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# **WOMEN IN THE HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR – CONFRONTING THE ISSUES FOR ACADEMICS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF BRADFORD**

## **PROJECT REPORT**

By

Jessica Guth and Fran Wright  
Bradford University Law School

December 2008

# **WOMEN IN THE HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR – CONFRONTING THE ISSUES FOR ACADEMICS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF BRADFORD**

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The views expressed in this report are those of the authors alone and do not represent those of the University of Bradford.

University of Bradford - Making Knowledge Work: Foreword by Naseem Zaman,  
Head of Equality Unit

The University of Bradford has a long history of engagement with equality and diversity issues and has made strenuous efforts to promote equality in all aspects of its activities including policy, practice and implementation.

Given the University's diverse student and staff body, equality and diversity are at the heart of all aspects of work as an organisation situated within the multi-cultural and multi-racial city of Bradford, the University is fully committed to putting in place progressive structures and systems to ensure that gender equality is an integral part of its business and can be evidenced by the actions of all students, staff and others associated with the University.

Since developing the initial gender equality scheme and action plan in 2006 the University has been implementing and reviewing its action plan which has been monitored annually by the Equality and Diversity Committee. The University of Bradford has been a member of Opportunity Now since 2000 and participated in the benchmark exercise to assess its performance on gender policies and practice. Opportunity Now is the national network representing employers who aim to ensure full inclusiveness of women in the workplace.

Participation has enabled the University to share best gender related experience and to improve practice. The University has achieved the Opportunity Now Silver Award through the Opportunity Now benchmark.

Naseem Zaman, November 2008

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **Introduction and Background**

This report details the findings of a small scale research study carried out by staff of the Bradford University Law School. The study considered the progression of women in higher education and focused on academic staff at the University of Bradford. The research outlined the European and national law relevant to this area before examining the university's own policies in detail. The majority of the study then focused on the lived experience of academics at the University exploring issues around promotion and progression, work life balance, mentoring and perception of policies amongst others.

The research strategy of this project employed a socio-legal methodology. It involved the analysis of law and policy from institutional to European level. This analysis was then complemented with in-depth empirical work comprising of semi-structured interviews with male and female academics employed at the University (n=30). In addition to the interviews, some basic analysis was also made of statistics provided by the university.

The situation of academics in the UK has been considered before, and the issues arising from the literature are perhaps not surprising. We do not intend to provide a literature review here but suffice it to say for the purposes of setting the context, that the majority of issues arising from this research project are issues of which there is already some discussion in the literature. Factors such as family responsibilities and career breaks, networks, a 'male' model of success and a meritocracy based on that model are all examined and it is clear that the issue of gender equality in academia remains on the agenda.

### **The Findings: Law and Policy**

The Equality Act of 2006 places a general duty on all public authorities, when carrying out their functions, to eliminate discrimination and harassment that is unlawful under the Equal Pay Act (1970) and the Sex Discrimination Act (1975); and promote equality of opportunity between men and women.

'Confronting inequality: Celebrating diversity' is the University of Bradford's equality strap line. The equality policies and schemes reflect this commitment to promoting equality. The policies examined as part of this study were found to be comprehensive and well thought out. The gender equality scheme is well supported by a number of other policies dealing with issues such as harassment and bullying as well as maternity, paternity and adoption leave and flexible working. Other policies which may impact on progression are those relating to promotions procedures. We found the information to be available on the personnel section of the Human Resources website but the information was not easy to navigate and lacked transparency.

### **The Findings: The Experience of University of Bradford Academic Staff**

Perhaps unsurprisingly, statistics we were provided with by the University show that the most marked gender differences arise at the more senior level. Out of the 444 members of academic staff below professorial grade 43% (189) are female. At Professor level, however, only 24 % are female. At Senior Lecturer level the proportion of women is 35%, and at Reader 12%. At Lecturer level however the genders are almost evenly split with women making up 49% of the total.

The university also supplied the figures for the promotions round held in 2007. More men (87) applied for promotion than women (59) and men were more likely to be successful. 74% of men who applied were granted a promotion whereas only 66% of women were successful. No breakdown by job family or level of seniority was available to us; we therefore have not analysed the data by schools as they are unlikely to provide further useful insights.

The main purpose of this study was, however, not to conduct detailed statistical analysis but rather to gain an insight into the experience of staff at the institution. Even the brief figures given above indicate that women face barriers to progression. Further analysis by schools also reveals that women are generally underrepresented in the more senior positions even though there are some discipline areas that are highly feminised.

As part of this project the research team interviewed 30 academics from across the institution including a range of levels of seniority and subject disciplines. While it must of course be recognised that there are disciplinary differences and that different factors are likely to affect people differently as they progress through their life course and career trajectory, a number of common themes emerged.

### Promotions Process and Criteria

In order to get a picture of what academics at the University of Bradford considered to be a good academic and thus paint a picture of those attributes and characteristics that people valued in their colleagues and the standards they were measuring themselves against, we asked respondents about their 'ideal' academic. It is clear that there was no single picture of an ideal academic, and different people placed their emphasis on different skills. Interestingly the idea of a good academic or an ideal academic did not necessarily map onto what our respondents thought was the public perception of academics. Jessica<sup>1</sup> captures this well:

*Someone who's really clever ... I don't know, I think the image of academics is that they're straight laced, a little bit stiff, a little bit unapproachable, often male*

[Jessica, Senior Lecturer, Female]

A further reason for asking about academics' own image of the 'good academic' was that we wanted to find out to what extent this corresponded with the characteristics and skills that are considered and rewarded in the promotions process. However, investigation of this issue was somewhat hampered by the difficulty of getting an accurate picture of the University's promotion criteria.

The personnel website of the University of Bradford devotes quite a significant amount of web space to promotion-related matters. However, we got a strong sense that academics across the university felt daunted by the complexity of the promotions process and that although information is available it is not easy to navigate and make sense of. This was further compounded by some concerns that the personnel department was not giving potential applicants for promotion sufficient time or assistance in completing the complex paper work.

*Researcher: How did you, did you find the criteria?*

*I think it's still written in gobbledegook, I'm a plain speaker. I just find it really interesting that on the one hand the institution is saying that they want people to apply for a promotion, they advertise that this is going to happen. The information session run by the institution was a week before submission. So those 2 things do not go hand in hand. So they're saying one thing, when they actually mean something totally different. And that, that's my impression. If you really, really want to support people to do something you don't give them the information a week before, the amount of evidence that they want needs to go in, even down to when you've got to write your list of publications. We use Harvard referencing here, that's not Harvard referencing, so I had to redo it all.*

[Shannon, Lecturer, Female]

The second issue arising in relation to the promotions process at the university was that respondents' perception of what the promotions criteria are varies enormously not just from school to school but also within schools and departments. We detected what might be a mismatch between what people thought the criteria were, what the criteria actually were and how the criteria then operated on the ground.

*There's a phenomenal repeat message from the females about how they went for promotion and they have the most research and you know, everything else they*

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<sup>1</sup> The names of all our respondents have been changed in order to ensure their anonymity

*outperform guy X and guy X got the job and they asked for feedback and none of them got feedback. So I think the criteria might be different or the experience of the criteria might be different between the male academic and female*

[Nicole, Junior, Female]

### Work Life Balance Issues

Overall we got a clear sense of a long hours culture still being prevalent within the institution and those who managed to work a “standard” working week were few and far between. Many of our respondents alluded to difficulty of clearly separating work and private life. Many felt that there were significant overlaps between the two. However, many respondents still felt that they had not managed to find the right balance between the amount of work they were doing and their other responsibilities and interests. This situation seems to be exacerbated in situations where the member of staff also has caring or family responsibilities.

In some cases the issue of caring responsibilities was associated with child care and in particular the care of very young children and maternity leave. In the course of the interviews we heard many comments in relation to maternity leave issues. Many of our female respondents who have yet to embark on having a family were concerned about maternity leave entitlement and how they could balance that with maintaining a career and how they would be able to come back to work. These concerns were borne out when talking to female academics who have had children and had experience of maternity leave either here or at other institutions. Overall there was a feeling that the university was not particularly good at supporting expecting and new mothers

*There was a lot to do with maternity leave but just didn't seem to work*

[Michelle, Lecturer, Female]

Many had faced ‘battles’ about their status and working hours on their return or the workload they were expected to pick up. There were also comments about the lack of adequate maternity cover which meant that respondents often were still involved with work while they were actually on leave or that they had to return to work on part time pay with very similar responsibilities as they had had before.

### Leadership, Mentoring, Role Models and Networks

Many of our respondents talked about the importance of having support, strong and positive leadership, mentoring, role models and the management of staff. One of the perceived problems with the promotions criteria and process was the lack of transparency as discussed above. There was a sense that some of that could be overcome if the academic was well managed. Poor leadership and management as well as a lack of mentoring and role models could however exacerbate the situation

The top level in the university hierarchy was repeatedly talked about as male dominated and was seen as an old boys’ network. Promotion, certainly into senior management level positions was seen as heavily influenced by being part of the right network. In some cases there was a very strong feeling that the network was more important than the people’s skills and qualifications making it even more difficult for others to break into the network and progress. April captures the gendered dimension of networks well:

*I think men have better connections. I think men like men, men socialise with men, men get on with men better and they talk about football matches. When it comes to promotion and getting work done, the men will support the men. That's a very blunt thing to say but I think it's true.*

[April, Lecturer, Female]

However, there was also recognition that networking can be important and is a legitimate part of the academic job and that it was not networking in itself that was problematic but the exclusory effect networks can sometimes have.

### Gendered Approaches to Work and Promotion

We were interested in the comments about a gendered approach to career progression and as part of the interview we discussed with respondents their own approaches to work and whether they thought men and women approached work and promotion in different ways. Many agreed that it was too much of a generalisation to say that men approached work and progression in a certain way while women did so in another. However some respondents clearly thought that the way academics approach their work has a gendered dimension.

Some respondents felt that men were generally better at protecting their research time and were less likely to spend significant amounts of time devoted to pastoral care and the 'caring side' of teaching and learning. There were also some comments about women generally being more conscientious when it came to teaching and learning and administration and that men were more likely to cut corners in those areas and focus on those activities which would ensure promotion. Some respondents spoke about the importance of pastoral care – and the lack of recognition it received for it.

### Overt Discrimination at the University of Bradford

We heard of few overt and direct cases of discrimination at the institution but we did hear about some. In order to protect the anonymity of our respondents we cannot report the details of the incidents they told us about. However, we were shocked and disappointed to hear of such incidents and even more dismayed to hear that the university, from the respondents' point of view, did little to resolve the matters and support them. We would urge the university to consider carefully how it deals with complaints in relation to discrimination, harassment and bullying. Attention should be paid to what can be done to resolve such matters and support victims. In particular it should consider how it can tackle the perception that the old boys' network will protect its own, or if this is in fact, merely a perception.

### Conclusions and Summary of Policy Recommendations

Our study of progression statistics and university policies showed that there is little wrong with university policy as such. The university has policies that, in theory, should ensure that women academics have an equal opportunity to progress within the university and that they feel valued and supported in their roles. However, the picture of the lived experience of academics that emerged in interviews is somewhat different. Many of our respondents felt that the promotions process was unclear and lacked transparency, that their skills were not valued or rewarded, that it was impossible to carry out their job in a reasonable number of hours, that they had a poor work-life balance, and that the university was still a male-dominated environment. We have made recommendations throughout the main report; their essence can be summarised quite briefly.

- Reward: there is more than one way of being a good academic and this needs to be reflected in the university's system of reward.
- Information: all the information academics need in order to plan and execute career plans needs to be accessible and available at one web location. Misconceptions about what is required need to be tackled.
- Transparency: we have no doubt that the university's promotions systems are more transparent than they were in the past but there is still much to be done. In particular, allocation of non-teaching duties needs to be equitable, and differences between schools must either be eliminated or be capable of proper justification.
- Encourage: a promotion system that relies on self-identification appears to favour confident male applicants at the expense of some women. Alternative or additional ways of identifying candidates for promotion should be identified and trialed.
- Support: the mentoring system is valuable but it does not always perform because of a lack of clarity about its aims and because mentors do not always have the requisite knowledge, skills and experience.
- Visibility: there are women in senior positions in the university but they are not necessarily visible to other women in the institution. A support network is needed to encourage women to aim high, and to develop the skills needed for a move into management roles.
- Balance: it is unclear why academics routinely work very long hours and fail to take annual holidays, but the university needs to explore ways to support a culture of balance. Part of that

is recognition of the value of a life outside the university, perhaps by including contribution to the wider community as a category in the promotions criteria.

