ABC, it's easy as 123… but can you achieve an MSc?

The pathway from PG Cert to MSc

Oliver Cooper – The University of Warwick

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Learning Objectives

▶ To gain an understanding of the pathway to achieving an MSc through the AUA development programme.

▶ To critically analyse and reflect upon three varied research projects in a HE setting.

What is the PG Cert, Dip and MSc?

MSc (180 Credits)

Post Graduate Certificate
(60 Credits)

2 Modules
(30 credits each)

5000 words per module

Post Graduate Diploma
(60 Credits)

2 Modules
(30 credits each)

4500 words per module

MSc
(60 Credits)

2 Modules
(20 and 40 credits each)

2000 and 8000 words per module

Why we did it

PGCert

- Lack of formal qualifications
- "Magic" Level 7 qualification
- Specific to Higher Education
- Support from work
- Values set out by AUA
- Over 2 years – it wouldn't be too much of a challenge!!

PGDip

- I could do it!
- Enjoyed learning
- Better understanding of sector I was working in
- Support from work
- Modules would support my role

MSc

- Still enjoyed learning!!
- Focused on a research topic of my choice
- Complete a piece of research that could support my institution
- Only one final step to a Masters!!
- Opportunity to further engage with colleagues from across the sector

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To what extent do the perceived barriers to staff development hinder (or benefit) the engagement of professional staff in continuing professional development programmes within a Higher Education Institution?

Context

Shattock (2010) suggests that successful management of a university creates a culture where teaching and research activities flourish. Over the last decade, professional service roles have significantly changed to support the management of university functions (Whitchurch, 2007). Szekeres (2004) suggests that professional staff are the invisible workers and attitudes for personal and professional development has not been a priority. As the roles of professional staff become more central to managing an effective university, these staff are beginning to consider their own professional identity and by engaging in continuing professional development opportunities advance their career in the higher education sector.

Specific Context

The Association for University Administrators (AUA) supports the professional and career development of higher education administrators and managers underpinned by a behavioural framework. More recently the AUA have developed a Mark of Excellence that promotes an institution's commitment to the development of professional staff (AUA, 2017).

Uni A and Uni B are both members of the Russell Group. In December 2016, Uni A was the first university to achieve the AUA Mark of Excellence. In October 2017, Uni B committed to working to achieve the AUA Mark of Excellence, working to embed the AUA behavioural framework and statement of values across the organisation.

Research Objectives

The aim of the study is to understand the perceived barriers of engagement in continuing professional development programmes. It will consider the barriers for promoting and engaging in development from a line manager and staff perspective.

This will be accomplished through the following objectives:

- Gain a deeper understanding of skills and behaviours that can facilitate staff development.

- Identify and explore the perceived barriers of engagement in continuing professional development from a line manager and staff perspective.

- Identify similarities and differences between Uni A and Uni B, examining the perceived barriers of engaging in professional development programmes.

- Develop recommendations which support managers and staff in their increasing engagement in continuing professional development.

Research Methods

To obtain a wide representation, a comparative study of two universities will be carried out. Quantitative research will be undertaken to describe and examine the cause and effect (Burns and Grove, 1987) and to explore the barriers as perceived by line managers and staff in the form of an online questionnaire.

- A clear and concise questionnaire will be designed (Boynton, 2004) and will take less than ten minutes to complete.

- A participant information sheet will be incorporated into the questionnaire to facilitate understanding of the aims and objectives of the research.

- Questions will be phrased appropriately for the target audience and will use previously validated questions in a clear format.

- The questionnaire will be piloted to a small sample to ensure the design is rigorous (Saunders, 2016), and clear conclusions and recommendations can be made.

- Respondents will be provided with the opportunity to complete the questionnaire anonymously within the ethical guidelines of Nottingham Trent University and relevant Higher Education Institutions.

A response rate of 50% will be sought to present high quality generalisable data to enable recommendations to be applied across the sector. To increase response rates (Nulty, 2008), a follow up email will be sent to all staff two weeks after the initial contact. The questionnaire will survey staff across all grades and data will be analysed by institution and by grade to determine trends and themes identified within specific cohorts.

Limitations

- Primary research questionnaire with pre-set answers will not reflect respondent perceptions.

- Quantitative data may not be sufficiently robust to explain the complex issues.

- Research only considers responses from a small cohort of staff and may not be representative across a range of higher education institutions.

- Responses may only capture views from staff and line managers who are already engaged in development and may present a biased view.

Existing Research

There is little research evidence on how professional service staff engage in continuing professional development. Existing empirical research undertaken by Whitchurch (2006, 2009) focuses on the changing identities of professional staff and career progression within the higher education sector. Conway (2000) sets out the increased level of responsibility in managing the operations of a university and how the professional service role is moving away from governance and decision making processes to more corporate management practices. Additionally, Pickersgill (1998) and McInnis (1998) have identified the 'blurring of boundaries' between academic and professional staff to manage a successful university. Lauwerys (2002) suggests the future of the profession of university administration and management as working more closely with academic staff and to be seen as on an equal footing.

