



SFC Corporate publication

Gender Action Plan: annual progress report

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Summary: Aim 10 of SFC's Gender Action Plan is '*To evidence our progress in achieving our 2030 vision*', in support of which we committed to publishing an annual progress report. This is the second of these reports and outlines the SFC's annual progress on the GAP, and highlights key priorities for action in the coming year.

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Introduction

Background

1. SFC's gender action plan (GAP) was published in August 2016. It was developed in response to recommendation 29 of 'Developing Scotland's Young Workforce' that 'the Scottish Funding Council and colleges should develop an action plan to address gender disparities within college education'. It also addresses SFC's Guidance Letter for 2015-16 in which the Minister urged a 'renewed focus on reducing gender segregation in participation' at colleges and universities.
2. In support of two specific aims of the GAP ('providing evidence of our progress in achieving our 2030 vision', and hold[ing] SFC to account in the implementation of the plan'), we have committed to publishing an annual progress report, and bringing that report to the SFC Board each year. This is the second progress report.
3. The GAP sets out our overall ambition that by 2030 no college or university subject will have a gender imbalance of greater than 75% of one gender and that the proportion of men studying at undergraduate level at university will be at least 47.5% (put another way, the gap between women and men's participation will be reduced to 5%).

Summary of progress

4. The GAP was published in 2016. In 2017 we focused on the implementation of institutional Gender Action Plans, reporting to the Council in our first annual progress report.
5. In 2018, our focus was engaging with students and institutions to assess the impact of institutional Gender Action Plan (iGAPs) and – therefore - the likely impact of SFC's GAP achieving its targets and aims. This work suggests that asking institutions to establish iGAPs has been positive, and our assessment of these plans is that they demonstrate a clear commitment to action. However, our engagement has also made clear institutions are still not adopting a 'whole institution' approach to achieving and promoting gender equality as required by the SFC plan.
6. Our work last year with institutions confirmed SFC needs to increase support for, and discussion of, gender equality within institutions. With that in mind we held an annual conference at the end of 2018, attended by institutions, national bodies and gender equality advocates. The theme of the conference was intersectionality (the overlapping and varied impact of discrimination on different protected characteristics, e.g. recognising that the experience of black women is different from white women).

7. Since the latest data we have relates to 2016-17 (the year in which we published our GAP) it is too early to provide a meaningful statistical analysis of its impact and our work. However, our assessment of the data suggests some movement in engineering, particularly in the college sector; it also suggests some (slight) shifts in other subject imbalances in colleges. But imbalances in the university sector appear more stubborn; against the background of the GAP's target to improve men's representation in the university sector, data for 2015-16 and 2016-17 suggest the position worsened. This further highlights the need for a sectoral approach, led by SFC, to tackle these issues. It is still our firm belief that significant change is possible. In order to encourage this to happen we will need to consider how we incentivise change. This will partly be through persistently prioritising this issue in outcome agreements and promoting gender specific interventions in the most skewed subjects.
8. SFC has published a more detailed technical report alongside this report.

Gender equality policy since the publication of the Gender Action Plan

9. Since its creation, SFC has worked with institutions to tackle gender inequality. Prior to our GAP this was essentially focused on gendered imbalances at a subject level, usually on women's under-representation – though we have also been aware for many years of the disparity in university participation in totality between men and women.
10. SFC's commission for a GAP originated in the Developing Scotland's Young Workforce report, which concentrated only on gender in the Senior Phase cohort, and on colleges. However, SFC took a wider view, adopting a more comprehensive approach to gender equality. The GAP sets out our overall ambition that by 2030 no college or university subject will have a gender imbalance of greater than 75% of one gender, and that the proportion of men studying at undergraduate level at university will be at least 47.5%. It made clear that gender equality related to all genders and applied to staff and governing bodies, and applied to trans equality, and preventing - and responding to - violence against women.
11. Since the publication of this plan the policy environment has expanded significantly. Our last letter of guidance from the Minister includes specific requirements in relation to:
 - Preventing and responding to gender based violence particularly in relation to support the Scottish Government's Equally Safe strategy.
 - The full implementation and realisation of the Gender Representation on Public Boards (Scotland) Act 2018 which means that 50% of non-executive members on public boards must be women by 2022.

1 Progress in implementing SFC's Gender Action Plan (GAP)

Quantitative progress against the GAP's main outcomes

College data

12. Table 1 shows the change in the gender imbalance of the ten superclass subjects on which the GAP focuses between 2011-12 and 2016-17.
13. Progress is varied. Overall the story is positive: there is progress in 8 out of the 10 subjects, with Construction and IT the two subjects in which the imbalance has increased. The biggest improvement is in Building Services, where the proportion of men has fallen from 97.0% to 90.8%; and all three engineering superclasses included in the priority subjects (Engineering/Technology, and Mechanical and Electrical Engineering) have also improved (respectively, 4.9%, 3.6% and 0.6% reductions in the imbalance). In the table below, red highlights an increased imbalance, and green a decreased imbalance.

