women at academic manager (AM) or professor grade percentage increased in Engineering from zero (0F, 11M) to 40% (4F, 10M). There was no overall increase in computer science. Although, one woman retired, and another was appointed as a professor.

Promotion to UH9 has also increased in Computer Science (Figure 2.8) in 2023-24 was (9F, 15.8M) up from (7F, 6M) although there was a drop of Females at UH9 in 2020-21 due to leavers and in Engineering (Figure 2.9) was (4.3F, 17.4M) up from (2.1F, 9.8M).

The success achieved above in ECS is through improvements in promotion, targets through EDIT action plans, improvements to recruitment, training and academic promotion.

Regarding gender and ethnicity, the ECS senior management team (Figure 1) includes one BAME woman (appointed in 2023) and one BAME man out of 11 members. There are currently no Black women or men among the senior management team or the 21 AM/Professor grade staff in ECS. In 2023/24, within Engineering, 1.3 of the 4.3 women at UH9 identified as BAME, and in Computer Science, 2 of the 9 women were BAME. Although there is a positive upward trend at both AM and UH9 levels, BAME staff across all genders remain underrepresented at senior grades.

PTO pay grade improved with more staff pay grade above UH4 (Figure 2.42 – 2.43).

KEY LEARNING: ECS acknowledges that improving workforce diversity is a long-term endeavour that extends beyond a five-year Athena Swan cycle. While overall diversity has improved, including an increase in BAME staff, persistent barriers to progression such as bias, identity-related challenges, imposter syndrome, and stereotyping continue to impact staff experiences and career trajectories.

2.2: Key Priority 2: Improving inclusivity to Academic Promotions processes

In 2018, Herts introduced a new process for promotion to associate professor (UH9), professor (AM) and reader (UH9) which included mentorship, forums and workshops (led by DVC), clear criteria, feedback for applicants and review all applications to capture key learning. ECS is supporting female academic promotions, through workshops, appraisal and line manager support. In 2023, the promotions process for readerships and associate professors has been revised to a paper-based exercise without a face-to-face interview, to further encourage applicant gender and ethnicity diversity. The number of applicants in ECS increased from 10 in 2024 to 15 in 2025.

As a result of the progress made five-year data from 2021-2025 shows increase in promotion for ECS as more females are applying. The data tracked number of

applications and successful applications by gender. As a result of this, Engineering (Figure 2.25) now has 2 female associate professors and 1 reader from 0 in the previous submission (7F applications, 3F success). Similarly, in Computer Science (Figure 2.26), in the same period, there were 8F applications and 5F successful (2 associate processor, 2 Reader and 1 professor).

KEY LEARNING: Staff continue to experience barriers to career progression, including discouragement from applying due to overcautious managerial advice and the challenge of balancing work, family commitments, and workload. There remains a need to ensure panels are diverse, representative, and chaired by individuals who have completed the required EDI training. The University is reviewing promotion criteria and processes regularly, introducing briefings on recognising and mitigating unconscious bias in decision-making.

Figure 12: Academic Promotion Celebration REDACTED

Previous Action Plan

	High Priority Action		Mid Priority Action

Ref.	Planned action/ objective	Rationale	Key outputs and milestones	Timeline		Person responsible	Success criteria and outcome	2025 Evaluation (RAG rated)
				Start date	End date			
Section 3: The Self-Assessment Process								
3.1	Increase participation and raise awareness of the impact of the School's E&D initiatives and progress amongst staff and students.	Although 97.7% (n=83) of staff in the survey were aware that the School was working towards an AS award, less staff were clear on whether this had a positive effect (36.5% agreed; 51.8% neutral; 11.8% disagreed). We therefore need to focus on better communicating impact and progress of the School's E&D activities amongst staff and students.	• Develop annual programme of awareness-raising and engagement events focused around E&D and women in science. • Develop monitoring system for event attendance. • Hold AS drop-in 'Tea and Chat' sessions to raise awareness of E&D work and gather staff/student input into various areas. • Report results of evaluation of progress and	Nov 2019 Jan 2020 Sept 2019 Jun 2018	Annually May 2020 One per term Ongoing	AS Champion, Deputy AS Champion, EDIT team, UH Equality Office and AD SE&P Head of Marketing AS Champion, Deputy AS Champion AS Champion, Dean, Deputy	At least two E&D events run per year and monitoring system for event attendance developed. Participation increases incrementally year-on-year, positive feedback received. Increase to 50% of staff who agree that AS work has a positive impact in the School, as measured by next Staff Survey in 2022.	In 2023 culture survey, 70.9% (n = 56) of staff are aware of Athena Swan/Juno work and 40% of staff who agree that AS work has positive impact. In 2025 Supplementary face-to-face (one-to-one) survey, 80.2% (n = 26) of staff are aware of AS work and agree that AS work has positive impact. At least two E&D events run per year and monitoring

Ref.	Planned action/ objective	Rationale	Key outputs and milestones	Timeline		Person responsible	Success criteria and outcome	2025 Evaluation (RAG rated)
				Start date	End date			
			impact to all ECS staff through posting of EDIT meeting minutes, development opportunities, School meetings, and the inclusion of reference to AS in School induction events and staff training. • Develop staff internal SharePoint site to showcase work in relation to E&D in the School, events etc.	 Mar 2020	 May 2020	Dean, EDIT Clerk AS Champion, Deputy AS Champion and AS Officer, Web Support		system for event attendance developed.
3.2	Broaden remit of EDIT to encompass wider E&D agenda and develop synergy amongst E&D leads (old and new) to further embed and promote AS principles in the School.	The AS charter has broadened to encompass more of an intersectional focus that needs to be reflected in our approach. As well, we need to increasingly consider the wider E&D agenda at UH, including the Race	• AS lead to liaise and work with E&D representative and BAME Champion when in position and invite to join EDIT. • Decide and document consensus on best	Dec 2019 Feb 2020	Feb 2020 Mar 2020	AS Champion, Deputy AS Champion, BAME Champion, SEG E&D Rep & AS Officer	EDIT meetings to incorporate AS, Race Equality Charter, BAME attainment and other E&D considerations which affect the School.	EDIT meetings incorporates AS, Race Equality Charter. BAME staff objectives are included in Race Equality Charter work.

Ref.	Planned action/ objective	Rationale	Key outputs and milestones	Timeline		Person responsible	Success criteria and outcome	2025 Evaluation (RAG rated)
				Start date	End date			
		Equality Charter and the University's Equality Objectives. New E&D roles (E&D SEG representative and BAME Champion) have been created in the School. In order to push forward initiatives, cooperation and contribution to the EDIT will be essential.	practice in promoting and embedding AS principles and wider E&D issues into EDIT focus, taking into consideration best practice in other Schools and universities. • Report and agree these with SEG and EDIT. • Review membership of the EDIT and key roles on an annual basis, regularly invite expressions of interest.	Feb 2020 Jun 2020	May 2020 Exp of Int invited in Sept Annually	AS Champion and SEG Dean		
3.3	Fund CPD E&D-related activities for Champions and EDIT members.	Currently, there is no standalone funding to support CPD in relation to E&D activities for EDIT members.	• Allocate pool of funding for E&D-related activities. • Organise and promote activities for EDIT members as they arise.	Apr 2020 Ongoing	Jul 2020 Ongoing, funding-dependent	Heads of Departments AS Champion, UH Equality Office	Dedicated funding secured for E&D activities and at least two EDIT members attend CPD opportunities per year.	Quarterly forums, annual away day and CPD for EDIT Chairs, EDI Leads, Champions and HRBPs. Funding available from Chair, AS champions

Ref.	Planned action/ objective	Rationale	Key outputs and milestones	Timeline		Person responsible	Success criteria and outcome	2025 Evaluation (RAG rated)
				Start date	End date			
								attended CPD annually.
3.4	Run regular staff/student surveys and focus groups to assess impact of action plan.	Initial joint ECS survey was run in 2019 and must be repeated in order to gauge impact of continuing merger and AS initiatives. Focus groups will help to shed further light on staff and student experiences.	• Conduct smaller interim 'bitesize surveys' to try to avoid 'survey fatigue' and track impact of initiatives around various targeted areas highlighted in ECS AS Staff Survey. • Re-run full staff survey. • Conduct focus groups to follow up on issues raised in the Staff Survey.	Jan 2020 When needed May 2022 Oct 2022	Jun 2023 Oct 2022 Dec 2022	EDIT survey working group, Dean to circulate to ensure participation EDIT survey working group, AS Officer	Gain better understanding of changes in staff perception through targeting specific issues. Increase full survey response-rate to 60%.	Surveys were continued every other year meeting target. Additionally, focus group and one-to-one surveys completed.
Section 4: A Picture of the Department								
Students								
4.1	Ensure continued high visibility of women on outreach and recruitment	The %F for UGs has remained reasonably consistent but is still under the	• Run focus groups with F/T female UG students in	Oct 2020	May 2021	AD SE&P	Better understanding of female (UG and PGT) motivations for choosing ECS and	Interviews are conducted through student feedback via module feedback,

Ref.	Planned action/ objective	Rationale	Key outputs and milestones	Timeline		Person responsible	Success criteria and outcome	2025 Evaluation (RAG rated)
				Start date	End date			
	activities, including websites and promotional materials.	benchmarks – more markedly so in ENG than CS. For ENG, the %F has remained consistent over the reporting period but is below the benchmark for "general engineering" for both F/T and P/T. It is important for us to better understand why women choose to study with us to see if there is scope for improving our recruitment practices. We also need to continue to ensure high visibility of women at key events and in promotional materials.	both departments. • Conduct interviews with P/T female UG student in all ENG subjects. • Interview female PGTs in ENG to understand why they chose to study with us to help to inform how to attract more female students. • Interview female PGRs in both departments to understand why they have chosen to study with us to inform how to attract more female students, particularly in ENG. • Integrate findings into recruitment approach.	Nov 2020 Nov 2020 Nov 2020 Jun 2021	Nov 2020 Nov 2020 Feb 2022	Deputy Dean Deputy Dean AS Officer	recruitment tailored effectively. At least three women present at all Open Days.	NSS and programme committees. The number of female academics has increased since our last submission and we have more than three female academics on ECS open days as well as female student proctors.

