

Supporting equitable experiences and progress in research teams:

Reflection and Action Planning Tool for Group Leaders

Background

The '[What do women need to progress in academia?](#)' project identified 10 key 'facilitating' factors (Fig, right) that are important for academic women's progression. When these factors are present within workplaces and teams, people are less likely to perceive barriers to their progression, are better able to thrive day-to-day at work and achieve their career goals and ambitions. Whilst good examples of the 'facilitating factors' exist in pockets across Imperial, the study found that there are significant inconsistencies with how they are applied/experienced across the College. A key recommendation of the study was to invite every department and group at Imperial to reflect on the 10 facilitating factors and ask: ***What else can we do to consistently integrate these practices into our organisational systems?***

To support colleagues with leadership/management/supervisory responsibilities to respond to this recommendation for their own groups and teams, this reflection and action planning resource was developed. The resource helps leaders to:

- Consider the 10 facilitating factors for equitable progression
- Identify the positive practices already in place for their team(s)
- Plan for future actions to further promote inclusive and equitable workplace environments in which **everyone** can thrive and progress.

A note about the term 'Equity':

In this document the term **equity** is used as opposed to equality. Equality means each individual or group of people are given the same resources or opportunities. Equity, however, recognises that each person has different circumstances and allocates the exact resources and opportunities to reach an equal outcome. This is likely to mean that some individuals/groups will need alternative/additional resources than others to progress at similar rates, this is entirely appropriate and necessary to facilitate equity of opportunity and progression.

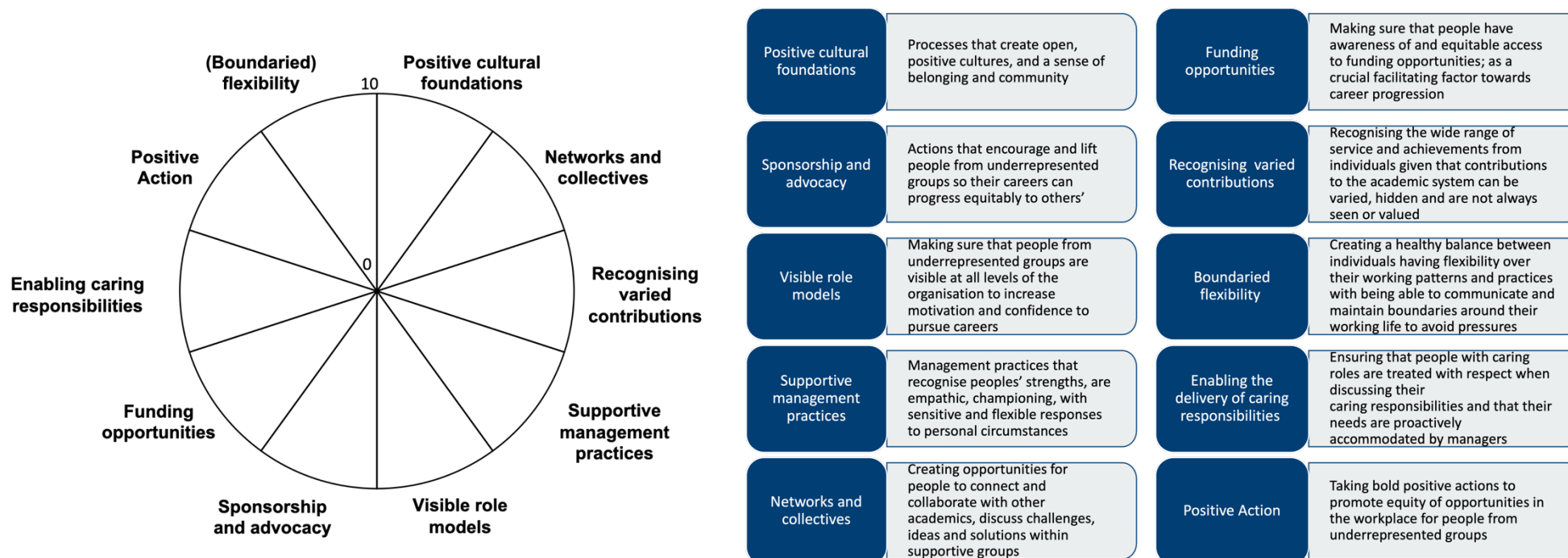


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Reflections on Current Practice

Use the wheel below to complete a self-assessment of your current equity activities in relation to the 10 facilitating factors. To what extent do you feel these factors are enacted for your team/group currently? Give an honest (gut reaction) rating between 0 – 10 (10 being fully satisfied) and shade each segment of the wheel accordingly (e.g., If you rated a factor at 10=fully satisfied, you should shade the whole segment to the outer edge).



Which of the 10 facilitating factors do you feel are areas of strength in your current leadership practices with your group/team?

Which of the 10 facilitating factors are areas you would like to strengthen for the benefit of your group/team?