**WOMEN IN THE HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR –  
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**Project Report**

## Introduction and Background

This report details the findings of a small scale research study carried out by staff of the Bradford University Law School at the University of Bradford. The study considered the progression of women in higher education and focused on academic staff at the University of Bradford. The research outlined the European and national law relevant to this area before examining the university's own policies in detail. The majority of the study then focused on the lived experience of academics at the University exploring issues around promotion and progression, work life balance, mentoring and perception of policies amongst others.

## The Research Strategy

The research strategy of this project employed a socio-legal methodology. It involved the analysis of law and policy from institutional to European level. This analysis was then complemented with in-depth empirical work comprising of semi-structured interviews with male and female academics employed at the University (n=30). In addition to the interviews, some basic analysis was also made of statistic provided by the university. A full description of the research methods used can be found at Appendix 1

## The Context: Women in HE in the Literature

Much has been written about gender equality generally and women in the work place specifically. For the purposes of this report we have not undertaken a wide review of the literature but have instead concentrated on what has been written about women academics. In this context a substantial amount has been written about women in specific disciplines and in particular women in science, engineering and technology<sup>2</sup>, there is less information publically available which considers female academics across the sector. What information there is comes predominantly from the American context and, while important, this did not provide the focus of our analysis here.

However the situation of academics in the UK has been considered and the issues arising from the literature are perhaps not surprising. We do not intend to provide a literature review here but have instead provided a list of references that may be of interest in appendix 4. Suffice it to say for the purposes of setting the context, that the majority of issues arising from this research project are issues of which there is already some discussion in the literature. Factors such as family responsibilities and career breaks, networks, a 'male' model of success and a meritocracy based on that model are all examined in the literature. It is clear that the issue of gender equality in academia remains on the agenda with the *Times Higher* running the headline story 'Still second among equals' in March 2008<sup>3</sup>.

## European and National Law and Policy

The Equality Act of 2006 places a general duty on all public authorities, when carrying out their functions, to eliminate discrimination and harassment that is unlawful under the Equal Pay Act (1970) and the Sex Discrimination Act (1975); and promote equality of opportunity between men and women. Appendix 2 contains a 'Law in Brief' giving more detail on gender equality law and policy at European and UK national level.

## University Policy

'Confronting inequality: Celebrating diversity' is The University of Bradford's equality strap line. The equality policies and schemes reflect this commitment to promoting equality. The policies examined as part of this study were found to be comprehensive and well thought out. The main gender equality policy and schemes covered the issues one would expect and stresses the importance of ongoing research and monitoring. The policy is supported by a number of other policies dealing with issues

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<sup>2</sup> For examples and references see the ATHENA project <http://www.athenaswan.org.uk/html/athena-swan/>

<sup>3</sup> Oxford, E (2008), 'Still second among equals' *Times Higher* 27<sup>th</sup> March 2008, p30 -35.

such as harassment and bullying as well as maternity, paternity and adoption leave and flexible working. Overall the university seems to have considered a comprehensive equality package which covers the issues staff and students may face. The policies are easily available online through the Human resources website and the main Equality Policy is distributed to new staff in their induction pack.

Other policies which may impact on progression are those relating to promotions procedures. Again we found the information to be available on the personnel section of the Human Resources website. The information was however not easy to navigate. It was not always apparent which level of staff the documents were aimed at or which part of the document applied to which category of staff. We also found the role descriptors listed on the website confusing and unhelpful in trying to determine promotions criteria.

The next section of this report analyses the data gathered through staff interviews in detail in order to consider whether the policy rhetoric is actually implemented and whether the university's strap line does in fact filter through to everyday life of its staff.

Appendix 3 contains a list of the policies considered as part of this study together with information on how to obtain copies of them.

## University of Bradford: The Numbers

The university supplied the following statistical data which was accurate as at January 2008.

**Table 1: job family by gender 2005 – 2008**

% of staff in Job Family	Jan-05	Jan-06	Jan-07	Jan-08	Jan-05	Jan-06	Jan-07	Jan-08
	% Men				% Women			
Managerial/Professional/Specialist	37.7	40.1	38.1	43	62.3	59.9	61.9	57
Administrative/Clerical	21.8	21.9	20.4	20.3	78.2	78.1	79.6	79.7
Manual	36.5	36.7	39.2	42.3	63.5	63.3	60.8	57.7
Senior Management	80.0	78.6	77.8	75	20.0	21.4	22.2	25
Academic	57.2	55.8	57.5	57.7	42.8	44.2	42.5	42.3
Technical	77.0	78.4	78.8	79.2	23.0	21.6	21.2	20.8

Source: University of Bradford statistics, as supplied

These figures however tell us little about how women fare in the more senior academic positions. In order to get a clearer picture, we carried out further calculations on the basis of the data we were given. The results are presented in the table below. Only those members of staff in the academic schools on academic grades have been included (this excludes research staff).

**Table 2: Job family by grade and gender taking into account academic grades in total numbers**

Job Family	GRADE 08		GRADE 09		GRADE 10		SENMNGRS		SENSTAFF		Total
	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	
Academic Grade 8	22	29	4	4							59
Academic Grade 9+	1	3	94	77	68	142					385
Professorial								3	24	73	100
Grand Total	23	32	98	81	68	142	0	3	24	73	544

Source: University of Bradford statistics, own calculations

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the table shows that the most marked gender differences arise at the more senior level. Out of the 444 members of academic staff below professorial grade 43% (189) are female. At Professor level, however, only 24 % are female. At Senior Lecturer level the proportion of women is 35%, and at Reader 12%. At Lecturer level however the genders are almost evenly split with women making up 49% of the total.

The university also supplied the figures for the promotions round held in 2007. More men (87) applied for promotion than women (59) and men were more likely to be successful. 74% of men who applied were granted a promotion whereas only 66% of women were successful. No breakdown by job family or level of seniority was available to us; we therefore have not analysed the data by schools as they are unlikely to provide further useful insights.

The purpose of this study was however not to conduct detailed statistical analysis but rather to gain an insight into the experience of staff at the institution. Even the brief figures given above indicate that women face barriers to progression. Further analysis by schools also reveals that women are generally underrepresented in the more senior positions even though there are some discipline areas that are highly feminised. Further information can be found in the Gender Equality Scheme (University of Bradford 2008) and online at <http://www.brad.ac.uk/admin/equalopp/statistics/>

## University of Bradford: The Lived Experience

As part of this project the research team interviewed 30 academics from across the institution including a range of levels of seniority and subject disciplines. While it must of course be recognised that there are disciplinary differences and that different factors are likely to affect people differently as they progress through their life course and career trajectory, a number of common themes emerged.

### What is a 'Good Academic'?

In order to get a picture of what academics at the University of Bradford considered to be a good academic and thus paint a picture of those attributes and characteristics that people valued in their colleagues and the standards they were measuring themselves against, we asked respondents about their 'ideal' academic. We did so in order to get a sense of whether our respondents saw themselves as good academics and whether there were any underlying stereotypes and assumptions about the characteristics of a good academic. It is clear that there was no single picture of an ideal academic, and different people placed their emphasis on different skills. This is highlighted nicely in the quotations below

*An ideal academic is someone who's incredibly passionate about their subject area*  
[Daniel, Senior, Male]

*Somebody who can read a 2,000-word assignment in 15 minutes as per workload model.*  
[Christina, Lecturer, Female]

*I think creativity, a really good understanding of how people learn and different learning styles, a willingness to take risks, not to do things the way they've always been done, an ability to lead other people, not necessarily through management role but maybe by example, somebody who can inspire students and somebody that has a wide network of contacts.*  
[Stephanie, Lecturer, Female]

Interestingly the idea of a good academic or an ideal academic did not necessarily map onto what our respondents thought was the public perception of academics. Jessica captures this well

*Someone who's really clever ... I don't know, I think the image of academics is that they're straight laced, a little bit stiff, a little bit unapproachable, often male*  
[Jessica, Senior Lecturer, Female]

We also asked our interviewees what they liked about their job and roles or why they chose academia over and above other possibilities. The key message arising from those questions was that all of our respondents valued the flexibility of the academic job.

*One of the things is flexibility I really like the flexible work hours*

[Andrea, Lecturer, Female]

*Well, I like the idea of freedom*

[Sarah, Lecturer, Female]

*I do like the relative independence and the emphasis is on relative of course. You know, you do get a certain amount of freedom to, to follow your interests and to manage your workloads*

[Sylvia, Lecturer, Female]

*You've got a bit of flexibility as to what you're doing. Though you do need to work in the right areas to get published in the right places.*

[Michael, Lecturer, Male]

However, some respondents acknowledged that the academic role was changing and that some of the aspects of an academic life that had originally attracted them were now under threat.

*Academia's changing though and a lot of the things that I might have said once were a plus I think are not so much of a plus as they used to be.*

[Jennifer, Lecturer, Female]

A further reason for asking about academics' own image of the 'good academic' was that we wanted to find out this corresponded with the characteristics and skills that are considered and rewarded in the promotions process. A lack of correspondence might be problematic in various ways. For example, if a person's goals for their development as an academic were based on a picture of a 'good academic' that was contrary to the University's own promotion criteria, this might impact on chances of promotion. A mismatch here might also result in a perception that those who were successful in promotions exercises did not truly deserve their promotion. However, investigation of this issue was somewhat hampered by some difficulty in getting an accurate picture of the University's promotion criteria.

## **Promotions Process**

The personnel website of the University of Bradford devotes quite a significant amount of web space to matter related to promotions. Staff can access detailed information about the pay and grading structure, role descriptors and the promotions process and timetable. Nonetheless our respondents did not necessarily feel like they were well informed about the process and the applicable criteria, nor did they feel confident in going through it.

There was a common perception that the promotions process was time consuming and involved complex paperwork. A number of our respondents actually felt unable to spare the time from the 'day job' to complete the required paperwork and those who did often found the process stressful:

*It's interesting because I'd seen [the promotion round information] come out and a couple of people said are you going to apply, and I thought well yeah, yeah, but then I just thought I don't know if I can be bothered. And then there was a meeting [...] for people who were thinking of applying and I went to the meeting and I came back and I just thought I haven't got time, to write all the evidence that's needed. [...] It's just, it's a lot of, it is a lot of work.*

[Shannon, Lecturer, Female]

*It was hard work, bureaucratic, lots of box ticking.*

[Sarah, Lecturer, Female]

*People think, 'I'm not going to get it, it's too much hassle, it's too much paper work, I won't bother'.*

[Julie, Senior, Female]

*I don't want to want to be knocked back; I don't want to put a lot of time into something that I can see is going to be knocked back because I know I haven't got the quality publications recently*

[Michelle, Lecturer, Female]

Michelle touches on a further issue which many respondents raised. She highlighted that she did not want to just 'have a go' at going for promotion but rather wanted to be sure that she met the criteria and would be successful when she applied. She did not want to go through being rejected or knocked back. Two related points emerge. In the view of some respondents, there was a gendered dimension to reluctance to submit a speculative application, and that men were less concerned about rejection.

*It was really interesting when we advertised for chairs here and there were men who applied when I would never have applied for them, I would think I wasn't ready to apply and they have far fewer publications and experience than I've got.*

[Jamie, Senior Lecturer, Female]

*I also think that they are willing to try for opportunities that maybe women wouldn't be with the same experience and qualifications, I think women say oh, I've only been here 11 years, I'm not possibly ready to be the Vice Chancellor, where men would say, I've been here 11 years, why shouldn't I be the Vice Chancellor!*

[Stephanie, Lecturer, Female]

The promotions process requires members of staff to put themselves forward for promotion; they have to initiate the process and respondents often thought that this put women at a disadvantage:

*Nobody taps you on the shoulder and says it's time you applied for senior lectureship. Researcher: Do you think that puts women at a disadvantage? I do yeah, yeah I think it does because I do think women are less willing to put themselves forward maybe because they're afraid of being hurt, you know*

[Stephanie, Lecturer, Female]

*And even though we might deny having internalised any of that in our upbringing, I think most of us feel very uncomfortable with any form of self-promotion we always have what some people call the phoney police sitting on our shoulder, telling us you're a phoney, you shouldn't be here*

[Jennifer, Lecturer, Female]

We got a strong sense that academics across the university felt daunted by the complexity of the promotions process and that although information is available it is not easy to navigate and make sense of. This was further compounded by some concerns that the personnel department was not giving potential applicants for promotion sufficient time or assistance in completing the complex paper work.

