



SFC Gender Action Plan

Summary and Review

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Introduction:

Gender Action Plan (GAP) published by SFC in August 2016 outlines its recommendations to address gender imbalances at subject level in HEIs. The GAP has become a long term, large-scale project, requiring a great deal of partnership working to be successful. Therefore, LIFT OFF should aim to do all we can to ensure we work within these guidelines, without comprising our own goals – the details of this will become apparent later. This report contains a summary of the GAP publication, as well as other sources such as the Higher Education Academy's 'Whose Job is it Anyway?' (2016) which explains the inner workings of the GAP in more detail; D&A College's Regional Outcome Agreement with the SFC (2016-2018) for real world statistics when looking at the extent of gender imbalances and ScienceGrrl's 'Through Both Eyes: The Case for a Gender Lens in STEM' (2016).

After attending the Equality Challenge Unit's Webinar, "Under-Representation in Higher Education", a further action was to contact the ECU for resources to develop a better grounding in the gender landscape in HE. This opened up more questions than it answered in relation to equality in general, especially for disabled and Muslim students, which could potentially require more research.

Under-representation:

Fig. 1 outlines the subjects for college with the highest need to address the gender imbalance with the national average percentage of the split

Female	Male
Construction (General) – 95%*	Child Care Services
Building/Construction Operations – 96%*	Hair/Personal Care Services – 96%*
Building Services	
Engineering/Technology (General) – 90%*	
Mechanical Engineering – 93%*	
Electrical Engineering	
IT: Comp Science/Programming/Systems	
Vehicle Maintenance/Repair	

*Nationally

Fig. 2 gives a regional perspective for D&A College – Fife College statistics were unavailable at the time of writing. However, we can assume that these are similar.

Female	Male
Construction (General) – 97.6% Male	Child Care Services
Building/Construction Operations - 98.4% Male	Hair/Personal Care Services – 95.9% Female
Building Services	
Engineering/Technology (General) – 94.0% Male	
Mechanical Engineering – 96.8% Male	
Electrical Engineering	
IT: Comp Science/Programming/Systems	
Vehicle Maintenance/Repair	

Fig. 3 shows the genders and their lowest representation in courses at university level.

Female	Male
Architecture, Building and Planning	Social Studies
Engineering	Nursing
Technologies	Training teachers
Computer Sciences	Psychology

SFC Aims:

Subject areas across the university and college delivery have been identified as having ‘severe imbalances’, defined as having >75% of one gender imbalance. By 2021, there must be a 5% increase in the minority gender share in the most imbalanced subject areas. The SFC urge all partners to focus on innovative ways of working to reach these in 5 main areas: outreach, recruitment, enrolment, retention and success. The GAP itself is a ‘vital part of how SFC will support Scotland’s institutions to become more accessible and diverse’ (GAP, 2016, pg5).

Also, of interest to LIFT OFF, the GAP will align with SFC socio-economic aims and the inclusion of students with care experience. Therefore, we should integrate more gender awareness alongside our organisational goals as they will attribute to meeting the SFC targets. Something to note is the fact that there is a need for a ‘joined-up approach’ across all of educational partners to review approaches

to reducing gender imbalances in HE. The main approaches outlined by the GAP are as follows: HEI Infrastructure; Influencing the Influencers; Raising Awareness and Aspirations; Encouraging Applications and Supporting Success (Higher Educations Academy, 2016). SFC have requested that all Scottish HEIs develop their own Gender Action Plans with a focus on the 5 areas previously discussed, the first round of GAPs are expected around July 2017. Once these individual GAPs are drawn up, the SFC will look to align them with recommendations from the Commission on Widening Access to 'enhance alignment between their plan of work and this plan' (GAP, 2016, pg.13) by Summer 2017. It is crucial to outline these in order to understand the work that our partners are currently undertaking, as well as figuring out how we can develop one to work alongside gender imbalances and widening access.

Fig. 4 highlights how a GAP will operate and indicates areas which LIFT OFF could support partner's plan, once released.



Below, these areas are listed, explained and there are suggestions for moving forward in LIFT OFF's involvement in gender.

