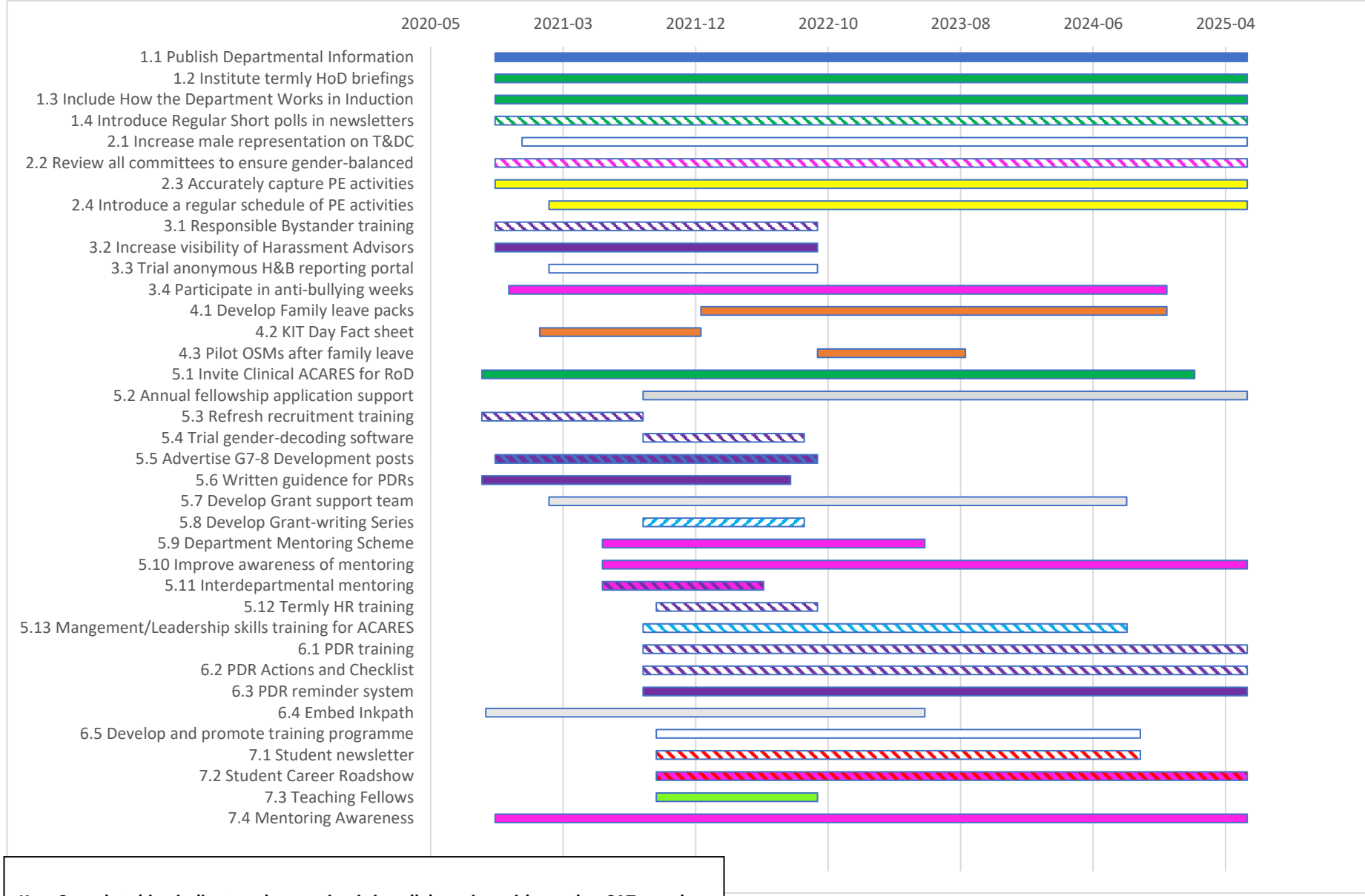
DEPARTMENT OF ONCOLOGY

Action Plan 2020 - 2025

Acronyms

ACARES	Academic and Research Staff
AP	Action Plan
AS Lead	Athena SWAN lead
EOR	Executive Office of Research
HAF	Head of Administration and Finance
GL	Group Leader
GSM	Graduate Studies Manager
H&B	Harassment and Bullying
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HoD	Head of Department
HR	Human Resources
MSc	Masters of Science
OEC	Executive Committee
OPN	Oncology Postdoctoral Network
PE	Public Engagement
PDR	Personal Development Review
POD	People and Organisational Development
PSS	Professional and Support Staff
RoD	Recognition of Distinction
R&R	Reward and Recognition
SAT	Self-Assessment Team
SAP	Silver Action Plan
T&D	Training and Development
T&DC	Training and Development Committee
TDA	Training and Development Administrator
UG	Undergraduate