Nevertheless, the current perception is that professional staff feel invisible and undervalued (Szekeres, 2004) and are not identified as a profession within the higher education sector. Skinner (2001) sets out the need for this to be addressed to support the requirement that professional staff have their own identity. Furthermore, Gander (2018) suggests there continues to be a gap between a staff member's desire for a career and promotion and the opportunities that are available within their own organisations.

Impact

- There is limited research within this area and this empirical research will provide an assessment of current views specifically in the higher education sector.

- The research will determine to what extent barriers exist in engaging in professional development programmes.

- Uni A can reflect on the effectiveness of the initiatives undertaken and the research can support future initiatives and work programmes to maintain the AUA Mark of Excellence.

- The research will provide Uni B with an evidence-based needs assessment. This will support the development of a a targeted and effective action plan to achieve the AUA Mark of Excellence.

- The research will present recommendations that could be considered by other higher education institutions who are considering applying for the AUA Mark of Excellence.

Outputs

- A Research Report - July 2018

- A Journal Article - September 2018

- Presentation to Professional Service Staff within Uni B - Sept 2018

- A workshop at the AUA Conference - March 2019

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How do professional service staff perceive and engage in professional development programmes within HEIs?

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How do professional service staff perceive and engage with professional development programmes within Higher Education Institutions?

Research Objectives

- To review the literature on the changing roles of PS staff and opportunities for professional development and summarise the findings from previous studies.

- To complete a survey of staff in Uni A and Uni B and compare the findings between the two HE institutions. The questionnaire will seek to understand perceptions and attitudes towards CPD programmes.

- To make recommendations that will inform Uni B's action plan to achieve the AUA MoE.

How do professional service staff perceive and engage with professional development programmes within Higher Education Institutions?

Research Questions

▶ How committed are the universities in supporting PS staff development opportunities?

▶ Do line managers look for opportunities to support the professional development of their staff?

▶ What are the professional development barriers as perceived by PS staff?

▶ What are the motivations to engage in CPD programmes?

Barriers

Are there barriers that prevent engagement in professional development?
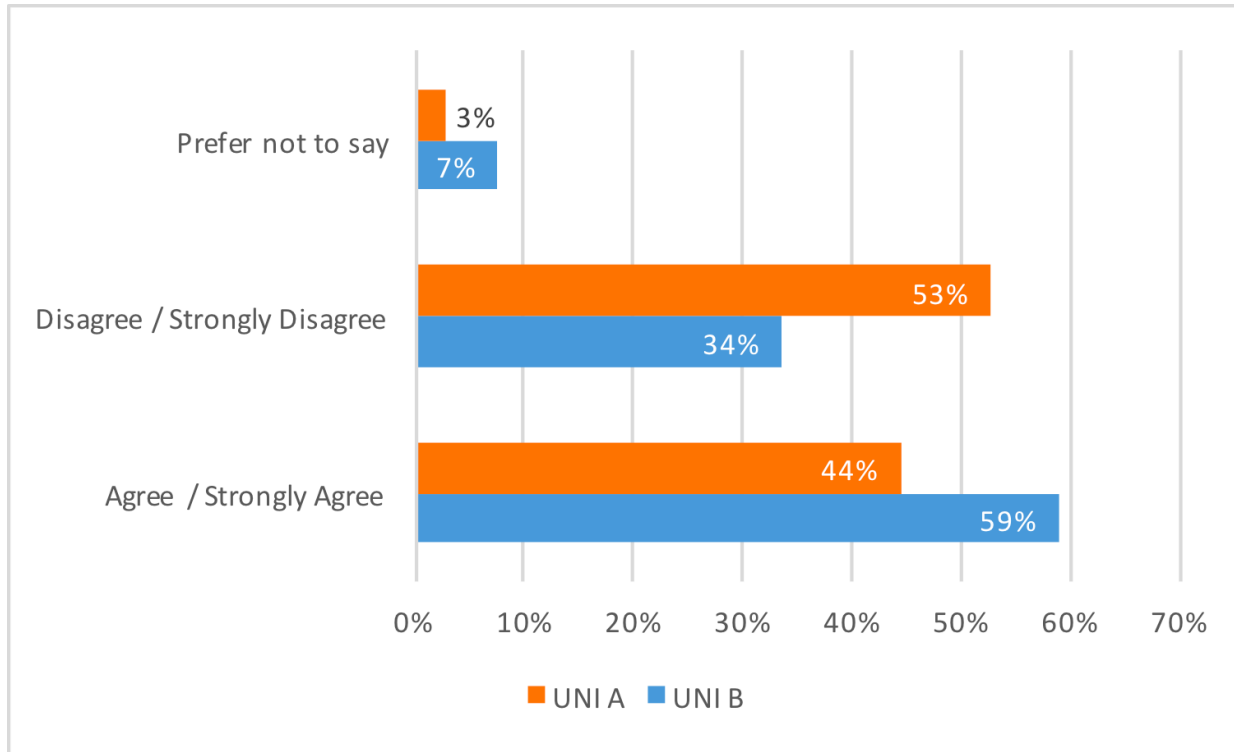
Barriers: The role of the line manager

"I decided to get involved with an engagement activity …. personally, for my own development … my line manager told me that I did not have time for this" (Uni B)

"My line manager is very supportive of professional development opportunities; the only barriers to this is workload, sometimes it is difficult …. because of other competing priorities." (Uni A)

