

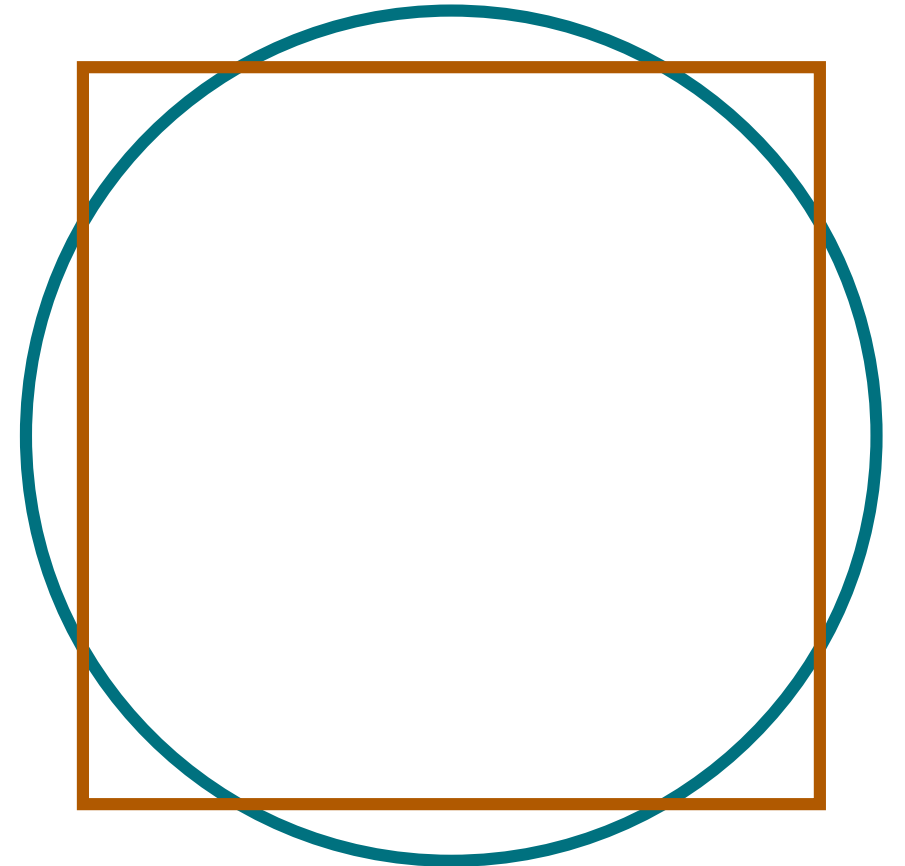
# **Squaring the circle: Athena SWAN at UCL, a success story**

**Professor Sara Mole  
UCL Provost's Envoy for Gender Equality**



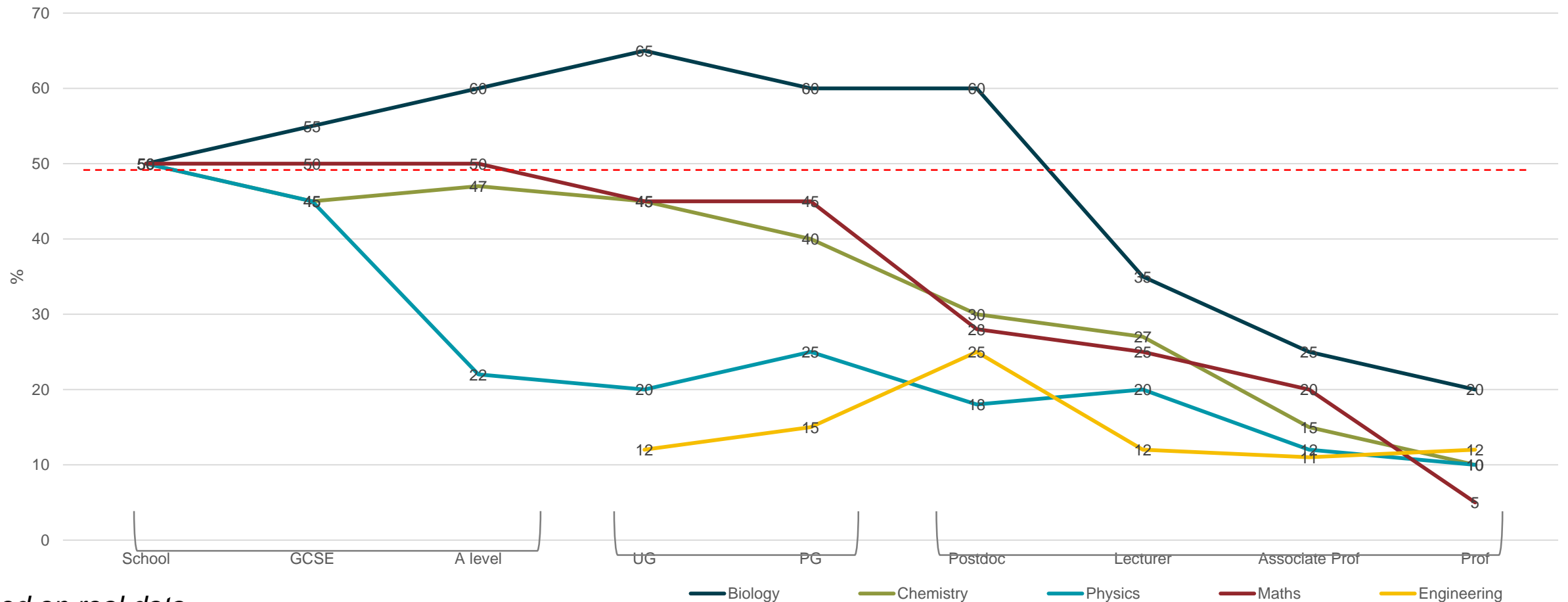
# Squaring the circle: Trying to do the impossible?