*Researcher: How did you, did you find the criteria? I think it's still written in gobbledegook, I'm a plain speaker. I just find it really interesting that on the one hand the institution is saying that they want people to apply for a promotion, they advertise that this is going to happen. The information session run by the institution was a week before submission. So those 2 things do not go hand in hand. So they're saying one thing, when they actually mean something totally different. And that, that's my impression. If you really, really want to support people to do something you don't give them the information a week before, the amount of evidence that they want needs to go in, even down to when you've got to write your list of publications. We use Harvard referencing here, that's not Harvard referencing, so I had to redo it all.*

[Shannon, Lecturer, Female]

The promotions process at the University of Bradford was seen as complex and information was not considered to be easily available or transparent in spite of all documents being available on the intranet and information sessions being held for interested staff.

- ❖ **Personnel should ensure that their website is logically structured and signposted. All documents should be available for download and should be clearly marked as to whom they apply to**
- ❖ **Any out of date information should be removed from all areas of the HR website**
- ❖ **Information sessions should be organised in such a way as to give staff wishing to apply for promotion sufficient time to act upon the information and advice given at the session**
- ❖ **If a school has its own explanation or interpretation of the promotions criteria, these should be displayed on the HR website along with university documents.**

## Promotions Criteria

The second issue that comes from respondents' desire to wait until they had met the requirements before applying for promotion was that they did not feel confident that they knew what those requirements were.

*Researcher: Do you have a clear idea of what needs to go on your CV [to get to senior lecturer]?*

*No, I don't. I know that's where I want to be, but I don't know what I need to do to be there, apart from do lots of admin and publications and such.*

[Andrea, Lecturer, Female]

Many of our respondents felt that research was the main and in some cases only criteria for promotion.

*I think if you want to be a professor you have got to be a researcher and you have got to have a high research profile and teaching doesn't figure on there.*

[Amanda, Lecturer, Female]

*Research, that's the first thing that comes to mind. I think a lot of HE lecturers believe that research is a big part of the job but I personally like the teaching much better [...] I would like to think that all lecturers actually enjoy the teaching part it's just when it comes to being a lecturer it is generally assumed that you have to take on board the research*

[April, Lecturer, Female]

*Researcher: What do you think it is in your discipline that, that gets people promoted, what's the key thing that has to be on the CV?*

*Undoubtedly, papers in peer reviewed, excellent, well-read journals.*

[Michelle, Lecturer, Female]

*What does the institution reward? It rewards researchers who can bring in big research grants. It doesn't particularly reward teachers for good teaching [...] because if you want a promotion to senior lecturer then you have to have a research track record*

[Shannon, Lecturer, Female]

One research-active respondent commented that the RAE, with its emphasis on quality research, might have made it easier for women as it was harder for their research to be ignored.

*Also in an odd way I think the RAE has helped women ... with the RAE you've got such a value on, you've got the publications, you've got the research grants that, if someone came from another planet and they got the publications and they got the research grants, they would probably get promoted.*

[Mary, Senior, Female]

However, not all respondents were happy with the idea that research was the main emphasis in the promotions process. Many interviewees felt that there was a mismatch between the work the university expected them to carry out and the work that they were actually rewarded for in terms of promotion and progression.

*[A] lot of the successful female academics do seem to be more male in their approach and characteristics. Its just that all the qualities that I see myself as having doesn't make me a bad academic just because I don't put research on top of my list, it makes me a flipping good lecturer and getting across to the point of, if there wasn't a university here, there would be no academic jobs, there needs to be some sort of form of good teaching and I think that we really lose the sight of that even though research is massively important, its easy to lose sight of other things equally as important like you've just said.*

[Andrea, Lecturer, Female]

One respondent, who had been carrying out a difficult and time consuming administrative job, lamented that it was now virtually impossible for her to be promoted because the administrative role had left no time for research, and research was essential for further promotion.

*Do I want to do research? I mean, there's absolutely no way I've got time for it at the moment. Of course it's an automatic disbar to your promotion, because you've got a heavy teaching load, you've got all [the administrative work] that goes with it, there is no time for research, so I can't research my way to a chair and I've been told categorically I won't get one any other way. So I feel a bit miffed, having given a hell of a lot of time, effort and energy and so on ... there is nowhere else for me to go.*

[Julie, Senior, Female]

The view that research was the be all and end all was however not universally held and some felt that the promotions criteria were changing or that the emphasis or weighting of them was shifting:

*So at Professorial level I've no doubt that we have to move from a focus on research. Now we have, we have changed [...] some of the criteria, we've changed it so it's more about teaching excellence, it's about knowledge transfer, KTs, consultancy, it is wider*

[Daniel, Senior, Male]

*So that when you look at what you need in order to move up, research just isn't there in the same way that it was before. I was on a lecturer contract and now, where does it say that you should be actively researching and income generating, it's almost just a 'by the way.*

[Elizabeth, Senior Lecturer, Female]

*I've been through the kind of promotions process to get me from one grade to another. And the kind of criteria that they use some of those criteria, might map onto to a good academic but actually I think a lot of the criteria map onto management skills. A lot of the criteria seem to be about decision making and implementing policy or effecting policy, that kind of thing, which I think yes could come within a model of what a good academic does and in order to be able to relate what they're doing to the kind of wider world to reality for want of a better word.*

[David, Senior, Male]

*I'm really pleased to hear in some discussions that I've been in to hear that that promotion criteria will be changing and that teachers will be recognised as much as researchers.*

[Laura, Senior, Female]

However, it was also recognised that part of the difficulty in bringing learning and teaching into play in the promotions process was evidential:

*I think so far learning and teaching has not figured heavily for promotion. How do you evaluate success and therefore what evidence do you then take to a promotions panel. There's a genuine issue about deciding what is good evidence. Is it student evaluations and results? That might be despite your teaching rather than because of it. You've got problems with student performance, you've got problems with student evaluation. What evidence is sensible? So there is an evidential debate to be had about what counts as good evidence of good learning and teaching. In a sense from a research point of view people don't have the same problem. You can count the number of research grants, you can count the income brought in, count the number of research publication*

[Jason, Senior, Male]

At more senior level visibility in the university community was regarded as necessary. Respondents felt that they had to carry out a significant amount of committee work and internal and external networking activities and many noted that this was extremely difficult for those with caring responsibilities

*I actually think that the thing that does you well for being promoted is being a known face and sitting on committees, networking. Of course you have to have enough research to be seen as valid but I actually think that the networking, at Bradford, probably counts more than the research career, up to the chair level. It's a tricky one. It's not surprising really.*

[Rebecca, Senior, Female]

One respondent explained what was needed to be promoted to a chair very precisely:

*I'm aware that you need to be a good colleague and have good publications ... I can see that there's very much a path, you do a few papers, you do a symposium, you want to get a book chapter, you want to edit a special issue, write a book if you can, be a director of studies, and then you're probably going to be well on your way to a chair ....*

[Michael, Lecturer, Male]

The quotations above also reveal that respondents' perception of what the promotions criteria are varies enormously not just from school to school but also within schools and departments. We detected what might be a mismatch between what people thought the criteria were, what the criteria actually were and how the criteria then operated on the ground.

*There's a phenomenal repeat message from the females about how they went for promotion and they have the most research and you know, everything else they out perform guy X and guy X got the job and they asked for feedback and none of them got feedback. So I think the criteria might be different or the experience of the criteria might be different between the male academic and female*

[Nicole, Junior, Female]

*It's a bit disturbing that there are areas where there are quite staggering differences in practice, I'm not thinking particularly of personnel, but quite staggering differences in practice across the university schools.*

[Julie, Senior, Female]

*[The promotions panel] literally have bullet points and if you meet them all, they have to think of a really good excuse not to give you it [...] if I meet each of these bullet points then I have a really good chance*

*Researcher: I don't know where to find them [the bullet points]  
I was given a copy in the panel...*

[April, Lecturer, Female]

Further, those who were aware of the promotion criteria, for the most part felt it difficult to relate them to the work that they did or were frustrated with the application paperwork because it did not allow them to accurately portray what they felt was important.

*Researcher: So the criteria in a lot of the promotion paper work may not actually fit what you are doing at all?*

*Not at all, because it's all based on process, it's numbered. It's how many hours do you stand up in front of the class. But do we really want to stand up in front of the class, and I would argue no we don't, that's a very traditional way of looking at it.*

[Elizabeth, Senior Lecturer, Female]

*It [the promotions application] didn't really portray me as I would have put it, because the questions didn't allow you to get a full enough or a round enough description of you and all the things you were doing.*

[Sarah, Lecturer, Female]

As part of our discussion about promotion, we asked respondents whether they had any ideas about what the university could do to assist women with promotion. Their suggestions were consistent with respondents' concerns about how much information was available, transparency, and the difficulty of filling in the forms in a way that showed them in the best light.

*It might be something as simple as line managers saying promotions is coming up and speaking to individuals and encouraging them to apply, being very supportive, which I don't think everybody who has line manager responsibility necessarily is. The other side is also say quite clearly to people, sorry I don't think you're right for it this time but I will support you fully next time, I have seen cases which never should have come before a promotions board, and that in itself is more damaging especially if it's a woman who gets knocked back ... you need to leave it with line managers to encourage where appropriate and discourage where inappropriate but I think there could be somebody in personnel who goes through with the candidate what they are expected to put on those forms, what kind of information or evidence is needed.*

[Julie, Senior, Female]

*we didn't discuss whether promotion should be based on the same criteria as the initial appointment and I think there is a lot to that in that it gives the person the opportunity to put across themselves whereas it's rather sterile if you've simply got a piece of paper that says Fred Bloggs wants promotion on the basis of blah blah blah ... Interviewing candidates for promotion might be the way forward, but again I think we need the individual to have access to somebody in personnel who would give the kind of coaching confidence skills to do that, because you see some people ... who would be very reluctant to do a presentation, much happier doing paper based exercise ...*

[Julie, Senior, Female]

*I think what you need is much more critical reflection as a community, within departments and as a university, what it would mean to do this, what would you need to ask, how would it change our practice, really sort of simple things. For example another department I know of in another university, for promotions processing, the department gets together every year and considers everybody's CV and considers who they should be encouraging to put forward for promotion, which is a very different way of doing things. Now here, the department I'm in, is secretive, it is up to you, whether you think and you ask the head of department and the head of department rebuffs you and you don't go ahead for years and years. But maybe you are one person who should go ahead; maybe you hide your light under... That whole open way of doing it means that*

*you can have a debate and a dialogue about what are the criteria and how do they fit with the work and are people actually given the opportunity to do the work that would give them promotion and so on. I would be for a much more open system.*

[Rebecca, Senior, Female]

A related issue, although respondents did not identify it as such, is that if success with high-level administrative tasks is a pre-requisite for promotion, the equitable allocation of such tasks is critical in ensuring that women have equal promotion opportunities. Respondents' anecdotes about how they were appointed to senior administrative roles suggest that this process lacks transparency.

### Higher Education Role Analysis

A small number of respondents referred to HERA when discussing promotion (or, more accurately, re-grading). Amber expressed the view that the new process had the potential to be much fairer but its implementation had not been handled well:

*[Personnel has] given extremely poor support and demonstrated their lack of knowledge of academic working lives ...The Deans know what they're doing, and I would say on the whole they're trying to do the best for their staff ...There's potential for a really good process here but it's in a muddle.*

[Amber, Senior, Female]

Others, for example Stephanie, James and Julie, thought HERA had made the promotion – or rather, re-grading – more difficult.

*I applied but when I went to one of the meetings they said [...] the HERA people said we're going to be involved in the selection process this year, we weren't last year, we were only advisors and they let people through that we wouldn't have let through and now we have a voice. So, my interpretation of that was that oh, it's going to be harder.*

[Stephanie, Lecturer, Female]

Other expressed the concern that these criteria had added to the complexity of promotion procedures, and increased uncertainty about what was required.