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Imperial College
London



Forward Planning

Equity Vision

Use this space to identify some aspirations for your own leadership and the culture of your team/group to promote equity, diversity, and inclusion. (E.g. How will you lead your group/team over the coming year to promote equity? What expectations will you have of your team members and how will you communicate and encourage these?)

Goal setting

Using the outcomes of your reflection on your current activities and your equity vision, identify some actionable goals to make progress towards equitable experiences and opportunities for progression for your group/team members over the next 12 -18 months. **Use the Annex on the following pages for inspiration** of practical ways to promote the 10 facilitating factors.

	Key actions to take towards this goal:	Timescales for completion	Measures of Success
Goal 1:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•••		
Goal 2:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•••		
Goal 3:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•••		

Annex: Possible actions to support the 10 facilitating factors

On the following pages are some ideas of practical actions that group leaders might implement to promote the facilitating factors in the leadership of their teams. These are intended as prompts for ideas generation, it would **not** be expected that group leaders would do all these actions! You might want to select 1-2 that feel appropriate for your team/circumstances for the factors you would like to work on and/or use the ideas for inspiration for alternative actions you will implement for the benefit of your team.

Positive cultural foundations

- Create a network within your group or department.
- Create a buddy system in your lab.
- Have a conversation on at least an annual basis with your team members about their hopes and aspirations for their career direction, be open to your team members' aspirations within or outside of academic career paths. This could be part of or in addition to the [Annual Review Conversation \(ARC\)](#)
- Have an anonymous suggestion box so people feel safe to raise concerns. These concerns can then be addressed at a monthly meeting to tackle any challenges.
- Make sure you and your team members are aware and have mechanisms to raise anything in the workplace. Read up on the range of mechanisms/policies/services that are available to [report and support challenges](#), and research into the support services available in your department and across the College. Ensure that your team has training/is aware of these too.
- Think about tangible ways you can recognise the progress of your team members.
- Ask your team members to make suggestions of career development topics for which they would like further support/information, and help them to source this within the College or externally where appropriate.
- Create opportunities to do a team strengths profile to help all group members understand their own and others' strengths and differences in working styles/preferences. (E.g. [Belbin team profile](#) or [team strengths profile](#)).

Sponsorship and advocacy

- Take time to discuss and understand what your team members want to achieve (at Imperial and beyond) and actively seek out ways to help them achieve these goals, bearing in mind that people have different needs for encouragement and different resources, and that different barriers exist. Make sure that you do this in a way that recognises resources and privileges in an equitable way.
- Introduce your team members to key people in your internal and external networks.
- Facilitate team members to share and present their work to support them to build their professional profile/visibility.
- Give your team members responsibility for leading aspects of work where appropriate ('step-up' opportunities or stretching targets which would allow for your team members to develop in a way that helps them). Ensure that opportunities for feedback are built into this process to facilitate learning and confidence development or team members.
- Each year have a conversation with your team members about whether they want to go for [promotion](#) (so they know it is a possibility). Look at the criteria for promotion and give your team member feedback to allow them to work on the gaps. Recognise potential barriers to progression, spot where people need extra encouragement to progress.
- Instigate a clear induction process for new team members, paying particular attention to navigating the institutional environment and broader UK research sector.
- Look for opportunities to nominate people you manage, or junior colleagues, for awards (particularly colleagues from under-represented groups).

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Visible role models

- Recognise that you yourself are a role model and how you can be an ally to colleagues.
- Ensure you are inviting speakers to seminar series that actively promote gender role models and diversity in that field. Source literature from diverse authors, be proactive in supporting people in your field of all genders and backgrounds (and encourage team members to do the same).
- If there is an absence of diverse role models in your space, consider what steps will you take to increase the number and diversity of role models.
- Enable your team members to attend relevant networking events (e.g. special interest groups/women's/carers/LGBTQ+/disability/diversity networks) as part of their working day. Actively promote these events to your group and encourage them to go if they are interested.
- **Initiate** conversations and actions around visibility and diversity in the workplace.
- Think about positive action in your recruitment practices to encourage a broader pool of potential applicants.
- Take active steps to promote the visibility of team members from underrepresented groups within the broader institution and research community.

Supportive management practices

- Make use of the [Academic's Success Guide](#), a dedicated resource to help you to manage your career and build successful research teams.
- Check in with your staff about whether they require any reasonable adjustments to their working circumstances.
- If someone is returning to work from a break and will adopt a new working pattern, proactively communicate this change to your team in advance so the individual doesn't have to do this.
- Allow space to get to know your staff members, the things that they are interested in and motivated by. Proactively ask them for feedback on your leadership and if there are particular management approaches that would work well for them. Recognising that team members are individuals and there is no 'one-size fits all' approach to get the best from people.

