

Silver Action Plan 2017-2021

List of abbreviations

BioSci	Biological Sciences
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 19
DHoS	Deputy Head of School
EDI	Equality, Diversity & Inclusion
EDIC	Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Committee
EDIG	Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Group
FELS	Faculty of Environmental Life Sciences
FT	Fixed term
HoS	Head of School
HR	Human Resources
JAM	Job Allocation Model
PAT	Personal Academic Tutor
PGR	Postgraduate Research
PPDR	Personal Performance and Development Review
PT	Part-time
SMHSG	Student Mental Health Steering Group
SoBS	School of Biological Sciences
ToR	Terms of Reference
UG	Undergraduate

The action plan is broken into 3 parts: Students (Objectives S1 –S5), Staff and Culture (Objectives C1 – C13) and the E&D committee (Objective E1).

NOTES:

- The self-assessment team (SAT) was referred to as Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Committee (EDIC) until August 2019. Then it was renamed EDI Group (EDIG).
- The school was referred to as BioSci until August 2018. Then, it was renamed SoBS.
- The Aims are broad statements of what we would like to achieve overall; the Actions are SMART - specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and timely with corresponding Measure of Success. A column with the 'Outcome' header was included in the original 2017 Action Plan of the Silver application. We changed the header to 'Expected Outcome' for more clarity about the colour coding-based rating of progress against actions.
- The responsibility for carrying out actions lies with the relevant staff or student appointed to a particular role as part of their citizenship duties or the administrative staff member responsible for an activity such as monitoring training and mentoring uptake data. The timing of actions is under constant review by the EDIG, HoS and relevant staff involved in action implementation.

G = Green (good progress); A = Amber (some progress); R = Red (no progress)

Students						
Objective	Rationale	Actions	Responsibility	Milestones	Success measure	Expected Outcome
S1. Integrate part-time (PT) study provision into future degree programmes.	The EDIC found current UG programmes cannot offer PT study due to their high practical content which constraints the timetable. However, we can embed exploration of PT provision into establishment of all new programmes.	G Action S1a: Develop new terms of reference for how to examine whether PT provision is possible in establishing new programmes in BioSci.	Director of Programmes.	January 2018: -New terms of reference developed	Integration of examination of PT provision into establishment process.	New terms of reference for how to best implement PT study in developing new programmes. New programmes having PT provision introduced in 2020/2021.
		G Action S1b: Survey current and past PT PGRs to identify reasons for the decline in PT PGRs.	Director of the Graduate School	December 2019: -Completion of survey. Run over 2 years due to small numbers involved.	Identification of reasons for the small numbers of part-time PGRs.	Actions to reverse the decline in PT PGRs if appropriate.

S2. Address gender differences in BioSci UG programmes.	The EDIC has monitored UG gender balance enough now to discover that there are differences in gender balance between the different degree programmes in BioSci, some of which appear to be increasing.	G Action S2a: Set up focus groups with Year 1 students on degree programmes with strong gender biases. The focus will be on the underrepresented gender – for Pharmacology and Biochemistry this is women; for Zoology, this is men. Reverse the drop in female students in Pharmacology and Biochemistry.	Co-chair of the EDIC Director of Programmes for Biochemistry and Pharmacology	June 2018: Focus groups with Year 1 students on programmes	Identify issues that make certain programmes in BioSci less popular for men or women.	Gender balance on all programmes within 5% of comparator universities for the 2020 UG cohort.
		G Action S2b: Analyse the relationship between gender and entry tariff for programmes in BioSci for the 2017 cohort. This is key as it is the entry tariff that is the key determinant of which students are admitted.	Chair of the EDIC	August 2017: analysis complete and presented to The EDIC	Identify any programme-level disparities in entry tariff for the 2017 cohort.	
		G Action S2c: Design new promotional material to address programme-specific gender biases in numbers and quality of applications, if appropriate.	Director of Programmes	April 2019: New promotional material designed for 2020 cohort.		
S3: Address under performance of men relative to women in BioSci.	As in many universities, men do disproportionately worse in their degrees than would	G Action S3a: Set up focus groups with UGs to identified perceived reasons for the poor academic performance of men.	Director of Programmes	June 2018: -Focus group run (Same one as for Action S2a)	Understand perceived reasons for the poor academic performance of men.	New actions designed to improve academic performance of men (see Action S5).