Table 1: Progress Towards KPI 8 Update: 2011-12 and 2015-16

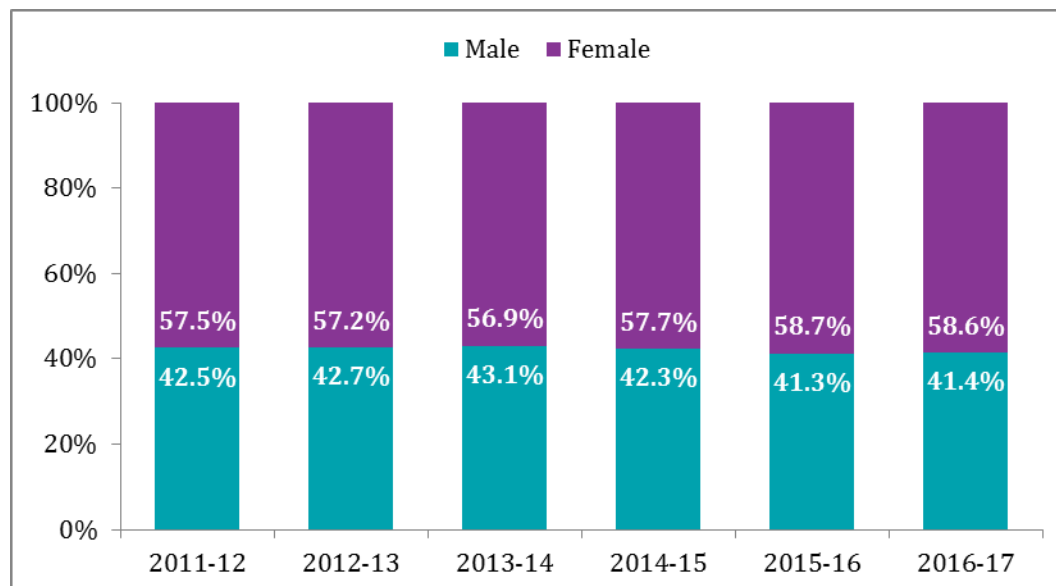
GAP superclass	Minority Share 2011-12	Minority Share 2016-17	Progress towards KPI 8
Hair/Personal Care Services	3.5%	5.8%	2.4%
Child Care Services	4.7%	6.1%	1.5%
Construction	6.6%	5.8%	-0.8%
Building/ Construction Operations	2.5%	2.7%	0.2%
Building Services	3.0%	9.2%	6.2%
Electrical Engineering	4.1%	4.7%	0.6%
Vehicle Maintenance/ Repair	5.1%	6.9%	1.8%
IT: Computer Science/ Programming/ Systems	12.2%	11.2%	-1.0%
Engineering/ Technology (general)	10.9%	15.8%	4.9%
Mechanical Engineering	6.1%	9.7%	3.6%

University data

14. In considering the two university-focused aims of the GAP (overall gender imbalance and subject imbalances) the story is less positive. Both in terms of the sectoral measure to increase undergraduate participation by men (only applies to the university sector) and at institutional level when considering subject imbalances. This is discussed in more detail below.
15. Figure 1 shows sector level totals over six years for the overall gender balance for Scottish-domiciled undergraduate entrants (SDUE). In 2016-17, the gender

imbalance of men and women SDUEs at university was 17.2 percentage points. Women accounted for 58.6% of total enrolments.

Figure 1: Overall Gender Balance across Scottish Domiciled Undergraduate Entrants to University, 2011-12 to 2016-17



16. Table 2, below, shows the progress made towards the GAP’s aim to reduce the sector level gender gap for SDUEs to five percentage points. Between 2011-12 and 2016-17, despite fluctuations, the gender imbalance has increased overall by 2.2 percentage points (despite a 0.2 percentage point decrease between 2015-16 and 2016-17).