Time Line and Responsibilities for Athena SWAN Action Plan



Key: Cross-hatching indicates where action is in collaboration with another SAT member

To ensure Athena SWAN principles are embedded within the activities and culture of the Department						
Rationale	**Ref**	**Page**	**Action**	**Timeframe/ priority**	**SAT Responsibility (Colour Coded with timeline)**	**Success Measure**
1.0: Increase levels of transparency around decision-making processes						
Our 2020 staff survey revealed concerns around transparency, only 35%F/23%M felt that decision-making processes were clear. We are therefore enhancing communications via: the Departmental intranet, fortnightly HoD newsletters, termly HoD briefings, during induction, and via rapid-turnaround staff surveys covering specific topics of interest.	**1.1**	70	Information about all Departmental committees, membership and Terms of Reference will be published on the Departmental intranet. Links will be provided in the HoD fortnightly newsletter. OEC and other Departmental Committee briefings will be published in fortnightly HoD newsletter.	01/10/20 – 31/05/25 High	HAF	Significant improvement in number of staff describing clear management and decision-making processes, at least consistent with MSD benchmark of 58%F/61%M by 2022 survey
	1.2	70	HoD briefings will be conducted termly providing information about Departmental activities	01/10/20-31/05/25 High	HoD	

	1.3	70	Include a description of "How the Department Works" in the Induction Schedule to provide clear overview of decision-making processes.	01/10/20-31/05/25 High		
	1.4	18	Regular short polls with prize draws will be included in newsletters around topics of interest and poll outcomes will be featured in "you said, we did" section of subsequent newsletters	01/10/20-31/05/25 High	HoD (&TDA)	
2.0: Ensure Departmental Committees and Activities are gender-balanced						
We aim to ensure membership of all committees broadly represents the Departmental F/M population. Currently, our committees are well gender-balanced (53%F/47%M). However, the T&DC is 71%F indicating underrepresentation of men.	**2.1**	74	Increase male representation on T&DC by advertising within Department. If gender balance is not improved, members will be asked to nominate others, ensuring more balanced representation	01/12/20-31/05/25 Medium	TDA	Increase male representation on the TDC from 29%M to 50%M by Dec 2021
	2.2	74	Review all Departmental committees to ensure	01/09/20 – 31/05/25	AS-Lead (&TDA)	Ensure all Departmental committee membership is

			gender balance and instigate membership change if necessary.	Medium		gender-aligned to Departmental F/M ratio.
A broad spectrum of public engagement (PE) activities are currently undertaken by our staff on behalf of the Department, our funders (such as BRC), the Hospital Trust and the wider cancer research community. Currently only involvement in the main Departmental activities are captured within our statistics. These suggest a gender bias with predominantly female involvement (68%F/32%M). We recognise that PE is important, not only for promoting our activities and attracting the best students and staff, but also for the personal and career development of staff. We will introduce a formal PE schedule and more accurately capture our PE activities	**2.3**	77	Prospectively and accurately capture PE activities conducted by Departmental staff and students. Monitor F/M ratio to assess for gender bias.	01/10/20 – 31/05/25 Medium	Postdoc Lead	Present full report of PE activity to AS-SAT annually.
	2.4	77	Develop a formal schedule of PE activities to enhance career development, national/international reach and engage a wider audience. To include (but not be limited to) podcasts, interviews and interactive online platforms to increase individual's online presence and link to their Departmental profiles	31/01/21 – 31/05/25 Medium		Increase male participation from 32% to 50% by June 2021.