	be expected from their entry tariff.	<p>G Action S3b: Break down gender differences in performance by programme, year and assessment type (coursework vs exams).</p>	Chair of the EDIC	September 2018: -Analyses completed	Understand if the poor academic performance of men is influenced by programme, year, and assessment type.	
		<p>G Action S3c: Monitor the gender breakdown of graduates entering graduate jobs.</p>	Chair of the EDIC	January 2018 then annually	Assess the gender profile in graduate job prospects over time.	Evidence-based knowledge of the gender profile in graduate job prospect; design new actions (if appropriate) to continue to improve our UG students' employability and graduate prospects.
S4. Prevent inappropriate behaviour on field courses in BioSci	The EDIC has identified isolated incidents of poor behaviour fuelled by drinking on BioSci field trips. The co-Chair of the EDIC has actioned changes to the structure of field trips to mitigate these events. However, we need to continue to monitor.	<p>G Action S4a: Following each field trip we will have wash-up meetings with academic staff, demonstrators, and students to discuss behaviour. We will also survey students on their return.</p>	Module organizer for the first-year field course & HoS	May 2018 and annually (following each Eastertime field trip).	No poor behaviour on field trips. Good feedback from students on their return.	A new process supporting trans students as well as students' mental/physical health and wellbeing and preventing inappropriate behaviour embed in the field course preparation in coming years. New measures passed on to the University by 2020 to be incorporated into the Policy on residential field courses.
		<p>G Action S4b: Include information on academic integrity at the briefing talks and a compulsory Health and Safety workshop including a code of conduct signed by students.</p>	Module organizer for the first-year field course & HoS	April 2019 and annually (before each Eastertime field trip).		

		G Action S4c: Raise awareness about mental and physical health and gender equality at the pre-course workshops and encourage students to declare any related issues that may prevent them from enjoying fully their field course.	Module organizer for the first-year field course & HoS	April 2019 and annually (before each Eastertime field trip).	Individual meetings with students who declared issues arranged, to help find reasonable adjustments in response to their own circumstances.	All students declaring mental health issues supported before and after the field course. Support for gender issues provided before and after the field course.
S5: improve mental health support for UG students.	Our learning from focus groups with our UGs (Action S3a) highlighted the need to improve our support for their mental health and wellbeing during their studies.	G Action S5a: As part of our membership at the university Student Mental Health Steering Group (SMHSG) initiate new activities to support mental health.	HoS & EDIC UG Champion	January 2019	Design a course aiming to raise awareness of mental health and stress management.	An online Mental Health Awareness workshop developed in collaboration with Solent Mind for students and staff in 2019.
		G Action S5b: Work with the university Student Services to develop new activities to improve support for our UG mental health and wellbeing.	EDIG	April-August 2019	Design pilot activities based on peer support intervention for students who are struggling, in liaison with the Student Services.	Two pilot Student-Led Support Groups for SoBS UG student organised in August 2019, and a report drafted and passed on to the university Student Services to develop new actions as appropriate. 100% positive feedback from UGs who attend the pilot Student-Led Support Groups.
		G Action S5c: Introduce the Solent Mind Mental Health First Aid training for PATs.	HoS & Senior Academic Tutor	September 2019	Provide training for PAT to improve support for our UG mental health.	Uptake of the training by the HoS, Senior Academic Tutor and 20 % of PATs in 2019/2020. Uptake monitored, feedback collated, and new actions designed as appropriate.