Table 2: Gender Gap for Scottish-domiciled UG entrants, 2011-12 to 2016-17

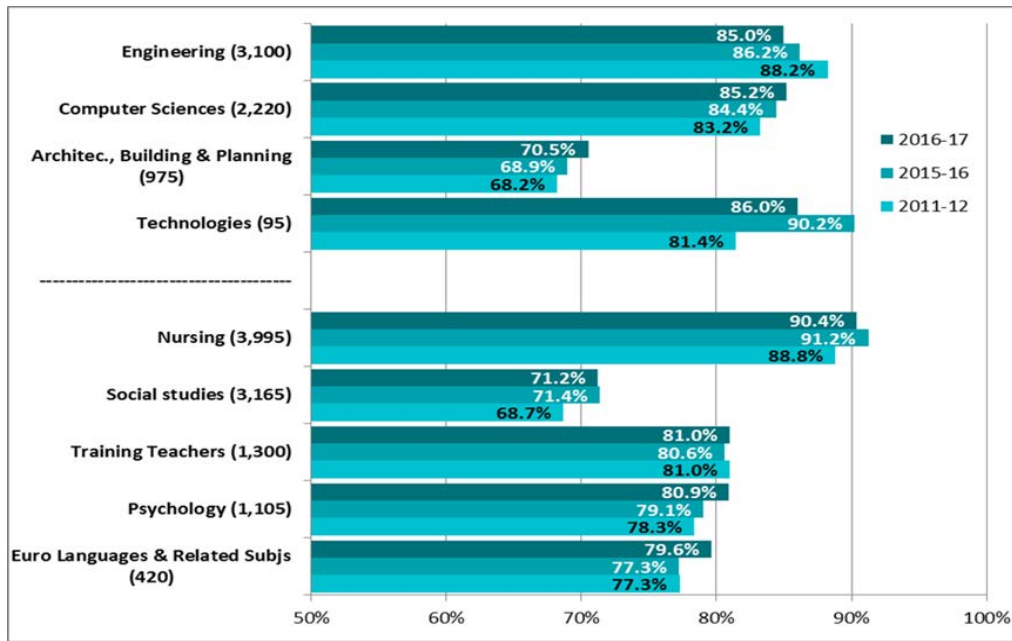
Academic Year	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Gender Gap (pp)	14.9%	14.5%	13.8%	15.3%	17.4%	17.2%

17. Figure 2 considers the subjects with the greatest gender imbalances, showing the proportion of the majority gender by academic year comparing the baseline year of 2011-12 and the two most recent years for which we have data. The first four subjects in Figure 3 (Engineering to Technologies) are dominated by men while the remainder (Nursing to European Languages and Related Subjects) are dominated by women.

18. In Engineering, the number of male entrants decreased by 3.2 percentage points between 2011-12 and 2016-17; for the other subjects dominated by men, the imbalance increased.

19. These figures are from shortly after the GAP was published, so we would not expect progress so early in the plan’s implementation. However, the data is not positive, particularly for the university sector, and suggests we need greater focus and intensification of effort.

Figure 2: Majority Gender Proportion of SDUE in GAP Subjects in Universities by Academic Year



2 Successes during the year

20. Notwithstanding the scale of the challenge(s), we have achieved a good deal. In particular, we have made a substantial contribution across colleges and universities to lend focus and to drive activity to tackle gender based violence (GBV). Our GAP commitment to spread good practice across both sectors has seen SFC:
 - Work as part of the Government’s Equally Safe in Colleges and Universities Working Group to develop a consistent approach across the sectors.
 - Set specific requirements on GBV in 2019-2020 OAs.
 - Work with the University of Strathclyde and other institutions – and directly with Fiona Drouet (founder of #EmilyTest) to develop good practice and share approaches across the sector.

21. We have continued to support the sectors to improve strategic oversight of tackling gender imbalances at an institutional level, including:
 - (again) Asking all institutions to set out in their Outcome Agreements their desired outcomes for tackling gender imbalance.
 - Helping to develop and guide implementation of iGAPs, largely through Outcome Agreement Managers.
 - Helping develop intersectional approaches to tackling inequality through both our national gender conference, and by providing increased intersectional data in SFC’s technical reports.
 - Conducting a survey with the sector to analyse progress in tackling gender imbalances.
 - Visiting a range of institutions to explore the issues raised in the survey in more detail.

22. The last two bullets above comprised a self-completion survey open to anyone (institutions and individuals) and in-depth meetings with a sample of colleges and universities. We aimed to scope the current application and implementation of the GAP in colleges and universities, and to gather in-depth feedback from institutions, practitioners and sector bodies to shape the future direction of our work. Both the survey and meetings indicated that the GAP - and the requirement for institutions to develop iGAPs - was seen as positive, increasing momentum and accountability through identifying and developing local level aims. That said, we think institutions are not properly resourcing the work involved, with it too often falling to a few individuals. In addition, there are (perceived) tensions between the GAP and other equalities and widening access policies, and a need for greater accountability in implementing iGAPs.