Ref.	Planned action/ objective	Rationale	Key outputs and milestones	Timeline		Person responsible	Success criteria and outcome	2025 Evaluation (RAG rated)
				Start date	End date			
			• Develop case studies for ECS webpage to encourage more women to study with us. • Ensure at least three women present at all Open Days. • See Action on Outreach (5.18).	Jun 2021 Oct 2020	Sept 2021 Ongoing	Head of Marketing Central Marketing and Web Support team Admissions Tutor		
4.2	Monitor the degree attainment of UG and PGT men.	The level of attainment for UG men in ENG dipped significantly in 2016/17 and is still below that of other groups. This issue is already being tackled through a working group and corresponding action plan. The issue particularly affects UG BAME, BTEC and commuting students. Performance of women tends to be	• EDIT to liaise with Student Attainment Working Group with regard to gender attainment gap.	Feb 2020	Annually	Deputy Dean and Associate Dean for Academic Quality, EDIT team	Issues identified and changes put in place lead to better attainment for men, particularly UG men in ENG and PGT men across both departments.	Ongoing. The male degree attainment gap is continuously addressed by the ECS departments, and it is part of action plan in the business plan.

Ref.	Planned action/ objective	Rationale	Key outputs and milestones	Timeline		Person responsible	Success criteria and outcome	2025 Evaluation (RAG rated)
				Start date	End date			
		higher than for men across PGT programmes as well.						
Staff								
4.3	Identify and support female staff progression to higher grades and raise further awareness and transparency of the promotion process.	The proportion of female staff in CS tends to concentrate at Lecturer level and there is a bottleneck at UH09. Whilst in ENG, the majority of women stagnate at Senior and Principal Lecturer grades and no female staff at Prof/AM grades. This is not in line with the national benchmark which shows 11% of Professors in this area are female. As well, the Staff Survey indicates that many staff do not feel there are enough women in senior roles within the School. Staff survey results also show that just under	• Actively identify eligible staff at appraisals and put in place plans of action accordingly in consultation with line managers. • Interview individuals who have been successful in achieving principal lecturer, readership and professorship to better understand how to help those who wish to progress and to understand any obstacles or barriers to promotion. • Produce paper with case studies	Sept 2020 Apr 2020 Apr 2021	Annually at appraisal Dec 2020 Dec 2021	Line managers, Subject Group Leaders AS Champion, Deputy AS Champion	Increase in senior academic women progressing to AM level in both Schools (10%) by 2025. This is in line with University Equality Objective targets. Awareness and perception of transparency of promotion process increases to 70% in next Staff Survey 2022. Paper accepted for publication and conference presentation.	More women (>10%) in senior roles and grades as of Sept 2023. Annual workshops run for EQUATE, associate and full professorship, readership. It is a pre - requirement before submitting application. Targets met based on 5-year monitoring including promotion of a professor in learning and teaching as a result of the promotion process training. Culture survey in 2023 indicated more

Ref.	Planned action/ objective	Rationale	Key outputs and milestones	Timeline		Person responsible	Success criteria and outcome	2025 Evaluation (RAG rated)
				Start date	End date			
		half of all staff (42%F and 45%M) understand the promotion process. Responses also indicate that many staff do not view the process to be transparent and fair. As a matter of priority, this needs to be rectified. Those involved in Learning, Teaching and Enterprise routes (who tend to be women) are not being supported in the same way as those who research more traditional subjects.	discussing barriers and how to support women in progressing. • Hold workshops for staff at UH08 (to progress to UH09). • Run sessions for UH07 (to progress to UH08). • Gather feedback from workshops. • Track informal stages of application to help understand whether any biases exist. • Run a workshop on promotion through Learning, Teaching and Enterprise routes. Invite successful appointees to share experience.	Feb 2020 Nov 2020 Feb 2020 Nov 2020 Jun 2020	Annually Annually Annually Annually Annually	AS Champion, Deputy AS Champion Dean Heads of Department EA to Dean AS Champion, Deputy AS Champion AS Champion, AD L&T	Attendance by 3 and 1 application for EQUATE by Nov annually. Attendance by 3 and 1 application for EQUATE by Feb annually. Online survey completed by all workshops attendees. Present at SEG for discussion Mar & Dec annually. At least one promotion in area of Learning, Teaching and Enterprise by 2023.	women understood progression processes compared to 2019.

Ref.	Planned action/ objective	Rationale	Key outputs and milestones	Timeline		Person responsible	Success criteria and outcome	2025 Evaluation (RAG rated)
				Start date	End date			
			• Line managers in ECS to be provided with more understanding of different routes through dedicated workshop.	Dec 2020	Dec 2020	AS Champion, AD L&T		
4.4	Liaise with HR on improving exit interview process, feedback dissemination and increasing staff uptake.	Leavers can choose to have an exit interview conducted by HR but uptake has been low and the process is currently under review at the University level. Feedback from staff leavers is also not cascaded down to the academic Schools, which is a point of concern we have raised.	• HRBP to report regularly to EDIT on central University exit interview review. • Work to ensure that feedback from staff leavers cascades back to the School from HR for consideration. • Review leavers' feedback and address issues, if any.	Feb 2020 Jan 2020 May 2020	Tri-annually May 2020 Annually	HRBP HR and Dean Dean	Feedback from leavers disseminated to School as standard. Better understanding of reasons for leaving to help feed into retaining existing staff.	Feedback from leavers is disseminated to School from HR providing reasons for leaving.
Section 5: Supporting and Advancing Women's Careers								

Ref.	Planned action/ objective	Rationale	Key outputs and milestones	Timeline		Person responsible	Success criteria and outcome	2025 Evaluation (RAG rated)
				Start date	End date			
5.1	Make Unconscious bias, E&D, Recruitment and Promotion training mandatory for all managers.	The majority of staff have already attended Unconscious Bias training. From this year we are taking this one step further to make Unconscious Bias, E&D and Recruitment and Promotion training mandatory for all managers, including the SEG and Heads of Subject Groups across both departments.	• Hire external provider for dedicated School manager Unconscious Bias training sessions. • Inform managers of new mandatory requirements and send information about central UH courses. Attendance to be monitored.	Mar 2020	Twice per year until achieved	UH Equality Office and AS Champion Dean	100% of managers have undertaken all required training by Nov 2023.	The training courses are mandatory for managers for the past four years. All managers have undertaken training.
5.2	Monitor impact of recently implemented recruitment actions to increase number of female applicants, and subsequently staff, in ECS.	Applications from women are low compared to those from men. We acknowledge a challenge for ECS is to attract more applications from female candidates and we have already implemented a series of actions to ensure women are attracted to apply for	• Analyse data in relation to recruitment by gender on an annual basis. • Report findings to EDIT for further consideration. • Further enhance recruitment practices by putting in place	Sept 2020	Annually	Heads of Departments, Head of Marketing, Deputy Dean	Increase number of applications from women by 5% by 2023.	The target is continuously met for the past three years. (Note that there was a pause of recruitment in 2020 during COVID)

Ref.	Planned action/ objective	Rationale	Key outputs and milestones	Timeline		Person responsible	Success criteria and outcome	2025 Evaluation (RAG rated)
				Start date	End date			
		posts. This needs to be monitored to see if it is having the desired effect.	best practice from AS Gold award members (e.g. Aston University).					
5.3	Merge departmental E&D webpages to create single ECS webpage.	Each department has its own equality, diversity and inclusion webpage with case studies; however, we need to bring these together as a reflection of the newly merged School.	• Liaise with Marketing and Communications team to discuss refreshing webpage and better communication information about E&D work. • Advertise webpage and E&D activities to all new students through School inductions. • Check number of website hits periodically to gauge views.	Oct 2019 Sept 2020 Sept 2021	Aug 2020 Annually Annually	AS Champion, AS Officer, Marcomms AD SE&P AS Champion, Web Support	Single webpage created and increase in number of hits.	There is now a single web page for EDI.
5.4	Monitor effectiveness of new induction process and identify areas for improvement,	New resources were developed, and a new local induction programme was rolled out in	• Heads to meet with all new staff following probationary	Dec 2019	Following complete probation, regular basis	Head of Departments	90% of staff agree that induction into their role was adequate, as	Induction includes mandatory training and allocated mentor. Induction question not

Ref.	Planned action/ objective	Rationale	Key outputs and milestones	Timeline		Person responsible	Success criteria and outcome	2025 Evaluation (RAG rated)
				Start date	End date			
	particularly for women.	academic year 2019/20 as a result of negative staff feedback (slightly more so for women than for men) around previous induction practices. This needs to be monitored to ensure positive experiences for new staff.	period to gauge perceptions around revised induction process. • Include question about induction in next Staff Survey and review responses. • Address any issues that arise from staff consultation.	May 2022 Nov 2022	Oct 2022 Aug 2023	AS Champion, Deputy AS Champion Deputy Dean	measured through Staff Survey 2022.	included in the 2023 survey. This was not monitored.
5.5	Integrate E&D, BAME and AS work and support into promotion and progression criteria.	Following a presentation by the School AS Champion at the institutional AS SAT in relation to recognising and valuing E&D work, which was taken on board by the central Secretary and Registrar, from this year E&D, BAME and AS work and support will be included in the consideration of promotion and progression.	• Continue to Champion recognising and valuing E&D work across the University and participate in central Away Day on the topic. • Add E&D work to promotional criteria and lobby for changes at the central level.	Jan 2019 Jan 2020	Ongoing Ongoing	AS Champion Dean and Deputy Dean	E&D work added to promotional criteria at School and University level. At least one successful promotion partly attributed to E&D work. Individual feedback from those involved in E&D work shows recognition in appraisals.	E&D work is included in the appraisal process. In 2023 survey, only 39.3% of staff agree that EDI work is recognised in applications for progression and 39.3% do not know. Action has not impacted perception.

