



Case Study:

# TARGETED MPI

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## INTRODUCTION

At the forefront of educating our future leaders and managers, Business and Management Schools (B&M Schools) are well-placed to shape the development of inclusive cultures in organisations and to influence national and global policy and research agendas. Yet women's progress in academic roles, both globally and in the UK, lags behind men's, especially at professorial and senior leadership levels. This reflects a persistent overall pattern of gender inequality in Higher Education.

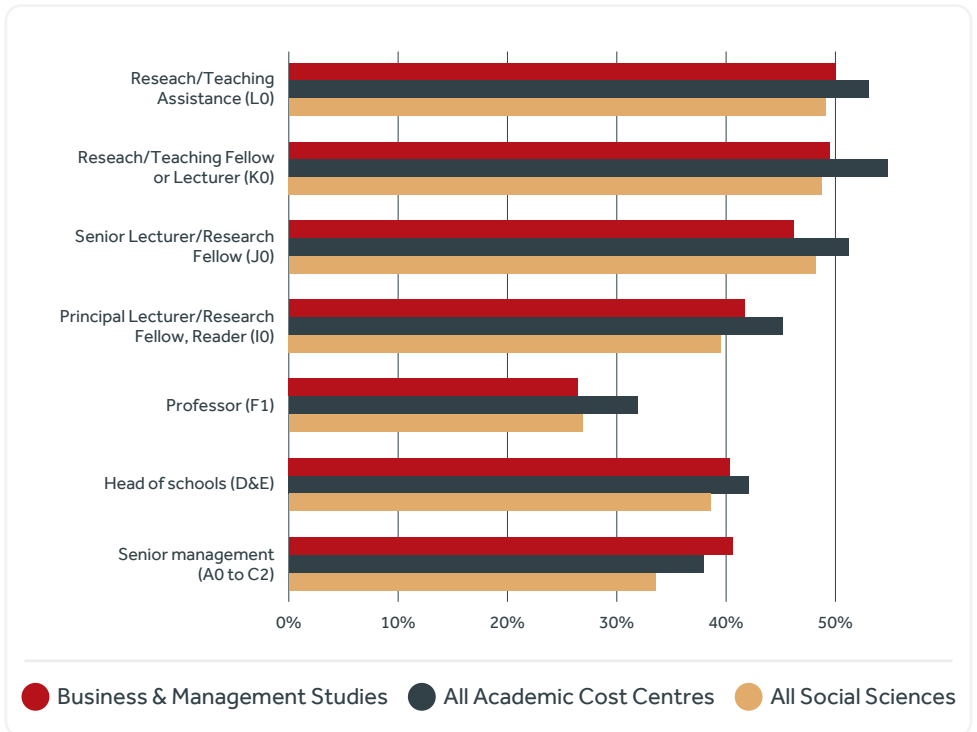
This case study illustrates the scope of gender inequality in academic roles in UK B&M Schools, and how research being undertaken by Lancaster University as part of an EU-funded international project is working to tackle gender challenges in their own organisation.



## CONTEXT

In UK Higher Education academic careers progress through a number of stages, typically entering as doctoral researchers studying for a PhD, through to early career positions such as research assistant and lecturer (also termed assistant professor), with progression to senior lecturer (or associate professor), through to reader, with professor as the top rank. Statistics show that the percentage of women at the top of their academic career in professorial roles has seen minimal progress in the UK over the past decade, increasing only by one percentage point year on year from 2013/14 until 2019/20, and in 2020/21 the number of women in professorial roles has remained at 28% (Figure 1). Academic staff employed on other senior academic contracts (Head of School or Senior manager) comprised 40% of women in 2020/21. This has gradually increased from 33% in 2013/14 (HESA, 2020/21).

**Figure 1. Proportion of Women Academic Staff by contract level**



When it comes to UK B&M Schools, there is a 6% gender imbalance in favour of men; double the imbalance in the UK universities' labour market. Early career gender parity disappears with career progression: 48% of lecturers are women while only 26% of professors are women, at 2% less than the overall number of women professors in HE (Śliwa et al., 2022). The gender gap at senior career levels widens depending on the type of university the Business and Management School is part of: 25% of professors are women at Russell Group universities, compared with 34% at post-92 universities (Śliwa et al., 2022).

## THE TARGETED-MPI RESEARCH PROJECT

The international EU funded research project Transparent and Resilient Gender Equality through Integrated Monitoring, Planning and Implementation (TARGETED-MPI)<sup>1</sup>, aims to tackle gender inequality issues in Business and Management Schools across Europe and beyond through the development, implementation and monitoring of Gender Equality Plans (GEPs). A key goal of the project is to establish a European Network of Gender Equality Observatories to ensure the long-term sustainability of gender equality activities and initiatives (TARGETED-MPI web-site) in B&M schools. The four-year project with partners from B&M schools in five different countries includes a team of UK researchers at Lancaster University Management School (LUMS). A key focus for each project partner is to develop, implement and monitor bespoke Gender Equality Plans at their own B&M schools to take account of the specific cultural and organisational context. The emphasis of this research is on actions that will be integrated into wider institutional practice, and stimulate cultural change and greater inclusivity.