Staff and Culture						
Objective	Rationale	Actions	Responsibility	Milestones	Success measure	Expected Outcome
C1: Move employees from fixed term to open ended contracts	Fixed term contracts mostly affect research staff, who are > 50% female. Being on such a contract can affect individuals ability to obtain mortgage or loans.	A Action C1: Make individuals and their line managers aware of the University process for moving onto an open-ended contract via emails from HR, the Head of BioSci and through appraisal meetings with line managers.	Faculty HR manager & HoS & Line managers	May 2018 (end of each annual appraisal cycle) to embed this into the meetings of line managers.	Rates of transfer on to open ended contracts.	A 5% reduction in FT contracts in BioSci by 2020/2021
C2: Better understand the reasons why staff leave BioSci and any gender biases in this	We have little recent data on why staff leave. However, as of 2017 a new University-wide exist survey was launched.	R Action C2: Analyse results of 2017/2018 exit survey for any gender-related issues.	Chair of the EDIC	September 2018 and September 2019: -Analysis complete	An analysis of 2017/2018 and 2018/2019 exit data.	New future actions to try to address any gendered differences in reasons for leaving.
C3: Assess effectiveness of BioSci Staff induction	The new induction measures launched in 2013 have not been assessed for their effectiveness.	G Action C3a: Survey new staff 6 months after the induction process about their experiences by email and via their line manager.	HoS	December 2017: -Complete survey design and get ethical approval for the survey April 2019: -Complete survey.	An analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the induction process broken down by gender and job category.	Evidence-based knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the induction process, feedback collated and new future actions designed to improve the induction process.
		G Action C3b: Develop guidance ensuring Professional/support staff are included in the induction process.	HoS	October 2017	Professional/support staff invited to the induction session.	Attendance of Professional/support staff to the induction session from 2018 onwards.

C4: Improve information flow about promotion and training opportunities for research staff	Lack of training opportunities and a lack of clarity on promotion were identified as an issue by research staff.	A Action C4a: Send a separate email to all research staff for each promotion round. This email will make it clear that promotion is also available to them, and what the criteria are.	HoS	November 2017: - Email sent out in advance of 2017/2018 promotion round, then annually	Bespoke promotion email sent to all research staff.	Positive responses in the 2020 culture survey for research staff for the question "I understand the promotion process and criteria in my academic unit" go up to 80% for women and men.
		A Action C4b: Send clear guidance to appraisers of research staff on promotion criteria via email. Make it clear that there is an expectation that promotion is discussed during appraisals.	HoS	January 2018 then annually (in advance of appraisal window)	Bespoke email outlining promotion criteria for research staff sent to all line managers of research staff.	Positive responses in the 2020 culture survey for research staff for the question "I understand the promotion process and criteria in my academic unit" go up to 90% for women and men.
		A Action C4c: Early career session on which training opportunities are available to research staff, followed up by an email summary of this to session to all research staff.	EDIC & Concordat committee	December 2017 -Session completed by this date.	Session on training opportunities for research staff held and email summary sent.	Positive responses in the 2020 culture survey for research staff for the question "I am encouraged to take up training opportunities" go up to 85% for women and
		G Action C4d: Hold a focus group with research staff to gain a better understanding how support for professional development training can be improved in light of the 2020 culture survey.	EDIG & Research staff champion	January 2021	Collating qualitative data that inform future measures to improve support for research staff professional trainings.	Evidence-based and better understanding of research staff training needs and future actions designed to improve support for research staff professional development.

C5: Assess effectiveness of the support for family leave offered by BioSci	Two academics have raised concerns that the money available to maintain research (the Family Leave support) during maternity leave is too restrictive to apply to most academic staff. Additionally, teaching staff are not eligible for this support.	G Action C5a: Line managers to explicitly discuss applying for family leave with all academics going on maternity leave and report both uptake and the lack thereof and the reasons for this back to the Head of BioSci.	HoS	May 2017: -HoS to email line managers to outline the action and reasons for it May 2017 – May 2019: -Monitoring of uptake of leave June 2019: Analysis of data and recommendations for new actions	Data on percentage of eligible academics taking up family leave support. -The reasons why staff did not take up this support	Recommendations to the Faculty to change the conditions of taking up this funding where appropriate
		G Action C5b: Work with the Faculty EDI Committee to amend the family leave Policy providing funding to include Teaching staff.	EDIG & HoS & FELS EDIC	January-April 2019	-the policy amended to include teaching staff	Teaching staff eligible to take up the funding, and update in the policy and eligibility criteria communicated to staff by e-mail.