**Squaring the circle** is an ancient problem. It is the challenge of constructing a **square** with the same area as a given **circle** by using only a finite number of steps with a compass and a straight-edge.



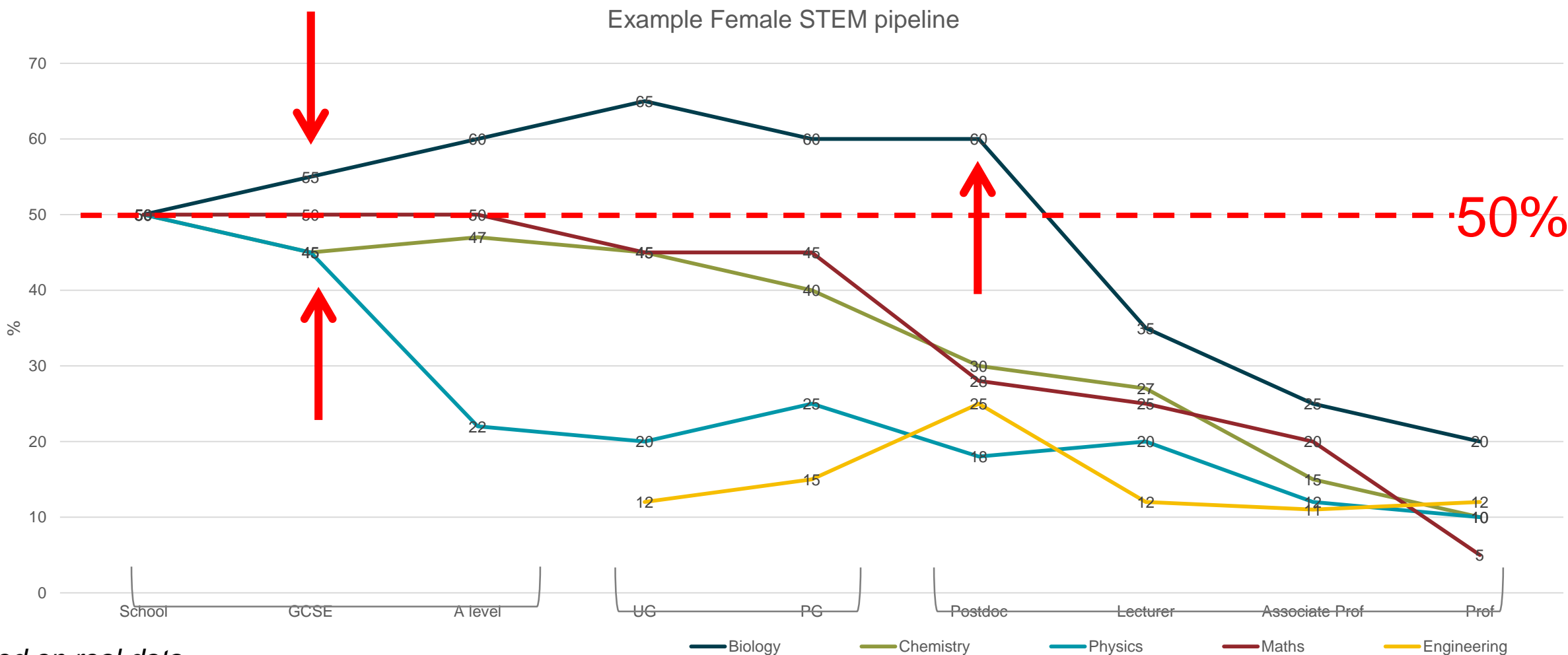
# The gender challenge (UK)

Example Female STEM pipeline



*based on real data*

# The gender challenge – losing talent



# What is Athena SWAN? (Scientific Women's Academic Network)

## Promoting gender equality

Using chartering for an award to drive the process of cultural change (since 2005, 16 years)

Frameworks to engage and embed gender equality & intersectionality

**Awards:**      **Institution (leadership) level = institutional practices & processes**

**Department or Faculty (local) = local implementation & initiatives**

Provides proven structure for work - *Data, Rationale, Action, Impact*



# What is Athena SWAN? (Scientific Women's Academic Network)

Promoting gender equality



- Athena:
- Bronze** - Assessment and progress
  - Silver** - Implementation and **measurable impact**
  - Gold** - **Significant & sustained impact** - cultural change

*\*UCL holds AS Silver, Race Charter and Stonewall (LGBTQ) awards; No University yet has a Gold AS award*



# Athena SWAN for institutes : UCL



- Use Athena SWAN for assessment of gender equality - ***internal progress monitoring & external recognition***
- **Highest number of dept awards in the UK** - 39 awards, including 3 Gold awards
- Centrally resourced