*I think HERA to some extent has muddied the water. My impression is there's a lot of misunderstanding of what's required now. I've experienced that from a reviewer's point of view, talking to some of my reviewees, and really spend hours trying to understand what's required by some of this very vague wording that surrounds HERA, so understanding what's required, I think, is becoming more of an issue. Perhaps the sense of rewarding bad behaviour is a contentious issue and I think that's still seen as an issue amongst a number of staff. But primarily it seems to me that performance recognition and advancement is now very much kind of a contract to be worked on between the performance reviewer and the reviewee. It's the reviewer who makes the case essentially to the school, and therefore, and thereby to the University.*

[James, Senior, Male]

*[T]he HERA thing has put in place, I think slightly artificial barriers about you're on a grade 8 job, you can't do a grade 9 job, you're on a grade 8 job, and it comes out very clearly in promotions exercise where the personnel people say you claim you want promotion because you've been doing work at the grade above what you're on and they sit there and say no no no that's only a grade 8 not a grade 9 and it seems to me that some slightly artificial barriers have been put in with this HERA issue and that you've got to put a very strong case for re-grading ... it's got to be something significant, something strategic...*

[Julie, Senior, Female]

Others did not mention HERA role descriptors at all. It is not clear whether this was because they did not know about them or how they might impact on promotion, but it does suggest there may be some confusion or lack of awareness of the HERA guidelines.

- ❖ The criteria for promotion should be clarified
- ❖ HERA needs further clarification and explanation
- ❖ Consistency of promotions criteria needs to be ensured across schools
- ❖ Promotions criteria (once clarified) need to be applied consistently across schools and departments; more training for those involved in the process may be necessary
- ❖ Staff need to be fully informed of what the criteria are and how they operate in practice to allow them to make decisions about their own career
- ❖ A more open and less secretive system of promotions may be more equitable and should be piloted and carefully evaluated
- ❖ Heads of Departments and other senior members of staff should fully understand their role in allocating administrative tasks and the implications of those allocations in terms of workload as well as promotion opportunities
- ❖ The allocation of administrative tasks and management responsibilities should be transparent and should be monitored in order to detect and avoid inequalities
- ❖ The induction process for new staff and in particular the 'Orientation for New Academics' should include an explanation of the promotion/re-grading procedures.

## **Barriers to Progression and Promotion**

Having discussed with our respondents their thoughts about promotions processes and criteria, we were interested in finding out more about what they considered the barriers to progression to be. While some issues were explicitly referred to as barriers to progression, others were talked about in terms of ability to do the job well or manage work and family life. The next section of this report considers the issues impacting on progression raised and discussed by our respondents

## **Long Hours**

The normal contracted hours for academic staff at the university are just under 40 hours per week, although there was some confusion as to the exact number of hours. Some respondents indicated that they thought they were contracted to work the hours necessary for the effective performance of their duties, others referred to 26.5, 37.5 or 38 hours. We have based our definition of a normal working week on a 40 hour week for the purposes of this section. Most of our respondents felt that it was impossible to carry out an academic job in a 40 hour week.

*I'm not sure it is possible, not if you want good research and good teaching. Ones got to give if you stick to 40 hours a week*

[Andrea, Lecturer, Female]

*Researcher: Can you do an academic job in 37½ hours a week?*

*Yeah right! I can't imagine that you could really, I mean I don't know, I mean the rumours are the blokes manage it but there again they're so much cleverer than us so they would be able to wouldn't they? Erm, no...*

[Jessica, Senior Lecturer, Female]

*Researcher: Do you think you could do everything that is in your contract, including the research, if you stuck to your official working hours?*

*No, no chance!*

[Amanda, Lecturer, Female]

*Researcher: Do you think it's possible to do an academic job in say, 37 ½ hours?*

*No, absolutely not. I think it's completely unrealistic and I think that the sort of work load model that we're trying to work on now, I think is very unrealistic cos I don't think it's going to capture what people actually do and I think one of the things that is not in the new sort of workload models they're looking at, they're not taking into consideration actual thinking and reflecting time, which if you're planning a research project or you're developing a curriculum, a lot of the time that looks as if you're not doing anything, you're doing some really valuable work in the fact that you're contemplating, you're thinking, you're trying to get your ideas together and it's very hard to capture in a workload model. And also networking with people within your own school or across university or people you've met at conferences around the world, that time is important as well.*

[Stephanie, Lecturer, Female]

Some of our respondents said that it was possible to do an academic job in a 40 hour week. However, they qualified this either by defining the job in a more limited way or by admitting that they were themselves unable or unwilling to stick to 40 hours. Shannon thought a 40 hour week was plausible if no major responsibilities were taken on; and Christopher considered it possible although he routinely worked many more hours himself. Kelly on the other hand did not work excessive hours but agreed that she found it hard.

*Researcher: Do you think it's possible to do an academic job in 38 hours a week?*

*I think if you have no sort of leadership responsibilities of any description so whether that's course leader or, if you only have 2 modules, one in semester one, one in semester 2 and have half a dozen personal students then yeah, I think you could do it but if you have any more than that, no.*

[Shannon, Lecturer, Female]

*Researcher: Do you think it's possible to do an academic job with all that it entails in contracted hours, about 40.*

*Oh yes, yeah.*

*Researcher: You think you can?*

*Oh yeah, yeah, I'm sure you can. I spend all that time cos I enjoy it and I do far too much and I take on things you can take on, no, I'm absolutely certain that it's possible to do it in 40 hours a week. It's about quality and I'm sure if I just worked 40 hours a week, I'd just take different choices, I'd say I want to do this, I want to do that, so, I might even do better*

[Christopher, Senior, Male]

*It's very hard [to do an academic job in 37.5 hour week]. To a certain extent, I've never put in really long hours, because I've never been in a position to. I haven't been able to commit in that sense. I know at one point, I didn't take my annual leave, so in that sense; yes I was putting in the longer hours that way. So yeah, I have got there without doing extortionately long hours*

[Kelly, Senior, Female]

Overall we got a clear sense of a long hours culture still being prevalent within the institution and those who managed to work a "standard" working week were few and far between. Interestingly, the following respondent was male.

*I try and do a 9 to 4.30, 5 ish day. I don't do later than that because I have to go get the kids or take my kids to various, you know, cello lessons or piano etc, etc, swimming. I try and keep within that day, that's a struggle sometimes but I try and keep within that day. Sometimes, then and again I'll be taking stuff home to do marking and to write*

*stuff etc, so then the day is obviously much longer and there's weekends. So I think it's supposed to be 36 but in reality it's more like 40.*

[David, Senior, Male]

Related to this acceptance of long hours was a failure to take annual holidays or statutory holidays with many of our respondents not keeping track of their annual holidays and often not taking their full entitlement.

*Researcher: Do you take your annual holidays?*

*Oh, I do, yes. I mean there was, I think it was the first year I came here, I ended up doing an awful lot of hours every week and I think I lost holiday then. Since then I've tried to make sure that I generally get my holiday and I, I mean I do work a lot of bank holidays, you know, and all of that.*

[Sylvia, Lecturer, Female]

*We know it's actually sensible to take a holiday but the thought of breaking your routines is probably more stress than it's worth.... You end up checking your emails anyway, you can't put an out of office reply on your emails, you're not allowed to.*

[Michael, Lecturer, Male]

*I've never taken my holiday, but I don't know anyone who does, male or female, as academic. I know several very senior people who take all their leave and I know several admin people at senior level but administrators who work alongside us don't take all their leave, even junior people, which is outrageous, and academics don't.*

[Amber, Senior, Female]

Other respondents however felt strongly about taking their holidays

*There was a certain pressure but I also believe that if you have a rest that you can come back much stronger. So I would always take that time. ... Now the main reason I take my annual leave to its full allocation is I just feel sometimes I'm tired and if I take a holiday then it will be better for me, for everybody, so that I'm not ill. And I think that I'm more aware of working hours because of working part-time, and I'm with er, that probably means that I work fewer hours on paper, but overall I think it probably evens out.*

[Sara, Lecturer, Female]

The long hours culture is a health and safety issue, as it is not consistent with a work-life balance, and this is discussed below. However, it may also impact on progression: if conventions about how much work is required in order to advance within the university assume that long hours will be worked, employees who are either unwilling or unable (perhaps because of caring responsibility) to work long hours may be less likely to progress their careers.

- ❖ **The University of Bradford should consider measures to combat the long hours culture still prevalent in many areas of the university and in doing so may need to reconsider the expectations placed on its academic staff**
- ❖ **The University should monitor staff uptake of annual holiday in order to help encourage people to make full use of their entitlement**
- ❖ **Further research into the underlying causes and the consequences of this long hours culture is recommended**

## **Work Life Balance**

Related to the question of working hours, is the issue of work-life balance. Many of our respondents alluded to difficulty of clearly separating work and private life. Many felt that there were significant overlaps between the two. However, many respondents still felt that they had not managed to find the right balance between the amount of work they were doing and their other responsibilities and interests.

*The reality of it is that [...] very often the distinction is blurred, you know, if I'm sat at home reading then or if I'm, you know, browsing on the internet whatever is that work or is that not?*

[David, Senior, Male]

*Researcher: Are you happy with your work – life balance, as it stands at the moment? Probably slightly not, and I think as I've, as I've grown older I've come a little less happy with it. Because you realise, with the passing of time, there are things that you can't go back to, so I think I'm more aware of it now whether I am actually doing any more about it I'm not sure.*

[James, Senior, Male]

*Researcher: Are you happy with that kind of workload? It cuts into my social and family life I think at times, particularly at some points in the year where there are marking deadlines and things, but I think as well that I'm one of those people who, one of my own worst enemies really in a sense that I kind of let work take over.*

[Karen, Lecturer, Female]

Some respondents were happy with their work-life balance and did not see the hours they worked as excessive, even if they went significantly above what might be considered a normal working week (40 hours)

*Researcher: Overall are you happy with your work/life balance? I am because I've got myself into it. It's my hole, I've dug it and it's my bed so I need to lie on it. But I met up with a friend [...] she said 'you just sound so stressed and so on the move all the time' and I just smiled and she went 'but you love it don't you' and I went 'yeah...'. So I think that I thrive on that.*

[Laura, Senior, Female]

*I'm not sure that on a personal level I, I mind not having [a work life balance]. There's a little bit of me that is quite happy to spend every Sunday holed up in the library but if I did that my family would disown me. I think my ideal work life balance would allow me to forget about the job when I left on a Friday night and not think about it again til Monday and possibly even do that in the week, in the evening. I might even have a hobby!*

[Jennifer, Lecturer, Female]

*Researcher: Are you happy with your work/life balance? Yes I am because my job is my hobby as well, I love it, I can't imagine doing any other job, [...] I can't imagine doing anything else; I can't imagine a job that doesn't take so much time. I suppose it opens us to exploitation if you really love the job.*

[Jamie, Senior Lecturer, Female]

It must also be recognised that the idea of what an ideal work life balance is, is likely to change over the career trajectory and life course.

*Until this particular year, yeah, I had been [happy with my work life balance]. It worked pretty well. This year I think has been an absolute nightmare, because the work has just burst out everywhere. Whether that's partly to do with becoming more senior, being expected to take on more senior admin responsibilities. [...] This year I feel like my home life and my kids have really suffered for work.*

[Rebecca, Senior, Female]

*Other people had a work-life balance and actually I found that quite frustrating, because they didn't have the same work ethic or mind set and it drove me nuts. [...] But then again I have the appreciation now when I have kids, that you need to have a work-life balance and you need to take time off at home etc.*

[Angela, Lecturer, Female]

*I made the decision to let go of teaching, and I'm really, I've really cut my ambitions in terms of research, so there was a time when I was working, particularly the first years .. 70 hours a week. And I thought 'I can't carry on'. I got married, I'm since divorced, but I did get married, and I thought there are more important things in life ... . In recent years I've tried even harder not to do big weeks. I am older, I recognise I am not so effective once I get up to those high hours a week and I've just started to let some things go, I can't be such a perfectionist about things."*

[Amber, Senior, Female]

Balancing work and private life became much more of an issue for those of our respondents who had caring responsibilities and family commitments.

### **Caring Responsibilities**

Respondents were asked about their past and present caring responsibilities and the impact this had had on their career progression.

*I'm lucky in a way because I'm older and my children are grown up, but people have family issues and even grown up children have issues and problems and I think for women it can be very difficult particularly when they have young children or children at school or teenage children have their own problems, yeah I think it's hard.*

[Stephanie, Lecturer, Female]

*so everything stops at 5, 5 30 for tea time, for play, for mucking about and reading stories and then restarts at 8 o'clock once [the child] is in bed and sleeping. If [the child] fights sleep and doesn't get to sleep until 8 30 – 9, either I give up the ghost and don't work that evening or I very reluctantly approach my emails.*

[Mary, Senior, Female]

The ability or lack of it, of a partner to transfer work skills to a different location meant that some women had not been as mobile in their careers as they might have been otherwise.