Ref.	Planned action/ objective	Rationale	Key outputs and milestones	Timeline		Person responsible	Success criteria and outcome	2025 Evaluation (RAG rated)
				Start date	End date			
			• School to ensure work is recognised in appraisals.	Oct 2021	Ongoing	Dean and Deputy Dean		
5.6	Further investigate why staff (particularly women) do not feel able to access CPD and put in place support for interested staff to take up these opportunities.	Results from Staff Survey questions indicate that whilst awareness of opportunities is very good, fewer staff (more so women than men) feel able to take advantage of them. Also, programme leadership roles in CS are dominated by women (10F:2M); in contrast in ENG this is more evenly spread through considering the number of women in the department this is not proportional (6M:4F). Research shows that women academics do much more of the 'institutional	• Hold 'Tea and Chat' drop-in session to discuss CPD with staff to better understand ways of providing further support as well as assessing whether uptake of certain roles by female academics disadvantages them in terms of career progression. • Report findings if relevant to EDIT and senior management. • Line managers to discuss adequate support for CPD activities with interested staff during appraisal.	Feb 2020 May 2020 Sept 2020	Feb 2020 May 2020 Annually	AS Champion AS Champion Line managers	Increase in women feeling able to take advantage of CPD opportunities to 70% in next Staff Survey 2022.	In 2023 staff survey, 82.1% agree that line manager supports their career development (80% of F, 88% of M). 87.1% of staff feel able to take advantage of CPD opportunities (93.3 of F, 92% of M).

Ref.	Planned action/ objective	Rationale	Key outputs and milestones	Timeline		Person responsible	Success criteria and outcome	2025 Evaluation (RAG rated)
				Start date	End date			
		housekeeping' than men arguably because men avoid them to do research. Therefore, this could also have an impact on taking up CPD opportunities.						
5.7	Continue to raise awareness and encourage applications for the Aurora Programme and monitor impact on career progression.	Since 2014, six women in ECS were selected from across the University to attend the Aurora Programme. One participant was promoted to Deputy Dean and Associate Dean of Academic Quality and encourages others to attend. It is important to track the impact of Aurora on other colleague career trajectories.	• Email opportunities and encourage applications from female staff – academic, PTO. • Produce case studies and hold workshop to share participant experiences. • Track participant experiences over next 3 years.	Sept 2020, as they arise Dec 2021 Oct 2020	Annually Dec 2021 Aug 2023	Deputy Dean AS Champion, Deputy AS Champion, AS Office, Aurora participants	At least three women from the School apply to participate until 2023. At least one success story from a participant (such as promotion, change of role etc.) by 2023.	Aurora has been advertised to staff annually by the departments and line managers in the last five years. At least three of the senior female managers who participated were promoted or changed roles.
5.8	Enhance appraisal process to make more relevant and meaningful for staff.	42% (n=16) of staff think that appraisal is a tick-box exercise and has little impact on workload	• Explore ways of improving appraisal process in the School,	Feb 2020	Feb 2020	AS Champion	Improvement in response rate to 70% of staff who find appraisal process beneficial.	In 2023 survey, 71.5% found last appraisal a positive experience overall.

Ref.	Planned action/ objective	Rationale	Key outputs and milestones	Timeline		Person responsible	Success criteria and outcome	2025 Evaluation (RAG rated)
				Start date	End date			
		allocations, promotion or career direction. Responses to the staff survey also show that women are particularly (more so than the general population) interested in receiving career advice and having more effective appraisals.	such as through discussing at 'Tea and Chat' drop-in session (See Action 5.7). • Train appraisers in career progression criteria etc. as well as ensuring that they encourage and support all staff to plan their careers. • Revise approach to appraisal process based on findings and liaise with School of PAM who updated their process to share best practice. • Monitor appraisal uptake and gather feedback to gauge improvements.	May 2021 Mar 2020 Dec 2021	Every 3 years Apr 2021 Annually	HRBP, Learning and Org. Dev. team, and Line managers Dean and Deputy Dean Dean and Admin support team		

Ref.	Planned action/ objective	Rationale	Key outputs and milestones	Timeline		Person responsible	Success criteria and outcome	2025 Evaluation (RAG rated)
				Start date	End date			
5.9	Better signpost staff to new central mentoring and existing coaching opportunities.	The ECS staff survey shows over 40% of all respondents – both women and men – expressed a wish to have a mentor in relation to career development and planning. This can also be addressed in appraisals and there are numerous University schemes being developed that staff can tap into, but these need to be better signposted.	• Refer staff to existing L&OD coaching scheme for support. • Signpost staff to new central Women and Professors Network (encompassing Associate Professors, Readers and Professors) who have a pool of existing mentors and to Academic Women's Advancement Group. Also signpost new central BAME Mentorship and LGBT+ Mentor schemes (once rolled out) for interested staff. • Post information on local	Nov 2019 Jan 2020 Mar 2020	Ongoing Ongoing Ongoing	AS Champion, Deputy AS Champion	Interim 'bite size' survey in 2021 shows staff uptake and satisfaction of central mentorship and coaching opportunities. Full Staff Survey 2022 will show decrease in number of staff wishing to have a mentor to 20%.	All unsuccessful applicants for Associate and full Professorship and Readership are assigned mentors. Unsuccessful EQUATE applicants are also given feedback and encourage to seek support and mentorship from managers. In 2025, face to face interview, staff commented that they would like mentorship e.g. 'I like more proactive mentoring from people who knows what they are talking about'. Ongoing.

Ref.	Planned action/ objective	Rationale	Key outputs and milestones	Timeline		Person responsible	Success criteria and outcome	2025 Evaluation (RAG rated)
				Start date	End date			
			Sharepoint webpage.					
5.10	Raise awareness of support available for grant writing.	Only half of research-active staff are satisfied with the support available for grant writing.	• Inform staff about new grant writing opportunities being organised such as a workshop by the Academic Women's Advancement Group. • Hold local grant writing workshop for those who cannot attend central events. • Gather feedback from staff who have attended events.	Nov 2019 Mar 2021 Mar 2020	Ongoing Mar 2021 Apr 2021	AS Champion and Deputy AS Champion AD Research Deputy AS Champion	70% of staff are satisfied with level of grant writing support available in next Staff Survey 2022. At least five members of research-active staff attend central University grant writing workshop and give positive feedback.	The school has research centres for all active research staff that meet monthly to support staff collaboration and grant application. All research staff have mandatory training including grant writing. More than five staff have attended the training.
Section 5.5: Flexible working and managing career breaks								
5.11	Ensure that staff embarking on maternity/adoption/ shared parental leave are aware of KIT days, their use	Of seven respondents to the staff survey section around maternity etc., only one woman took	• Ensure line managers are fully trained in providing maternity guidance and	Mar 2020	Annually	L&OD, Line managers	Of staff who take maternity leave from 2020-2023 (if any), interviews reveal that they were provided with	KIT days are optional for staff on maternity to take. All managers are trained in providing UH guidance on

Ref.	Planned action/ objective	Rationale	Key outputs and milestones	Timeline		Person responsible	Success criteria and outcome	2025 Evaluation (RAG rated)
				Start date	End date			
	and potential benefits as well as (if applicable) shared parental leave, if not aware of it already.	advantage of KIT days but did not find them useful. We need to ensure that staff are aware of KIT days and the potential benefits as well as recently-created University information documents on the intranet. Only 44% of staff were aware of shared parental leave.	signposting to University support. • Send regular email to line managers highlighting pertinent information.			Dean	adequate advice around KIT days and shared parental leave (increase to 70% in Staff Survey 2022)) by line managers and HR.	maternity and KIT days. 5.8% of staff in the 2023 survey took advantage of Keeping in Touch (KIT)/Shared Parental in Touch (SPLIT). KIT/SPLIT days are continuously offered for those who wish to take them.
Section 5.6: Organisation and culture								
5.12	Hold School-wide Trans Awareness campaign to improve staff understanding of trans issues.	All staff are trained in courses related to E&D. However, ECS will organise an additional School-wide Trans Awareness training as this is not offered centrally on a regular basis and will help raise colleague awareness of trans issues.	• Run awareness campaign to coincide with University rolling out Gender Neutral Toilets (two of which will be located in the ENG corridor) and completed Trans Guidance. • Bring in external provider to run	Apr 2020	Apr 2020	AS Champion and AS Officer	Understanding of trans issues gauged through short evaluation survey of Trans Awareness campaign.	Transgender day (31 march each year celebrate and increase the visibility of trans and non-binary people. Transgender awareness week 13-19 November 2024. The UH and school provides Trans-inclusive guidance for staff and

