

## C2: **Developing a flexible and family friendly workplace at UEL – implementing change to drive a more supportive family friendly environment within an HE setting**

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### **Overview**

UEL has a flexible employment policy which aims to provide a supportive environment and to allow flexible working arrangements based on individual staff needs wherever it is managerially and financially possible. There is provision for part time working, job sharing, flexi time, career breaks, emergency / dependents leave and homeworking.

In preparing for our institution Athena SWAN submission, we undertook assessment of how our flexible employment policy is enacted into practice; gathering staff and management feedback. In response to feedback, we have initiating development and implement of a strategy to enable culture change and a mind-set shift in relation to flexible working at UEL.

### **Approach taken**

Qualitative and quantitative feedback was gathered through the Athena SWAN self-assessment process which highlighted existing areas of good practice and areas for development.

The findings suggest variance in experiences of working culture by gender and across different areas of the university; while feedback highlighted good practice, it also highlighted concerns regarding career progression while working flexibly and inconsistent practice.

Our demographic is comparable in terms of working pattern to the sector. However, within professional / support staff less than 20% of those working part time are men which highlighted questions around take up / acceptability of working flexibly for men, in particular in the services.

What are the **outcomes we are aiming to achieve**? In the long term we are aiming to:

- Increase the number and proportion of women working at higher grades particularly in areas that they are under represented
- Increase the take up of family friendly policies (flexible working, parental leave etc) of men
- Contribute to reducing the gender pay gap

The **next step** was to develop and implement a strategy to enable culture change and a mind-set shift in relation to flexible working at UEL. The main focuses are:

- **engaging and supporting management** in managing flexible teams. Gaining further understanding from managers in terms of the current status and readiness to adopt new ways of working. Considering how we support managers in feeling confident in developing and leading high-performing flexible teams.

- **improving the visibility and communication** of our family friendly policies; for example understanding and planning how we promote flexible working within UEL and celebrate success stories.
- **supporting staff** through more accessible guidance and greater peer and management support.

### **Metrics**

We used a gender equality survey as the basis for our feedback as well as some qualitative interviews. This has provided us with our baseline from which to measure improvements and we have set target success measures against which to assess progress.

The **aims of the workshop** will be:

- To share the findings in relation to current picture at UEL
- To discuss subsequent planning – how we have planned to implement culture change
- To facilitate interactive discussion of the barriers, opportunities, strategies, what works / what doesn't work