"….in the past, I felt too busy and the extent it was appropriate for me to engage in professional development. With time, communication and excellent line management, this barrier was removed" (Uni B)

Motivation

Engagement in professional development to support current role

	Yes	No
Uni A (n=36)	81% (22)	19% (7)
Uni B (n=122)	78% (95)	22% (27)

"my manager assumes I will be in my current role forever … professional ambitions and how to facilitate their achievement is not done" (Uni B)

"Lack of direction from senior leadership … around which areas of professional development are actually useful in order to further one's career" (Uni A)

Motivation

Engagement in professional development to support future roles and career progression
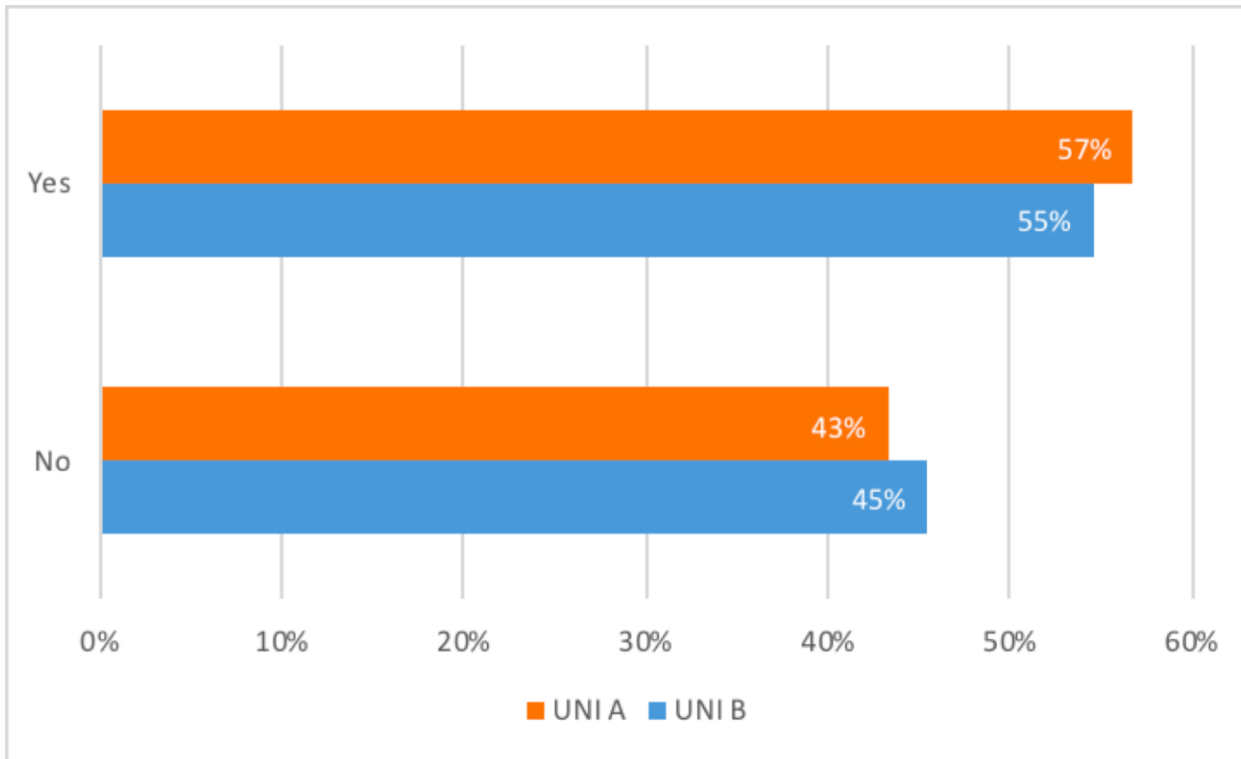
Motivations to engage in professional development
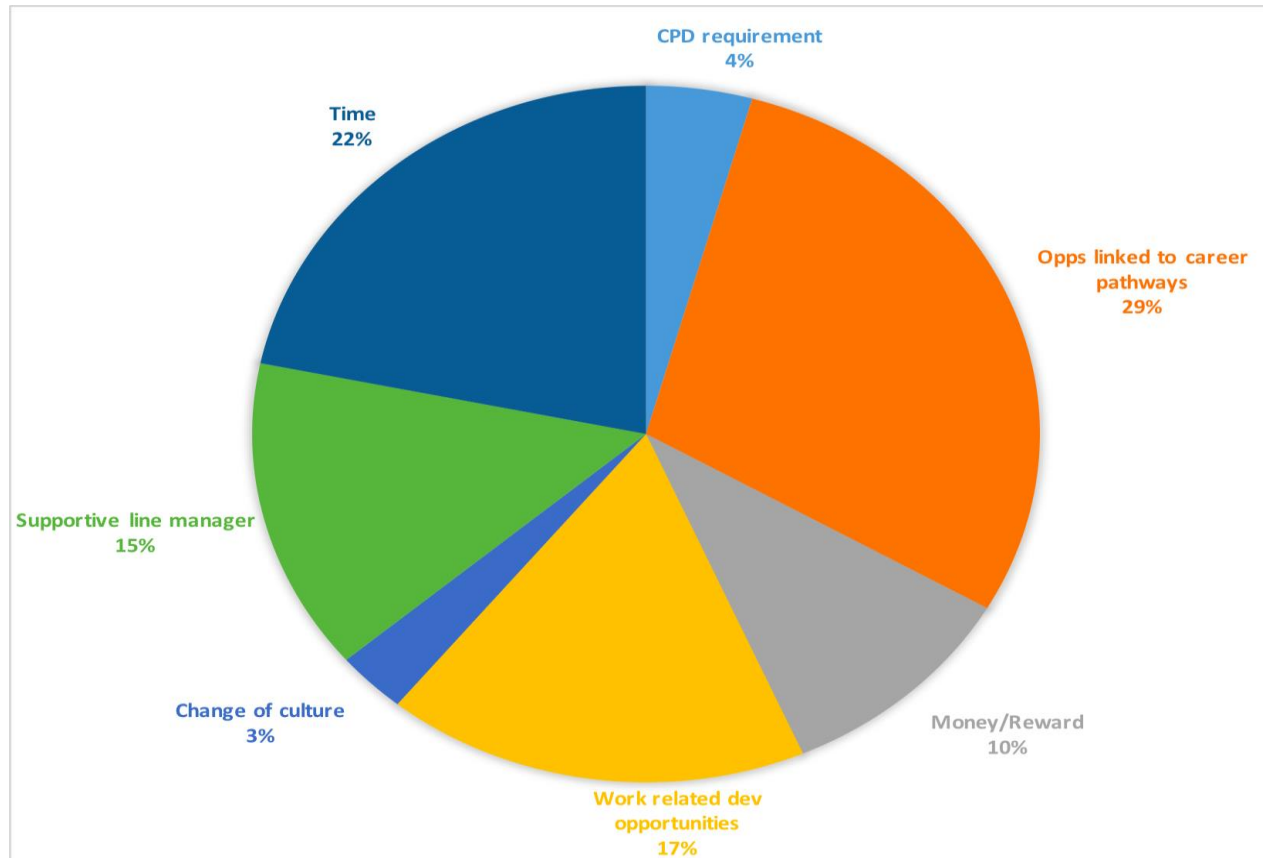
Recommendations