Ref.	Planned action/ objective	Rationale	Key outputs and milestones	Timeline		Person responsible	Success criteria and outcome	2025 Evaluation (RAG rated)
				Start date	End date			
			Trans Awareness training for staff in School to attend, particularly EDIT team members.	Jun 2020	Jun 2020			supportive environment to address Trans issues. We have trans rep in our SEPECS EDIT.
5.13	Raise further awareness of School efforts to reduce the gender pay gap.	Responses to the Staff Survey showed that generally males and females have a similar perception regarding salaries with respect to gender within ECS. Unfortunately, a sizeable number of staff surveyed still consider women to be slightly or significantly disadvantaged in terms of salary. ECS is already working on an action plan to address the gender pay gap and this needs to be better communicated.	• Complete gender pay gap action plan, in coordination with HR. • Continue to work with Female staff to encourage and support the lack of action to submit to EQUATE process (Also see Action 4.3). • Publicise information widely to all staff and regularly report on progress to EDIT and SEG.	Feb 2020 Mar 2020 Mar 2020	Apr 2020 Bi-annually	Dean, Deputy Dean and HR Heads of Departments, Heads of Subject Groups and HR Dean and Deputy Dean	Perception of unequal pay by gender reduces, as measured in Staff Survey 2022. Pay gap reduces by 10% in ENG and 5% in CS by 2023.	Ongoing The latest UH pay gap suggest that gender gap still exist. ▪ The mean hourly rate of pay gap has reduced from 11.02% (2024) to 8.03% (2025) ▪ The median hourly rate of pay gap has reduced from 13.25% (2024) to 8.03% (2025) ▪ The mean gap of 8.03% indicates that for every £1 paid to men, women's pay is 91.97p ▪ Bonus pay gap has increased slightly from -6.71% (2024)

Ref.	Planned action/ objective	Rationale	Key outputs and milestones	Timeline		Person responsible	Success criteria and outcome	2025 Evaluation (RAG rated)
				Start date	End date			
								to -8.08% (2025) in favour of women
5.14	Build staff confidence and raise awareness of support in relation to reporting unfavourable treatment.	In the Staff Survey, half of staff reported confidence in reporting instances where they felt they have been treated unfavourably or witnessed someone else being treated unfavourably; however, 35% did not feel comfortable reporting and 15% said they would not know how to. This needs to be addressed.	• Run two staff sessions relating to bullying, harassment and discrimination that will be mandatory for all staff to attend. • Hang posters in key locations and send around information about University's Dignity and Respect Advisors. • Dedicate one AS 'Tea and Chat' drop-in session to this issue to gather thoughts from staff. • Send out short 'bite size' survey in relation to this issue to gauge impact around improving staff	Nov 2020 May 2020 Feb 2021 Nov 2021	Apr 2021 Reminder emails sent annually Feb 2021 Dec 2021	AS Champion, Equality Office, HRBP and Dean AS Champion and Dean AS Champion AS Deputy Champion and Dean	75% of staff feel comfortable reporting unfavourable treatment and 95% know how to report any instances, as measured through follow-up 'bite size' survey questions in Nov 2021.	In 2023 survey, 64.3% agree about feeling comfortable reporting unfavourable treatment (33% of F and 20% M disagree). In follow up 2025 face-face survey (n= 26) 69.2% know how to report, 27% of F do not know about dignity and respect advisors.

Ref.	Planned action/ objective	Rationale	Key outputs and milestones	Timeline		Person responsible	Success criteria and outcome	2025 Evaluation (RAG rated)
				Start date	End date			
			awareness and confidence.					
5.15	Monitor staff perception in relation to the view of the School as 'stressful and cliquey'.	In the Staff Survey, the most cited description of the School as a place to work were: Supportive, inclusive, welcoming and stressful. Further interrogation is needed into the perception of the School as 'stressful' in order to ensure positive staff wellbeing.	• Further discuss characterisations of the School as 'stressful' and 'cliquey' with staff in 'Tea and Chat' drop-in session. • Add question to Staff Survey in relation to staff views of School culture.	Feb 2020 May 2022	Feb 2020 Oct 2022	AS Champion AS Champion and AS Officer	Reduction in number of staff (particularly women) who view the School as stressful (down to 20%) and cliquey (down to 20%).	The school adopted by weekly drop-in sessions available on Calendar with the senior managers in the past five years. These specific questions were not asked again, so we have used proxies. In 2023 survey, 78.1% of staff feel that they belong in the departments (80% of F and 91% M) 55.3% of staff feel confident asking for mental health and/or wellbeing support at work (66.7% of F, 52% M agree)
5.16	Co-opt female observers onto groups and	Women are generally less positive in their	• All SEG members to take female staff as observers	Jan 2020	Ongoing	SEG members	Women gain greater appreciation of School and central	There are more women in SEG meetings.

Ref.	Planned action/ objective	Rationale	Key outputs and milestones	Timeline		Person responsible	Success criteria and outcome	2025 Evaluation (RAG rated)
				Start date	End date			
	internal/external committees where permissible.	response to the Staff Survey question, "Have you been given the opportunity to sit on any committees within the School or wider University?"	to internal and external committees for experience, where permissible.				committees. Increase in positive responses to question in relation to Staff Survey 2022 by 15%.	Ongoing. These specific questions were not asked again, so we have used proxies.
5.17	Monitor impact of changes to workload model and transparency in relation to staff experiences.	60% of all respondents in the Staff Survey do not agree that the workload model is fair and transparent. A review of the workload already took place in June 2019 and module workload for ENG was published for all staff to view. CS continues using the internally developed SWAT system.	• HoDs attend UH Working Group for a standard workload database to be introduced in 2020. • Publication of each role and the hours it attracts are published when Expressions of Interest are asked for new openings. • Conduct smaller interim 'bitesize surveys' to try to avoid 'survey fatigue' and track impact of workload model.	Jan 2019 Ongoing Jan 2020	 Ongoing Jun 2023	Heads of Departments, Heads of Subjects and Line managers AS Champion, Deputy AS champion, AS Officer	Decrease in number of staff (40%) who do not agree that the workload model is fair and transparent. To be measured in next Staff Survey 2022.	2023 survey shows decrease in number by 13.6% of staff who do not agree that the workload model is fair and transparent. The UH has now introduced a new workload model which is yet to be evaluated. Ongoing.

Ref.	Planned action/ objective	Rationale	Key outputs and milestones	Timeline		Person responsible	Success criteria and outcome	2025 Evaluation (RAG rated)
				Start date	End date			
			• Communicate message to reinforce that a workload can be discussed at any time within line management. • Re-run full staff survey. • Conduct focus groups to follow up on issues raised in the Staff Survey.	Jan 2020 May 2022 Oct 2022	Annually Oct 2022 Dec 2022	Dean AS Champion, Deputy AS champion, AS Officer		
5.18	Monitor staff and student participation in outreach and engagement activities.	ECS does not currently monitor outreach and engagement activities data.	• Create 'Blog and Log' web blog similar to Institute of Integrative Biology University of Liverpool in order to further celebrate, reflect on, share and record the outreach activities of students, post-docs, researchers and academics from ECS.	Sept 2020	Sept 2021	Outreach team and Web Support team	Web blog created and all staff engaged in outreach post regularly, enabling activities to be monitored.	The school and departments monitor outreach activities with dedicated outreach staff appointed for the roles. There is a portal for this.

Ref.	Planned action/ objective	Rationale	Key outputs and milestones	Timeline		Person responsible	Success criteria and outcome	2025 Evaluation (RAG rated)
				Start date	End date			
5.19	Engage further with professional staff in lead up to the StAR implementation in order to best support them through this period of transition.	UH is currently implementing a Student Administration Review (StAR) which will have significant impact on our professional staff moving forward. This has resulted in feelings of uncertainty for this staff group. We intend to engage further with professional staff in lead up to the StAR implementation in order to best support them through this period of transition.	• At least two individual meetings with each member of administrative staff to discuss concerns and issues moving forward. • Conduct de-briefs with all staff following consultation with senior management. • Signpost staff to Employee Assistance Programme for legal and wellbeing support.	Nov 2019	Apr 2020	School Administration Manager and SEG member	Professional staff provided with adequate support in lead up to StAR implementation.	Professional staff provided with adequate support by the School in lead up to StAR implementation. Completed.

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

1. Culture, inclusion and belonging

Departmental values: Central to ECS's community are Herts' FACES values: friendliness, ambition, collaboration, enterprise, and student success. These values underpin our aim to foster respect, integrity and belonging, and are embedded in the SPECS business plan to improve staff engagement. SPECS' EDI objectives align, promoting an inclusive culture, equal opportunities, and diversity. In the 2023 culture survey, most staff valued relationships, trusted line managers and career support (80%F, 88%M), felt aligned with departmental values (76.3%F, 83.4%M), and reported access to hybrid flexible working (73.4%F, 83.3%M), which is actively supported in ECS.

Flexible working and hybrid working: Following the pandemic, HR introduced a Flexible Locations Framework with six principles (business need, role, compliance, location, communication, flexibility) determining remote-working eligibility. These principles provide staff, particularly those with caring responsibilities or disabilities, greater choice in working arrangements. Positive staff feedback was reflected in the 2023 survey and the 2025 one-to-one survey, where 76% agreed and 27% of women and 12% of men disagreed.

Working parents*:* Working parents/Carers responded positively to the health and wellbeing question (overall 62.5%: 60% F, 64%, M) from culture survey, 2023. Although, some barriers with some staff (male and female) report lack of flexibility and adjustments as noted in the FAP (3.6, 3.12).

Inclusion and staff engagement*:* ECS offers a range of activities led by SPECS wellbeing champions, who organise and promote weekly events, including School and University initiatives such as the learning and teaching away day, welcome back day, the Annual EDI away day, menopause support, and coffee mornings. Events are planned with accessibility in mind including gender-based issues such as childcare commitments or caring responsibilities. The School also operates a recognition scheme through the Dean's annual performance awards. These inclusive activities have strengthened staff engagement and belonging. In the culture survey 2023 survey (Question 34.1), (80% F, 91.7%M) agreed 'I feel like I belong in my department' an increase from 67% from previous submission.