*I never really spent a lot of time seriously looking to move away from the area but if I had there would've been huge problems for my husband to then, if say I went to work in the States [...] he would never have been able to come and work because of the skills that he was offering, so in a sense that was part of the decision-making I made subliminally if you like.*

*I guess I could've had a very different career if I'd decided I was going to move and travel ... but I wouldn't actually swap another career for him [...] occasionally I thought about it you know, how might it have been if I hadn't made those roots where might I have gone and what might I be doing now. But yeah it's not a regret it's just a thought.*

[Jessica, Senior Lecturer, Female]

The inability to spend time away from home was thought by some to impact on promotion possibilities.

*The fact you've got a husband and family and all the rest of it doesn't appear in the institutional mindset. I think what people could do is ... But then if you turn around and say no because of family commitments I'm not prepared to do that you're automatically jeopardising your promotion prospects ...*

[Julie, Senior, Female]

Some respondents, like Michael, felt that the key to success was having the skill to juggle competing demands:

*I wonder whether a lot of people, men and women, who are used to working in this kind of environment haven't necessarily developed all the skills they might, that would help*

*them get on, whether it's about managing conflict effectively, thinking in a really clearcut objective way beyond the task in hand, or maybe they just drift a bit. I don't know other people's motivation for working in academia ... it might be that they just drifted in ...*

[Michael, Lecturer, Male]

One issue that a number of respondents commented on was their "second shift": a number of respondents had households with traditional divisions of labour, and they spent a considerable amount of their non-working time ensuring that cooking, cleaning and other household tasks were done.

*I have in the last three years employed a lady to come in and clean, she comes three hours a week, keeps body and soul together, I do all the cooking and shopping and the washing and the ironing. The tendency has been over the last couple of years ... as the job has grown ... we depend more often on takeaway because I arrive back too tired, haven't been to the supermarket on the way home, too tired to bother.*

[Julie, Senior, Female]

*He wouldn't do any housework at all, so I was doing all the housework, all the cooking, cleaning, washing, ironing. My career, again, was seen as secondary and I had got these extra pressures. I could see him working in the evening [...]. I couldn't do that because I had everything else to do in the house. That was a gender role thing. [...] Even now, [...] he doesn't do much in the house, he does a little bit now [...], but I'm still doing the washing and the ironing and the cleaning so most of it.*

[Kelly, Senior, Female]

*But I do think there seems to be a different perception of men and women saying 'I can't have a meeting at three o'clock today because I've got to go and pick my kids up from school'. In relation to the women it's like: 'she's doing that family thing again,. Whereas if it's a man doing that it's like, 'oh look he's looking after the kids, isn't he doing well'.*

[Michelle, Lecturer, Female]

Caring responsibilities, either in relation to children, partners or other family members clearly does have an impact on how academics can manage their work and family life. The interviews also confirmed that the majority of the caring responsibilities and day to day housework still falls to women and this has implications for career progression. While things are clearly better than they were in the past and caring responsibilities are being recognised more, it seems there is some way to go before the institution can be considered a family friendly place to work.

- ❖ **Line managers should develop a supportive culture which facilitates the full integration of members of staff with child care commitments.**
- ❖ **Senior members of staff should take care not to hold meetings or require attendance at times where child care is not easily available**
- ❖ **The flexibility of the academic job should be embraced rather than eroded**
- ❖ **The University should consider whether there is a way of timetabling which is better able to take into account the needs of individual academics**
- ❖ **All members of staff, male and female, should be encouraged and supported in finding a balance between work life and private life which suits them at their point in their career baring in mind that this may change over career trajectory and life course**

## Maternity Leave Issues

In some cases the issue of caring responsibilities was associated with child care and in particular the care of very young children and maternity leave. In the course of the interviews we heard many comments in relation to maternity leave issues. Many of our female respondents who have yet to embark on having a family were concerned about maternity leave entitlement and how they could balance that with maintaining a career and how they would be able to come back to work. These concerns were borne out when talking to female academics who have had children and had experience of maternity leave either here or at other institutions. In most cases no more than 6 months of maternity leave was taken and many continued to work during their time off.

*I think that obviously some women are held back because they take time away with their kids. I haven't done that as both of my maternity leaves were shorter than 6 months*

[Angela, Lecturer, Female]

*I did a little bit of work. I examined a PhD dissertation while I was on maternity leave*

[Michelle, Lecturer, Female]

Overall there was a feeling that the university was not particularly good at supporting expecting and new mothers

*There was a lot to do with maternity leave but just didn't seem to work*

[Michelle, Lecturer, Female]

Many had faced 'battles' about their status and working hours on their return or the workload they were expected to pick up. There were also comments about the lack of adequate maternity cover which meant that respondents often were still involved with work while they were actually on leave or that they had to return to work on part time pay with very similar responsibilities as they had had before. Working part time brought with it its own problems discussed below.

We were however also told of a number of instances where women had used maternity leave and returning to work part time as a way to focus on their research and in a sense buy themselves out of teaching and other duties.

*women who've taken maternity leave have come back part-time and they are a rocketing success, we've had quite a few of those in our area, because they're taking a salary cut but they're probably working full-time and they're doing their research unpaid which is another disgrace but that is, that is a bit of a phenomenon that's been known to happen to several people in the area I'm from [...] you're buying yourself out [...]. And I don't think that's right but it's an interesting dimension because blokes don't get the chance to do that do they much?*

[Jessica, Senior Lecturer, Female]

We only heard of such instances anecdotally and further research would be necessary to determine how widespread this sort of practice is. It does however reinforce the idea that it is not possible to do an academic job in a normal working week.

- ❖ **The University of Bradford should carefully review how it implements its policies in relation to maternity, paternity and parental leave and return to work following such leave. In particular it should consider the following**
  - **To what extent members of staff are aware of their entitlements**
  - **To what extent members of staff feel like they are able to take advantage of all of their entitlement**
  - **To what extent cover is provided for staff absent on such leave so as not to unduly burden those not on leave**
  - **To what extent 'keep in touch days' are available and utilised**
  - **To what extent flexible and part time working is used when initially returning from leave**
  - **To what extent members of staff are fully informed of their rights when returning to work both part time initially and full time at a later date**
  
- ❖ **Further research into the operation of the family leave and flexible working policies is recommend**

## **Part Time Work**

Although we were not specifically looking for issues relating to part time work, inevitably they arose in this context. Respondents who worked part time often felt that the problems they faced were linked to the fact that they were part time members of staff rather than to their gender.

*I think that the fractional working for family responsibility reasons actually only works only if your work is streamlined into certain areas. But actually trying to perform into the same range of tasks, particularly committee work, when there are times that you cant control, you end up being seen as ineffective, because you have to leave early or not attend, so I think there is not enough consideration to what a profile of work would be to someone who is working, and its not always women with kids but for someone who is working part time*

[Rebecca, Senior, Female]

*I think it's that the teaching load sort of fills up your time and then you've got the additional meetings and stuff that go on top of that and as a 0.5 it's really hard to.*

[Amanda, Lecturer, Female]

*I feel really quite de-motivated in some respects, because I can't see how, working in essence, three days a week, given the increased responsibility I've got on a number of admin fronts, how I can do the amount of work that is required to produce high quality publications for journals that would lead to promotion, and so because I can't even see how I could do it I've partially taken my foot off the pedal, because I know I can't produce six refereed journal articles in the next year, so.*

[Michelle, Lecturer, Female]

*I do kind of feel a little bit overlooked sometimes, people forget to include me and things, and I think if you are pessimistic you'd say they're doing it on purpose but I'm an optimist and I know that I don't think about their personal circumstances very much and there's no reason they should think about mine*

[Sara, Lecturer, Female]

Although Sara said she felt overlooked on occasion her experience of working part time was positive overall. We did not specifically ask respondents about their views on part time working and further work should be done in this area in order to clarify where the issues are and ensure equality of treatment between full time and part time members of staff

- ❖ **The University of Bradford should consider carefully whether part time employees receive treatment that is no less favourable to full time employees in all areas including areas such as parking permits, access promotions or opportunities that will lead to promotion**
- ❖ **Further research into part time work at the university is recommended**

## Leadership, Mentoring and Role Models

Many of our respondents talked about the importance of having support, strong and positive leadership, mentoring, role models and the management of staff. One of the perceived problems with the promotions criteria and process was the lack of transparency as discussed above and there was a sense that some of that could be overcome if the academic was well managed. Poor leadership and management as well as a lack of mentoring and role models could however exacerbate the situation

*Well, one aspect [of how members of staff progress] is the way they're managed. You know, I've seen it here that, I mean, we have a very sort of linear management process in academia. But we do have mentors, we have performance reviewers who deal with clusters of staff, and it's quite clear there are quite different experiences based on the way the reviewers have dealt with the reviewees, and I think that's been a cause for concern.*

[James, Senior, Male]

*One of the most difficult things that I've found is I think [that within the university there] is a real lack of mentorship. I had a mentor when I first came and was on probation [...] but she was mainly just looking at things she could do within your own school and not within the uni', not within the wider university and I think it's getting involved with things from the wider university that that can sometimes be difficult and I don't know, there's nobody that I feel I can go to and say well, what are my career choices now, what pathway should I take?*

[Stephanie, Lecturer, Female]

*Researcher: How important do you think that role modelling, mentoring idea is?  
I have got no evidence for this but I suspect it's vitally important. Knowing how things operate behind the scenes. When you know how things operate behind the scenes, you know how to play the games so you need to know the rules before you play the game and we do not know the rules. We get to know the official rules but not all the rules.*

[Jamie, Senior Lecturer, Female]

Mentoring was seen as having the potential to play a big part in helping staff make the most of their careers at all levels. While the university operates a mentoring system, experience of that system is varied and mentors are not always matched up well with mentees

*Researcher: How useful have you found the whole mentoring process?  
Very, my mentor has been very supportive and helped me, because I didn't know anything to start with so she would help me through the process of running the module, writing the exams, the whole assessment process, what I need to do. Also, if I've been in a small panic and distress, she's been there to help. She's been a really good help, helped me by showing me the ropes and now she's sort of left me to it but when I had needed her, she had been there.*

[Andrea, Lecturer, Female]

*Researcher: What was your experience [of mentoring] when you first arrived?  
It was ok. The person that was assigned to me, in one sense, they didn't have to do much, because although they were an SL at the time, they was a lot less experienced overall, what they did know was the University of Bradford. [...] I didn't know how*

*Bradford operated, so I think they were almost daunted by me because here I was, walking in with loads of experience.*

[Sarah, Lecturer, Female]

One respondent described how she discovered that she had a mentor and who it was:

*Respondent: I was given no induction, just handed the module manual, "you'll be teaching that, just get on with it," sort of thing. In fact my first week in the office I had to go and find somebody to show me how the computer worked, and what the systems were... It was very much learn as you go. It was only the following summer somebody, it might have been the Dean I'm not sure, emailed and said "where is your PDP." I said, "What?" "Well, you have a mentor you should be working on your"... Personnel had forgotten to tell me that I needed to do a personal development plan in my first year, had forgotten to tell me who my mentor was...*

*Researcher: Your mentor hadn't come to find you either?*

*I presume they'd forgotten to tell him he was mentoring me.*

[Julie, Senior, Female]

Most respondents felt that they were well supported emotionally and Christina articulates that well:

*Well, my mentor was great for me [...] I still go to her for advice and she's good for me because she, she takes care of my emotional side as well*

[Christina, Lecturer, Female]

However, many also felt that their mentor was not best placed to help them progress or further their career for a variety of reasons. Sometimes the mentor simply lacked the experience and knowledge to offer advice in relation to career progression; sometimes the mentor and mentee simply did not see that as being part of the mentoring role and sometimes the mentoring relationship broke down or was a mere 'tick in the box' exercise.

*I mean I had a [male] mentor for one thing who hadn't worked in the university for as long as I had and you know*

[Karen, Lecturer, Female]

*Oh, my mentor was lovely but my mentor didn't have the right skills and lacked the expertise to support me*

[Sylvia, Lecturer, Female]

Some of our respondents felt that there was a skills mismatch between those elements of the academic job that got you promoted and the skills actually then required to carry out the tasks involved in more senior positions. They suggested that there was an assumption that once you reach a certain level you can manage people and understand how academic management works. Respondents felt that this was not the case and much more training and mentoring at senior level was required in order to help people become effective managers. The same argument can be made for training mentors.