▶ **CPD Programme** – Expectation of CPD requirements for PS staff.

▶ **Career pathways for PS staff** – career pathways to identify skills to develop and progress line with career aspirations

▶ **Career Stage Development Programmes** – bespoke programmes for early career PS staff

▶ **Development Reviews:** Separated out from PDR process to support career aspirations

➢ **Learning and Development culture** – Defining professional learning through training and work based learning opportunities

➢ **Identifying development opportunities** – Line manager training to identify development opportunities

An investigation into attendance in Higher Education: does it matter and can it be used to predict completion rates?

Predicting Non-Completion Rates

- Small HE in FE provision

- New provision

- Non – traditional students

- Poorly performing
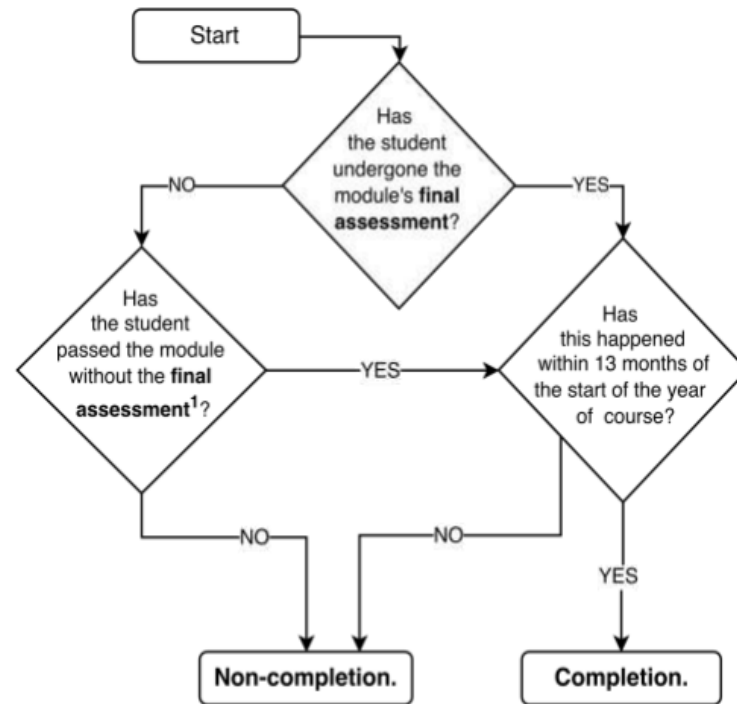
Could attendance be the key?

Research Objectives

- Evaluate the extent to which attendance and completion are linked within the HEI

- Identify any key factors that could predispose students to not complete

- Create a formula to enable a prediction of completion rates based on attendance rates and other key factors

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An investigation into attendance in Higher Education: does it matter and can it be used to predict completion rates?

Research Questions

- Does attendance impact performance?

- What other factors impact performance apart from attendance and which of these are statistically significant?

- Can attendance and other factors be used to predict completion rates?

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What were the results?

Does attendance impact performance?