C6: Improve awareness of support available during and after maternity and caring leave	Staff report that information on the policies BioSci has in place related to maternity leave and flexible working are not well known, reducing their effectiveness.	A Action C6a: Pilot promotion of maternity mentors to BioSci staff and students about to take maternity leave or who are just about to return from leave via induction sessions and emails (biyearly). This includes encouraging staff and students who have been on maternity leave to sign up as mentors.	EDIC (emails) and HoS (induction sessions)	June 2017: -First email sent out Dec 2017: -Second email sent out June 2017 – June 2018: -Maternity mentors promoted in all induction sessions	Maternity mentors flagged via induction and email (bi-yearly).	100% awareness of relevant maternity related policies by staff and students who have taken maternity leave. 95% positive response to the survey question “I am kept informed about gender equality matters that affect me” in the 2020 culture survey.
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		G Action C6b: Conduct a survey on the use and perceptions of the policies in place around maternity leave by BioSci Staff.	EDIC	December 2017: -Survey designed and ethical approval obtained. Jan 2018 – June 2018: -Survey sent out September 2018: -Data in survey analysed.	Collection of data from all staff who have been on leave since June 2017.	
		A Action C6c: Raise awareness of shared parental leave and of the paternity leave policy of the University of Southampton via a workshop and the appraisal system.	HoS	Jan 2018: Email sent out to line managers with this information in advance of 2018 appraisal window May 2018: “Maternity, Adoption & Paternity Leave” workshop organised	Paternity leave policies presented and explicitly flagged as something to discuss during appraisal with relevant staff.	Increased uptake of paternity leave by relevant BioSci staff between April 2019 and April 2020.
		A Action C6d: Increase awareness of staff aware of flexible working, part-time working and caring leave support offered by BioSci via the appraisal system.	HoS	January 2018: Email sent out to line managers with this information in advance of 2018 appraisal	Bespoke email outlining flexible working, part-time working and caring leave support sent to all appraisers.	10% increase in QuickCat Question “SoBS provides for staff with flexible working and caring responsibilities” in the 2020 culture survey.
C7: Gain a better understanding of differences in gender equality concerns of research and pool technicians in BioSci	Technical staff pointed out that the 2016 QuickCat survey and the Athena Swan submission template do not adequately differentiate between (mostly permanent) pool technicians and	G Action C7a: Hold focus groups with technical staff to identify issues related to gender equity that are particularly relevant to pool and research technicians as well as those that only apply to one or the other group.	Senior Technical Manager	September 2017 – April 2018: -At least 2 focus groups held during this period of time.	A better understanding of issues related to gender equity that are particularly relevant to pool and research technicians as well as those that only apply to one or the other group.	New actions (if needed) to address concerns of the two different groups of technicians.

	(mostly fixed term) research technicians	G Action C7b: Ensure continued effectiveness of training and mentoring to ensure pool technical staff are ready to progress to upper grade positions when these become available	Senior Technical Manager	April 2018, then annually	Training needs are discussed and identified during the Personal Performance and Development Review (PPDR).	>85% of technical staff agree advice, coaching, mentoring, training and/or other support provided by SoBS offers sufficient grounds to help them progress in their career. As determined in the 2020 SoBS culture survey.
		G Action C7c: Develop summer research projects for pool technicians, and them to apply	DHoS (Research) / Senior Technical Manager	Summer 2019	Uptake of summer research projects by pool technicians	

