

Gender Pay Gap Action Plan

Context and background

The gender pay gap is the difference in average pay between men and women in the workplace and includes basic pay and certain allowances. It has been a legal requirement since 2017 for organisations with more than 250 employees to complete an annual gender pay gap return to the government. The mean gender pay gap calculates the percentage difference between average (mean) male and female hourly pay. The median gender pay gap calculates the percentage difference between the midpoint of male and female hourly pay when both are listed from highest to lowest value. Calculations are made following guidance on the [Government website](#).

There are economic, competitive, moral, and reputational reasons why we should pay attention to gender pay gaps at the University. It is important for us to prompt critical discussion and debate about the reasons why pay gaps exist and what can be done to reduce them. It has been acknowledged for some time that the inequality that women experience in the labour market is a significant and persistent barrier which both damages the prospects and health of women, as well as limits the potential of economic prosperity. As an inclusive organisation, we recognise and celebrate the significant benefits of diversity in our student and staff community and have taken steps to promote this further e.g. promoting our Diversity 200 recruitment project.

Targets

As part of our institutional Athena Swan submission, we committed to tackling our gender pay gap.

2026 Athena Swan (AS) target - Median gap to have reduced to less than 10%

2028 Athena Swan (AS) target - No significant median gap

Data/key insights

As of 31st March 2024 (and reported on by 30th March 2025) – our gender pay gap is recorded as:

- Women occupy 45% of the highest paid jobs and 62% of the lowest paid jobs.
- Women earn 86p for every £1 that men earn when comparing median hourly pay. Their median hourly pay is 13.7% lower than men's.
- When comparing mean (average) hourly pay, women's mean hourly pay is 13.3% lower than men's.
- When comparing mean (average) bonus pay, women's mean bonus pay is 43.4% lower than men's.

2024 vs 2023 Comparison



The mean and median gender pay gaps have decreased since the 2023 report. Notably, the mean pay gap is the lowest it has been since 2017 (see appendix). In part this is due to greater representation of women in the highest pay quartile (senior roles) and a reduction in the proportion of women in the lower middle quartile. Whilst this movement is in the right direction, there remains an over-representation of women in the lower quartiles and men in the higher quartiles which remains a key driver of the gender pay gap. Whilst this trend is consistent with the broader pattern seen among most large employers in the UK, where men are more likely to be in senior roles and women are more likely to be in junior, lower-paid positions, the University remains committed to addressing this.

Proportions of staff in each quartile

		Lower Quartile	Lower Middle	Upper Middle	Upper Quartile
2023	Male %	39%	40%	41%	58%
2024	Male %	38%	42%	42%	55%
		↓	↑	↑	↓
2023	Female %	61%	60%	59%	42%
2024	Female %	62%	58%	58%	45%
		↑	↓	↓	↑

Bonus figures

	Difference Bonus Pay Mean %	Difference Bonus Pay Median %
2023	11.19%	0%
2024	43.40%	0%

The figures highlight the difference in bonus payments received by men and women in the 2023-24 academic year. During the reporting period bonus payments were primarily awarded as part of the University's Value Award initiative which recognised colleagues who demonstrated the University's core values. Other bonus payments included the Vice-Chancellor Awards Scheme, the Executive Board Incentive Scheme and a small number of targeted individual payments.

Analysis has shown that a greater proportion of women received bonus payments, with 60% of the total number of bonuses awarded. However, a small number of higher-value bonuses were awarded to men. This combined with a reduction in the overall number of bonuses awarded during the reporting period compared to the previous year, has contributed to a widening of the mean bonus gap – rising from 11.19% to 43.40%. The reduction in bonuses awarded this year was because a one-off ‘thank you’ payment was issued to all staff in 2022–23. The payment was made in recognition of staff contributions to several key University achievements, including the Research Excellence Framework (REF) results and the National Student Survey (NSS) outcome. The mean bonus gap is particularly sensitive to outliers, as it is influenced by a small number of very high (or very low values), further amplified by a reduced number of total awards.

There is no median bonus gap, continuing the same trend observed last year. This means when looking at the middle value of all bonus payments, there was no difference between the bonuses received by male and female employees, reflecting work conducted in recent years to ensure consistency and transparency in our bonus processes.

Future changes

The Executive Board bonus scheme has been restructured for 2025/26. The new simplified annual arrangement reduces maximum payout potential. This won't be reflected in the pay gap data until 2026 (submitted in March 2027).

Why does the gender gap exist?

Detailed analysis completed in 2023 showed that there is no single reason for our gender pay gap. Key reasons included:

- New starter data suggests that patterns of recruiting are perpetuating trends in pay, with men more likely to be recruited into higher roles.
- Starting salaries were higher for men.
- Fixed allowances were more likely and higher for men.
- Use of the Higher Responsibility Zone (HRZ) contributes to inequality (men are more likely to be within HRZ and at higher levels within HRZ).

Actions taken in the past 18 months:

- **Strategic priority** - Gender pay gap is one of four top EDI plan priorities which has been a key focus over the past three years, supported by Executive Board sponsors, ensuring that actions to reduce the existing gap are prioritised at leadership level.
- **Athena Swan Charters** –In line with above, all schools now have Athena Swan charters. Action plans are held locally to maintain focus on promoting and advancing gender equality.
- **Recruitment and starting salaries** - In 2024 we had a 50/50% split on recruitment overall into the

University, and starting salaries are no longer asked for to prevent pay discrimination.