Leadership training and Transparency and access to decision making*:* Mandatory promotion training for managers has been in place since 2020; Unconscious Bias training for all staff has been offered since 2021; central E&D training for panel chairs since 2022; and a Recruitment and Selection module was introduced in 2023 for interview panels. In the 2023 culture survey, positive scores were received from all genders for 'my line manager supports my career development' (82.1% overall; 80%F, 88%M, Figure 1.5). To increase transparency and improve staff access to decision-making, the School introduced two weekly senior-management drop-in sessions in 2021. These provide an open forum for all staff, to raise concerns and seek information, strengthening trust and visibility of

decision-making. In 2025, the School launched the Executive Leadership and Shadowing Programme, enabling staff to shadow SEG members for 18 months. Ten staff were appointed (30% female; 20% BAME; 40% white male), expanding access to leadership pathways. The programme, including workshops on EDI, BAME, LGBT, and leadership, will run every 18 months to develop diverse future leaders and broaden participation in decision-making.

Bullying and Harassment: ECS promotes treating people fairly and equally and raises awareness of bullying and harassment in the department. Annual mandatory bullying and harassment training is provided through iHASCO. An anonymous Respect and Dignity Officer and feedback box are available to all staff. There is also central support from the EDI team through their Digntiy & Respect advisors. Despite these measures, 14.3%F disagree, and 42.9%F reported they do not know how bullying and harassment is addressed in ECS.

KEY LEARNING: ECS recognises that improving diversity and awareness of bulling and harassment in the workforce is a long-term process **(FAP action 3.7 – 3.11).**

Student Culture

ECS has seen female student numbers rise over the past five years, from 18% to 23% in Computer Science and from 9% to 11% in Engineering (Tables 2 - 3), largely driven by international students on PGT programmes. Cultural diversity has also increased, with students from Nigeria, India, and Pakistan, alongside a reduction in UK undergraduate students. Promoting awareness of cultural differences remains fundamental to fostering an inclusive, respectful, and supportive community.

The five-year UG awarding gap (students achieving a ‘good degree’) between BAME and White students has reduced from 17% to 11% (Table 4). Similarly, the gap between Black and White students has narrowed from 25% to 7% (Table 5). Female students continue to achieve good degrees across all ethnicities compared with male students. However, the overall awarding gap (Tables 6 - 7), with non-BAME outperforming BAME students across all genders, remains higher in ECS. These gaps are addressed centrally by Herts through the BAME Institutional Action Plan and Access and Participation Plan (APP).

Herts continues to offer on-campus childcare facilities, faith support from the Chaplaincy and a vibrant student union with 300+ student societies and 10 elected officers with focused areas such as women and LGBTQ+. The School introduced bespoke Students Academic Support Hub (SASH) in 2021, providing first line wellbeing support, academic skills and tutoring support such as maths, writing skills and programming. In addition to this, students have access to student Union buddy scheme and UH student wellbeing services.

ECS survey results in 2023: NSS, PTES and PRES show improvement in most areas, including student support and wellbeing. This has contributed to overall Herts results from institutional surveys, evidencing ongoing commitment to improving the student experience (Figure 14).

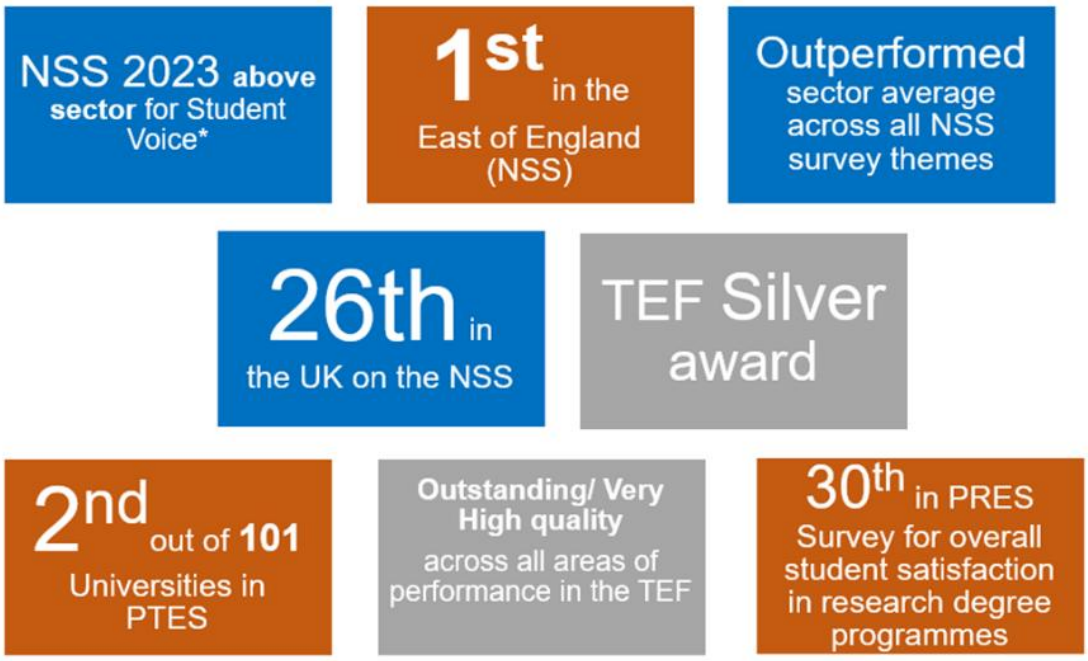


Figure 14: Herts Highlights from TEF (2021), NSS, PTES & PRES (2023)

2. Key priorities for future action

Please describe the department's key priorities for future action.

Evidence-based recognition of the key issues facing ECS

To identify the key priorities for our 2025-2030 Action Plan, we have collated, reviewed and analysed staff and student data (see Appendix 2), the results of the culture survey in June 2023 (see Appendix 1), additional supplement surveys from June 2025 (see Appendix 1) and informal feedback gathered by the SPECS EDIT. Our Action Plan focuses on four areas of particular importance for ECS over the next five years.

Priority 1: Staff progression and career development

The staff data in Figure 2.1 and Figure 2.2 show that the current gender split within ECS broadly reflects the national picture of men and women in engineering and computer science departments, using HESA data as a benchmark.

Figures 2.6 to 2.15 show the data split by grade (see the UH grading structure in Figure 2.5 for context). It is encouraging that the percentage of women at the most senior AM level is 25% in both departments which is an all-time high for ECS. The number of women at AM level has increased by 100% from two to four since our last Athena Swan award. The number of women at UH9 at has also doubled. (Note that the number of female staff at AM and UH9 is not accurately reflected by the data in

Figure 2.7 to 2.9, which is the most recent data available from HR, as this does not allow for two recent promotions at AM and four at UH9).

Figure 2.18 shows a decrease in the percentage of women on fixed-term contracts by half.

The recruitment data in Figures 2.19 gives a positive picture. Like other STEM departments there is a smaller pool of female applicants, but, as a percentage of applicants, the number of women shortlisted and successfully taking up a job compares favourably with the equivalent percentages for men in most years. This is a result of our good recruitment practices discussed in the previous section.

The academic promotion numbers in Figures 2.23 and 2.24 show the percentage of male and female ECS staff members whose grade have changed during the past five years. The level fluctuates due to the small numbers involved, but overall, it does not appear to give evidence of a bias towards either men or women. We note that this only shows the number of promotions as a percentage of the total number of males and females in the department; it would also be useful to see it as a percentage of the number of promotion applications, but this data was not collected. (In addition, the figures may also include grade changes for reasons other than promotion. We do not believe that this has significantly affected the results.)

Action 1.1 Liaise with the central Herts HR data team to improve the promotions data available to us. Data has not been collected or easily disseminated to departments. As well as the number of promotions, we need the number applying and the number of eligible candidates not applying, split by gender and ethnicity

To achieve inclusive promotion, it is essential that everyone is aware of the progression processes and believes them to be fair and transparent. According to the 2023 culture survey, most ECS staff are aware of the process and know where to find information about it, with only 16.1% disagreeing with this statement. However, a worrying 40% do not agree that the progression criteria are clear, 46.7% do not consider the process to be transparent and 20% do not think that the decisions are fair (Figures 1.8 to 1.11). These figures were similar in the 2021 culture survey. The academic promotion system is run at an institutional level, so the criteria and processes are not owned by ECS. However, we can improve our communication, guidance and support, so our Action Plan focuses on these aspects.

Action 1.2 Improved communication of the Equate process (criteria, process, how decisions are made) to all ECS academic and professional staff.

Action 1.3 Hold a workshop aimed at women+ with HR business partner, to guide women and non-binary people through the Equate process.

Action 1.4 Promote training opportunities for women to prepare for leadership roles (e.g. Aurora); SPECS EDIT chair(s) work with HoD to determine a workload allocation for this.

While technical staff have been incorporated into their own department within SPECS since around 2021 (officially as of September 2023), for many years, the ECS EDI champions have supported and lobbied for technical staff progression practises to be improved. Previously it was only possible to progress when someone left a role, leaving many people stuck in a salary band that they had significantly outgrown. It is now possible for technical staff in SPECS to use the Equate process to meet progression criteria and be promoted based on experience. This is in part due to Herts being signed up to the Technician Commitment. The SPECS EDIT will continue to lobby for better progression routes for other PTO roles.

The number of Professional, Technical and Operational (PTO) staff has also increased. The most recent HR data 2023-24 shows in Figure 2.37 that there are 10 women in the technical staff an increase from zero. The ECS now has 4 administrative women and 4 men from 2 women and 1 man. There are 5.4 senior administrative women compared to 1.2 of men as seen in Figure 2.41. The pay grade for professional and technical staff for women has increased with no pay grade below UH3 as seen in Figure 2.42 to 2.43 this is due to lobbying by EDIT and the university policy to improve paya grade for PTO staff.

Some questions in the culture survey (2023) indicate a gendered response. In particular the core questions “My contributions are valued in my department” and “My line manager supports my career development” (Figures 1.1 and 1.5). We note that 33.3% of women respondents ticked “Disagree” compared with 20.3% of men for both questions (perhaps the same people in both cases). The 2025 supplementary staff surveys in ECS also show gendered responses more prevalent in computer science. We need to address the fact that some women in ECS feel unsupported (see action 1.5-1.10)

Action 1.5 Provide progression support and mentoring for women via the SPECS Women's Network.