<p>C8: Establishing better communication with Head of Department</p>	<p>The dissatisfaction with independent career advice and line management flagged by the 2016 QuickCat and Engagement surveys suggest that more opportunities for fixed term staff and postgraduates to interact with the Head of BioSci separately from other staff would be beneficial. These would enable concerns to be voiced without going through line managers, and also aid on such things as career advice and how BioSci is run.</p>	<p>G Action C8: Introduce quarterly 'no agenda' meetings between the Head of BioSci and the fixed-term researcher community and the PGR community.</p>	<p>HoS</p>	<p>May 2017 onwards on a quarterly basis</p>	<p>Quarterly 'no agenda' meetings with PGRs and fixed term researchers.</p>	<p>5% increase in overall staff satisfaction (average positive score) for these groups in the 2020 culture survey.</p>
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C9: Assess effectiveness of line management in BioSci	New mandatory line management training is being rolled out in BioSci and across the University in response to concerns raised in the Staff Engagement survey. The biggest issues were with management of fixed term research staff.	G Action C9a: Establish focus groups with fixed term research staff to assess whether line management has improved as a result of the new training.	EDIC with Concordat	September 2018: -Set up focus groups (after 2018 appraisals)	Qualitative indicators of the effectiveness of line management training for fixed term research staff.	A 10% increase in the 2020 culture surveys and University wide staff engagement survey for all questions related to management.
		G Action C9b: Analyse results of 2018 University staff engagement survey and 2020 culture survey data related to line management to assess whether line management has improved as a result of the new training.	EDIC	January 2019, July 2020: Analyse results of staff engagement survey and culture survey data related to line management	Quantitative indicators of the effectiveness of line management training for fixed term research staff.	
		G Action C9c: Come up with recommendations for changes to line management training (if needed).	HoS	September 2019:	Revisions (if needed) to line management training.	

C10: Improve equity of allocation of outreach activities.	There is qualitative and quantitative evidence that women do a disproportionate share of outreach in BioSci	A Action C10: Form a focus group (including HoS, and Head of Enterprise, as well as volunteers) to discuss mechanisms for increasing the fairness of allocation of outreach activity and/or more formal recognition of the workload associated with such tasks.	Director of Enterprise	September 2018 and September 2019 (after examining outreach data from the 2018 and 2019 appraisals)	New guidelines for allocating outreach and/or better inclusion of such activity in the workload model	A reduction in gender biases in outreach activity and/or a more formal recognition for such work
C11: Strengthen mentoring in SoBS.	The 2020 culture survey results revealed the need for an inclusive mentoring programme providing more effective personal and professional support.	G Action C11: Form focus groups with all staff and PGRs to discuss mechanisms for strengthening our mentoring programme.	EDIG Champions	July 2020	Design a new mentoring programme for all staff and PGRs, providing multiple levels of personal and professional support depending on the career stage and current circumstances.	The new mentoring programme launched in October 2020 and mentors recruited to provide support within the following themes: 1) Fellowships/grants; 2) Parenthood, caring responsibilities, and flexible working 3) Living and working abroad 4) Industry experience 5) Leadership and line management 6) Teaching 7) Wellbeing 8) General career progression and academic life 9) Independent advice for managing difficult situations. Uptake monitored and future actions designed as appropriate.
C12: Address bullying and harassment and inappropriate behaviour in SoBS.	In SoBS we communicate regularly and clearly our zero-tolerance policy against towards bullying/harassment.	G Action C12a: Provide clear guidance for all staff and PGRs explaining lines of contact for reporting bullying / harassment, and	EDIC & HoS	May 2017-onwards: -Send regular e-mails providing guidance explaining the support mechanisms for	Policies and the university "Harassment Contacts" and related links flagged via email (quarterly) are	A 1-day long "Honest Conversations" workshop delivered in 2019 to train line manager in tackling bullying and harassment, and uptake