# Impact example – Promotion to Professor

- ***Data/Rationale:*** In 2014 women were 32% of successful applicants; consultation said promotion criteria did not reflect the breadth of contributions of staff, particularly citizenship; need to increase diversity of staff applying.
- ***Action:*** Revised Promotions criteria launched in 2017 which included citizenship alongside other key attributes, and gave parity to teaching and research output.
- ***Impact:***
  - Near doubling of successful promotion applications for all staff
  - Proportion of female professors increased to >30% (UK ~28%).
    - 29 to 56, 49 women, 43 to 85, 69 men in 2018, 2019
    - Increased success rates 86.1% to 94.7% for women and 86.7% to 94.2% for men
    - Women now 41.9% of all successful promotions to Professor



# Impact example – Paternity leave

- **Data/Rationale:** Low uptake of paternity leave at 2.6% for total staff in 2014/15.
- **Action:**
  - Doubled to 20 days of full pay from 2015 for all staff;
  - Published FAQ web page for parental leave (2017);
  - Produced fact sheet on 'Pregnancy & Paternity: your rights and benefits at work'.
- **Impact:** Doubling of paternity uptake to 5.2% for all staff in 2018/19, from 149 in 2014/15 to 333 in 2018/19.

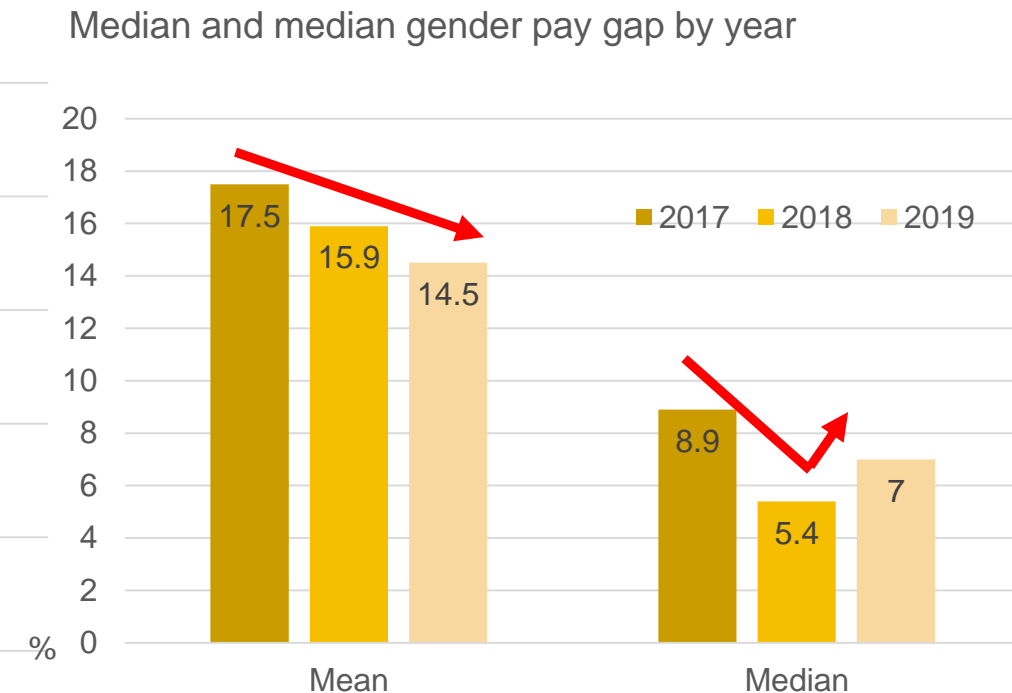
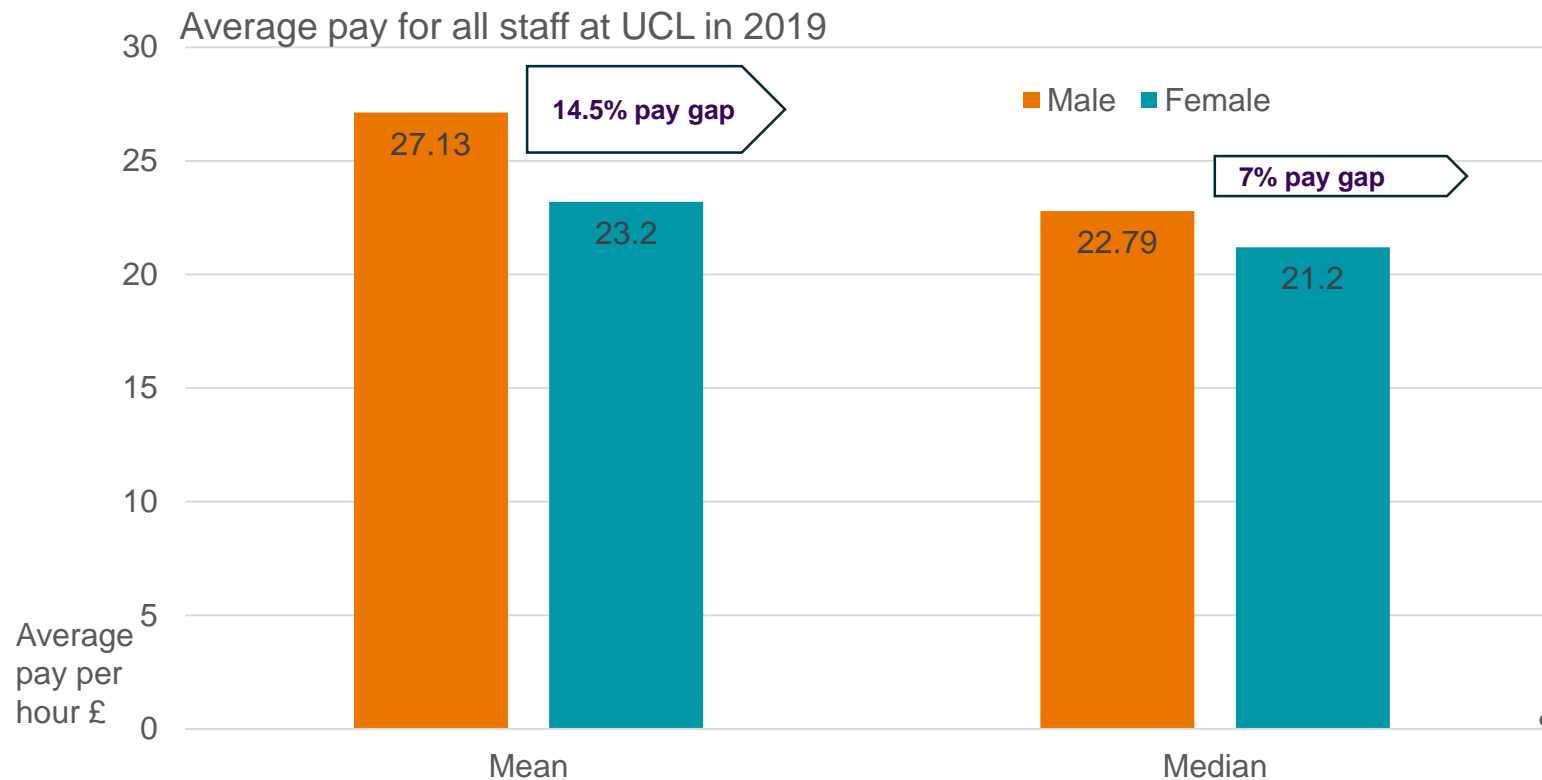
# Impact example – Head of Department roles