3.0: Eliminate Harassment and Bullying						
Our 2016 staff survey revealed that 21%F/9%M had experienced Harassment or Bullying (H&B), especially ACARES females (27% experienced incidences of unacceptable behaviour). Since 2018, we have introduced mandatory H&B training for all new starters and current staff with 30% (55%F/45%M) completing training so far. While this has significantly reduced experiences of H&B to 12%F/13%M in 2020, it is still high. Additionally, only 75%F/67%M know how to contact Harassment Advisors. To address this, we are enhancing the visibility of our advisors, increasing participation in external anti-bullying activities, introducing education around witnessing unacceptable behaviours (Responsible Bystander) and are implementing an anonymised reporting portal.	**3.1**	72	In addition to anti-H&B for all new starters (100%) and existing staff, promote role of Responsible Bystanders in annual training.	01/10/20 - 01/10/22 High	Head of HR (&TDA)	By 2022, 100% current staff will have completed Anti-Harassment and Bullying and Responsible Bystander training. Reduce incidence of H&B events <5% (no gender difference) by 2022 survey.
	3.2	72	Increase visibility of Harassment Advisors through posters, intranet webpages, twice-yearly coffee mornings and as a standing item in our newsletter.			Increase awareness and knowledge of how to contact Harassment Advisors to at least 90% staff (with no gender difference) By 2022 survey.
	3.3	72	Work with MSD to trial an anonymous H&B reporting portal	31/01/21-01/10/22 Medium	TDA	By 2022 survey, at least 90% awareness of reporting tool (with no gender difference). Deliver annual analysis of reports to AS-SAT to provide insight into types of unacceptable behaviours experienced and reasons why they are not being formally reported. Report to OEC and implement actions as appropriate.

	3.4	72	Participate in annual National Anti-bullying Week by delivering a range of interactive activities, drop-in sessions, stands and training	Annually in November 01/11/20-30/11/24 Low	AS-Lead	Actively promote and deliver at least 3 activities within National Anti-Bullying week. Aim for at least 20 attendees to attend interactive activities (e.g. training, drop-in sessions) – no gender difference.
4.0: Foster an Inclusive, Respectful and Family-Friendly Culture						
Qualitative feedback indicates that family leave meetings caused staff to experience "information overload". We are currently developing Family Leave Packs for staff who are going on maternity, adoption, paternity and shared-parental leave.	**4.1**	68	Develop comprehensive Family Leave Packs containing leave planning information and feedback questionnaires. Review feedback annually within AS-SAT. Update packs using information obtained from feedback	10/01/22-30/11/24 Medium	Family friendly lead	By 2024, >75% of annual feedback from those receiving Family Leave Packs scoring good/very good.

Keeping In Touch (KIT) days enable those on maternity Leave to attend training days or conduct limited work, supporting the transition period between periods of leave and returning to work. However, since 2014/15, uptake of the optional 10 KIT days has been low (a total of only 3 days taken by 2 ACARES staff) due to lack of awareness.	**4.2**	68	Create a KIT day fact sheet to drive a targeted approach for staff taking family leave Highlight benefits in Leave Packs (e.g. payment for days attended, ability to attend training events), present case studies in Departmental Newsletter	10/01/21-10/01/22 Low		100% of staff taking family leave are aware of KIT days by 2022
Informal feedback from those returning to work suggests they would benefit from more structured objective-setting meetings by their line-managers.	**4.3**	68	Pilot structured objective-setting meetings (OSMs) to support the transition back into work from Family Leave	01/10/2022-01/09/23 Medium		Uptake of OSMs by >50% those returning to work after Family Leave by Sept 2023. Qualitative feedback on usefulness of OSMs to be obtained at annual Family Leave Focus Groups and reported annually to AS-SAT.