Action 1.6 Promote membership of UH networks (Academic Women's Action Group, Network of Women+ Professors, Working Parents Network).

Action 1.7 Line managers offer targeted promotion support during appraisals, eg focusing on roles which contribute towards progression.

Action 1.8 Training for line managers around career barriers for genders other than men and how to support them.

Action 1.9 Encourage postdoc women to attend RDF training.

Action 1.10 Lobby UH to ensure that all PTO roles can progress based on experience; promote to staff as becomes available.

Priority 2: Embedding EDI in the culture of the School and Department

SPECS EDIT is central to the School's EDI planning and priorities. Following the merger of the three departments in 2019 and 2020, we are actively working towards consistency and sharing of best practice across the School and this is reflected in the action plan.

Action 2.1 Continue to hold meetings of the SPECS Women's Network (inviting men too).

Figures 1.12 to 1.14 show that awareness of the benefits of Athena Swan, Juno and EDI in the department is generally high. It is encouraging to see broadly positive responses from both men and women to the core Athena Swan statement "Department leadership actively supports gender equality" (see Figure 1.2).

However, we have identified some areas for improvement. We would like more staff in ECS to be involved in EDI, as our survey showed (Figure 1.15) that 40% of respondents disagree being active contributors to EDI.

It is a requirement at Herts that every staff appraisal incorporates an EDI-related target which can be gender based. Unfortunately, it is clear from our survey that this is not happening uniformly in ECS (see Figure 1.16), and we are disappointed by the number of women responding "N/A" to this question, given that it should be applicable to everyone.

Action 2.2 Gather feedback on why people do not engage with EDI; formulate new action points based on the answers.

Action 2.3 Line managers to ensure people are including and actioning at least one EDI priority in appraisal process; better communication between the SPECS EDIT and the line managers for suggestions of how people can get involved.

The student body is a key part of EDI representation and culture. Figures 2.27 to 2.33 show that the number of female students at UG, PGT and PGR for engineering and computer science is lower than the HESA benchmark.

Action 2.4 Identify possible actions through sector analysis of ECS data for proportions of male/female UG, PGT and PGR students.

Action 2.5 Work with MarComms and student recruitment to ensure EDI strategies such as outreach activities to encourage female applicants are included in marketing ECS courses to prospective students in marketing courses to prospective students.

Figures 2.35 and 2.37 show that female students are generally more likely to achieve a good degree (1st or 2:1) than males. Although the data in the most recent year 2024 of UG from computer science shows males performing better than females (Figure 2.34). We have also included an action point to ensure that we continue to make progress with diversifying and decolonising the curriculum, an ongoing project within ECS and Herts

Action 2.6 Engage with the Herts project of diversifying and decolonising the curriculum

Priority 3: Mental health and wellbeing of students and staff

Feedback from student representation on the SPECS EDIT, programme committees and the NSS indicates that mental health is a serious issue for university students, particularly noting higher numbers of referrals for females. There are well-documented reasons for this, including Covid-19 and the cost-of-living crisis. During the 2024-2025 academic year, there were 243 SPECS student self-referrals to the UH Wellbeing team's counselling and mental health services. (Note that this is the number of referrals, not the number of individual students.) Figure 13 shows how this compares to the rest of Herts. The proportion was lower for male students, in line with research showing that men are less likely to seek support for mental ill health. Numbers were also relatively low for students identifying as transgender.

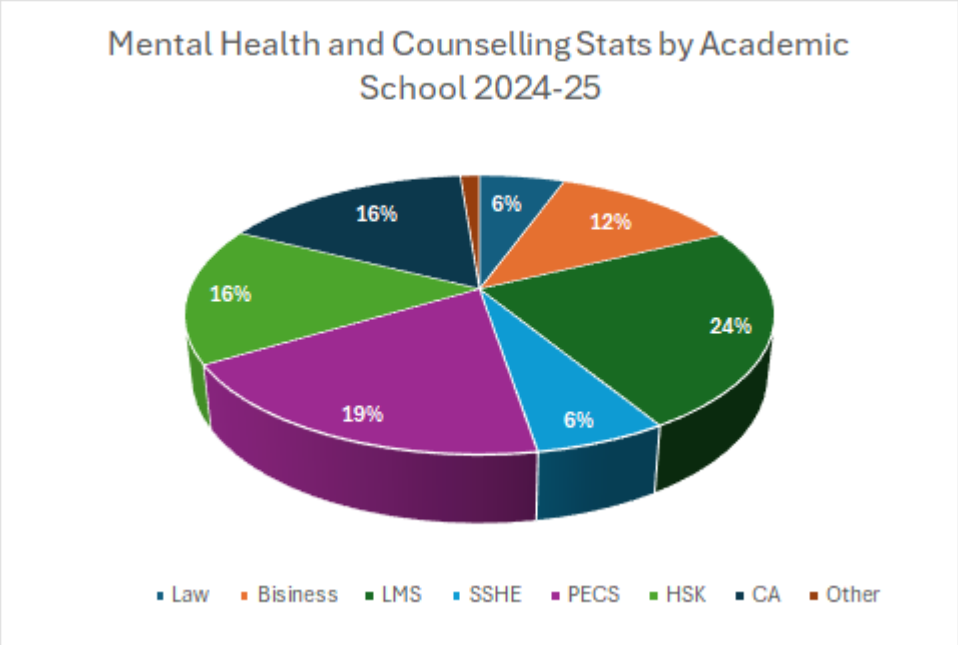


Figure 13: Student self-referrals split by School

Help and support is available for students via a system of personal tutors, year group tutors and the Academic Support Hub (SASH), as well as Herts Student Wellbeing Services and Student Union buddy scheme. Our action points are around raising awareness of existing provision and encouraging students (particularly male and transgender students) to make use of it and improvements in planning and priorities.

Action 3.1 Raise awareness of the support available to students (SASH, Student Wellbeing, Student Union buddy system, 'Report and Support') via personal tutors.

Action 3.2 Communicate to personal tutors that male and transgender students may need extra encouragement to access the above services.

In the 2023 culture survey 23.2% of staff respondents answered “Disagree” or “Strongly Disagree” to the core Athena Swan question “My mental health and wellbeing are supported in my department” (Figure 1.6), indicating an issue for staff as well as students. The follow up supplemental survey in 2025 free text comments include:

There was a gendered response in 2023 staff survey to the question “How regularly do you work longer than your contracted hours?”, with 56% of men compared to 66.7% of women responding “Usually”. Conversely, more women than men felt that the ECS workload system is not fair and transparent (33.3% compared to 24%).

There is an increase in new staff members since 2023 when the survey was conducted to support the increase in PGT student numbers. We hope this will have a significant effect on workload issue. ECS will be moving to a Herts-wide workload system in September 2025. Our action plan recognises the adverse contribution of high workload towards wellbeing and aims to assess the impacts of the forthcoming changes.

Action 3.3 Monitor impact of moving to Herts workloading system (including gender split, particularly female in relation to administrative roles).

Action 3.4 Aim to keep workloads as close to 100% as possible going forwards.

Action 3.5 Discuss options for recognising the contribution of staff who have had additional workloads due to understaffing.

In our culture survey in 2023, we note that 42.9% of women and 29.2% men do not know how bullying and harassment is addressed in ECS (Figure 1.4). The follow up survey in 2025 free format comments include:

There is support in place for staff struggling with their mental health or experiencing bullying and harassment, including the Employee Assistance Programme, SPECS Wellbeing champion, the Chaplaincy, UH Dignity & Respect advisors, EDI team, HR Business Partners, Speak Out anonymous reporting, and the UH Men's Health and Wellbeing network. Our action plan aims to raise awareness of these support services support and the training available, recognising the importance of the messaging coming from senior management.

Action 3.6 HRBP to run a session raising awareness of the various wellbeing services available to staff.

Action 3.7 HRBP to run a session raising awareness of UH's Bullying and Harassment Policy. Female staff particularly encouraged to attend.

Action 3.8 HRBP to run a session raising awareness of UH's Bullying and Harassment Policy for line managers.

Action 3.9 Promote anti-bullying & harassment training (eg Active Bystander training) offered by Herts

Action 3.10 Remind staff of the ECS/UH policy to take all their annual leave and not to send messages outside working hours, in order to improve workplace culture.

Action 3.11 Increase visibility of senior management zero tolerance of B&H via reminder of B&H policy, reminder of open-door policy.

Action 3.12 SPECS Wellbeing Champion to liaise with University Workplace Health & Wellbeing Lead to develop new, and promote/incorporate, existing wellbeing initiatives (with a focus on issues disproportionately affecting Women e.g. Menopause).

Action 3.13 HRBP to run a session raising awareness of UH's Menopause Policy for line managers.

Action 3.14 Build staff confidence and raise awareness of support in relation to reporting unfavourable treatment.

In the 2023 staff survey 74.5% agree ECS enables flexible working. However, 20% of women disagree. The follow up survey in 2025, 19.2% disagree that the department enables flexible working. The free format comments from the survey include:

Majority of the respondents agree the departments enables flexible working. The departments have a timetable constraints application process available to all staff, through an online application form which is approved by line managers. Many staff have benefited, as seen in both surveys in 2023 and 2025. However, this process is not always consistent and transparent in practice.

Action 3.15 Line managers to ensure that flexible working in ECS is promoted in practice in a way that it supports people with teaching timetable constraints and provide flexibility.

***Priority 4: Ensure the transition to the new SPECS building is inclusive to the needs of women and other minority groups**

SPECS moved to a new open plan building in 2024, with less privacy and personal space for staff members. Although not asked about it directly, in the 2023 culture survey, indirect responses to other questions and other sources of feedback indicate that it is an area of serious concern for staff members. An example comment is: "... the move to open plan offices and hotdesking, which is an unsuitable environment for academic staff...".