- **Salary management** – Staff allowances are now reviewed at a school level to ensure there is no bias applied.
- **Management training** – A critical part of the culture change required to reduce and maintain a downwards trend in the gender pay gap is the diversity confidence of managers. It is crucial to building inclusive team cultures and attracting and managing diverse talent. EDI content has been weaved through the new management training portfolio, available to all new and experienced managers.
- **Equality Impact Assessments (EQIA)** - EQIAs are now completed for all structural change programmes. This is a tool to ensure we uphold our commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, in line with our moral and legal equality duty and to support our strategic ambitions.

Best practice continues, for example:

- **Recruitment** – Maintain the strong work that has kicked off with *Diversity 200 (*an actionable checklist that ensures Equality, Diversity and Inclusion is embedded throughout the recruitment process).
- **Appraisals and promotion** – HR Business Partners and Senior Leaders continue to monitor gender and ethnicity in appraisal rating distribution and promotion advancement, and challenge if required, and ensure diverse panels that fully understand any mitigating factors.
- **Womens networks** – Collaboration across the university to address gender related barriers continues to prioritise purposeful action.
- **Policies** – Family friendly policy changes e.g. Shared Parental Leave and Parent Returner Network and Toolkit are being made to ensure changes are embedded across the University.
- **Anti bias training** – Continue to reinforce that all selection panels to have undertaken relevant training
- **Springboard** – The women only development programme continues to run, offering tailored support to increase representation and career progression. One quarter of Springboard participants have now successfully achieved promotion.

Continuing to close the gap

Due to the financial challenges facing Surrey and the rest of the HE sector this is not a problem that can be immediately eradicated and even if it was, a culture shift is required to prevent it from returning. Moving forward, in addition to the work referenced above, focus will be on the following five key actions:

1. **Local accountability** - HRBPs continue to work with Head of School/Department to gain visibility and take accountability for closing the gap
2. **Further analysis** - More root cause analysis is required e.g. length in role prior to promotion, review quartiles by area/level, analyse quartiles since 2017 to see any shift. Depending on findings may need to increase Line Manager awareness of stretch career objectives and readiness for promotion. We also want to pay particular attention to any pay outliers, that is, those who get paid the very most, and those who are paid the very least.
3. **Executive Board Focus** - Will look to add 'gender pay gap closure' to the Executive Board objectives.
4. **Allowances** - Assess the potential impact of the University's Medical School and associated clinical allowances.
5. **Communicate success and role models** - Create a comms plan to ensure that motivational stories are communicated e.g. FABSS no longer has a gender pay gap

APPENDIX

Table 1: Median and Mean Gender pay gap results since 2017

Year	Median	Mean
2017	13.7%	14.1%
2018	14.0%	17.0%
2019	14.0%	17.0%
2020	11.1%	17.0%
2021	13.7%	17.5%
2022	13.7%	16.41%
2023	15.79%	16.78%
2024	13.66%	13.32%

Table 2: Hourly and bonus pay figures

	Hourly Pay Mean	Hourly Pay Median	Bonus Pay Mean	Bonus Pay Median
Male	£27.96	£23.64	£574.71	£172.24
Female	£24.23	£20.41	£325.29	£172.24

Table 3: Difference between hourly rates and bonus pay

Difference Mean Hourly Rate %	Difference Hourly Pay Median %	Difference Bonus Pay Mean %	Difference Bonus Pay Median %
13.32%	13.66%	43.40%	0%

Table 4: Difference between hourly rates and bonus pay

	Difference Mean Hourly Rate %	Difference Hourly Pay Median %	Difference Bonus Pay Mean %	Difference Bonus Pay Median %
2023	16.78%	15.79%	11.19%	0%
2024	13.32%	13.66%	43.40%	0%

Table 5: Number and proportion of employees awarded bonus pay

	Count of Bonus Payments	Total Staff	Proportion of Bonus Pay %
Male	341	2131	16.00%
Female	504	2655	18.98%

Table 6: Number of staff in each quartile

	Lower Quartile	Lower Middle	Upper Middle	Upper Quartile
Male	459	504	507	661
Female	738	693	689	535
Total	1197	1197	1196	1196

Table 7: Proportions of staff in each quartile

		Lower Quartile	Lower Middle	Upper Middle	Upper Quartile
2023	Male %	39%	40%	41%	58%
2024	Male %	38%	42%	42%	55%
		↓	↑	↑	↓
2023	Female %	61%	60%	59%	42%
2024	Female %	62%	58%	58%	45%
		↑	↓	↓	↑

Calculation Methodology

Calculations are made following the government regulations [Making your calculations - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/making-your-calculations)

In summary:

Median Gender Pay Gap

1. **List all employees:** Arrange all employees' hourly pay rates from lowest to highest.
2. **Find the middle value:** Identify the middle value in this list. If there is an even number of employees, the median is the average of the two middle values.
3. **Calculate the gap:** The median gender pay gap is the difference between the median hourly pay of men and women, expressed as a percentage of the median hourly pay of men.

Mean Gender Pay Gap

1. **Sum all hourly pay rates:** Add up all the hourly pay rates for men and women separately.
2. **Calculate the average:** Divide the total pay by the number of employees for each gender to get the mean hourly pay.
3. **Calculate the gap:** The mean gender pay gap is the difference between the mean hourly pay of men and women, expressed as a percentage of the mean hourly pay of men.