5.0: Provide comprehensive gender-balanced career support for academic staff						
There is a lower representation of female clinical professors accounting for 1 out of 7 post-holders (14%) when compared to non-clinical professors with 5/11 (50%) female post-holders. Although numbers are small, the 1:6 ratio has remained static for 4 years	**5.1**	29 & 41	Annually invite all female clinical staff that are eligible to apply for RoD to discuss nomination and provide dedicated administrative support.	01//09/20 ahead of annual RoD (January) – 01/02/25 Low	HoD	We have identified 2 female candidates who will be eligible for Professorial titles over the next 4 years. This will increase our Professors to 33%F, if our male pool remains consistent at 6M.
We recognise that the recent promotion of non-clinical female GLs to professors has depleted the %F within our GL pool. To increase Junior GLs within the Department, we will be supporting researchers applying for independent funding through fellowships to improve female representation at this level	**5.2**	59	Deliver annual fellowship application support, comprised of workshops, panel sessions with successful and unsuccessful fellowship applicants. Include previous successful case studies within sessions.	01/09/21-31/05/25 Medium	Working Environment Lead	Increase the number of fellowship applications at least in-line with MSD average of 13%F/13%M by Sept 2022.
Analysis of Oncology recruitment to non-clinical ACARES posts between 2016-2019 reveals a higher percentage of females appointed to Grades 6 & 7 posts (68% and 53% respectively) than the percentage of females applying (54% G6 & 40% G7) or being shortlisted (55% G6 & 49% G7). Comparative	**5.3**	38	To ensure unbiased recruitment we will refresh training on panels and expand panel expertise by including an independent external assessor.	01/09/20-01/09/21 High	HR Lead (&TDA)	Monitor impact of change by assessing change in the number of M/F applicants and successful appointments to Grade 6+ roles until Sept 2021.

data demonstrates our percentage difference between applications and acceptances are in-line with local benchmarking. However, we would like to review these areas to ensure we continue working towards unbiased processes. We have 40%F applicants to Grade 7 posts, below our average 51%F Grade 7 population. Female applicants to Grade 8 (senior postdoc), and Group Leader positions are lower still. To start addressing the issue and improve gender balance at applicant level we are encouraging less experienced candidates to apply for G7-to-8-transition posts so that we can internally support the development of a cadre of promising female scientists.	**5.4**	38	Trial the use and effectiveness of gender decoding software to de-gender all job adverts and person specifications for one year and re-analyse/introduce.	01/09/21-01/09/22 Medium		If pilot of gender decoding software demonstrates a reversal of gender bias by >5% by Sept 2022, instigate routine use of gender decoding software for all job descriptions and person specifications by Jan 2023.
	5.5	38	Advertise G8 positions with an opportunity to start at G7 and, with support, training and development to develop into G8 within post. We will monitor these recruitments for differences within applicant pools, assess the impact and use these examples as the basis for wider roll out to other senior posts.	01/10/20 – 01/10/22 High	HAF (&HR Lead)	Increase % female applicants to G8 posts from current 20% to at least 40% by 2022.
Of routes to promotion, regrading is the most common method for PSS staff. However, females represent 65% of regrades despite	**5.6**	48	Create written guidance for line-managers to identify regrading criteria	01/09/20-01/09/22 Medium	HR Lead	Increase % female regrades to 73%, or at a level equivalent to %F PSS staff pool by August 2022.

being 73%F of the PSS staff pool. This indicates lack of awareness of the scheme amongst all staff or that more females are awarded R&R when regrading could be more appropriate			within PDRs. Introduce "letter of recommendation" system whereby R&R panels to feedback directly to managers to support eligibility for regrading. Introduce awareness of promotion routes within Manager training (see AP5.12)			>60% awareness of regrading process in rapid poll questionnaire conducted in September 2021 (prior to Jan 2022 R&R application round).
Although there is no gender bias in overall grant application success (27%F/28%M), there is a gendered difference of lower female success in obtaining high value grants over £500,000 (15%F/28%M). This is due to lack of grants awarded rather than lack of applications. An Executive Office of Research (EOR) is now providing strategic support for applicants as part of our new Departmental strategy.	**5.7**	59	EOR to proactively highlight key high-value funding calls to ACARES and help form a Grant Writing Support team (from existing GLs) that can provide peer review. Trial annual targeted training sessions for those wanting to apply for larger grant amounts Develop resources including successful case studies and facilitate shared experiences	31/01/2021-31/08/24 31/01/21-31/08/24	Working Environment Lead	Increase % female applicants for grants >£500,000 to >20% annually, with success rates within +/-5% of males by 2024. Track applicants and review feedback to understand how and which aspect of the additional support impacted their success. Assess impact on RoD application success. Report to AS-SAT annually.

