

Aurora initiative overview

What is Aurora?

Aurora is for those who identify as women, up to senior lecturer level or the professional services equivalent, working in a university, college or related organisation who would like to develop and explore issues relating to leadership roles and responsibilities. The initiative is run and facilitated by [AdvanceHE](#) with the support of [institutional Champions](#).

Participants should have the endorsement of their line manager and be committed to developing and enhancing their career. We encourage delegates to use their voices to promote positive change across the institution and their areas.

While most leadership programmes are aimed at leaders and managers already in role, Aurora is designed to enable a wide range of women, in academic and professional roles to engage with leadership development at an earlier stage in their careers.

Aurora uses self-directed learning materials which are intended to be an on-going resource, available to participants to increase their knowledge and aid their further development as leaders. We appreciate that in our busy complex lives finding time to attend long training programmes or undertake academic study to further our careers is often difficult or impossible so Aurora is a multi-part leadership development initiative made up of:

Welcome and Introduction webinar. This is an integral part of the programme and the first opportunity to meet Aurorans from your cohort. During the session you will consider your Personal Development Plan for the programme and the attitudes and approaches essential for its success. You will also hear from one of AdvanceHE's inspirational guest speakers about their experience of being a woman leader

Four online development days (Identity, Impact & Voice; Core Leadership; Politics & Influence; Adaptive Leadership Skills). These form the core of the Aurora programme and will be **delivered virtually** with up to 250 women from across the virtual region attending on each day. The days will ignite your thinking and equip you with skills essential for your leadership progression. They will help you connect with a deeper sense of self, gain visibility, make an impact, understand internal politics, influence, become networked, adapt to a fast-paced HE environment and take courageous actions

Two Action learning sets (ALS) Highly valued by participants, these powerful online learning spaces will give you an opportunity to discuss your leadership challenges and practice implementing new approaches learnt throughout the programme. You will work with a small group of colleagues to find new insights and solutions. During the first ALS, held by Advance HE, you will get a full briefing on how to benefit from this learning. The second ALS will be self-facilitated in already established groups.

Face to face event – Your future in Higher Education. This will give you an opportunity to meet other Aurorans from your cohort in person, revisit key areas attributed to leadership and hear from expert speakers about 'The Future of HE'. You will work in small groups, share experiences and aspirations, examine the challenges that leaders currently face and identify practical steps to achieve your leadership aspirations and thrive in the complex HE environment.

Networking on the programme will be facilitated through connecting with colleagues from the sector: online in breakout rooms during the development days and action learning sets, and in person during the face-to-face events. You will also be able to meet Aurorans from other cohorts through virtual Aurora Networking Sessions and connect with a global community of women leaders through Advance HE Connect.

Aurora Mentor – you will select a mentor from your institution to provide in-house insights into ‘the way things are done around here’; guidance and advice on the sector and career progression; encouragement and to facilitate networking and building supportive connections.

Mentoring Resources. As an Auroran you will gain access to Advance HE’s Mentoring Resources (handbook and online materials) to help you set up and get the most out of the mentoring relationship at your university

Self-directed learning materials to supplement the content of the development days and provide an opportunity to continue development under the four strands.

The four development days:

Identity, Impact and Voice (day one)

Focus: *Participants will explore:*

- What they are bringing to the programme – experience, strengths, fears, hopes
- How they show up – what others see in them that looks and feels like leadership; also what stops them being at their best
- What they want to get out of the programme

Outcomes: *By the end of the day participants will have:*

- Considered their professional identity – what it means and how to enhance it
- Taken stock of the qualities and behaviours that already make them a leader
- Reflected on the people who inspire them to do and be better
- Clarified what they want and need to take from the programme as a whole

Core Leadership Skills (day two)

Outcomes: *As a result of taking part in Core Leadership Skills and its associated activities before and after the workshop, participants will have:*

- Understood the role of vision, strategy, and values (both organisational and personal) in leadership, and have articulated a clear vision for their own area of work
- Continued to practice the skills of motivating and influencing people and negotiating mutually acceptable outcomes
- Understood the role of storytelling for leadership and practised telling their own stories
- Become more aware of the influence of bias and stereotype threat on decision-making and responses to women in leadership roles, and established an action plan to address these in their own leadership

Power and Influence (day three)

Focus: *Participants will:*

- Gain an understanding of the nature of institutional power and politics and how this is changing for women, now.
- Gain insight regarding the existing political structure/system with their own institution
- Recognise the risks and opportunities that this may present for women.
- Learn the secrets of power and politics success and how to deploy these effectively

Outcomes: *By the end of the day participants will develop their skills beyond the theory of power and politics to:*

- Better understand the realities of working within an existing institutional system
- Recognise how to maximise their opportunities for influence and networking, while remaining authentic and true to self.
- Recognise any barriers they may face and identify ways of navigating these, whilst maximising opportunities for achievement
- Recognise the success factors for negotiating power and politics and plan to leverage these in their own work environment

Adaptive Leadership Skills (day four)

Focus: *Participants will:*

- Consider approaches to leading when there are no easy answers
- Understand how to orchestrate courageous conversations
- Take new perspectives on risk
- Take a systemic view
-

Outcomes: *Participants will develop their skills beyond the theory of adaptive leadership to:*

- Gain an increased ability to challenge the status quo in their institution
- Expand their informal ability to influence
- Increase awareness of their strengths and development areas
- Action plan for their leadership success