(1): Supporting the educational choice process, challenging gender stereotypes and enabling others to the same. LIFT OFF, as a programme, does and will continue to support this aspect of the GAP, due to our organisational aim – promoting aspiration to HE. Also, LIFT OFF is doing well in attempting to challenge gender stereotypes in HE, with a focus on reducing the gender imbalance for STEM related subjects pre-existing the GAP. A report from ScienceGrrl outlined their recommendations to reduce the gender imbalance in STEM subjects and placed more importance on them engaging with STEM subjects, rather than just having an interest in it in order to develop their 'science capital'. They recommend increased support in The Big Bang Near Me scheme and STEM Clubs. Both of these schemes could be beneficial for LIFT OFF core pupils and could require networking to understand how these programmes operate and a potential opportunity to signpost in S4 Core Pupil Meetings or S5/6 IAPs, if they will assist core pupils in promoting interest and applications in STEM.

(2): Raising awareness and influencing aspirations is another area where LIFT OFF could potentially have an impact on helping meet the gender targets as LIFT OFF shares this as its operation aim. Now, gender imbalance is something on our agenda. This is due to its ever-increasing importance in the educational policy sphere – it is difficult to postulate whether an increased review of whether we need to re-evaluate our work in order to raise aspirations, in terms of gender imbalanced courses. This could feel like we were pushing an agenda onto young people's life choices and 'forcing' them down a certain route. For the meantime, being aware of young people's choices and nurturing them, especially if they do not meet the gender norm, would be the best way to tackle this area of the GAP.

(3): Encouraging applications is an area of LIFT OFF that is critical to the programme's success and, at this moment in time when looking at gender, an aspect of the GAP that we do well. Similar to (2), we do not want to be seen as forcing young people to apply for a particular HE route just because of their gender but should do all we can to aid them in it, if they decide to do so themselves. LIFT OFF is

very good at taking note of career interests and signposting to partners or giving advice on where to gain experience to gain entry into HE, this should definitely continue.

(4): Supporting student success is, again, critical to what we do. From Social Media updates congratulating young people after exam results to running a graduation event after LO2S – we support our young people success through a variety of ways. This comes down to the previously mentioned need to ‘nurture’ young people in their learner journey. Although gender barriers do exist in gaining entry into a career route through gender socialisation, in my experience, gender is not something that we put across as a barrier to that particular young person – only something discussed in a positive manner. We should, and will, continue with our work in this area as it is one of our strengths.

(5): ‘Influencing the influencers’ can be explained briefly as long term partnership working linking up with the educational choice process to ensure our partners are in check with the targets outlined in the GAP, and vice versa. By influencing the influencers, we have to ensure that guidance teams in schools are doing their best to support gender action and not just prescribing to pre-existing gender norms when it comes to career choices – promote nursing to female pupils or construction to male pupils. Due to the large-scale nature of the GAP and Scottish government policy drivers, schools will become more conscious of gender when giving advice to young people. In the meantime, it is important to act alongside guidance teams when we give advice to young people to reinforce new ways of thinking when it comes to gender imbalanced courses and career paths. There is potential to work on this further, due to LIFT OFF’s proposed concept of providing CPD for school staff where LIFT OFF could mention the importance of gender awareness in the transition to HE for gender imbalanced courses and student retention in HE, especially for males, in order to address potential information gaps or assumed knowledge. Also, when our HEI partners publish their individual HEI Gender Action Plans, we could provide a narrative for staff, in terms of what is being worked on and targets in the local region for transitioning S5/S6s pupils.

Summary of Potential Areas of Development:

1. Continue to integrate gender awareness with our organisational goals to align with SFC targets.
2. Review Partner GAPs in July 2017 to develop greater partnership working to reduce local gender under-representation.
3. Linking up with and signposting to local STEM schemes (Big Bang Near Me, local STEM Clubs), if relevant to our Core Pupils, to engage our young people in STEM.
4. Work with guidance teams in our current capacity as Widening Access Practitioners in CPMs, S5 IAPs to promote new ways of thinking among young people.
5. Potential opportunity to mention gender awareness at a Transitions CPD for teachers further down the line in order to maintain SFC targets and provide a narrative of local HEI targets from their individual GAPs.

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