

BUCU ANALYSIS:

SEX AND GOVERNANCE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BUCU have long been concerned with issues of equality and diversity at the University of Birmingham, particular in relation to senior management and the governance of our university. After having raised concerns at both College and University-level about the lack of female presence on both College Boards and the University Executive Board, BUCU decided to carry out some research to compare the situation at the University of Birmingham with other Russell Group universities. BUCU compared the Senate, Council and Executive Boards (or equivalents) of the 24 universities in the Russell Group for the academic year 2012-13. It found:

- Birmingham was ranked 24/24 in terms of the percentage of female members of Russell Group Senates (or equivalent) for the academic year 2012-13 (81% male; 19% female);
 - Birmingham is notable as having fewer women on Senate than would be expected given its size and the percentage of academics at Birmingham who are female (a predicted figure of 33% against an actual figure of 19%);
 - This difference is almost entirely accounted for by the low percentage of female Senate members in the Ex-Officio, Pro-VC, Heads of College, Heads of College Nominees, and VC Co-Opted categories (7% combined; 2 out of 29 in total);
- Birmingham was ranked 24/24 in terms of the percentage of female members of Russell Group Councils (or equivalent) for the academic year 2012-13 (83% male; 17% female);
- Birmingham was ranked 18/24 in terms of the percentage of female members of Russell Group Executive Boards (or equivalent) for the academic year 2012-13 (77% male; 23% female);
 - Since this research was undertaken, the only female academic member of the University of Birmingham's Executive Board has left the university. The current balance of UEB is 85% male and 15% female.

BUCU welcomes both the recent focus on issues of equality at the University of Birmingham and the recognition by senior management that there is a problem at the University. As set out more fully in the conclusion, BUCU calls on senior management to build on their recent good work in this area both in order for a full and transparent picture of the situation at the University to be built and so that any progress over the next few years can be measured.

INTRODUCTION

BUCU have long been concerned with issues of equality and diversity at the University of Birmingham. In order to place the situation at our University in context and to provide a series of benchmarks against which the University can be compared in the future, BUCU decided to undertake some research on female presence on Russell Group Universities' governance bodies during the academic year 2012-13 (see [Appendix](#) for details of the method employed). The findings for Russell Group Senates, Councils and Executive Boards are outlined below.

SENATE

The University of Birmingham had the lowest percentage of female members of Senate of any Russell Group university for the 2012-13 academic year. 19% of Birmingham's Senate members were female, compared with a Russell Group average of 31%. Furthermore, the actual percentage of female members of Senate at the University of Birmingham is 14 percentage points lower than the predicted percentage given both the Senate's size and the percentage of female academics at the University – the biggest disparity of any Russell Group university.

The membership size of Senate within the Russell Group varies between 15 at Cambridge and 961 at UCL (although Edinburgh does have a potential Senate membership of 1700 if all positions were filled) with an average size of 197. This range can be explained by the different rules regarding membership. Membership for most Senates is based on a mixture of elected, appointed and *ex officio* categories and limited by the Ordinances at a certain, fixed total for each. However, at some universities, membership is automatic if staff members fall into particular categories – usually professors but sometimes all academic staff, as well as some other categories of staff – and then Senate is usually a much larger body.

The average female membership of Russell Group Senates is 31% ($\sigma = 7.5$) with a high of 47% at Newcastle and a low of 19% at Birmingham (see [Figure 1](#) and [Table 1](#)). As the highest academic body of a university, most Senate members are academics, although other groups of people can also be members (e.g. students). Following on from this, [Table 2](#) ranks female senate membership both overall and when compared to the percentage of female professors and female academic staff at each of the Russell Group universities during the academic year, 2011/12 (the last academic year with figures available).

There is only a weak and not statistically significant negative correlation between the percentage of female members of Senate and Senate size ($r_s = -.362$, $n = 24$) and there is only a very weak and not statistically significant correlation between the percentage of female members of a Senate and the percentage of female professors at a university ($r = .195$, $n = 24$). However, there is a weak and close to statistically significant correlation at the 0.05 level between the percentage of female members of a Senate and the percentage of female academics at a university ($r = .352$, $p = .092$, $n = 24$). Furthermore, a multiple regression run with the percentage of female academics at a university and Senate size as the independent variables and the percentage of female members of a Senate as the dependent variable does produce some noteworthy results – with the percentage of female academics being statistically significant ($t = 2.202$). In terms of predictions from such a regression of the percentage of female Senate members (for a given size of Senate and a given percentage of female academics), Birmingham is notable as having fewer women on Senate than would be expected, and LSE and Newcastle as having rather more (see [Table 3](#)).