			amongst successful applicants			
Currently only 7% postdocs apply for independent fellowship funding due to previous funder restrictions. In order to increase the number of Junior GLs within the Department, we are working with OPN to deliver a new series of grant writing workshops to proactively support Early- and Mid-Career Researchers. Previous workshops received good turnout ~30 attendees (55%F).	**5.8**	59	Deliver grant writing series for Early- and Mid-Career Researchers including sessions on costing grants, panels with successful/non-successful applicants, funder top tips.	01/09/21-01/09/22 Medium	Post-doc Lead (& TDA)	Increase percentage of Fellowship applications amongst Early-Mid-career researchers to > 25% by Sept 2022.
Following a small pilot, we have rolled out an annual Departmental mentoring scheme with a focus on career development. The scheme has achieved excellent feedback but the "blink and you miss it" invitations to annual mentoring has meant that few ACARES (23%F/18%M) and PSS (18%F/11%M) have been mentored. In our 2020 staff survey, 45% ACARES (no gender difference) and 60%F/20%M PSS who were not offered a mentor would like one. Our aims are to increase access to our Departmental Mentoring Scheme by instituting rolling recruitment throughout the year and to	**5.9**	56 & 63	Expand Department mentoring scheme to rolling recruitment for improved accessibility	01/06/21-01/06/23 Medium	AS Lead	Increase those being mentored to at least 50% of all staff by 2023, with no gender difference.
	5.10	56 & 63	Increase related communications around scheme recruitment, mentoring benefits, and advertise previous mentor/mentee experiences. Add mentoring to PDR checklist for annual discussion.	01/06/21-31/05/25 Medium		Survey awareness of available mentoring schemes within the next biennial survey (2022) to assess the impact of improved communications. Target of 75% aware of mentoring options by 2022.

widen access to schemes running in other Departments. We have identified two other MSD departments who would like to collaborate. We will specifically assess the impact of mentoring on career development.	**5.11**	56	Work with other MSD departments and wider University to provide inter-departmental mentoring, including scheme advertisement, recruiting mentors and mentees and matching	01/06/2021 – 01/06/22 Medium	AS -Lead (& HR Lead)	At least 15 inter-departmental mentor-mentee pairs matched by 2022.
In our 2020 annual survey fewer female ACARES line-managers feel confident in applying HR policies compared to males (50%F/83%M).	**5.12**	72	Deliver termly training based on a range of HR topics such as probation, promotion, objective-setting meetings, as well as HR policies.	01/10/2021 – 01/10/22 Medium	TDA (& Head of HR)	At least 95% of managers report feeling confident in applying HR Policies by 2022, with no gender difference.
In our 2020 annual survey 38%F/41%M ACARES would like more opportunities to develop management/ leadership skills with only 15%F/17%M reporting having opportunities to develop these skills.	**5.13**	52	Work with OPN committee to facilitate management/leadership skills training for Early- and Mid-Career Researchers. Provide details in induction, highlight in newsletters and include in PDR checklist.	01/09/2021 – 01/09/24 Low	Post-doc Lead (&TDA)	Increase ACARES reporting having access to management/leadership training to 50% by 2024 (no gender bias).

6.0 Provide comprehensive and informative Professional Development Review (PDR) and Staff Development Programmes						
Annual PDRs have been conducted since 2013 and following SAP2016, PDR forms and guidance were updated and interactive information packs developed. PDR uptake was 55% overall, (54%F/46%M) in 2019. In the 2020 staff survey, more staff felt supported in their career development. Paradoxically, this survey also reported low satisfaction rates around the usefulness of PDR amongst ACARES (50%F/69%M) a gendered response. Amongst PSS, there were mixed responses in satisfaction. Only 70%F find it useful in comparison to 92%M. Qualitative feedback from female ACARES has included "feeling rushed" during PDR and it "not leading to change". We are introducing mandatory training for managers that conduct PDRs and introducing a follow-up checklist of actions to be discussed in subsequent PDRs/meetings. Additionally, we will institute a reminder email system to ensure PDR is completed.	**6.1**	54	Targeted training for managers conducting PDRs, at least 90% of managers to be trained by 2022. Topics include "effective conversations" and "following-up agreed actions".	01/09/21 - 31/05/25 High	HR Administrator (&TDA)	Increase usefulness of PDR to at least 75% for ACARES (without gender difference) and to at least 90% for PSS females (without gender difference) by 2024 staff survey.
	6.2	54 & 77	New Agreed Action section on PDR form, a summary of future activities to enhance career development.			
			Provide a PDR discussion checklist including information about development opportunities through Inkpath and POD, entitlement to annual training days, public engagement, workload, work-life balance and grant writing support.			
	6.3	54	Institute reminder email system for managers and			Increase PDR uptake to 75% staff (non-gendered) by 2024

