Good Practice Action Plan

Last updated 12 February 2015

The Mathematical Institute wishes to provide an outstanding environment in which to create, teach and study mathematics. We aspire to excellence in all three of these activities, and in all aspects of our work to support them. We believe that an outstanding working environment, in which students and staff alike can achieve their full potential, is not only highly valuable in itself, but is also a major factor in achieving the excellence we seek.

We hold that good working practices benefit all, while bad ones unduly and adversely impact on under-represented, disadvantaged or minority groups. In particular, we recognise the under-representation of women in the mathematics community and the importance of high-profile departments taking the lead in seeking to redress it. We recognise that awareness of unconscious biases and their consequences leads to better decision making.

We fully acknowledge and respect our legal obligations in this sphere (while noting that in many cases they merely set out a minimum necessary standard), together with principles of the London Mathematical Society's Good Practice Scheme and those of the Athena Swan Charter. Together, these underpin the following aims:

1. To maintain a working culture in which all are treated equally in their prospects, recognition and progression, with particular emphasis on those from under-represented, minority or disadvantaged groups. In particular to ensure that everyone is suitably encouraged and supported to apply for promotion at appropriate stages of their career, and to focus where appropriate on under-represented groups when recruiting at all levels, for example targeting girls in outreach activities.

2. To create and maintain an open and transparent system of governance, recruitment, administration and management in which it can be seen that all members are treated fairly. In particular,
   (i) to monitor workload to ensure that duties are allocated fairly;
   (ii) to ensure that all constituencies within the department are represented and have input into departmental activities that affect them.

3. To recognise and value diverse models of success within the overarching aims of the department, and to provide good role models at all levels.

4. To support members of the department who need non-standard working practices or other help, for example in flexible working, return from parental leave, or to accommodate disabilities.

5. To support new members as they integrate into the department, ensuring that appropriate help is available.
6. To ensure that all early career researchers have the opportunity to develop the skills and experience needed for an academic career, while making it clear to students and postdoctoral researchers that the Department values the wide range of careers which mathematicians can pursue.

7. To promote mathematics to all prospective students, regardless of gender or background.

8. To ensure that selection procedures for undergraduate and graduate students are fair and transparent; and where there is a gender or other imbalance in the pool of potential candidates or at any other stage during the process take steps to investigate and actively redress it.

9. To have in place systems to monitor student progress and to identify and tackle any factors that may hamper the progress of a particular group.

10. To continue proactively to investigate factors which may act as barriers to staff or students achieving their full potential, including issues such as unconscious bias, in order to inform future strategies; to encourage all staff to engage with the literature and other resources on issues such as unconscious bias.

It is hoped and envisaged that these strategies will ultimately lead to an improved gender balance and increased diversity amongst academic and other staff, as well as students at all levels.

The strategies we will adopt in pursuit of these aims are described below, together with progress made. Some strategies may cover more than one aim – each is listed only once, under the most relevant aim.

1. **Working Culture**

   To maintain a working culture in which all are treated equally in their prospects, recognition and progression, with particular emphasis on those from under-represented, minority or disadvantaged groups. In particular to ensure that everyone is suitably encouraged and supported to apply for promotion at appropriate stages of their career, and to focus where appropriate on under-represented groups when recruiting at all levels, for example targeting girls in outreach activities.

**New ventures**

- Continue to advertise the LMS Grace Chisholm fellowships, and encourage applications from eligible candidates.
  
  *Research Facilitator*
  
  (Work towards supporting eligible candidates to prepare applications. Annual report on appointments to GPSG.)

- Ensure that the application procedure for internal funding to support research meetings prompts applicants to include female speakers and early career researchers (or to explain why this has not been possible).

*Head of Department, Head of Administration and Finance*
Regular and ongoing actions

- Continue to explore funding options for graduate students, postdocs and research fellows and make them attractive for female mathematicians.
  
  *Head of Department, Head of Administration and Finance*

- Continue to offer regular briefings for anyone who is involved in recruitment and selection as a panel member in addition to mandatory university training for selection panel chairs. Monitor take up. Make sure that chairs/members of appointment panels are aware that lack of confidence may prevent women from applying for positions unless they have been approached directly.
  