- Work with your team to set clear goals and expectations around their work. Define some Team goals so they can work together towards a common purpose.
- Make sure that your team members get regular constructive feedback on their progress (going beyond the annual review process), identify both areas of strength and opportunities for further development.
- Create opportunities for regular feedback about your management style and practices – e.g. annual 360° feedback.
- Learn about your own leadership preferences, and develop your own self-awareness about who you are as a manager.
- Undertake [training](#) to support your own management practices.
- Be supportive when changes of circumstances happen (e.g. menopause) and look for opportunities to accommodate changing circumstances as much as possible.
- Be aware of your management responsibilities under the [Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers](#).
- When chairing/facilitating meetings, create an environment and/or meeting format that encourages participation and contributions from all members of the team, including the quieter ones. This may involve facilitating paired/small group discussions before wider discussion in the full meeting.

Networks and Collectives

- Raise your own awareness of existing networks and signpost [networks within the College](#) and your field to your team members.
- Actively encourage participation in networks amongst your team and allow time for this within team members' working time.
- Recognise where people may be nervous about networking and take steps to make proactive introductions to key people in the field/institution.
- Share your own insights and learning about networking with your team.
- If available provide funding for your team to participate in conferences in networking opportunities.

Annex: Possible actions to support the 10 facilitating factors

Funding opportunities

- Involve junior team members in your grant making activity to help them develop their knowledge and skills regarding research funding.
- Accurately reflect the contribution of your team members in appropriate status in grant applications (e.g. researcher co-investigator).
- Signpost potential grant and [funding opportunities](#) to your team members.
- Provide time in the working week for junior team members to work on their grant applications (be aware of where additional funds may be available to facilitate activity to build up the grant, such as funding for pilot work and/or to enable people to pay for childcare).
- Raise your and your team's awareness of the various [internal funding](#) sources that are available.
- Where possible build into grant applications time/resource for staff development.
- Where staff are funded by grants, be clear on the rights of researchers on parental leave (because this varies with funders) and be ready to answer questions or refer people to further information.

Recognising varied contributions

- Share out the responsibilities and opportunities in your teams equitably and be mindful of 'gendered' responsibilities (e.g. note taking, event organizing). Regularly review the roles and responsibilities of your team and actively rotate responsibilities to ensure everyone is getting opportunities to try out different types of activities. Review the workload to ensure that varied contributions are recognised and rewarded.
- Be open to considering factors beyond metrics and achievements based on measurable outcomes, to take a more holistic view of what contributions a person might make to a team.
- Identify opportunities to advocate upwards about where/how varied contributions can be recognised.
- When providing references for students and staff, ensure you highlight the breadth and value of the contributions they make in their roles in your reference making.

- Be aware of broader institutional and sectoral developments (e.g. organisational change, REF, [The Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers](#)) and where this might impact on your team proactively communicate the expectations/implications to group members.

Boundaried flexibility

- Be aware and make your team aware of the College's [flexible working practice and policies](#).
- Implement an email policy for your own and group members proactive management of emails to facilitate clear boundaries and expectations around email communication/responses/reply times to limit the impact of email on day-to-day productivity.
- Enact the College's [workload principles](#) for yourself and your team members.
- Be open and responsive to staff requests for flexible working and proactively seek to implement flexible working arrangements where requested.
- Hold key work-related meetings and events within core hours to maximize people's opportunities to attend and consider how you might maximize attendance through different accessibility options.
- Have open conversations within the team about people's different working practices, preferences, and approaches, so that everyone is aware of everyone's normal working days and practices and communicates accordingly.

Annex: Possible actions to support the 10 facilitating factors

Enabling the delivery of caring responsibilities

- Signpost team members to the College's [support for parents](#) and [carers](#).
- Adopt a person-centred approach when hearing and responding to team members' personal circumstances, e.g. respond empathically when someone tells you something important about their life, even when it presents a challenge to project delivery.
- Respond practically to team members' needs for facilities (e.g. needing somewhere to pump for breast milk) and/or requests for working adjustments. Support them by helping to devise and implement solutions rather than placing sole responsibility on the individual to arrange their own solutions (e.g. work cover if an individual is off for family/caring reasons).
- Be open to conversations about personal circumstances including caring, even if you have not experienced similar circumstances. Lend a listening ear and a safe space for people to discuss challenges.
- Proactively discuss and agree confidentiality with individuals when they disclose any changes to their personal circumstances. Allow the individual to decide if, when and what details are shared with colleagues more broadly.

Positive action

- Use appropriate College approved software to screen job adverts for unintended gender bias in language.
- Update criteria in person specifications to emphasize a broad range of contributions.
- Include wording in job adverts to specifically welcome and encourage applications from underrepresented groups.
- Include a flexible working message on job advertisements.
- Update recruitment processes to ensure interviews take place in core-hours and are focused on broad skills and contributions.
- Take an open and curiosity-driven approach to interview style, do not encourage/facilitate adversarial interviews.
- Review the [Inclusive Recruitment webpage](#) to support you in your recruitment processes and decision making