			staff to ensure PDR is completed			
Following staff consultations, we piloted Inkpath (a Skills and Development Platform) to provide staff with greater access to training opportunities. The pilot was successful with positive feedback from ACARES, PSS and students. We will embed Inkpath as part of our Training and Development strategy.	**6.4**	52	Embed Inkpath as a Departmental tool to continue increasing awareness of T&D opportunities and support staff to keep sufficient training records which can be used for CVs, Grant Applications, etc.	01/09/20-01/06/23 Low	Working Environment Lead	Increase the usage of Inkpath throughout the Department, so that at least 50% are using it effectively by June 2022, raising to 60% by June 2023 with no gender difference. Conduct "Short poll" for qualitative feedback on impact of Inkpath on learning and development in 2021.
Ensure all staff and managers aware of entitlement to 10 annual training days through manager training, PDR and increased communications. Currently 59%F/46%M ACARES, 87%F/72%M PSS report completing training annually. Develop an annual training programme to increase access to opportunities.	**6.5**	42	Training and Development Committee to develop an annual training programme for ACARES and PSS training to be delivered locally.	01/10/21 – 01/10/24 Medium	TDA	PDRs and survey show at least 75% of ACARES and 95% PSS have completed training annually by 2024 Increase in number of staff who are clear on training opportunities to 95% PSS (from 83%F/87%M) and 85% ACARES (from 67%F/80%M) by 2024
	6.6	52 & 61	Use manager training, PDR and regular communications to promote training opportunities and entitlement of 10 annual training days.	01/10/21 – 01/10/24 Medium		

			Monitor uptake through PDR, surveys and, where appropriate, Inkpath.			
7.0: Enhance Student Engagement with Departmental Activities						
Student engagement in biennial surveys fell to 35% in 2020 compared to 59% in 2016. Feedback indicates reasons for poor compliance including "questionnaire fatigue" amongst students and the impression that surveys were too infrequent to benefit them. Of students that participated in our 2020 survey, only 50%F/55%M felt informed about the career options available to them. To improve this, we are delivering a student career roadshow.	**7.1**	18	Launch termly Student newsletter containing activities, news, links to blog, student specific "short polls" and "You said, we did" sections. Include promotion and links to biennial surveys	01/10/2021 – 01/10/24 High	Student Lead (&TDA)	Student participation in short polls to at least 50% by 2022 and 60% student engagement in biennial surveys in 2022 and 2024 survey (gender equal).
	7.2	58	Career Roadshow. Topics of interest including 'How to get a Postdoc job', 'Networking for Careers', 'Transferable Skills', 'Careers outside Academia', and any additional topics identified through feedback.	01/10/21 – 31/05/25 Medium	Student Lead (&Strategic Projects Lead)	Improve student awareness of career opportunities to at 75% (non-gendered) by 2022 student survey.
Students have expressed interest in developing their teaching skills. Currently, 13%F/21%M are engaged in teaching but 81%F/69%M would like further skills.	**7.3**	58	Teaching Fellows will support the development of teaching skills amongst students	01/10/21-01/10/22 Low	Training & Development Lead	Train 10 people by 2022 to develop, deliver and receive feedback for teaching a lecture on our MSc course or similar

Our department plan is to professionalise teaching, create links within the collegiate University to develop more teaching posts and establish new courses. We have appointed two Teaching Fellows to support the development of teaching skills and drive forward our aims to professionalise teaching						Deliver annual training session with 10-15 attendees 50%F/50%M
Only 32%F/29%M students are aware of the mentoring schemes available to them. Of those with mentors, 50%F/75% access them through informal relationships.	**7.4**	58	Work with MSD Graduate School to establish communication methods of mentoring scheme across colleges. Identify actions for Department to support communication of these, including collating all College mentoring schemes into an information sheet	01/10/2020-31/05/25 Medium	AS- Lead (& Strategic Projects lead)	Improve awareness of available mentoring schemes to at least 75% of students by 2022. Increase the number of students with a mentor to 50%F/50%M by 2025