  *Personnel Administrator*
  
  (Annual report to GPSG Michaelmas Term meeting.)

- Promote awareness of unconscious bias amongst all staff. Provide unconscious bias training for staff involved in recruitment and appraisal.
  
  *Personnel*
  
  (Annual report to GPSG Hilary Term meeting.)

- Continue to provide additional support for recognition of distinction exercises.
  
  *Head of Department, GPSG Chair*

- Continue to monitor further particulars for gender issues.
  
  *Personnel Administrator*
  
  (Standard elements of further particulars to be reviewed annually by GPSG in Trinity Term meeting.)

- Encourage female PGR, PGT and final year UG students and postdocs to attend the LMS Women in Maths Days and contribute talks/posters; offer to pay for their travel.
  
  *GPSG Coordinator*
  
  (Report on attendance and contribution (talks/posters) to GPSG Trinity Term meeting. Is there funding available?)

- Continue to circulate job adverts to EWM emailing list.
  
  *Personnel Administrator/GPSG Chair*

- Continue promoting training and support opportunities that are especially offered to women.
  
  *Good Practice Coordinator*

2. Governance

To create and maintain an open and transparent system of governance, recruitment, administration and management in which it can be seen that all members are treated fairly. In particular,
(i) to monitor workload to ensure that duties are allocated fairly; (ii) to ensure that all constituencies within the department are represented and have input into departmental activities that affect them.

New ventures

• Put brief description of appointment process on Personnel webpages with statement that every appointment committee includes both genders.
  Personnel

• Enable and encourage graduate students to contribute to relevant sections of website.
  Whitehead Lecturer

• Update the departmental handbook and make it easy to find on the website.
  Personnel Administrator, Deputy Personnel Administrator
  (Report to GPSG when ready.)

• Monitor all departmental handbooks for students, etc. for good practice
  GPSG to look over all handbooks at Trinity Term meeting, before they are revised for the following year.

• Head of Department continue to strive for a balance between gender equality and overload.
  Head of Department, Academic Policy Officer
  (Report to GPSG when ready, work towards annual report to GPSG.)

• Set up database with who does what in the department including membership of committees.
  Head of Department, Head of Administration and Finance, Academic Policy Officer
  (Report to GPSG when ready.)

• Make sure that outreach activities (as well as GPSG activities) are included in workload database.
  Head of Department, Schools Liaison Officer, Academic Policy Officer
  (Report to GPSG when ready.)

• Make the minutes of departmental faculty meetings available much sooner to inform those unable to attend, not just before the next meeting.
  Head of Department, Head of Administration and Finance
  (Circulate minutes within two weeks of each meeting.)

Regular and ongoing actions

• Have at least one woman and at least one man on every appointment committee (including for postdoc positions).
  Personnel Administrator
  (Included in annual Personnel report to GPSG Hilary Term meeting.)

• Update and maintain all Good Practice pages as well as their links to other departmental web pages.
  Whitehead Lecturer

Completed actions

• Develop Good Practice webpages.
Athena SWAN Facilitator

3. **Models of Success**
   To recognise and value diverse models of success within the over-arching aims of the department, and to provide good role models at all levels.

**New ventures**

- Develop and monitor mentoring of female PGT and PGR students by senior female mathematicians.  
  *Professors Helen Byrne and Frances Kirwan*
- Add a page on female mathematicians at Oxford to go with the history of the department.  
  *Good Practice Chair*  
  (Report to GPSG when ready.)

**Regular and ongoing actions**

- Make sure every open day has at least one female faculty member speaking.  
  *Schools Liaison Officer*  
  (Annual report on open day speakers to GPSG Michaelmas Term meeting.)
- Try to ensure that there are at least 6 female lecturers to the first year and second year undergraduates each year, with at least 3 giving core lectures attended by all undergraduates.  
  *Director of UG Studies*  
  (Annual report to GPSG Michaelmas Term meeting.)
- Have a female professor as one of the speakers at the annual open day for prospective graduate students (PGT and PGR).  
  *Directors of Graduate Studies*  
  (November. Report to GPSG Hilary Term meeting.)
- Organise women’s lunch event to offer mentoring to new female students and postdocs.  
  *Professors Helen Byrne and Frances Kirwan*  
  (Michaelmas Term. Report to GPSG Hilary Term meeting.)
- Continue running “Mathematrix” lunch meetings and encourage women to attend.  
  *Good Practice Facilitator*  
  (Annual report to GPSG Trinity Term meeting.)