▶ A – Negative Correlation
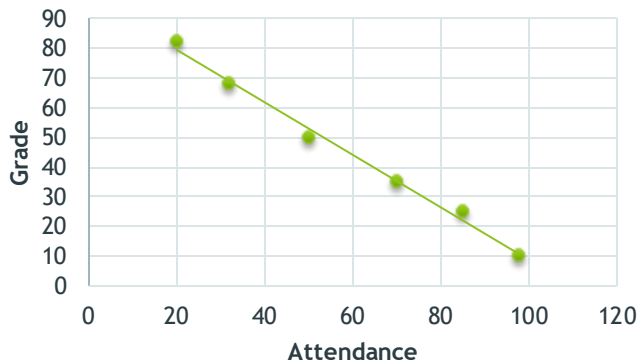
▶ B – Positive Correlation
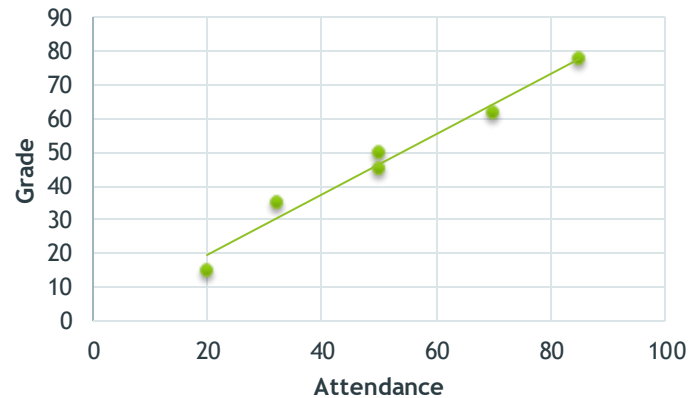
▶ C – No Correlation
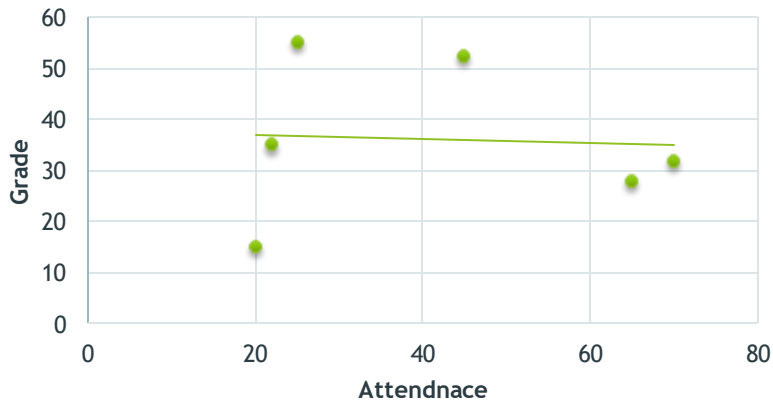
What were the results?
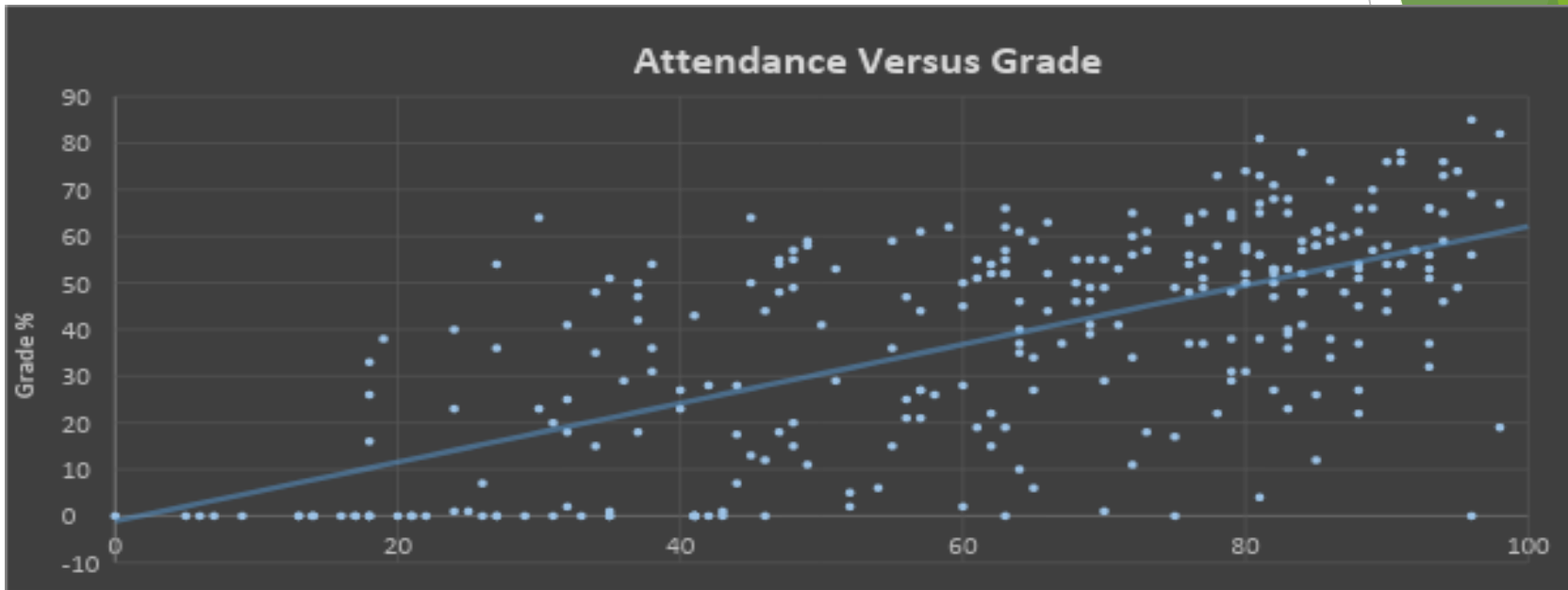
Does attendance impact performance?