Figure 1: Percentage of female members of Senate at Russell Group Universities, 2012-13

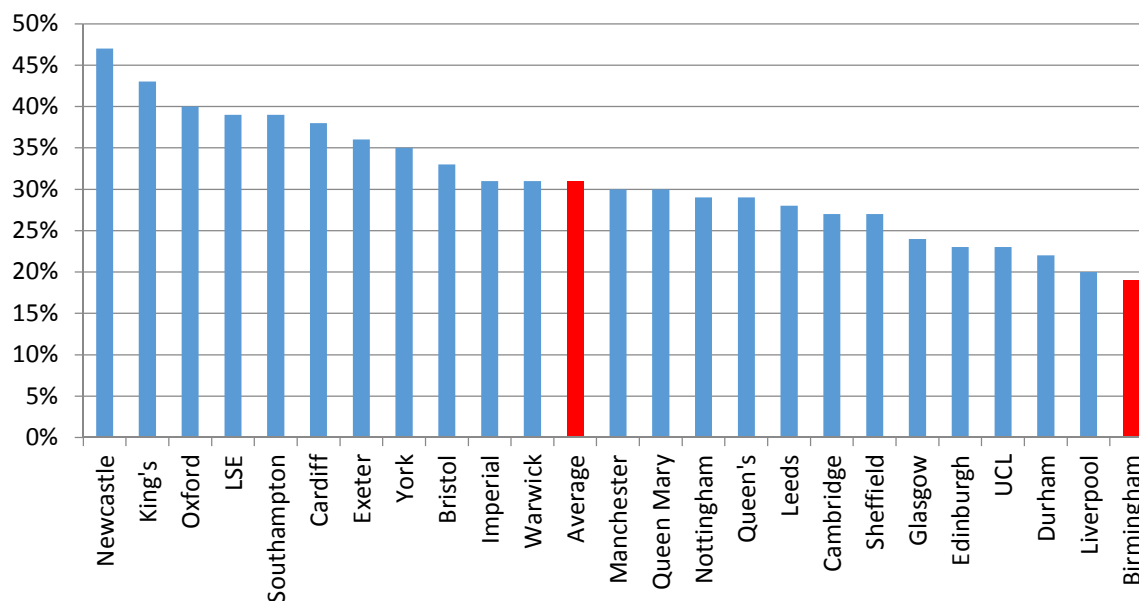


Table 1: Male & Female Members of Russell Group Senates (or equivalent) for 2012-13

Ranking	University	Male	Female	Vacant	Total*	% Male	% Female
1	Newcastle	17	15	3	32	53%	47%
2	KCL	35	26	2	61	57%	43%
3	Oxford	15	10	0	25	60%	40%
4	LSE	534	342	0	876	61%	39%
-	Southampton	89	56	4	145	61%	39%
6	Cardiff	49	30	15	79	62%	38%
7	Exeter	35	20	1	55	64%	36%
8	York	39	21	4	60	65%	35%
9	Bristol	64	31	2	95	67%	33%
10	Imperial	22	10	0	32	69%	31%
-	Warwick	29	13	1	42	69%	31%
12	Manchester	45	19	4	64	70%	30%
-	Queen Mary	48	21	5	69	70%	30%
14	Nottingham	70	29	2	99	71%	29%
-	Queen's	50	20	1	70	71%	29%
16	Leeds	110	43	28	153	72%	28%
17	Cambridge**	11	4	0	15	73%	27%
-	Sheffield	110	41	8	151	73%	27%
19	Glasgow	399	128	50	527	76%	24%
20	Edinburgh	478	141	1081	619	77%	23%
-	UCL	737	224	213	961	77%	23%
22	Durham	60	17	0	77	78%	22%
23	Liverpool	286	70	0	356	80%	20%
24	Birmingham	44	10	1	54	81%	19%

* excluding vacant; ** data for Cambridge is for 2012 calendar year

Neither the size of Senate, nor the size of the pool of female professors seems to impact on the size of female membership of Senate. Although there is some evidence that the size of the pool of female academics at a university does have a role to play in explaining the female membership of Senate, the findings suggest that other explanations – which would require further study – need to be sought (such as the impact of different rules governing membership (e.g. how many people are elected and/or appointed to Senate) and/or the impact of different management styles, cultures and traditions in play at particular universities).