	<p>However, the 2018 university Staff Engagement survey revealed 18% of staff experienced bullying. We aim to tackle more effectively these issues and improve confidence of all staff and PGRs regarding school dealing with bullying/harassment.</p>	<p>what will happen if they report. This guidance will make it clear that SoBS has a zero-tolerance policy towards bullying and harassment</p>		<p>reporting bullying and harassment.</p> <p>-Include links to policies and reporting process in e-mails, the EDIC website and on relevant documents including PGR handbook and discuss at staff meetings.</p>	<p>actively communicated to staff and students.</p>	<p>within the maximum number of places available.</p> <p>A 2-hour “Building a Supportive Culture” workshop delivered in September 2021 to staff and PGRs, feedback collated and new actions designed as appropriate.</p> <p>>85% of staff and students understand the position of SoBS on bullying and harassment, as well as the support mechanisms for reporting bullying and harassment.</p>
	<p>G Action C12b: SoBS to co-lead with Faculty Dean the design of activities to help line managers to tackle effectively bullying and harassment.</p>	EDIC & HoS	January-May 2019	Design of a workshop to train line manager in tackling bullying and harassment.		
	<p>G Action C12c: Present the culture survey results related to bullying and harassment by gender at staff meetings and organise a workshop where staff and PGRs will be invited to provide feedback on the schools approach to tackle bullying/harassment and discriminatory behaviours, and thereby inform the design of future actions. The workshop will be attended by the University Equality Charter Advisor who will present the University EDI policies and bullying/harassment reporting mechanisms.</p>	EDIG & HoS & University Equality Charter Advisor	<p>October 2020: -Present the culture survey results related to bullying/harassment at all-staff meeting</p> <p>September 2021: -A workshop for all-staff and PGRs to address Bullying and harassment.</p>	<p>The culture survey results related to bullying and harassment discussed with staff and PGRs, clear guidance about the new university Report + Support tool provided by the university Equality Charter Advisor, and bullying and feedback collated to inform future actions.</p>		

C13: Minimise the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic work-life balance and wellbeing of staff and students.	The COVID-19 pandemic has challenged our activities to make SoBS an inclusive workplace. It is important developed and implemented immediate measures to support our staff and students work-life balance and wellbeing.	G Action C13a: Ensure that all school meetings are organised during the core hours, and that Fridays remain meeting-free.	HoS & EDIG	From March 2020	Revision of the School meeting schedule, with all meetings booked during the core hours and Friday made meeting-free.	<p>All meetings are organised during the core hours and recorded.</p> <p>Fridays remain meeting-free.</p> <p>A clear communication flow of teaching and other activities for all staff and students.</p> <p>Successful Coffee and Wellbeing meetings attended by staff and students and feedback collated to inform future actions as appropriate.</p> <p>>80% of staff and students agree that healthy work-life balance and wellbeing are supported in 2020 SoBS culture and COVID-19 impact surveys.</p>
		G Action C13b: Ensure that all school staff and PGRs meetings are recorded and made available to everyone.	SoBS Admin	From March 2020	Information making it clear meetings are recorded are included in the calendar invites sent to staff and students.	
		G Action C13c: Send weekly digests e-mails, where key information and updates about school's activities are communicated clearly.	HoS	From March 2020	Weekly digest e-mails sent by the HoS.	
		G Action C13d: Hold our Coffee and Wellbeing meetings and encourage staff and PGRs to attend. During these meeting feedback will be collated to improve our measures supporting work-life balance and wellbeing of staff and PGRs.	EDIG Champions	From March 2020, then quarterly	Coffee and Wellbeing meeting set up in the school calendar and invites sent to staff and students	
		G Action C13e: Send a clear guidance via e-mail to line managers ensuring they discuss with their staff and students on how they can support them achieve a healthy work-life balance and wellbeing.	HoS / Line managers	March 2020, and March 2021 During the appraisal window	Staff and students support needs for healthy work-life balance and wellbeing discussed with line managers.	

The E&D committee						
Objective	Rationale	Actions	Responsibility	Milestones	Success measure	Expected Outcome
E1. Improving the effectiveness of the EDIC	The self-assessment process has identified extra groups that need representation on the EDIC and weaknesses in information flow.	G Action E1a: Change Terms of Reference (ToR) for E&D to ensure inclusion of both male and female undergraduate representation on the EDIC.	Chair of EDIC	September 2017	Change in ToR to reflect M & F UG representation on the EDIC	Male and female UG representative on the EDIC.
		A Action E1b: Change Terms of Reference (ToR) for E&D to ensure inclusion of both pool and research technicians on the EDIC.	Chair of EDIC	September 2017	Change in ToR to reflect pool and research technician representation on the EDIC.	Pool and research technician representative on the EDIC.
		G Action E1c: Ensure EDI work and membership are accurately recognised in the new Job Allocation Model (JAM) implemented in 2019.	HoS & DHoS (education)	April-July 2019, then annually	EDI contribution and membership is included as an administrative role on JAM	EDI work and membership is accurately recognised in JAM as reported by staff at appraisal.