What were the results?

What other factors impact performance apart from attendance and which of these are statistically significant?

Gender – 76% Female / 24% Male

Employment – 40% in employment

Ethnicity - 84% BAME

Age – 87% mature students (over 25)

Previous Qualification – 44% below level 3 accepted as a mature student.

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What were the results

What other factors impact attendance apart from attendance and which of these are statistically significant?

Gender 🙂

Employment 🙂

Ethnicity 🚫

Age 🚫

Previous Qualification 🚫

What percentage value does this equate to?

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What we actually found

Can attendance and other factors be used to predict completion rates?

Attendance Average	Predicted Grade			
	Employed Male -.335 + (Attendance x 0.616) -5.127	**Employed Female** -.335 + (Attendance x 0.616) -5.127 + 4.807	**Unemployed Male** -.335 + (Attendance x 0.616)	**Unemployed Female** -.335 + (Attendance x 0.616) + 4.807
100	56%	61%	61%	66%
95	53%	58%	58%	63%
90	50%	55%	55%	60%
85	47%	52%	52%	57%
80	44%	49%	49%	54%
75	41%	46%	46%	51%
70	38%	42%	43%	48%
65	35%	39%	40%	45%
60	31%	36%	37%	41%
55	28%	33%	34%	38%
50	25%	30%	30%	35%
45	22%	27%	27%	32%
40	19%	24%	24%	29%
35	16%	21%	21%	26%
30	13%	18%	18%	23%
25	10%	15%	15%	20%
20	7%	12%	12%	17%
15	4%	9%	9%	14%
10	1%	6%	6%	11%
5	-2%	2%	3%	8%
0	-5%	-1%	0%	4%

Recommendations

▶ Ensure that institutions maintain and monitor accurate data concerning attendance, performance and student characteristics.

▶ Each institution adopt a model such as the one above (bespoke to that institution) to improve prediction of completion rates.

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Where and what are the barriers to progression for women in UK Higher Education (UKHE)?

Oliver Cooper (N0615003)

1 Context

Changes faced by the UKHE sector have been significant over the last two decades and universities are certain to experience further change in the future (Pitcher, 2013). The days of high levels of government funding for UK universities has ended (Tight, 2010) and a time where institutions have become highly competitive and performance driven has arrived (Shattock, 1994; Uni A, 2016). Tight (2012) however, argues that the impact of these changes is not as significant as those academics who look back with rose tinted glasses perceive. Nevertheless, to remain successful, Universities must make optimum use of all available resources, including staff and students (Purcell et al., 2016; Shah 2013). This means removing bias and discrimination, and embracing equality and diversity to ensure talent is nurtured regardless of gender (Clark-Blickenstaff, 2005).

4 Research Methods

▸ This project will use secondary source, primary data, as set out below. Quantitative research using published UKHE data will be conducted to provide a systematic and objective review (Burns & Grove, 1987) to help determine where gender bias may exist within academic progression. This will be coupled with qualitative research, analysing survey data and responses to help provide insight into causes and perceptions of any identified gender inequality (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

▸ Using nationally published data tables for UKHE, analysing gender profiles across the full spectrum of higher education, from students studying towards their UG degree to Professorial Level and senior academic staff, with a view to determine if there is a barrier to entry for female students/academic staff at any particular level. The published data offers validity as it is collected and reported by bodies representing the UKHE sector to which HEIs have a responsibility to provide accurate data.

▸ A comparison will be sought between Russell Group data and data from Uni A (a Russell Group Institution), to determine if they are comparable.

▸ Using existing questionnaire responses from Uni A (which were collected as part of an institutional investigation into gender equality) perceived barriers and rationales for any gender inequalities found in the qualitative data will be determined and potential recommendations suggested. As the questionnaire was written by a research intensive institution for a similar output to this research project, there should be no unintentional bias and the results can be trusted, although it yet remains to be seen whether Uni A will represent a 'typical' Russell Group institution.

▸ If questionnaire data is unavailable, Athena Swan submissions will be used, which would represent Secondary Data. Either way, all data is fully anonymised which provides ethical reassurance.

6 Limitations

▸ Limited to an analysis of Russell Group Institutions as they have similar strategies (being research intensive). This is because UKHE is too large and diverse a sector for a project this size.

▸ Qualitative data from Uni A's questionnaire's offers a small sample size, particularly when compared to size of whole Russell group. This makes it difficult to make generalisations across sector, even if data shows Uni A to be a typical Russell Group institution.