Research shows that open plan offices can be a more negative experience for women than men, resulting in decreased productivity due to being more accessible and the pressure of being "on display". This is likely be exacerbated for women with intersectional characteristics, such as a disability. We need to ensure that women and other minorities, have a voice while the new working systems and patterns are implemented, so that the senior management are aware of general and specific concerns and reasonable adjustments put in place. Our action plan aims to address these issues.

We felt that issues around the open plan design of the offices in SPECTRA were the same as those identified previously in the PAM Athena Swan submission (in 2023) and as part of the same School were relevant to ECS staff. *This section is the same as PAM AS application in November 2023

Action 4.1 Hold focus groups and/or surveys with staff and PGR students, ensuring female representation, asking for ideas to help make the new building work for them.

Action 4.2 Raise the new building as a topic of discussion at the next SPECS Women's Network meeting.

Action 4.3 Establish data trends regarding the new building (split by gender and job role).

Action 4.4 Add questions about the new building to the next culture survey, to monitor the gendered attitude to the change.

Action 4.5 Use the social spaces to promote regular networking opportunities within the department.

Section 4: Future action plan

1. Action plan

Please provide an action plan covering the five-year award period.

ID	Action	Rationale	Timeframes (start/end date)	Person responsible/ accountable	Success criteria and outcome
Priority 1: Staff progression and career development					
1.1	Liaise with the central UH data team to improve the promotions data available to us. Data has not been collected or easily disseminated to departments. As well as the number of promotions, we need the number applying for promotion and the number of eligible candidates not applying, split by gender and ethnicity	Data not easily collected or available	Data available by Sept 2026, then ongoing	UH HR data team (Chair of SPECS EDIT to monitor completion)	Improved pipeline for women and non-binary people to higher grades, achieving a similar ratio to that of men being promoted, and a similar ratio of eligible candidates applying for promotion
1.2	Communication of the Equate process (criteria, process, how decisions are made) to all ECS academic and professional staff	In 2023 culture survey, 40% do not agree that the progression criteria are clear, 46.7% do not consider the process to be transparent and 20% do not think that the decisions are fair. These figures were similar in the 2021 culture survey.	Annually, in advance of each promotion's round	DoS, HoD, HRBP (Chair of SPECS EDIT to monitor completion)	Culture survey indicates at least 10% increased trust in the progression process (Figure 1.8 – 1.11); number of people applying for promotion increases, especially versus length of service (data from action 1.1)
1.3	Hold a workshop aimed at women+ with HR business partner to guide women		Annually, in advance of each promotion's round	HRBP	Culture survey indicates at least 10% increased trust in the progression process (Figure 1.8 – 1.11); number of women and

	and non-binary people through the Equate process			(HRBP and AS champion to monitor completion)	non-binary people applying for promotion increases, especially versus length of service (data from action 1.1)
1.4	Promote training opportunities women to prepare for leadership roles (e.g. Aurora); EDI champion/chair(s) work with HoD to determine a workload allocation for this		Ad-hoc promotion through School/Dept comms	HoD, DoS, SPECS EDIT, AS Champion (Chair/Lead of SPECS EDIT to monitor completion)	At least two eligible women+ staff member in ECS attends a leadership training courses each year (e.g. Aurora, UH Women Rise conference). Workload is established to accommodate attendance
1.5	Provide progression support and informal mentoring for women via the SPECS Women's Network	Culture survey in 2023 indicates a gendered response, in particular the core questions "My contributions are valued in my department" and "My line manager supports my career development". We note that 33.3% of women respondents ticked "Disagree" compared with 20.3% of men for both questions (perhaps the same people in both cases).	Ongoing, check in once per semester with WN leads to assess support needs and record uptake	SWN, SPECS EDIT, AS Champion (Chair/Lead of SPECS EDIT to monitor completion)	Informal feedback from the Women's Network leads and participants indicates increased uptake and feeling of support; culture survey indicates increased satisfaction regarding mentoring by at least 10%.
1.6	Promote membership of UH networks (Academic Women's Action Group, Network of Women+ Professors, Working Parents Network)		Ad-hoc promotion through School/Dept comms	SPECS EDIT, AS Champion (Chair/Lead of SPECS EDIT to monitor completion)	Culture survey indicates 10% increase in women agreeing on networking opportunities; add new question regarding membership of UH networks
1.7	Line managers offer targeted promotion support during appraisals, e.g. focusing on training and		Autumn 2027 (as part of appraisals), then ongoing	Line Managers (HoD to monitor completion)	Culture survey indicates 10% increased support satisfaction by women from line managers, (Appendix 1, Figure 1.1 and 1.4)

	progression criteria which contribute towards active progression such as in Research	26.7% of women disagree on question 'I feel that I have sufficient networking opportunities' compared to 12% of men.			
1.8	Training for line managers around career barriers for genders other than men and how to support them		Autumn 2027 (before appraisals)	Line Managers (HoD to monitor completion)	Culture survey indicates at least 10% increased support satisfaction by women from line managers, (Appendix 1, Figure 1.1 and 1.4)
1.9	Encourage postdoc women to attend RDF training		Ongoing (training opportunities info given to new starters and ad-hoc in comms)	Research Leads, (Line managers to monitor completion)	Relative number of attendees to training reflects proportion of male/female postdoc staff
1.10	Lobby UH to ensure that all PTO roles can progress based on experience; promotion to staff as becomes available	Some PTO are stuck in a salary band that they had significantly outgrown	Ongoing (raise at Ops Group, EDIT meetings, UH feedback forums)	SPECS EDIT, AS champion (Chair/Lead of SPECS EDIT to monitor completion)	All staff able to apply for progression and PTO staff feeling positive about promotion or career development opportunities; information is readily available and clear
Priority 2: Embedding EDI in the culture of the School and Department					
2.1	SPECS Women's Network working towards identifying key areas of interest for events that could also include allies such as men as well as	Sharing of best practice across the School	Ongoing (meetings occur at least once per semester)	SWN, SPECS EDIT, AS Champion	Regular meetings of the SPECS Women's Network occur; gather informal feedback from attendees

	those from other gender identity's				
2.2	Encourage more staff in ECS to engage with EDI	We would like more staff in ECS to be involved in EDI, as our survey show that 40% of respondents disagree being active contributors to EDI	Within 3 years (Sept 2028)	SPECS EDIT, AS Champion (Chair/Lead of SPECS EDIT to monitor completion)	Next culture survey indicates at least 10% increase of staff actively involved in EDI (Figure 1.15)
2.3	ECS line managers to ensure people are including and actioning at least one EDI priority in appraisal process	It is a requirement at UH that every staff appraisal incorporates an EDI-related target. Unfortunately, it is clear from our survey that this is not happening uniformly in ECS and we are disappointed by the number of women 46.7% responding "N/A" to this question, given that it should be applicable to everyone	Within 2 years (Sept 2027)	Line Managers (Chair/Lead of SPECS EDIT to monitor completion)	Next culture survey indicates at least 20% increased of staff including an EDI target in their appraisal (Figure 1.16)
2.4	Identify possible actions through sector analysis of ECS data for proportions of male/female UG, PGT and PGR students.	Lower number of female students below HESA benchmark	Ongoing (annual data release occurs ~ November)	SPECS EDIT, AS Champion (Chair/Lead of SPECS EDIT to monitor completion)	Increasing percentage of female UG, PGT and PGR ECS students

2.5	Work with MarComms and student recruitment to ensure EDI strategies such as outreach activities to encourage female applicants are included in marketing ECS courses to prospective students		June 2028 (i.e. within 18 months)	SPECS EDIT, AS Champion (Chair/ADESS of SPECS EDIT to monitor completion)	Increasing percentage of female UG, PGT and PGR ECS students
2.6	Engage with the UH project of diversifying and decolonising the curriculum	Gender inequality in student male students achieving good degree	Ongoing (check in with responsible person to establish progress and provide support)	SPECS EDIT, module leaders, AS Champion (Chair/ADESS of SPECS EDIT to monitor completion)	Next culture survey indicates at least 10% increase of staff actively contribute to SPECS EDI activities (Figure 1.15); progress with UH curriculum diversification project and gender balance in achieving good degree.
2.7	Review SPECS EDIT Membership. Work closely with representatives to advocate student membership. Invite expressions of interest from UG/PGT/PGR student with incentives, early career research staff, part time staff, male staff to join SPECS EDIT.	SPECS EDIT requires new UG/PGT/PGR student members, early career research and technical staff, part time staff and men are under-represented.	Within a year by the end of 2026.	Chair SPECS EDIT, AS Champion, Student representatives, ADESS (Chair/ADESS of SPECS EDIT to monitor completion)	Increased diversity and inclusivity to SPECS EDIT membership.

