

GEM annual report
October 2014

Summary of the year:

The 2013-14 academic year saw the self-assessment team, under the leadership of Prof Susan Hardman Moore, prepare and submit an application for a GEM bronze award. The application, with a substantial action plan for future activities, was submitted in April 2014, and the award was confirmed in September 2014. As well as being one of the first schools at the University of Edinburgh to gain this award, we are also the first Religious and Theological Studies unit in the UK to do so.

Dr Naomi Appleton took over as Convenor in May 2014, and will continue to work with the committee to put the action plan into practice, monitor the gender culture of the School, and identify new areas for improvement.

Gender culture surveys 2014:

The annual gender culture surveys of staff and postgraduates were conducted in May-June 2014, and showed a marked improvement on the previous year, especially amongst the postgraduate community, though several areas remain in need of work. Notable points include:

Staff:

- A marked increase in support for the statements 'My School provides me with useful mentoring opportunities' (44.1% 2013; 67.6% 2014) and 'My School provides me with a helpful annual appraisal' (57.5% 2013; 80% 2014), and an increase in positive response to more than half of the questions overall.
- 100% agreement (compared with 82.4% in 2013) for the statement 'The School uses senior women as well as senior men as visible role models'.

Postgraduate students:

- An increase in positive responses in all but five of the 40 survey questions, though there is still room for improvement in many areas.
- A decrease in agreement with the statement 'My School offers me advice, coaching, mentoring and/or other support, to help me progress from study to an academic career' from 76.3% in 2013 to 70.4% in 2014. While the new PGR mentoring scheme should help to tackle this, we also need to consider other means of offering further support and training for our postgraduate students.

The GEM Action Plan

In order to build upon the Bronze award and prepare our application for Silver, the School needs to put the action plan submitted in our Bronze application into practice. The full document can be found in the GEM folder on the shared drive.

Action points already completed:

- Equality and Diversity awareness has been fully integrated into the induction week programme for undergraduates and postgraduates.
- A section on Equality and Diversity was included in the latest version of the staff handbook.
- An additional promotion advisor was appointed, resulting in a choice of two advisors, one female and one male. The advisors ran an informal information session on 2nd October 2014.
- A PGR mentoring scheme was designed, discussed at the relevant committees and approved for implementation. This was launched in induction week and to date it has 18 students and nine staff taking part. The students are evenly split in gender terms, while two-thirds of the volunteer staff mentors are female.
- The Café Couthie group met regularly throughout the year, growing in numbers. A focus group has recently been convened to decide how to use the budget of £200 to continue to build on the success of the scheme, as well as to discuss any other matters relating to the PG experience that need to come to the attention of the GEM committee.

Main action points this coming year:

- Increase uptake of Equality and Diversity training amongst staff.
- Audit taught courses for representation of gender issues in course content.
- Establish progression focus group to examine the ‘leaky pipeline’ between UG, PGT and PGR study amongst female students, and to suggest ways to tackle this in the School.
- Establish a GEM website for the School, to disseminate relevant information, including summaries of the survey results.
- Establish lunchtime workshops for staff on issues such as family friendly leave, flexible working, and the appraisal process.
- Continue to build on the success of Café Couthie, and consider other initiatives to further improve gender culture at PG level.

Dr Naomi Appleton, GEM Convenor, October 2014