- ***Data/Rationale:*** Only 15.9% of HoDs were women in **2014/15**
- ***Action:***
  - New policy opened up the roles to all academic staff in the department (2016);
  - Fair and transparent advertising and appointment;
  - HoD gender data shared with faculty Deans.
- ***Impact:***
  - Doubling of women HoDs from 15.9% to 33.0% by 2020 (from 13 to 37).
  - Faculties engaging with Athena SWAN for longest showed most awareness and change e.g. in BEAMS women HoDs increased from 1 (3.6%) in 2014/15 to 10 (31.9%) in 2019/20

\*BEAMS is School of Built Environment, Engineering, and Mathematical and Physical Sciences

# Impact example - Gender pay gap analysis

- Legal requirement to publish – a reflection of gender balance at different grades
- Gender pay gap (mean) is decreasing year on year
  - from 17.5% in 2017 to 14.5% in 2019



# Other impact examples – Gender Equality

- Introduced and embedded improved policies, processes and structures
- Equalities governance structure includes Gender Working Group
- [Women in Leadership Development](#) programme (since 2015)
- New leadership models including co-Chairing to represent more characteristics – norm for departmental EDI groups
- Data dashboards for Faculties (2021)
- [Parents and Carers Together](#) network ~500
- Exhibitions on gender equality
- Awards to celebrate contributions to equality work
- Share experiences and good practice nationally and internationally

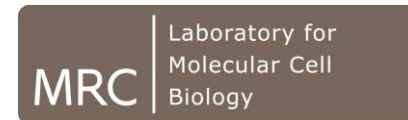


# Athena SWAN for Departments

ALL disciplines



## The UCL Medical Research Council Laboratory for Molecular Cell Biology



- A postgraduate research department
- 18 Principal investigators
- 3 Technology leaders
- Postdoctoral research fellows
- PhD students
- MSc and UG project students
- Core professional services staff

# Athena SWAN at the LMCB



## Promoting gender equality

Using the Athena SWAN charter to drive the process of cultural change (since 2008, 13 years)