Priority 3: Mental health and wellbeing of students and staff					
3.1	Raise awareness of the support available to students (SASH, Student Wellbeing, Student Union buddy system, 'Report and Support') via personal tutors	Research showing that men are less likely than women to seek support for problems such as depression or stress. Numbers were also relatively low for students identifying as transgender.	Ongoing, start of each semester	Personal tutors (Chair/ADESS of SPECS EDIT to monitor completion)	NSS feedback, feedback from student reps at programme committee meetings showing positive engagement with support services.
3.2	Communicate to personal tutors that male and transgender students may need extra encouragement to access the above services		Ongoing, start of each semester	Personal tutors (Chair/ADESS of SPECS EDIT to monitor completion)	Monitor gender split of the students seeking help from UH Student Wellbeing
3.3	Track impact of moving to new UH workloading system (including gender split, particularly female in relation to administrative roles).	There was a gendered response in 2023 staff survey to the question "How regularly do you work longer than your contracted hours?", with 56% of men compared to 66.7% of women responding "Usually". Conversely, more women than men felt that the ECS workload system is not fair and transparent (33.3% compared to 24%).	Within 2 years, next culture survey	SPECS EDIT, AS Champion (AS champion Chair/ADESS of SPECS EDIT to monitor completion)	Next culture survey maintains or improves the current response to fairness of workload model by gender.
3.4	Aim to keep workloads below 100%		Ongoing, every spring	Ops Group (HoDs of ECS to monitor completion)	Next culture survey indicates improved response to long working hours
3.5	Discuss options for recognising the contribution of staff who have had additional		September 2026 (i.e. within 12 months)	HoD, SPECS EDI, Ops Group (HoDs of ECS to monitor completion)	Next culture survey indicates improved response to fairness of workload model and long working hours

	workloads due to understaffing				
3.6	HRBP to run a session raising awareness of the wellbeing services available to staff	Raise awareness of these sources of support (26.7% of females and 20% of males disagree that my mental health and wellbeing are supported.	First session by June 2026 (i.e. within six months), repeated annually	HRBP (AS champion/HRBP/SPECS EDIT lead to monitor completion)	Next culture survey indicates improved response by 5%
3.7	HRBP to run a session raising awareness of UH's Bullying and Harassment Policy. Female staff particularly encouraged to attend	In our culture survey in 2023, we note that 42.9% of women and 29.2% men do not know how bullying and harassment is addressed in the ECS departments	First session within six months (by June 2026), repeated annually	HRBP (AS champion/HRBP/SPECS EDIT lead to monitor completion)	Next culture survey indicates improved response by at least 15%
3.8	HRBP to run a session raising awareness of UH's Bullying and Harassment Policy for line managers		First session within six months (by June 2026), repeated annually	HRBP (AS champion/HRBP/SPECS EDIT lead to monitor completion)	Next culture survey indicates improved response by at least 15%
3.9	Promote anti-bullying & harassment training (e.g. Active Bystander training) offered by UH		Regularly, ad-hoc via dept and School comms	SPECS EDIT, AS Champion, HoD, DoS (AS champion/HRBP/SPECS EDIT lead to monitor completion)	Increase of ECS staff attendance on anti B&H training courses and next culture survey indicates improved response by at least 15%
3.10	Remind staff of the ECS and UH policy to take all their annual leave and not		Within two years 2027,	HoD	Next culture survey indicates improved response to wellbeing and B&H

	to send messages outside working hours, in order to improve workplace culture		2029 next culture survey	(HoD, AS champion/HRBP/SPECS EDIT lead to monitor completion)	
3.11	Increase visibility of senior management zero tolerance of B&H via reminder of B&H policy, reminder of open-door policy		Ongoing, every September, review 2027, 2029 culture survey	DoS, HoD (AS champion/ SPECS EDIT lead to monitor completion)	Improved response to addressing B&H
3.12	SPECS Wellbeing Champion to liaise with University Workplace Health & Wellbeing Lead to develop new, and promote/incorporate, existing wellbeing initiatives (with a focus on issues disproportionately affecting Women e.g. Menopause)	More women disagree getting support for mental health and wellbeing, 12% men said it is not applicable to them.	June 2026 (i.e. within 6 months)	SPECS Wellbeing Champion (AS champion/SPECS EDIT lead to monitor completion)	Next culture survey indicates improved response to mental health and wellbeing support
3.13	HRBP to run a session raising awareness of UH's Menopause Policy for line managers		First session within six months (by June 2026), repeated annually	HRBP (AS champion/SPECS EDIT lead to monitor completion)	Next culture survey indicates improved response to AS Core Q20
3.14	Build staff confidence and raise awareness of support	In our culture survey in 2023, we note that 42.9% of women and	Within 2 years (Sept 2027)	SPECS EDIT, AS Champion, HoD, DoS	Next culture survey indicates at least 15% increase of staff

	in relation to reporting unfavourable treatment.	29.2% men do not know how bullying and harassment is addressed in the ECS departments		(AS champion/SPECS EDIT lead to monitor completion)	feeling comfortable reporting unfavourable treatment.
3.15	Line managers to ensure that flexible working in ECS is promoted in practice in a way that it supports people with teaching timetable constraints and provide flexibility.	In the 2023 staff survey 74.5% agree ECS enables flexible working. However, 20% of women disagree. The follow up survey in 2025, 19.2% disagree that the department enables flexible working.	Over the next two years (i.e. up to December 2027)	SPECS EDIT, AS Champion (AS champion/HRBP/SPECS EDIT lead to monitor completion)	Next culture survey indicates less than 20% of staff disagree that the department enables flexible working.
Priority 4: Ensure the transition to the new SPECS building is inclusive to the needs of women and other minority groups					
4.1	Hold focus groups and/or surveys with staff and PGR students, ensuring female representation, asking for ideas to help make the new building work for them.	Research shows that open plan offices can be a more negative experience for women than men, resulting in decreased productivity due to being more accessible and the pressure of being “on display”. This is likely be exacerbated for	Over the next 12 months (i.e. up to November 2026)	SPECS EDIT, AS Champion (SPECS EDIT chair/lead to monitor completion)	Focus group suggestions incorporated into action plan as it evolves
4.2	Raise the new building as a topic of discussion at the next SPECS Women's Network meeting		Over the next 12 months (i.e. before November 2026)	SWN (SPECS EDIT chair/lead to monitor completion)	Suggestions from the SPECS Women's Network incorporated into action plan as it evolves

4.3	Establish and track data trends regarding the new building (split by gender and job role), including use of the room booking system and feelings of satisfaction or dissatisfaction after the move	women with intersectional characteristics, such as a disability. We need to ensure that women and other minorities have a voice while the new working systems and patterns are implemented, so that the senior management are aware of general and specific concerns and reasonable adjustments can be made where necessary. Our action plan aims to address these issues.	From 2026 onwards to five years	HoD, SPECS EDIT (SPECS EDIT chair/lead to monitor completion)	Analyse data and present to a ECS departmental meeting
4.4	Include questions about the new building in the next culture survey, to monitor the gendered attitude to the change		2027, 2029 Culture survey	SPECS EDIT, AS Champion (SPECS EDIT chair/lead to monitor completion)	Aim for a gender equal split in attitudes to the new building in answers to 2025 culture survey
4.5	Use the social spaces in the new building to promote regular EDI events and networking opportunities within the department		From September 2026 onwards, 2027 and 2029 culture surveys	SPECS EDIT, AS Champion (SPECS EDIT chair/lead to monitor completion)	Recognition of increased opportunities for mixing socially in new building in answers to 2025 culture survey; next culture survey indicates at least 10% increase of staff supporting EDI

Appendix 1: Consultation data REDACTED

Appendix 2: Data tables REDACTED

Appendix 3: Glossary

Acronym	Full Description
A&R	Academic & Research Staff
ADESS	Associate Dean Education and Student Success
AM	Academic Manager
APP	Access and Participation Plan
AS	Athena Swan
AWAG	Academic Women's Action Group
B&H	Bullying and Harassment
BAME	Black Asian Minority Ethnic **Herts have chosen to use this term, rather than racially minoritised.*
CEG	Chief Executives Group
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CLASS	Centre for Learning Access & Student Success
COM	Computer Science
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CUPRAG	Corporate UPRs Advisory Group
D&R	Dignity & Respect Advisors
DAWN	Disability and Wellbeing Network
DC	Doctoral College
DDoS	Deputy Dean of School
DLP	Diversifying Leadership Programme
DOS	Dean of Students
DVC	Deputy Vice Chancellor
EDI	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
EDI Office	Equality Diversity and Inclusion Office
EDIT	Equality Diversity Inclusion Team
ENG	Engineering
ES	Employee Support Team - HR
EST	Estates
FACES	Friendly, Ambitious, Collegiate, Enterprising and Student-focused
FAP	Future action plan
FTC	Fixed Term Contract
FTE	Full Time Equivalent
HE	Higher Education
HEA	Higher Education Academy
HEI	Higher Educational Institution
Herts SU	Hertfordshire Students' Union
Herts’	University of Hertfordshire
HESA	Higher Education Statistics Agency
HoD	Heads of Department
HoEDI	Head of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
HP	Hourly Paid Team – HR
HR	Human Resources
HRBP	HR Business Partner - HR

KIT	Keeping in Touch days
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
L&OD	Learning and Organisational Development - HR
LCS	Library and Computer Services
LGBTQ+	Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgender, Queer +
NSS	National Student Survey
NW+P	Network of Women + Professionals
OfS	Office for Students
OVC	Office of the Vice Chancellor
PAM	School of Physics, Astronomy and Mathematics
PDP	Performance Development Plan
PG	Postgraduate
PGR	Postgraduate Research
PGT	Postgraduate Taught
PRES	Postgraduate Research Experience Survey
PSS	Professional and Support Staff
PTES	Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey
Pulse2023	Pulse staff survey from 2023
PVC	Pro-Vice Chancellor
RC	Research Committee
RCH	Research Office
REC	Race Equality Charter
REF	Research Excellence Framework
SASH	SPECS Academic Support Hub
SAT	Self-Assessment Team
SBU	Strategic Business Unit
SCO	School Community Organiser
SEG	School Executive Group
SIP	Student Information & Planning
SM	Senior Manager
SOS	Staff Opinion Survey
SPECS	School of Physics, Engineering and Computer Science
SWPUPRs	Standing Working Party on UPRs
TEF	Teaching Excellence Framework
ToR	Terms of Reference
UB	Unconscious Bias
UH	University of Hertfordshire
UG	Undergraduate
VCE	Vice Chancellors Executive
WAM	Workload Allocation Model
WASS	Widening Access and Student Success
WHEN	Women in Higher Education Network
WPN	Working Parents Network