▸ The qualitative research will not capture students and academic staff who have withdrawn from Uni A, perhaps due to the issues being investigated.

2 Research Aims

To determine if gender bias exists within Russell Group Universities by:

· Identifying if there are any significant points in progression where gender bias occurs;

· Identifying potential reasons for any identified bias;

· Developing recommendations based on findings.

5 Expected Outcome

▸ To validate the Leaky Pipeline theory (ECU, 2014) with Russell Group data and Uni A data respectively;

▸ To understand where the barriers to academic progression for women are in Russell Group institutions;

▸ To establish the causes and impacts of any barriers, both perceived and real;

▸ To understand male perceptions in a system traditionally created by men, for men (Van den Brink et al., 2010);

▸ From this, to understand the need for change and make recommendations.

Reference: ECU, 2014
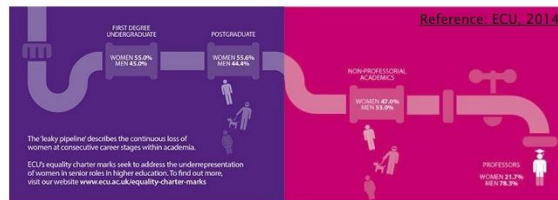
7 Next Steps

Outputs

· Research Report
· Practitioner Article

Impact

· To raise awareness and highlight barriers to female academic progression, which could result in changed processes and practices within Russell Group Universities.

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3 Current Thinking

That gender inequality exists does not appear to be in question within the literature (Clark-Blickenstaff, 2005; ECU, 2014; Van den Brink et al., 2010) but Pearce (2017) notes that there is disparity across disciplines, with men being underrepresented in some areas (such as Sociology) and women in others (notably STEM subjects). That said, Pearce (2017) argues that even where men are underrepresented in a discipline, there is still a over-representation of men in senior positions in comparison to female colleagues.

The Leaky Pipeline is a metaphor often used to describe the loss of women through academic progression from UG to Professorial level. According to Clark-Blickenstaff (2005, pp.369), whilst numbers drop for both men and women between the stages in the pipeline, the interesting feature is that women leak out more than men do in most areas, creating a "sex-based filter". Resmini (2016) discusses the reasons for this as two fold; unintentional bias (such as how women are the traditional care givers in society and as such are less likely to return following the birth of a child) and avoidable (although often unconscious) bias (such as gender bias in recruitment, authorship and funding). Both of these areas of bias are shown to negatively impact the progression of women.

The Equality Challenge Unit (ECU) have worked to recognise this and combat bias through the creation of charter marks, such as Athena SWAN. Originally aimed at STEM departments, Rimini (2016) argues that Athena SWAN has had a significant difference and that this is evidenced through its 2015 roll out to include non-STEM departments. Tzanakou (in Pearce, 2017) however, argues that whilst they have led to positive differences in raising awareness etc., they have also led to negative impacts such as an increased burden on female academics and reinforcing gender norms of women taking on caring roles (by often leading on Athena SWAN and other equality initiatives).

An emerging area of research seems to focus less on accreditation and more towards action and implementation. The Empathy Business (2017) believe that empathy has a bigger impact on performance than gender. They aim to teach clients to understand the impact of their actions and take appropriate steps to improve, i.e. helping male recruiters and academics to understand the impact of their actions/attitudes on the progression of female colleagues.

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Where and what are the barriers to progression for women in UK Higher Education (UKHE)?

Research Aims & Objectives

To determine if gender bias exists within Russell Group Universities by:

- Identifying if there are any significant points in progression where gender bias occurs across the Russell Group;

- Comparing these findings with Uni A and identifying any correlation;

- Identifying potential reasons for any identified bias;

- Developing recommendations based on findings.