Athena: **Bronze** - Assessment and progress

**Silver** - Implementation and **measurable impact**

**Gold** - **Significant & sustained impact** - cultural change

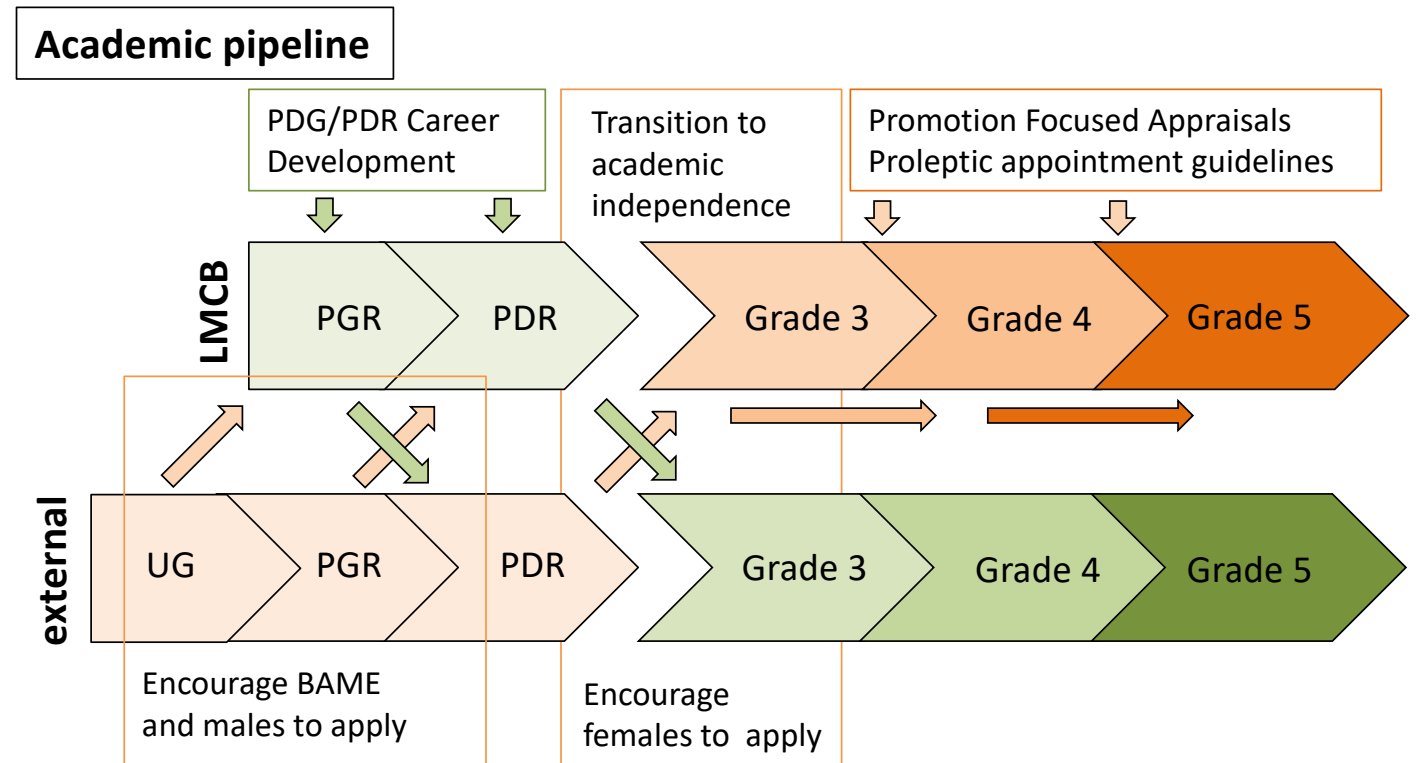
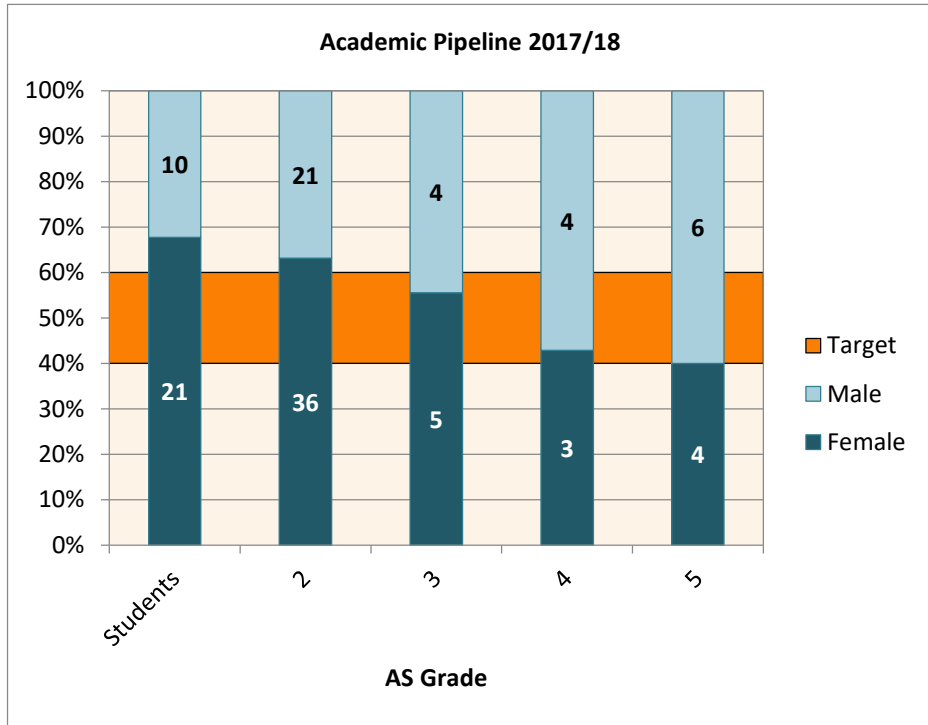
\*LMCB was 1st Silver at UCL, 1<sup>st</sup> Gold at UCL (8<sup>th</sup> Gold in UK, currently 13 Golds in UK)