*I mean, I'm quite happy for academics to manage things but I don't think there is enough support, enough training for academics to manage things effectively. I am aware that there are areas when my management skills could be better. And I can see in sort of my colleagues areas where their management skills could be better. But there doesn't seem to be, I mean, I believe if you become a head of department you have to do a management course or do something, some sort of training. And I assume the same is true if you become a Dean. It's not true if you become an associate Dean.*

[David, Senior, Male]

Almost all of our respondents felt that mentoring, if done well, could be very beneficial to them or that they could help more junior members of staff by being a mentor. Mentors would however have to be knowledgeable about progression and promotions, the university expectations and 'how to play the academic game' and it is here where many respondents saw the problems. Many were uncomfortable suggesting more training for academics in this role and some pointed towards the fact that the

relationship is somewhat artificial and forced because the mentors and mentees get little opportunity to choose who to enter into this kind of relationship with. The fact that it is tied to performance reviews and probationary periods also seemed to reinforce the idea that the relationship was more about form filling and having the right paperwork than anything else

*Well mentoring is a very funny thing, it's a tick-box thing isn't it?*

[Christopher, Senior, Male]

*If the university seriously wants to address the issue [of gender equality] then the mentoring process is key*

[Karen, Lecturer, Female]

Mentoring however does not only have to come from a formal mentor and many respondents talked positively about support, advice and guidance received from colleagues, both former and current.

*He is very good and [...] he has a huge amount of faith in me which is very comforting. It would be harder to succeed if you didn't have faith in yourself and you didn't give a certain amount of you. You need that feedback, you need that confidence boost. [...] There's an awful lot of people out there to knock [your confidence] for you, so you do rely heavily on people who boost your ego and let you know you are doing the right thing and who will support you.*

[Angela, Lecturer, Female]

*It's that having been taken under someone's wing kind of thing, when they can see your potential and they have allowed you to test that out a little bit and I think that is what has really helped*

[Laura, Senior, Female]

A further element of mentoring is that of role models. We asked our respondents whether they had any positive or negative role models either now or as they were progressing through their careers. Some of our respondents had neither

*I don't think I have had. Not a female one anyway. Not really, but there must be somebody*

[Kelly, Senior, Female]

*No, I don't think so. I certainly saw nice examples of lovely practice from academics and things that make you proud to be an academic. I never had a particular mentor or a specific role model*

[Mary, Senior, Female]

Most of our respondent however had at least one or the other. The role models were often PhD supervisors or lecturers the respondents had experienced as an undergraduate student but also included current and former colleagues and bosses. From the interviews conducted it seems that role models do play a significant role in shaping academic careers in a number of ways. Firstly they influence whether or not the respondent actually chooses to become an academic in the first place; secondly it seems to shape their approach to work and also their expectation of what it is possible to achieve.

*My PhD supervisor who was at another university, because I did my PhD externally, part time, she was probably 8-10 years older than me and a dedicated academic and research focused career and at the time she was supervising me she had children and was managing that and has since gone up to senior roles in management. She's always been the person, I've never thought of her as a role model until now, but she would be my sort of point of reference of what's possible and I have often phoned her with advice about when the pressures have been pulling in too many directions*

[Rebecca, Senior, Female]

*Yes, my role model is kind of both [positive ad negative], he is my PhD supervisor, who is absolutely fantastic, who knows the subject inside out and I would love that to be me,*

*but on the other side of things, for him to achieve that, he has had to dedicate his life to his career. Working 7 days a week, 12 hours a day. I don't know if the success he's got is worth that cost, I wouldn't be prepared to give up my life for that success. I want to be as successful as I can while trying to balance my work and life so I can at least live*

[Andrea, Lecturer, Female]

In the particular context of women's progression, role models were frequently mentioned as an important factor which would help increase the number of women in senior positions. Respondents commented that seeing women being successful in senior positions impacted positively on more junior women who may be considering going for the same sorts of positions. Equally the distinct absence of women at the top level, was off-putting to some of our respondents

*I don't think women rate themselves very well, and to be honest would you really want to go on a committee with all those dull blokes? I mean I certainly wouldn't. I'm sorry I don't have a lot of respect for some of our upper echelons. I've had meetings with the PVCs where they were making proposals that were so ridiculous that I actually laughed in their face. [...] I certainly wouldn't put myself forward for one of those higher positions because I couldn't stand working with that low quality person. Sorry that's a horrible*

[Jessica, Senior Lecturer, Female]

- ❖ **The purpose of the mentoring process at the University of Bradford should be clarified**
- ❖ **Care should be taken when matching mentor and mentee to ensure the mentor has the experience to guide the mentee appropriately**
- ❖ **Mentors need to have the knowledge, skills and experience to guide their mentees through the early stages of their career**
- ❖ **The University should explore how the benefits of mentoring can be maximised for those in more senior roles and those considering moving into senior management roles**
- ❖ **A careful balance must be struck between having a mentoring system with well trained mentors offering guidance to all mentees on the one hand and on the other hand recognising that informal networks and mentoring relationships are often extremely valuable**
- ❖ **Consideration should be given as to how more can be made of female role models within the institution as well as outside**

### **Old Boys Club – The Importance of Networking**

The top level in the university hierarchy was repeatedly talked about as male dominated and was seen as an old boys' network. Promotion, certainly into senior management level positions was seen as heavily influenced by being part of the right network

*So I, my impression is that if, certainly if you look at our senior management it's heavily steered towards white male middle class suited. Maybe suited is not the right word because women can wear suits. But that's what it looks like, you know.*

[Daniel, Senior, Male]

*We don't have the key to the executive washroom, which is critical*

[Jamie, Senior Lecturer, Female]

*It does still so often come down to a kind of old boys network and sort of dodgy handshakes under toilet doors and stuff. I think one of the reasons that my career stalled at [previous institution] was because I was not part of that clique. I'm not a very good clique player I don't like cliques. And I see that happening at the university as well, there are cliques in the place and if you're in then you're ok, but if you're out then you're not*

[David, Senior, Male]

*"I do think there is still, and there was then, something around it not being a familiar thing to have a tough manager who's a woman ...I think there was something there about perceptions of what, what skill set was useful and what it looked like. It would be embodied in a tall man, rather than a shorter woman who ... tough but I didn't quite fit the image.*

[Amber, Senior, Female]

In some cases there was a very strong feeling that the network was more important than the people's skills and qualifications making it even more difficult for others to break into the network and progress.

*I think men have better connections. I think men like men, men socialise with men, men get on with men better and they talk about football matches. When it comes to promotion and getting work done, the men will support the men. That's a very blunt thing to say but I think it's true.*

[April, Lecturer, Female]

*Traditionally it was always men who rose up into those senior levels, so the people who are there now, who are promoting the people who come behind them are still those men, the men who haven't got the doctorates, who haven't researched, who have a particular idea about who they want to see in senior positions, then actively supporting people who meet that idea of what they want. If you get women in those positions, quite often they take on that patriarchal role*

[Elizabeth, Senior Lecturer, Female]

However, there was also recognition that networking can be important and is a legitimate part of the academic job and that it was not networking in itself that was problematic.

*So I'm aware that networks legitimately function so that they bring together people who are skilled and know about the skills that are required and you might employ someone because they have a good reputation and that's important, but its when those practices become exclusiary, when people become excluded from them by virtue of their gender.*

[Rachel, Lecturer, Female]

In fact networking activities could be much better utilised by women within the institution as Rachel went on to point out:

*I think often getting to the top in a historically male dominated position, women have to go through things that change them in order to fit in and get promoted and get up there and by the time they get up there and they have that autonomy or a possibility, they've become changed, they've denied themselves. You kept hidden all the things in you that might help other women get there, in order to get there yourself and by the time you get there you're so changed and these things are so hidden, you don't think to do any backtracking to make it a little bit more appropriate for women to come up after you, which is not what the men do. The men do do the old school thing, that's why the other men climb up, but when women get there they don't do it, so they don't because that's the very thing that they don't like about men, they don't do that because they are women, nothing is changed on the way up for the next woman who has to climb up that way. I can understand why women do it, but if we don't make changes, it's like rebuilding the wheel every time. Every woman who breaks through that ceiling, it's not like it gets a little bit weaker, it's like we are closing the door behind us and putting all the same locks back on it instead of using that influence to consider how we might make things different and more enabling down that chain*

[Rachel, Lecturer, Female]

- ❖ HR should investigate the possibility of facilitating the development of semi-formal networks for women in the university.
- ❖ Because of the importance of committee membership in the networking system, the University should work to ensure that the selection of committee members was transparent.

## Gendered Approaches to Work and Promotion

We were interested in the comments about a gendered approach to career progression and as part of the interview we discussed with respondents their own approaches to work and whether they thought men and women approached work and promotion in different ways. Many agreed that it was too much of a generalisation to say that men approached work and progression in a certain way while women did so in another. However some respondents clearly thought that the way academics approach their work has a gendered dimension

*When the environment is dominated by alpha males, the only things that matter are funding, research and publication. Never mind the teaching, never mind the support for students, never mind the admin, none of that matters, the kind of matter is 'all I care about is getting funding, doing my research and getting published'. Nothing else counts*

[Sarah, Lecturer, Female]

*I mean I don't want to make universalising statements about anything you know, but I think, I think men just tend to be more career focused and are having to think the next 2 or 3 steps ahead really, and I'm not saying that no women do that but I think women perhaps tend to be more invested in the job that they're doing at the moment and have perhaps more of a sense of responsibility. I know have a huge sense of responsibility towards students.*

[Karen, Lecturer, Female]

Some respondents felt that men were generally better at protecting their research time and were less likely to spend significant amounts of time devoted to pastoral care and the 'caring side' of teaching and learning. There were also some comments about women generally being more conscientious when it came to teaching and learning and administration and that men were more likely to cut corners in those areas and focus on those activities which would ensure promotion. Some respondents spoke about the importance of pastoral care – and the lack of recognition it received.

*Women are much more open to doing that pastoral role, naturally, than men, they are perceived as sympathetic, etc, and again the loading there is not advantageous...*

[Julie, Senior, Female]

*All I can talk about is anecdotally. Over the course of these years, the impression that I have had is that in all of these situations, [...] it's the women who are much more prepared to be student centred and caring, I mean these are horrible stereotypes but in truth, it happens. My personal experience is that on the whole, the women take things like personal tutoring much more seriously, they will give time to their students, they will speak to them, they will be proactive in getting the students to come to see them, whereas, from my knowledge, if they can get away with nothing in terms of personal tutoring, by and large then that's what they will do.*

[Sarah, Lecturer, Female]

*There are certainly male members of staff who are very good at keeping their research side of things clear, very good. There are male members of staff who do the woman thing and I think were all probably getting less good [at protecting research time] because the amount of admin is just increasing. I think there is a big gulf between the*

*conscientious and the not conscientious. I think men are better in getting away with being idle bastards*

[Mary, Senior, Female]

*For me, I work for other people, I make sure my students are alright, I make sure my teaching is alright before I look into my research, whereas some of the men I know will be alright with just ok teaching, to make sure their students are ok, but make sure that they do their research. That is a split in my time I haven't managed to achieve and some people have and maybe that's why men seem to be able to get further*

[Andrea, Lecturer, Female]

In some cases the pastoral care elements extended far beyond what might normally be expected and the importance of supporting colleagues as well as students was also noted as important

*This isn't the visible side of being responsible citizen and good collegiate person, ... And there must be hundreds of incidents where people support not only students but colleagues through all kinds of difficulties that never gets acknowledged. The formal procedures, yes, you've got scholarship, you've got admin, you've got whatever, research, teaching ... the pastoral care is so much bigger now than it ever used to be.*

[Julie, Senior, Female]

The idea that men were less conscientious when it came to teaching and research was however controversial and some respondents felt that women were more strategic and ruthless when it came to career decision making and also that approach to work depended more on personality type than gender.