23. Good progress has been made in developing awareness and action to tackle men’s under-representation, specifically in nursing and early years. This

includes:

- SFC administering the Men in Early Learning and Childcare Challenge Fund to develop new ways to attract and retain men to successfully complete Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) courses.
 - A NES convened working group being set up to oversee action and share practice in nursing.
 - SFC convening a cross-sectoral Male Engagement Working Group.
24. Finally, we have made good progress in engaging students to tackle gender inequality and imbalances, driven by a joint SPARQS/NUS project working with four colleges and four universities to develop student bodies' capacity to engage with iGAPs.

3 Challenges and delays this year

25. The priority accorded admissions in the work to implement the Blueprint for Fairness meant the Gender Governance Group agreed to hold much of the GAP-related work focused on admissions until this year. We have, though, tried to ensure that implementation of the Blueprint supports fair admissions by gender.
26. The GAP said we would work with institutions where their data indicated they had difficulties with completion and retention. In 2018-19 OAs, only seven universities acknowledged the requirement to address men's retention within their Outcome Agreements (OA), and none of these identified specific subject areas with an imbalance between men and women's retention rates. Meanwhile, just three colleges identified imbalances in completion between men and women at a subject level. We need to understand if this is because there are no problems for those institutions, or because they simply failed to include this area in the OA.
27. We currently publish information at a sectoral level on retention and completion by gender. At a sector level in colleges there is a disparity in success rates: women are less likely than men to complete FE courses successfully. The reverse is true for HE-level courses. Whereas in universities men have had consistently lower retention rates than women.
28. Over the next year we will undertake a more detailed analysis of this by subject and by institution and use it as part of our Outcome Agreement discussions to seek improvements in this area.
29. The areas which said SFC would have a lead role, but where we have struggled to make the planned progress because of staffing pressures, are:
 - Developing a men's engagement strategy.
 - Developing an evaluation framework.
 - Improving CPD/training for staff and Boards so they understand their role and show greater leadership in this area.
 - Determining key steps to further career progression for female staff.

4 Priorities for next year

30. We have done well this year in those areas over which we have most control: Outcome Agreements; engaging with institutions to support the development and implementation of iGAPs; and enhancing the focus on Gender Based Violence. We have done less well in areas where we rely on others: schools; CPD/training; and staff focused issues. We propose to ensure our focus is firmly on those areas where we have direct control, and will separately develop an influencing plan for the remaining areas. We will develop this with the Gender Governance Group.
31. Specifically, our priorities for the year ahead will include:
 - Pushing for clearer and more focused outcomes from all institutions through Outcome Agreements, including a more detailed analysis of success rates and retention rates by institution by subject.
 - Building the evidence base for effective action through more in depth discussions with institutions, and developing an evaluation framework.
 - Sharing good practice where we find it.
 - Working with individual institutions on retention and success rates.
 - Continuing our focus on Gender Based Violence.
 - Action to improve the gender balance of Boards (largely through our funding for Advance HE).
 - Assessing our overall approach and the efficacy of the GAP so far, specifically working to ensure join up between different initiatives and policies.
32. The Gender Governance Group, with a new Chair, will oversee this work. This group includes members from the Scottish Government, Skills Development Scotland, Education Scotland, gender experts, universities and colleges. It will now be chaired by Professor Lesley Yellowlees.

5 Equality and diversity assessment

33. It is important to stress, as we do in the action plan, that SFC recognises gender is not binary and wants to be inclusive of all learners. Nevertheless, examining the differences in participation and success for men and women students enables the sectors to identify where there are differences, barriers, and potential discrimination. Alongside our work to address gender imbalances in colleges and universities, we have improved the support the sectors provide to all students, irrespective of their gender identity. This includes funding for <http://trans.ac.uk/> which made recommendations for how colleges and universities might better support trans students. We have asked all institutions to respond to these recommendations within their OAs for 2019-20.
34. As part of the development of the plan, [a full Equality Impact Assessment \(EIA\)](#) was published. It outlined the need for the plan to:
 - Address under-representation of both men and women.
 - Understand and support intersectional identities.
35. It recognised:
 - Address under-representation of both men and women.
 - Understand and support intersectional identities.
 - The tension created by multiple policies aimed at addressing under-representation and a need to align with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. It concluded there was a need for a concerted effort to support gender equality and that such an approach should be adopted.
 - That equality and diversity issues are often multi-faceted, and as such we should consider gender alongside other protected characteristics, such as disability, to ensure we are aware of the specific issues for each group.
36. To respond to this and feedback from this year's engagement work, the theme of our conference in 2018 was intersectionality and our statistical publications take an intersectionality approach to presenting data on gender.
37. In reviewing the EIA in 2018, the issues identified in our initial EIA remain and so we will continue to be alert to them as we implement the plan.