# Athena SWAN Department (local engagement)

Data, data, data! gender (intersectional - race)				Survey	Quotes
Support letter from Head of Dept					
Students		Degree results			
Staff across levels – Research, Teaching, Technical, Professional support services					
Recruitment – application, interview – offer			Leavers by grade		
Supporting and advancing careers					
Induction		Career development appraisals		Promotion	Training
Flexible working		Career breaks – cover, support, returns			
Organisation & culture		Outreach	Role models	Representation on committees	Timings
Beacon activities		Wellbeing	HR Policies		Workload model
Case studies		Action plan & impact of previous actions			

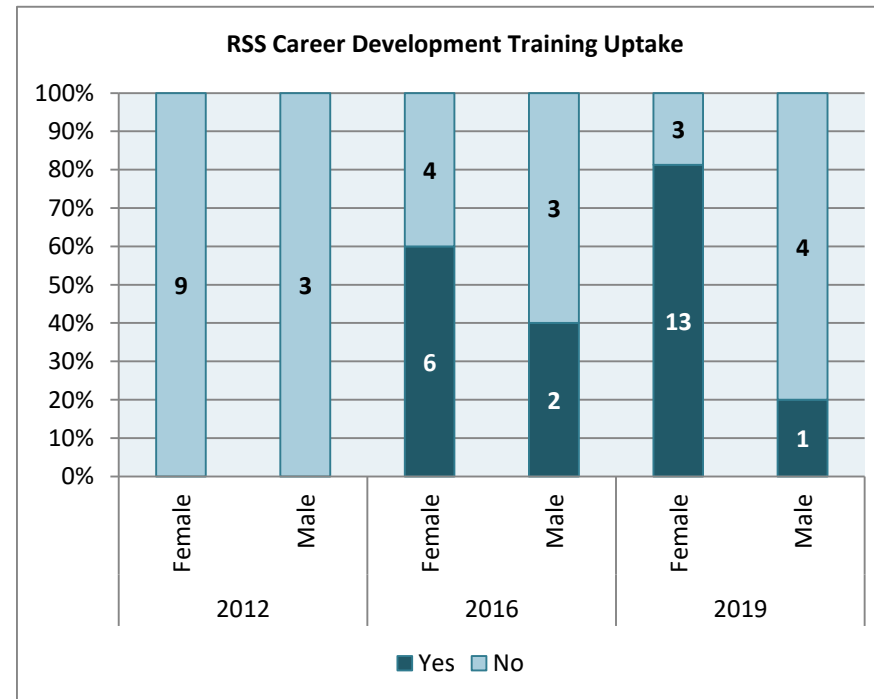
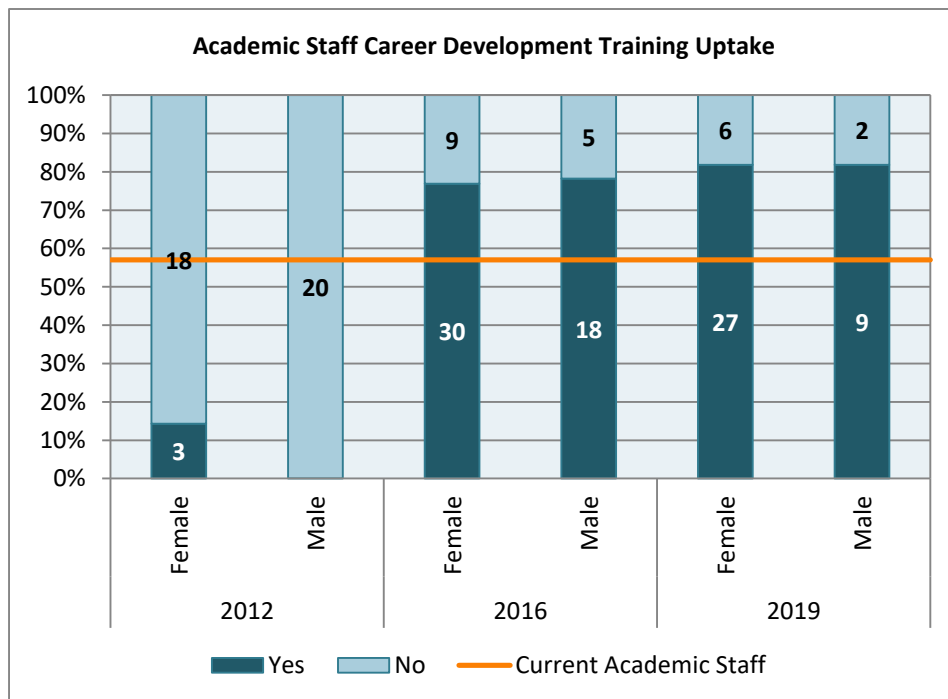
# Plugging the staff leaky pipeline



# Impact – change in practice & behaviour

- Positive action - Inviting applications for Group Leader positions from under-represented groups
- Encouraging uptake of career development training