*I think there is a glass ceiling, well I would say that, cos I think I'm underneath it, what I hate the most is that the people I see doing well as female academics, I know it's a real, stereotype but I think they display a lot of male characteristics and I know it's a stereotype but I actually think it's true*

[Jessica, Senior Lecturer, Female]

*If I personally had to look out for anyone, it would be other females. I find working with other females is quite tentative at times. If anything, males are quite, I'm not going to say dumb animals, but they are very consistent and they are very straight forward, whereas females are a bit more complicated and you are not sure where you stand*

[Angela, Lecturer, Female]

When asking the question we were very aware that we were inviting respondents to generalise and draw out stereotypes and we were surprised to find that in many cases these stereotypes seemed to still be translating into practice. Overall however respondents agreed that there were male and female characteristics and that we all had both to a greater or lesser extent.

*I still think there is maybe a masculine style and a feminine style and it doesn't matter whether you are a man or a woman, it's whether you adopt those things and there is probably a sliding kind of scale*

[Crystal, Senior, Female]

*I think the culture is such, and I see this when I'm with my woman friends who are not academics, that we become quite masculine as women, but I don't see that feminine type behaviour in many of the men. But the women take on what is regarded as masculine behaviour. After being in the culture so long, I enjoy it, I can't say I don't. I like the debate, the ability to challenge other people's ideas, some of the nastiness I see, we can call it as masculine nastiness, but it's articulated by men and women alike*

[Jamie, Senior Lecturer, Female]

*I think it's not so much a question of whether the place is run by men or women or both, but to what extent they are Alfa driven types, because I think the alpha types are nothing but work, it's about succeeding at any cost*

[Sarah, Lecturer, Female]

The question of male and female characteristics and approaches to work often led on to a discussion about management styles and the value of having more women at the top level. Our respondents were overwhelmingly of the opinion that just having more women in more senior positions was not the answer; the key was having the right women there.

*Well, you've got to be careful that you don't sort of drift into a kind of caricature of what women's skills are but if you look at management and leadership skills there's a lot of evidence across the literature that they are different so the notion, an attractive notion for many VC's is that the role of the VC is the kind of alpha male person who drives the institution who single handedly transforms the institution. Now that's, I think that's nonsense and it's about how you work with a team and team work skills are often better. Women are often better at displaying those skills. Women, well the literature, I don't want to caricature but probably their softer skills, in terms of management are better than men's. The emotional intelligence side...*

[Daniel, Senior, Male]

*Researcher: Do you think the university would be in a different place if we did have more women in a senior position?*

*Depends which women. [...] I think gender is one dimension, it's very important but I think it's also about styles of communication and management and things. We all know women who would be a nightmare to work with. I think it will help if there were more women in senior positions but it's not necessarily the answer on its own.*

[Rebecca, Senior, Female]

*Something does happen, it's not that all women behave better or are intrinsically better managers or better workers, but it does tend to change to some extent the way people behave, you get less macho posturing I think, and some things are more common to women, like having the courage, and it is courage, to say this isn't clear, what do you mean? And everyone in the room goes, 'thank God she asked that.*

[Amber, Senior, Female]

There was a feeling that those women who had made it to the top level had to act in what was considered a 'male' way to get there.

*I think in order to get on you have to take on that patriarchal role. The majority of the senior management are still men which has an impact on who is employed. I've heard that our dean gets an extremely hard time of it outside of our school, because she is a woman. I think that you do have to prove yourself more than your equal male. You have to be better at being a man than they are.*

[Elizabeth, Senior Lecturer, Female]

*I wouldn't necessarily say I've had to work harder or to prove myself more, I think what I've noticed is having to explicitly assert myself and to make claims the whole time and to make explicit claims. [...] I don't find it very nice behaviour, but you have to do it. Increasingly I think, unless you go in there and you claim and claim and claim again, you will be sidelined as a woman.*

[Rebecca, Senior, Female]

*One woman I worked with for a long time had adopted a sort of Margaret Thatcher persona and scared the living daylights out of many of the senior colleagues that she worked with because she was so forceful and so domineering.*

[Jason, Senior, Male]

For some women reaching the top positions was more about being able to escape and stop negative behaviour which they had experienced at a more junior level in their career

*It was the experience really, of being bullied and I realised that a senior lecturer has no authority but as a professor you can prevent that and as you see it happening to*

*someone else, you can prevent it off. That's what's made me ambitious, because of a very negative experience where I realised that I have no power to do anything*

[Jamie, Senior Lecturer, Female]

However, for some women, reaching senior positions brought with it problems and issues that they had not necessarily anticipated. They found themselves being belittled, patronised and discriminated against. This led some to conclude that problems began to arise as the career progressed.

*I think the barriers start to come when you get further up.*

[Kelly, Senior, Female]

One respondent noted double standards when it came to physical appearance:

*People pay a lot of attention to how women dress, the tone of their voice, and, um, quite minor things about how they conduct themselves in a way that they don't even see with a man.*

[Amber, Senior, Female]

The answers we received in response to this set of questions were interesting for a number of reasons. They highlight the importance of different approaches to working and the operation of stereotypes or perceptions of skills and approaches which may determine which roles are allocated to certain members of staff. These roles then in turn may impact on progression. The interviews also highlighted that there are different approaches to work and that these may be gendered to a certain extent. All respondents were keen to avoid generalisations but most pointed towards certain approaches being more male or female. The value then assigned to these approaches may again impact on progression.

- ❖ **The way in which pastoral responsibilities are handled within the workload model should be reviewed, to ensure that proper recognition is given for this aspect of the academic job.**
- ❖ **The role of the personal tutor should be clearly defined and made clear to tutors and students**
- ❖ **Personal tutors should be offered further training in handling difficult questions and students with complex issues, including advice on where to go for assistance.**
- ❖ **The university should consider whether a personal tutor model best meets the needs of students and staff or whether alternative systems such as through a 'senior tutor' role may be more appropriate**

### **Overt Discrimination at the University of Bradford**

We heard of few overt and direct cases of discrimination at the institution but we did hear about some. In order to protect the anonymity of our respondents we cannot report the details of the incidents they told us about. However, we were shocked and disappointed to hear of such incidents and even more dismayed to hear that the university, from the respondents' point of view, did little to resolve the matters and support them. We would urge the university to consider carefully how it deals with complaints in relation to discrimination, harassment and bullying. Attention should be paid to what can be done to resolve such matters and support victims. In particular it should consider how it can tackle the perception (or fact) that the old boys' network will protect its own.

- ❖ **The University needs to consider how it deals with complaints about discriminatory behaviour, harassment and bullying and needs to ensure that all victims are taken seriously and unacceptable behaviour is dealt with appropriately**

## Perception of the University of Bradford Policies

In order to help us evaluate the institutional policies, we asked our respondents of their awareness and knowledge of them. All of our respondents were aware of the existence of equality policies but very few had any detailed knowledge of them.

*I'm aware of their [the policies'] existence, I have read most of them, [...] I have tended to find that they don't seem to apply in any real sense to the type of job I'm doing so for example policies on work, life balance or flexible working are written with an image of a working life that isn't actually the working life that the academic has so mostly I look at those policies and I think oh well, that's for admin, that's a clerical, that policy effects clerical people because it just doesn't reflect the reality of my working conditions.*

[Jennifer, Lecturer, Female]

As well as not necessarily applying to our respondents' context, there was also a strong feeling amongst our respondents that the policies were ineffective at promoting equality or resolving problems

*And, and I, wasn't that impressed with [the equality policy], I thought it was quite outdated even though it was new so the university's notion of equality I think isn't up to date and I thought it was quite underdeveloped and I thought it was cosmetic . . . It wasn't really addressing the issues*

[Sylvia, Lecturer, Female]

*Researcher: You've used university processes at various times to put right some things that were done wrong. Are you familiar of the various university policies on equality and diversity and things like that?*

*Yes I am, but I wouldn't say that they work.*

*Researcher: Why not?*

*From my experience, when I made my complaint, I had to fight very hard for it to even be acknowledged, I went to a senior member of personnel and was told 'what would you like to happen?' and I said I would like mediation to be set up to resolve the issues, I've tried speaking to this person, I've raised my issues and its got me nowhere, so I think it needs an external mediator come in and to resolve the situation because we still have to work together [...] Finally after a lot of me being firm saying this needs resolving, I was then sent somebody who was supposed to mediate, so they met with me, sat in this office, went through all the issues, and I had got all the evidence, went through with them and they said yeah you've certainly got a case to be answered here. I'll go away and speak to the other person concerned and I'll set up 3 way mediation. I'm still waiting to this day and that was years ago.[...]. And I'm quite a confident, assertive person and I know of somebody who left after being felt that they were being bullied in the workplace, tried to have it resolved, got absolutely quashed and their response was to leave.*

[Elizabeth, Senior Lecturer, Female]

Many of our respondents felt that the policies, even if good on paper, did not filter through to the ground level. Some thought more effort should be made to make the policies available and accessible and others thought that having a policy was not sufficient, that much more needs to be done to engage with the issues the policies are trying to address

*Researcher: You've never gone to read [the policies]?*

*No, because as with most of the university documents, you can't actually find them when you want them on the website and they are usually incomprehensible when you do get to them. I am aware that we do have some general equality policy but I don't know what the university is actively doing to get women into more senior positions, if anything.*

[Amanda, Lecturer, Female]

*You might get people from HR to come down and present these nice policies and to say what's possible but we know from experience that hasn't filtered through or that attitude and awareness of policy hasn't filtered through. I think what you need is much more critical reflection as a community, within departments and as a university, what it would mean to do this, what would you need to ask, how would it change our practice, really sort of simple things. [...] Then we look at the heads of department and they don't necessarily even know about it. Then we see the practices varying enormously, between the departments and between schools, some of them have quite good practice, lots more listening and overt concern for equality and inequality and actually discussing it within staff meetings and some other departments never even had a discussion or an issue raised. That whole patchiness of awareness, reflectiveness and practice, that's where the real problem is.*

[Rebecca, Senior, Female]

*I think there is policy document rhetoric in all kinds of areas and what actually happens is very different.*

[Karen, Lecturer, Female]

*The law is good. I don't think HR has ever understood sexism really. I've never met anyone in HR who really gets what it's about. And even the benign managers I've worked with ... they're not perfect, and they find it very difficult to challenge sexism. They recognise it, which is great, and they'll talk to you about it, but it's very hard for them as men to say to other men, your attitude towards colleague X is inappropriate and you embody sexism.*

[Amber, Senior, Female]

Experiences were not negative across the board and a minority of respondents felt that the institution was supportive of gender equality

*Researcher: Do you think that the university overall is good at promoting gender equality?*

*Yes and no, it's more that they treat you as an employee and a lecturer, while I don't think it's overly obvious that they make specific considerations for females. Its just a case of they are fair to their employees or they try to be fair to their employees. [...] But then again this might only be because I'm in a very nice group, I don't know what is happening elsewhere, but they are really good to me.*

[Angela, Lecturer, Female]

- ❖ **The University of Bradford should ensure that its policies reflect the context in which all of its staff work more accurately and that they capture the flexible nature of the academic job**
- ❖ **The University and all its staff should engage more fully in a dialogue about gender equality issues**

## **What is Equality?**

When talking about the policies, many respondents raised the question of what was actually meant by equality and questioned whether the policies could ever achieve real equality or whether achieving equality was something much more intrinsic and cultural which could perhaps be encouraged but not enforced by policy. Another aspect of this is the problem of definition and our respondents recognised that different people may have different perceptions of equality and equal treatment

*So in terms of, but in terms of equality obviously there's policies which we need to abide by in relation to our dealings with students as well as the institution in its dealings with the staff so but people's definition of equality, that's sometimes where the difficulties are because you might think you're treating everybody equally but actually if you're not*

*taking into account something specific about an, an individual, you may well not be treating them equal.*

[Shannon, Lecturer, Female]

*I know you have to have policies and things in place it's part of the transparency I suspect, of the playing field now; but I honestly believe that things like equality, diversity, equal opportunities etc. I mean, they're things that live within inside each of us. And, you know if you, if you really do believe it then it will happen automatically.[The policy] simply sets a minimum level of compliance, or whatever you want to call it.*

[James, Senior, Male]

*...what we need is a sort of friendly inclusive culture that recognises talents, recognises skills and tries to, in a sense encourage people to do those bits of the academic job that actually they're best at and to harness the talent that we've got at Bradford.*

[Sasha, Lecturer, Female]

*I don't want equality. I'm not a man, I don't want to be treated exactly the same as a man, what I want is equity. I want fairness, in the treatment of people, regardless of their gender ethnicity all those kinds of things. I think there's an element of 'fear factor', whereby men who are in positions of power might legitimately be expected to be taken over by younger capable men eventually, that's part of the way of the world that they understand and know about, its part of the historical kind of system that whereby the master trains the student and the student then becomes the master, all that kind of stuff. There's an element of that and that's very different being overtaken by a woman. It challenges those historical gender roles and the nature of patriarchy for a woman to move up that ladder and I think what that means is that you have to overcome a lot of stereotypes, you have to overcome a lot of preconceptions and then you have to be better than the bloke, considerably better than the other candidate that is most similar to you and if he's a bloke, you've got to be a lot better than him to do the job, because you 'might go off to get pregnant*

[Rachel, Lecturer, Female]

❖ **The university and its staff should engage in a dialogue about what equality means or should mean in this institutional setting and how it can be achieved**

## Conclusions and Summary of Policy Recommendations

Our study of progression statistics and university policies showed that there is little wrong with university policy as such. The university has policies that, in theory, should ensure that women academics have an equal opportunity to progress within the university and that they feel valued and supported in their roles. However, the picture of the lived experience of academics that emerged in interviews is somewhat different. Many of our respondents felt that the promotions process was unclear and lacked transparency, that their skills were not valued or rewarded, that it was impossible to carry out their job in a reasonable number of hours, that they had a poor work-life balance, and that the university was still a male-dominated environment. We have made recommendations throughout this report; their essence can be summarised quite briefly.