**Completed actions**

- Add posters of female mathematicians and a photoboard of members of the department to the mezzanine in the Andrew Wiles Building.  
  *Head of Physical Resources, GPSG media advisor*  
  (Posters now up in mezzanine (and on website).)
• Help set up a Women in Maths Society similar to the recently established Emmy Noether Society for female undergraduates studying maths at Cambridge.

   Good Practice Facilitator
   (The Mirzakhani Society came into existence in Michaelmas Term 2014.)

• Design posters of female mathematicians and display them in the teaching & social area in the Andrew Wiles building.

   GPSG Chair, GPSG Media Advisor
   (Some posters now up in mezzanine of AWB and also available on website.)

4. Working Practices
   To support members of the department who need non-standard working practices or other help, for example in flexible working, return from parental leave, or to accommodate disabilities.

New ventures

• Make it clear in the updated departmental handbook that the lecture timetable will normally take account of the needs of parents and carers.

   Personnel Administrator, Deputy Personnel Administrator, Academic Administrator
   (Report to GPSG when ready.)

• Add information to website for visitors and prospective members of the department about baby-changing facilities, space for breastfeeding and expressing milk, etc. Ensure that Reception and Events staff have the necessary information. Make the information easily available for conference organisers (including childcare possibilities).

   Head of Physical Resources

• Improve links with university and college nurseries; explore sponsored places at nurseries.

   Head of Administration and Finance

• Support for childcare at conferences (both MI members going outside Oxford and visitors coming to Oxford); continue to advertise LMS scheme and explore further funding options.

   GPSG Chair
   (Report to GPSG when ready.)

Regular and ongoing actions

• Monitor seminar and meeting times to ensure that these are held within core hours.

   Head of Department, Head of Administration and Finance
   (Annual report to GPSG Trinity Term meeting.)

• Informing Faculty about opportunities for training in issues in the area of good practice.

   Head of Department, Head of Administration and Finance, Good Practice Coordinator.

• Set up and maintain a Facebook page ‘Oxford Mathematics Good Practice’.

   Whitehead Lecturer

Completed actions
• Extend the University’s maternity leave policy with additional provision for new starters.
  
  Head of Administration and Finance, Personnel Administrator

5. **New Members**
   
   To support new members as they integrate into the department, ensuring that appropriate help is available.

*New ventures*

• Improve induction procedures for staff, especially for postdocs; update departmental handbook and make it available on website. Introduce “check-points” and monitor progress.
  
  Head of Administration and Finance, Personnel Administrator
  
  (Report to GPSG when ready.)

6. **Early Career Researchers**
   
   To ensure that all early career researchers have the opportunity to develop the skills and experience needed for an academic career, while making it clear to students and postdoctoral researchers that the Department values the wide range of careers which mathematicians can pursue.

*Regular and ongoing actions*

• Run and develop careers events for finishing PGR students and postdocs with a forum on research careers in academia, industry and government funded research establishments, including female speakers.
  
  Academic Administrator
  
  (Work towards an annual report in Trinity Term to GPSG on careers events.)

• Monitor take up of Springboard and Navigator development programmes.
  
  Deputy Personnel Administrator
  
  (Included in annual Personnel report to GPSG Hilary Term meeting.)

7. **Promoting Mathematics**
   
   To promote mathematics to all prospective students, regardless of gender or background.

*Regular and ongoing actions*

• Host UKMT summer school(s) for girls.
  
  GPSG Chair, HoD, Schools Liaison Office, Whitehead Lecturer
  
  (Summer vacation. Report to GPSG Michaelmas Term meeting and Teaching Committee.)
• Continue making the website and undergraduate and graduate prospectus more attractive to women in general and in particular to prospective female undergraduates.

*External Relations & Media Officer in conjunction with Schools Liaison Officer, Director of Undergraduate Studies, Directors of Graduate Studies*

(GPSG to review new website.)