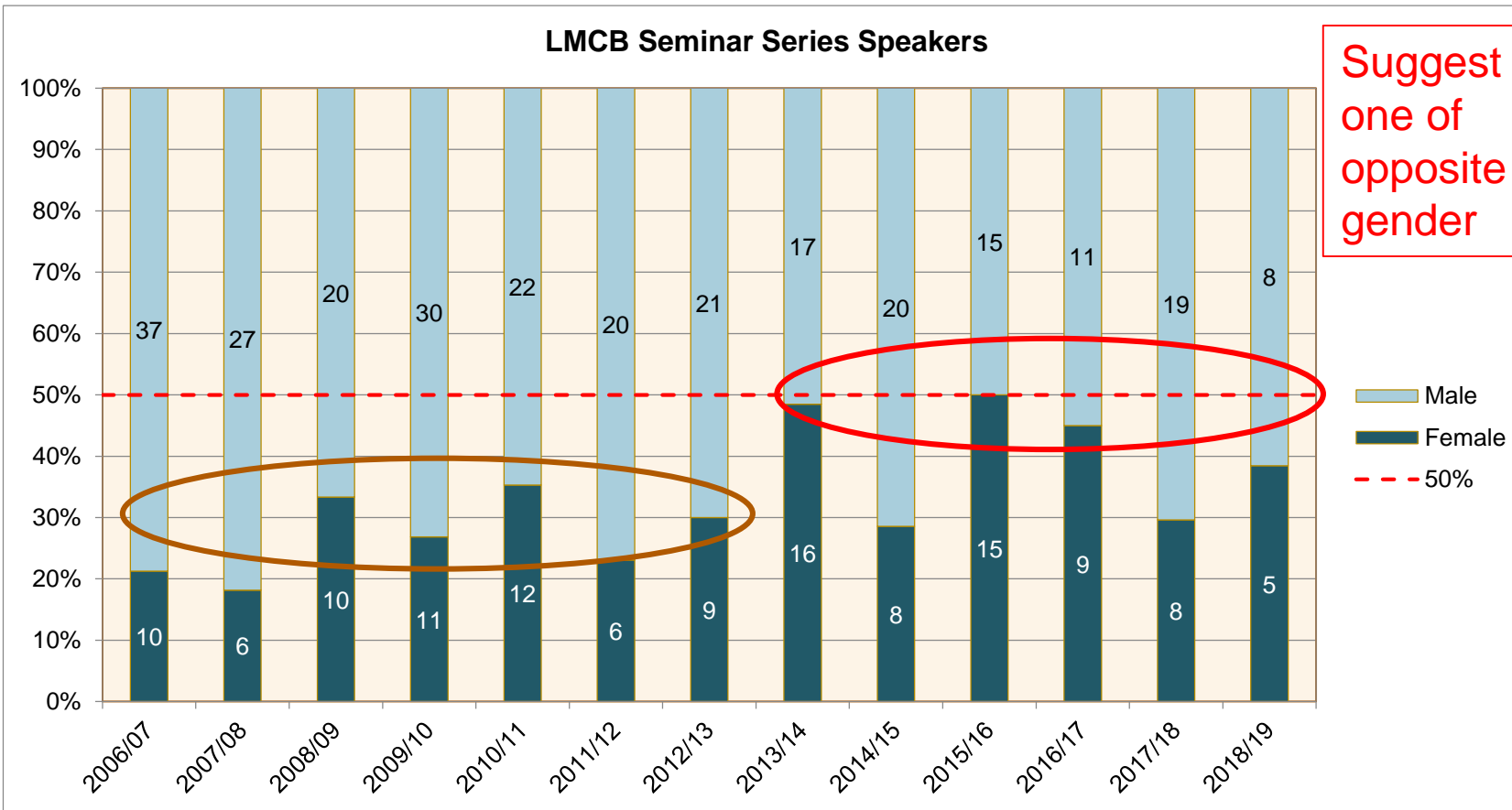
“When I saw the job advert, my initial response was 'I'm not ready for this job yet'. If I hadn't been encouraged to, I don't think I would have applied.”  
new Group Leader, **case study**



# Impact – role models, practice & policy

- Role model – someone like me, identifiable next step

core hours  
10 am-4 pm



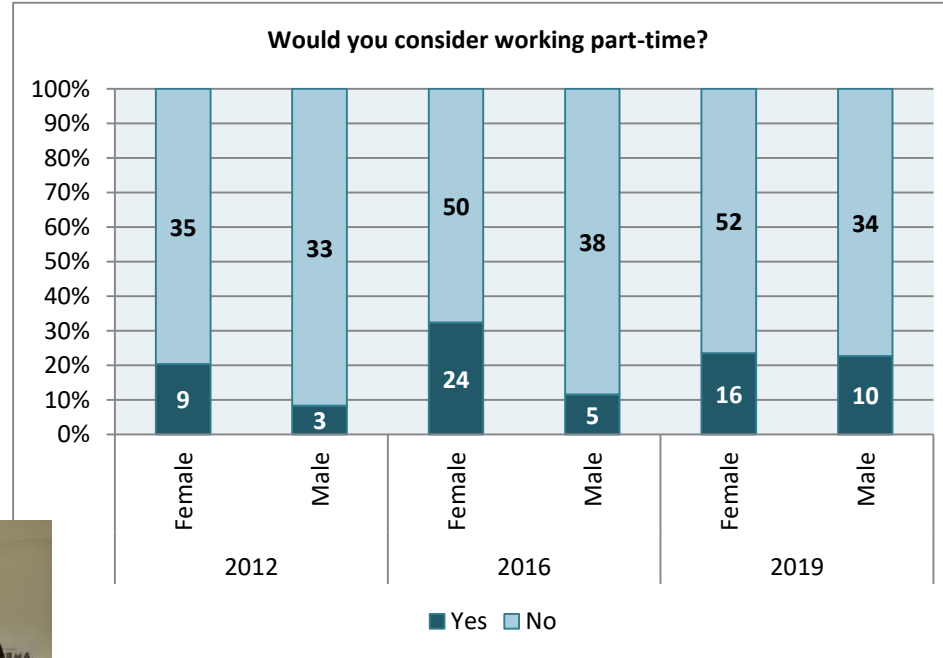
*The introduction of our appraisal checklist in 2015 has encouraged annual discussion on career development, promotion, equality & diversity training, extra pay awards or accelerated increments and early preparation of promotion-ready CVs. This practice has now been adopted by many departments and Faculties.*