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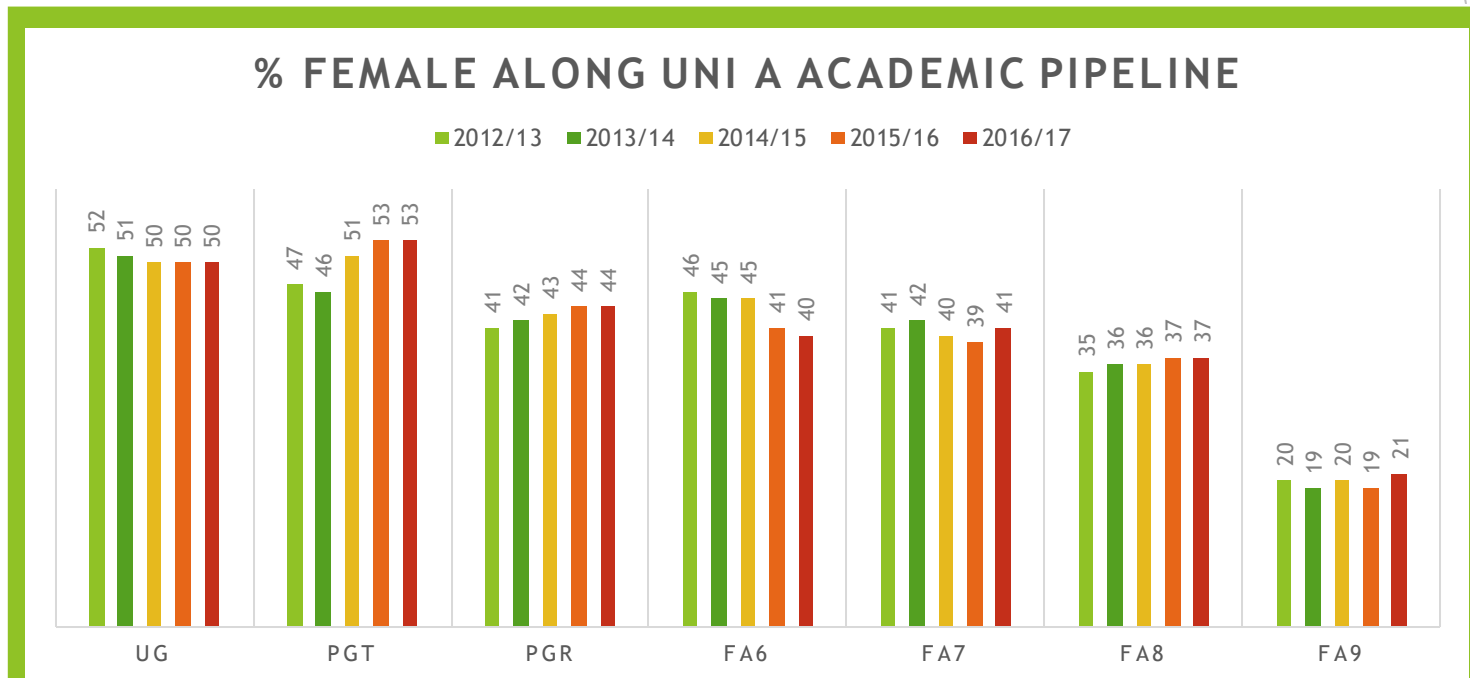
What we actually found?

Figure 2: Percentage of women in Uni A along the academic career pathway for the last five years (Uni A, 2017a, 2017b)

Table 2 shows that this is a statistically significant change at four key stages, from:

- Masters level (PGT) to Doctoral level (PGR)

- Teaching Fellow/Research Fellow (FA6) to Assistant Professor (FA7)

- Assistant Professor (FA7) to Associate Professor (FA8)

- Associate Professor (FA8) to Professor (FA9)

From	To	t value	p value	Conclusion
UG	PGT	0.39057	0.353156	The result is not significant at p < .05.
PGT	PGR	-4.51768	0.00098	The result is significant at p < .05.
PGR	FA6	-0.44721	0.333291	The result is not significant at p < .05.
FA6	FA7	-2.13498	0.032642	The result is significant at p < .05.
FA7	FA8	6.95701	0.000059	The result is significant at p < .05.
FA8	FA9	-30.9931	0.00001	The result is significant at p < .05.

Table 2 – A statistical analysis of gender ratios along the academic career pathway of Uni A, using the Student t-test.

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Conclusions

The main cause of the decline in female academics in proportion to male in Uni A was that **female academics did not apply for promotion at the same rate as their male peers**. Analysis of surveys suggested that this was for three principal reasons:

▶ **Part time working** – a greater percentage of female academics chose to work part time than male. This was due to family and caring commitments and work/life balance, with women more commonly taking on caring roles, particularly following the birth of a child. There were a lack of part time positions compared to full time, acting as a built-in bias towards men.

▶ **Women did not feel empowered to apply for promotion**. There was an intrinsic lack of career support and talent management for women in HE in comparison to men and only 42% of women believed that they gained equal pay for equal work in comparison to their male counterparts. It was common for women to take on greater administration or teaching loads and 52% women questioned felt that this work wasn't recognised as of equal value to research by UK HEIs. This perception of being undervalued discouraged women from applying for promotion.

▶ Both of the issues above, stemmed from the UKHE system not being designed for women. It is a **historically patriarchal system** that has not undergone significant structural change since its inception. This was evidenced by the different responses to survey questions between women and men, with men not perceiving issues as impactful as women did. Furthermore, 41% of women questioned had been made to feel uncomfortable in the workplace because of their gender. This issue was further supported by the free text comments, which explicitly stated that changes were required in the nature of masculine leadership in order for women to thrive in UKHE without discrimination, as advocated by Beer (2015).

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Recommendations

Facilitate part-time working: As more women choose to work part time than men, a review of policies and practices to further support part-time working would help to facilitate those wanting to work part-time. This should specifically be focussed on part-time roles in senior positions

Empower women: Female academics should be empowered to apply for promotion. This could involve investing in a significant mentoring and career support programme for female academics, in order to engage them building confidence and recognising talent early in their careers. To complement this, there should be a greater recognition of administrative and teaching duties in the promotions process, as whilst these roles are vital for institutional success and prevalent in female workloads, they are not currently equally valued alongside research and publications.

Recommendations

Address patriarchal nature of sector

Uni A should continue to engage with Athena SWAN, mandating engagement across all departments and communicating this publically. The dominant masculine social environment is easy to identify, but more difficult to change. Another way to tackle the male dominated nature of the sector is to have more women in senior posts.

Where and what are the barriers to progression for female students and academics in UK Higher Education?

Oliver Cooper

THE UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

Since Graduation…..and Reflections

Any Questions......

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