8. **Student Selection**

To ensure that selection procedures for undergraduate and graduate students are fair and transparent; and where there is a gender or other imbalance in the pool of potential candidates or at any other stage during the process take steps to investigate and actively redress it.

*Regular and ongoing actions*

• Monitor gender and diversity data on graduate admissions.
  *Academic Policy Officer*
  (Annual report to GPSG Michaelmas Term meeting and Graduate Studies Committee.)

• Monitor gender and diversity data on undergraduate admissions.
  *Schools Liaison Officer*
  (Annual report to GPSG Michaelmas Term meeting and Admissions Committee.)

• Monitor the effect if any of the introduction of MAT on undergraduate gender ratios at Imperial.
  *GPSG Chair, Schools Liaison Officer*
  (Annual report to GPSG Michaelmas Term meeting.)

• Support and participate in access initiatives.
  *Schools Liaison Officer*
  (Annual report to GPSG Michaelmas Term meeting.)

• Run briefing session for third-year undergraduates about the fourth year.
  *Director of UG Studies*
  (Michaelmas Term. Report to GPSG Hilary Term meeting.)

9. **Student Progression**

To have in place systems to monitor student progress and to identify and tackle any factors that may hamper the progress of a particular group.

*Regular and ongoing actions*

• Monitor undergraduate examination performance.
  *Schools Liaison Officer*
  (Annual report to GPSG Michaelmas Term meeting and Teaching Committee.)

• Monitor performance in taught postgraduate examinations.
  *Academic Policy Officer*
Monitor graduate student numbers, including comparison with others in the sector.

*Academic Policy Officer*

Run sessions giving undergraduates advice on exam technique, managing stress during exam period, etc.

*Director of UG Studies*

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10. **Foundations for Future Strategy**

To continue proactively to investigate factors which may act as barriers to staff or students achieving their full potential, including issues such as unconscious bias, in order to inform future strategies; to encourage all staff to engage with the literature and other resources on issues such as unconscious bias.

**New ventures**

- Collect better information from leavers – identify what information is needed and how it will be gathered.
  *Head of Administration and Finance, Personnel Administrator*
  (Work towards annual report to GPSG in Michaelmas Term.)
- Collect data about the points where female students/staff leave academia, and seek to understand the patterns in order to sustain and grow the proportion of professors who are female.
  *Personnel Administrator*
  (Report to GPSG when ready.)
- Identify what makes the department attractive to female academics.
  *Personnel Administrator*
  (Report to GPSG when ready.)
- Improve and develop monitoring and evaluating systems for Good Practice/Athena SWAN actions and activities; regularly check and update the action plan; set up termly monitoring and reporting.
  *Head of Department, GPSG Chair, Head of Administration and Finance*

**Regular and ongoing actions**

- Monitor online exit interviews.
  *Head of Administration and Finance, Personnel Administrator*
  (Included in annual Personnel report to GPSG Hilary Term meeting.)
- Conduct survey of third-year students.
  *Director of UG Studies*
  (Hilary Term. Report to GPSG Trinity Term meeting.)
- Conduct survey of graduate students.
  *Directors of Graduate Studies*
(Hilary Term. Report to GPSG Trinity Term meeting.)

- Collect data about staff.

  **Head of Administration and Finance, GPSG Coordinator**

  (Termly report to GPSG meeting (and then annual report to Departmental Committee). Data to include gender by category of post; professors including titular versus AP; and then the following by number, percentage, gender, post, etc.: leavers, take-up of services, parental leave, time in post (progression), sickness and absences including sabbaticals, age profile, part-time, provenance (country, nationality, university), disability, external directorships and appointments, membership of appointment panels, awards and prizes and conference speakers.)

- Conduct survey of staff.

  **Head of Administration and Finance, GPSG Coordinator**

  (At least every three years, due by Hilary Term 2016. Report to GPSG in Trinity Term 2016.)

- Remind all those mentioned above of their duties a few weeks before the relevant GPSG meeting.

  **Good Practice Coordinator**

- Review action plan each term and forward to Departmental Committee for information and approval.

  **GPSG Chair, Head of Administration and Finance**