Professional Services Career Event and Videos
Action Plan Reference: PS2 & PS5

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Increasing visibility of PS career pathways, boosting staff confidence, and promoting a more inclusive understanding of career development across the institution.

Rationale

Professional Services (PS) staff sometimes experience uncertainty about potential career pathways, particularly those who have been in the same role for several years. The initiative aimed to increase visibility of diverse career trajectories, showcasing examples of non-linear ("squiggly") career journeys and encouraging reflection on personal development opportunities.

The work was driven by:
- Persistent overrepresentation of women in lower PS grades (4–6), a factor contributing to the gender pay gap.
- Findings from the Race Equality Charter ISAT highlighting low representation of Black, Asian, and Ethnic Minority staff in PS roles.
- Feedback noting that academic staff benefit from the annual Gaining Academic Promotion event; a comparable initiative was needed for PS colleagues.

What we did

- Ten video case studies were produced and published on the Career Management microsite, exploring topics such as imposter syndrome, secondments, volunteering, and career transitions. Seven of the ten videos feature female staff across a range of grades.

- A dedicated PS Career Development Event took place on 9 November 2023, attended by approximately 100 participants (50 in person and 50 online).

- Participants were asked to watch the videos in advance and reflect on their own experiences and goals during the interactive session. The event also highlighted internal career resources and development programmes.

Line Managers as Key Enablers of Career Development

Results from the staff experience survey showed that PS staff rated line manager support for career development above the institutional average
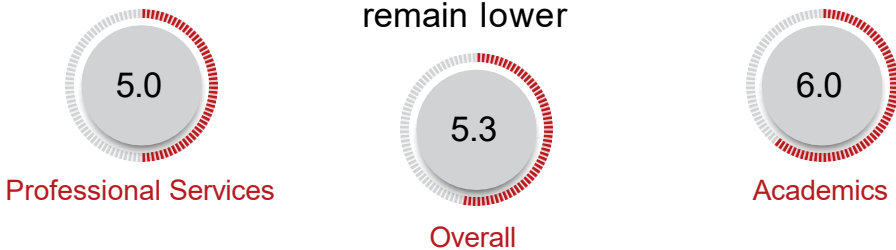
- **7.6** Professional Services
- **7.4** Overall

With female PS staff responding even more positively

- **7.8** Female PS Staff
- **7.5** Male PS Staff

Perceived Barriers to Career Progression in Professional Services

However, perceptions of promotion and progression processes remain lower

- **5.0** Professional Services
- **5.3** Overall
- **6.0** Academics

Similarly, PS staff felt less positive about career development opportunities

- **6.1** Professional Services
- **6.3** Overall
- **6.8** Academics

Female PS staff responded more positively on both measures, suggesting the initiative may have contributed to greater awareness or confidence, but further work is required to improve transparency and understanding of progression pathways.

1262 views

The PS Career Case Study videos have achieved 1,262 views since launch, demonstrating strong engagement with the resource.

Participant Feedback

"Put less pressure on myself – it's evident a lot of other people share my anxieties around career progression and recruitment processes!"

"Be less afraid to take opportunities."

"Be more willing to take on new responsibilities that take me out of my comfort zone, seeing them as opportunities to progress."

IMPACT

Engagement	Strong turnout at the hybrid event (~100 attendees) and over 1,200 video views show clear interest and relevance.
Representation	Case studies reflected diverse experiences, with most featuring women and highlighting intersectional stories.
Accessbility	Online videos and resources ensured wide reach and flexible access across the university.
Reflection	Participants gained confidence and perspective, recognising shared challenges and new opportunities.
Alignment	The initiative supported key priorities around gender equality, career development, and staff experience.

What Worked Well

Broader Reach

The initiative engaged PS staff across grades, fostering a shared conversation on career progression. Online videos extended impact beyond attendees, embedding the resource into ongoing development and OD communications. This approach complemented academic events, ensuring opportunity parity across staff groups.

Challenges

As with any development intervention, it is difficult to immediately assess impact of the event. Attendees were required to watch the videos and reflect on others career stories, but how that translates to their own career management is not known. There is not, currently, a system to track career pathways and link back to OD interventions.

Next Steps

- Develop a system to track PS career progress and link results to interventions.
- Expand the video library with a variety of case studies, including underrepresented groups and higher PS grades.
- Introduce follow-up sessions or communities of practice to sustain engagement and peer learning.
- Improve communication and transparency about progression frameworks and development options.

Find Out More

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