# Impact – change in culture

Survey

Focus groups

Photos



“I was drawn to the department by its friendly and inclusive atmosphere.” PhD student

“Having worked in other universities and other departments within UCL, I think LMCB is great place to work.”  
RA 2015 Survey

“I think the EDI committee have a good presence around the LMCB, so we know it is something the institute takes seriously and if you're not sure where else to go you know you can speak to one of the committee members.” Female PGR, 2019

“The LMCB is probably the best place I have ever worked in for the support and collegiality that are available. I often hear stories that make me glad I am not elsewhere.” GL 2015 Survey



# Impact – on career

For PhD students we track career moves.

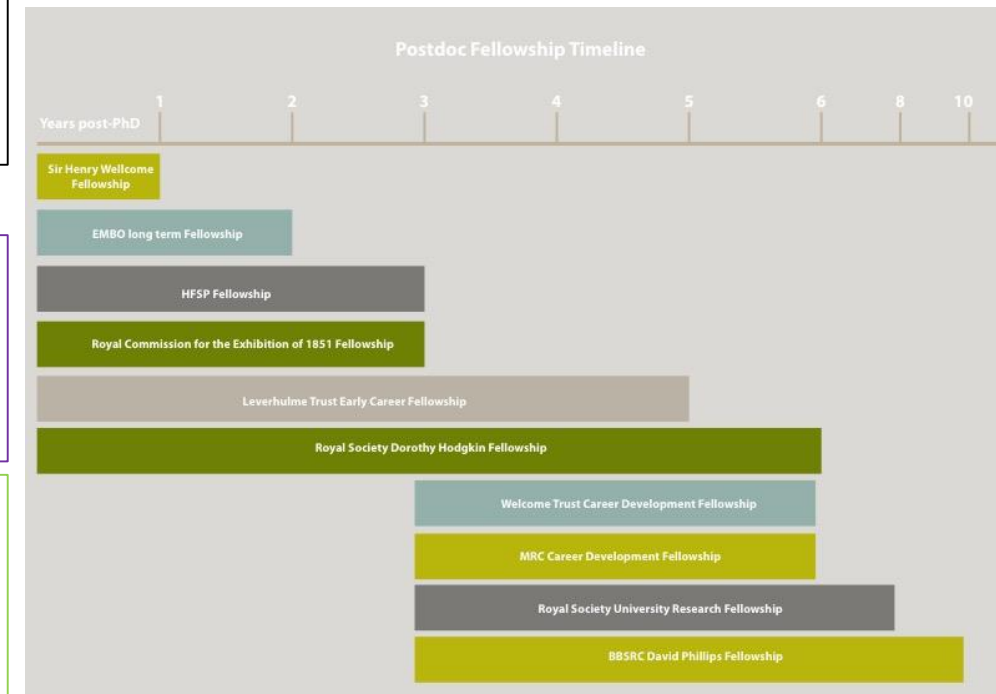
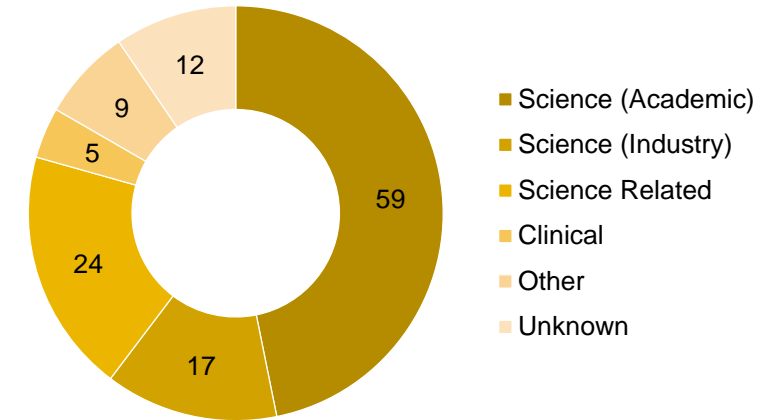
For postdocs we provide Career timelines, support fellowship writing, provide interview practice.

**LMCB-trained future group leaders are now gender balanced**  
- since 2009, 55% Postdocs that successfully established their own groups outside UCL were female.

*“Overall the flexible working arrangements have enabled me to be productive at work whilst maintaining a healthy work-life balance.”*

*“I am one of several students in my peer cohort who have taken different types of internship. This opportunity has been instrumental for my career”*

PhD Student Career Tracking





# Equity at the LMCB

- #simplygoodpractice
- #benefitsall
- Equity 50:50
- Norm for next generation



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