For the LUMS research team in this project, the UK Equalities Act of 2010/2017 offers significant oversight regarding gender equality and wider EDI concerns and shapes policy at Business and Management Schools. This is complemented by a growing recognition of the size and shape of EDI and gender equality issues, captured in the UK by the requirements of the Athena SWAN



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<sup>1</sup> The TARGETED-MPI project is funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (grant agreement No 872260) for the period 2020-2024 with partner universities from 5 countries: Athens University of Economics and Business (Project Lead, Greece), Lancaster University Management School (UK), Stockholm School of Economics (Switzerland), Vrije Universiteit Brussel (Belgium), the American University of Beirut (Lebanon), Brunel University (UK).



award, Stonewall and the Race Equality Charter. Professional bodies such as the [Chartered Association of Business Schools](#) identify equality, diversity and inclusion as a key priority, and the British Academy of Management (BAM) have most recently conducted an Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Respect (EDIR) project, to generate an in-depth understanding of structural and cultural challenges embedded within, the everyday practices (and failures) of EDIR in UK Business and Management Schools ([Śliwa et al., 2022](#)).

While the overall UK policy and research climate is positively disposed to advancing gender equality, as the statistics show, progress has stalled with a clear gap between well-intentioned policy and practice that brings about real change. The TARGETED MPI research conducted in the UK at Lancaster University with its focus on action and implementation, therefore, has the potential to inform practice across B&M schools in the UK that can bring about lasting change.

## **TARGETED-MPI RESEARCH PROJECT ACTIONS AT LANCASTER UNIVERSITY MANAGEMENT SCHOOL**

At each of the partner institutions, the TARGETED-MPI research project has involved a review of organisational quantitative data and applying a cultural diagnosis tool to interviews and focus groups. This data has provided partner institutions with information to help them identify actions that will promote and advance gender equality. The analysis of data collected at Lancaster University Management School (LUMS) has identified a range of specific Gender Equality challenges to form a [Gender Equality Plan](#) with the following different areas of focus:

1. Gender disaggregated data development,
2. Career development,
3. Policy: work-life,
4. Internal and external communications,
5. Culture and values,
6. Gender equality awareness raising.



Our research has highlighted in particular the potential to increase understanding of where gender imbalance and inequality occur, and to enhance consistency and transparency across key practices and processes, such as induction and promotion to enable and sustain equitable ways of working. Key initiatives have included generating datasets that will provide measures of gender balance in different aspects of academic life, and enhancing equality of access to career development with a series of career development workshops for different career stages and tracks including support to promotions information and guidance. A significant area of focus has been raising gender awareness through regular LUMS communication channels and with specific initiatives including presentations of gender research to internal and external audiences, and an edition of the LUMS alumni magazine focused on gender research and activities at LUMS. An important goal is to develop and integrate inclusive values and considerations of gender in our codes of conduct and in our research and teaching. This goal is facilitated by a dedicated infrastructure for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) including the EDI committee, termly EDI forum and EDI action groups. The establishment of a Gender Equality Observatory (GEO) is enabling the monitoring of targeted gender equality developments and outcomes.

In recognition of the bespoke nature of Gender Equality Plans the overall TARGETED-MPI research project ([Apospori et al, 2021](#)) views the implementation of Gender Equality Plans in B&M schools across the project as ongoing over the short, medium and long term. Each partner institution including LUMS will evaluate its plans and completed outcomes after an initial phase, and to inform further planning and implementation. This process is intended to establish and embed a model of sustainable good practice.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall recommendations of the TARGETED MPI project ([Leitch et al, 2021](#)) regarding the development, implementation and monitoring of gender equality plans for Business and Management Schools include:

- communication strategies should be a key requirement in the development, implementation and monitoring of gender equality plans to encourage inclusivity and overcome resistance;
- actions for promoting gender equality are required at multiple levels within the organisation and should be designed to have immediate, short-term, mid-term and long-term effects;
- engagement and commitment of the key decision-makers that set the Business and Management School's strategy, should be considered as a key factor to the success of Gender equality plans.

Furthermore, Lancaster University Management School experience has reinforced the following actions at the organisational level:

- the need for bespoke plans that will identify the specific needs of the organisation;
- the importance of developing plans and working in collaboration with internal stakeholders and leveraging existing initiatives to bring about and sustain change;
- the need for committed organisational resource to enable implementation and ongoing monitoring of gender equality plans;
- the need to showcase what the organisation is doing well, in addition to changes that need to be made.

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## Tackling Gender Equality challenges in UK Business and Management Schools

This summary case was prepared by Dr Natalya Radko and Professor Valerie Stead for the Gender Matters project. The Gender Matters project aims to provide an overview over time of the scope and range of gender challenges facing UK organisations and to stimulate discussion and action with organisations and policymakers. The 2022 –2023 Gender Matters research project is led by the Academy for Gender Work and Leadership, Lancaster University Management School in partnership with the Work Foundation and the equality charity Diversity UK and funded by UKRI ESRC Impact Acceleration Account.