- Reward: there is more than one way of being a good academic and this needs to be reflected in the university's system of reward.
- Information: all the information academics need in order to plan and execute career plans needs to be accessible and available at one web location. Misconceptions about what is required need to be tackled.
- Transparency: we have no doubt that the university's promotions systems are more transparent than they were in the past but there is still much to be done. In particular, allocation of non-teaching duties needs to be equitable, and differences between schools must either be eliminated or be capable of proper justification.

- Encourage: a promotion system that relies on self-identification appears to favour confident male applicants at the expense of some women. Alternative or additional ways of identifying candidates for promotion should be identified and trialed.
- Support: the mentoring system is valuable but it does not always perform because of a lack of clarity about its aims and because mentors do not always have the requisite knowledge, skills and experience.
- Visibility: there are women in senior positions in the university but they are not necessarily visible to other women in the institution. A support network is needed to encourage women to aim high, and to develop the skills needed for a move into management roles.
- Balance: it is unclear why academics routinely work very long hours and fail to take annual holidays, but the university needs to explore ways to support a culture of balance. Part of that is recognition of the value of a life outside the university, perhaps by including contribution to the wider community as a category in the promotions criteria.

**WOMEN IN THE HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR –  
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**APPENDIX 1 – RESEARCH STRATEGY**

## **WOMEN IN THE HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR – CONFRONTING THE ISSUES FOR ACADEMICS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF BRADFORD: PROJECT REPORT APPENDIX 1 – THE RESEARCH STRATEGY**

The research strategy of this project employed a socio-legal methodology. It involved the analysis of law and policy from institutional to European level. This analysis was then complemented with in-depth empirical work comprising of semi-structured interviews with male and female academics employed at the University (n=30). In addition to the interviews, some basic analysis was also made of statistic provided by the university

### **Phase 1 – EU and national law and policy.**

- Analysis of relevant legislation
- Analysis of relevant EU Level policy and initiatives
- Analysis of National Policy and Initiatives

The analysis carried out during the course of this phase informed the study and set it in its context. We consulted European and national legislation as well as policy documents and literature engaging with the legislation and relevant policy area. We have not provided a detailed report on phase 1 here as it was mainly used to inform our work in the following phases. A summary of the relevant context and literature can be found in Section x of the report whereas more detail in relation to the EU and national law and policy can be found in the Law in Brief included in Appendix x

### **Phase 2 – Examination of University Policy**

Phase 2 follows on from work undertaken in Phase 1 by examining the University of Bradford policies which impact on the career progression of women in HE either directly or indirectly. A full list of the policies consulted can be found in Appendix x

### **Phase 3 - Empirical work**

Phase 3 sought to gain in depth knowledge and understanding of women academics in the University of Bradford. The original research strategy proposed 2 methods, one relatively traditional and one more innovative, data will be collected to help us understand the many factors which determine whether or not women progress in academia or not and why women remain underrepresented at senior level. The first method was to use qualitative semi-structured interviews, this is discussed below. The second methods anticipated using an online discussion forum. While this forum was indeed set up using the institutions Virtual Learning Environment, Blackboard, the method of data collection was unsuccessful. The reasons for this are considered further below.

Qualitative Semi structured interviews were carried out with male and female academic staff at the University of Bradford at all levels of an academic career (n =30) The interviews covered areas such as

- Background Data
- Career trajectory
- Reasons for choosing to work in academia
- Advantages and Disadvantages of life as an academic
- Future plans
- Perceived barriers to career progression
- Views on promotions criteria and processes
- Public perception of women academics
- Institutional culture

In order to protect the confidentiality of our respondents we are unable to provide a full profile of our sample. However, the following details may be of interest

## Respondents by Gender

	Male	Female
Number	5	25
Percent	16.7%	83.3%

## Respondents by Seniority

	Numbers			Percentage		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Lecturer or below	16	1	15	53.3%	3.3%	50%
Senior Lecturer or equivalent	3		3	10%	0%	10%
Reader/Professor/Senior position	11	4	7	36.7%	13.3%	23.3%

We did not find any striking differences according to seniority in the answers given and the gender differences were also minimal with male and female respondents identifying similar issues to women's progression. Where we did note difference between men and women those difference are noted in the report.

The Online Discussion Forum was to allow participants to participate anonymously and discuss various issues around gender equality and women's progression in Academia. The forum was set up and arranged by topic with an area for general comments and discussion. However even though an email was sent round to all academics in the university encouraging participation, there were few registrations to the organisation which housed the forum and even fewer comments. We decided not to pursue this avenue because it was unlikely to yield significant results. A number of issues were likely to stop people participating and dealing with those issues would have taken too long given the scope of the project. Issues leading to non participation included the need to register, the fact that the forum was housed within the institutional VLE, lack of time to facilitate properly, unavailability of usual icebreakers due to confidentiality/anonymity, inability to register under false name and many others. In short we did not have sufficient time to devote to developing an online community where people felt comfortable sharing their experiences.

### **Phase 4 - Analysis of empirical data**

Analysis of the empirical data was carried out using the software package Nvivo7. The recordings of the interviews were transcribed and entered. The data was split (or coded) thematically as the themes arose from the interview data and was then analysed in accordance with those themes. As we ran short of time towards the end of the project, the last 5 interviews were initially not transcribed but listened to by both researchers who noted the important points in line with the established coding frame and transcribed the sections used for the report.

### **Phase 5 - Re-evaluation of the University of Bradford Policies**

In the light of the findings from the interviews, the researchers re-evaluated the university policies in order to identify gaps in the policies or areas where the policies were ineffective. In addition the draft report was circulated to all interviewees as well as the Equality and Diversity unit and the Head of the Human resources directorate for their input into the final report.

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**APPENDIX 2 – LAW IN BRIEF**

Please see [www.brad.ac.uk/management/lawinbrief](http://www.brad.ac.uk/management/lawinbrief) for  
**Law in Brief 2008/06:  
GENDER EQUALITY IN THE UK—THE LEGAL  
FRAMEWORK**

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**APPENDIX 3 – POLICY DOCUMENTS CONSULTED**

**WOMEN IN THE HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR – CONFRONTING THE ISSUES FOR ACADEMICS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF BRADFORD: PROJECT REPORT APPENDIX 3 – UNIVERSITY OF BRADFORD POLICIES AND OTHER DOCUMENTS CONSULTED<sup>4</sup>**

Academic terms and conditions <http://www.brad.ac.uk/admin/personnel/terms&conditions/index.html>

Annual Profile <http://www.brad.ac.uk/admin/equalopp/statistics/>

Equality and Diversity Policy [http://www.brad.ac.uk/equality/policies/Equality\\_Policy.pdf](http://www.brad.ac.uk/equality/policies/Equality_Policy.pdf)

Gender Equality Scheme and Action Plan <http://www.brad.ac.uk/equality/policies/ges.php>

HERA guidelines and information <http://www.brad.ac.uk/admin/personnel/HERA/index.html>

Human Resource Strategy <http://www.brad.ac.uk/admin/personnel/HRstrategy/index.html>

Management Development and Leadership Strategy  
<http://www.brad.ac.uk/admin/personnel/HRstrategy/index.html>

Pay Grading and Remuneration Documents  
<http://www.brad.ac.uk/admin/personnel/pay,grading&remuneration/index.html>

Personal Harassment and Bullying Policy and Procedures  
<http://www.brad.ac.uk/equality/policies/HarassmentandBullyingPolicy07.pdf>

Personnel Policies and Procedures  
<http://www.brad.ac.uk/admin/personnel/policies&procedures/index.html>

Policy Statement on Equal Opportunities <http://www.brad.ac.uk/equality/policies/equalopps.php>

Recruitment and Selection internal website <http://www.brad.ac.uk/admin/personnel/RnS/Index.html>

Staff Equality targets and statistics <http://www.brad.ac.uk/admin/equalopp/statistics/>

Work Life Balance documents <http://www.brad.ac.uk/admin/personnel/work-lifebalance/index.html>

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<sup>4</sup> Please note that many of the documents referred to above are internal documents and therefore require a University of Bradford username and password.

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**APPENDIX 4 – SELECTED FURTHER READING**

## Suggested further reading

The selection of references below is intended as a brief introduction and a starting point only. There are plenty more materials available, especially relating to women in science, engineering and technology.

Ackers, H. L. (2007) 'Legislating for Equality? Working Hours and Progression in Science Careers', *European Law Journal*, 13 (2) 169-185

Athena Swan website at <http://www.athenaswan.org.uk/html/athena-swan/>

Babcock, Linda, and Sara Laschever. 2003. *Women Don't Ask: Negotiation and the Gender Divide*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Blake, M and La Valle, I. (2000) Who applies for Research Funding, Wellcome Trust <http://www.wellcome.ac.uk/About-us/Publications/Books/Biomedical-science/WTD003211.htm>

European Commission (2008) 'Mapping the Maze: Getting More Women to the Top in Research', Report compiled by the Women in Research Decision Making expert group (WIRDEM).

European Commission (2006) 'She Figures 2006, Women and Science, Statistics and Indicators'

Doherty, L. and Manfredi S. (2006) Women's progression to senior positions in English universities. *Employee relations*, 28(6), 553-572

Due Billing, Y. and Alvesson, M. (2000), "Questioning the notion of feminine leadership: a critical perspective on the gender labeling of leadership gender", *Work and Organization*, Vol. 7 No. 3, pp. 128-44.

Eagly, A. and Carli, L.L. (2003), "The female leadership advantage: an evaluation of the evidence", *Leadership Quarterly*, Vol. 14, pp. 807-34.

Eagly, A., Johannesen, M. and van Engen, M. (2003), "Transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles: a meta-analysis comparing women and men", *Psychological Bulletin*, Vol. 129 No. 4, pp. 569-92.

Employee Relations Volume 28 Issue 6 – Special issue on the advancement of women in universities (2006)

Gender Equity Project at

<http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/genderequity/equitymaterials.html>

Goode, J. and Bagilhole, B. (1998), "Gendering the management of change in higher education: a case study", *Gender, Work and Organisation*, Vol. 5 No. 3, pp. 148-64.

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Osborn, M. et al., (2000) Science Policies in the European Union: Promoting Excellence through Mainstreaming Gender Equality. A Report from the ETAN Expert Working Group on Women and Science, Brussels: European Commission.

Saunderson, W. (2002), "Women, academia and identity: constructions of equal opportunities in the new managerialism – a case of lipstick on the gorilla?", *Higher Education Quarterly*, Vol. 56 No. 4, pp. 376-406.

TUC (2008) 'The return of the Long Hours Culture' available online at <http://www.tuc.org.uk/extras/longhoursreturn.pdf>

UK Resource Centre for women in science, engineering (UKRC) at <http://www.ukrc4setwomen.org.uk/html/resources/ukrc-publications/>

Wellcome Trust (1997) Women and Peer Review An audit of the Wellcome Trust's decision-making on grants

Wennerås C, Wold A (1997) 'Nepotism and sexism in peer-review'. *Nature* 387: 341–343