Table 2: Female membership of Senate in comparison to female professorial and female academic staff (with rankings)

University	% ♀ (Senate)	Rank	% ♀ (Prof)	Percentage Points Difference between ♀ Senate Membership & ♀ Professors	Rank	% ♀ (Academic)	Percentage Points Difference between ♀ Senate Membership & ♀ Academics	Rank
<i>Average</i>	31%	<i>N/A</i>	17%	14	<i>N/A</i>	41%	-10	<i>N/A</i>
Birmingham	19%	24	18%	1	23	41%	-22	24
Bristol	33%	9	17%	16	10	41%	-8	5
Cambridge	27%	17	16%	11	12	39%	-12	16
Cardiff	38%	6	15%	23	7	43%	-5	6
Durham	22%	22	19%	3	21	35%	-13	23
Edinburgh	23%	20	19%	4	24	41%	-18	18
Exeter	36%	7	17%	19	8	43%	-7	8
Glasgow	24%	19	21%	3	20	44%	-20	18
Imperial	31%	10	14%	17	12	33%	-2	22
KCL	43%	2	22%	21	2	50%	-7	3
Leeds	28%	16	17%	11	16	40%	-12	15
Liverpool	20%	23	14%	6	22	39%	-19	20
LSE	39%	4	24%	15	4	42%	-3	7
Manchester	30%	12	19%	11	11	41%	-11	9
Newcastle	47%	1	20%	27	1	40%	7	1
Nottingham	29%	14	17%	12	12	41%	-12	13
Oxford	40%	3	19%	21	3	41%	-1	4
Queen Mary	30%	12	26%	4	18	41%	-11	13
Queen's	29%	14	21%	8	8	39%	-10	12
Sheffield	27%	17	21%	6	16	38%	-11	16
Southampton	39%	4	19%	20	4	41%	-2	2
UCL	23%	20	21%	2	19	43%	-20	21
Warwick	31%	10	20%	11	15	36%	-5	9
York	35%	8	21%	14	6	44%	-9	9

As can be seen from the 'Birmingham in Focus' box, the issue at Birmingham appears to stem mainly from the lack of female members in those categories that are ex-officio, appointed or nominated. Nearly a third of elected members are female, whereas all the Senate members appointed by Heads of College (who are all men) and all bar one of the Senate members co-opted on the recommendation of the VC are male. Furthermore, the one female Pro-VC member of Senate has now left the University to be replaced by a male colleague.

Table 3: Actual percentage of female senate members in comparison to predicted percentage

University	Percentage of Female Senate Members – Actual	Percentage of Female Senate Members – Predicted	Percentage Point Difference
Birmingham	19%	33%	-14
Bristol	33%	32%	1
Cambridge	27%	31%	-4
Cardiff	38%	34%	4
Durham	22%	27%	-5
Edinburgh	23%	27%	-4
Exeter	36%	35%	1
Glasgow	24%	31%	-7
Imperial	31%	25%	6
KCL	43%	41%	2
Leeds	28%	31%	-3
Liverpool	20%	28%	-8
LSE	39%	26%	13
Manchester	30%	33%	-3
Newcastle	47%	32%	15
Nottingham	29%	32%	-3
Oxford	40%	33%	7
Queen Mary	30%	33%	-3
Queen's	29%	31%	-2
Sheffield	27%	29%	-2
Southampton	39%	32%	7
UCL	23%	26%	-3
Warwick	31%	28%	3
York	35%	35%	0

BIRMINGHAM IN FOCUS: SENATE

- Of the 54 members of Senate for the academic year 2012-13, 44 were men (81%) and 10 women (19%).
- Of the 20 members of Senate who were elected by academic staff, 14 were men (70%) and 6 women (30%)
- Of the 19 members of Senate who were either appointed by a Head of College or co-opted on the VC's recommendation, 18 were men (95%) and 1 was a woman (5%).

Type of Senate Member	Total in Category	Male (%)	Female (%)
Ex-Officio	2	2 (100)	0 (0)
Pro-VCs	3	2 (67)	1 (33)
Heads of College	5	5 (100)	0 (0)
HoC Nominees	15	15 (100)	0 (0)
Elected Members	20	14 (70)	6 (30)
Students	5*	3 (60)	2 (40)
VC Co-opted	4	3 (75)	1 (25)
Total	54	44 (81)	10 (19)

* Excludes 1 vacancy

COUNCIL

The University of Birmingham had the lowest percentage of female members of Council of any Russell Group university for the 2012-13 academic year. 17% of Birmingham's Senate members were female, compared with a Russell Group average of 31%.

Council membership varies in size between 19 at Imperial and Southampton (although the latter has two vacancies) and 32 at Bristol with an average of 23. The average percentage of female members of Council is 31% ($\sigma = 7.9$) with a high of 45% at UCL and a low of 17% at Birmingham (see [Table 4](#) and [Figure 2](#) below). Similar to Senate, there is only a very weak and not statistically significant correlation between the percentage of female members of a Council and Council size ($r = .04$, $n = 24$), again suggesting that there is a need to look elsewhere to explain the variance between female membership of Russell Group Councils.

Table 4: Male & Female Members of Russell Group Councils (or equivalent) for 2012-13

Ranking	University	Male	Female	Vacant	Total*	% Male	% Female
1	UCL	11	9	0	20	55%	45%
2	LSE	16	11	0	27	59%	41%
-	Newcastle	13	9	0	22	59%	41%
4	Exeter	12	8	0	20	60%	40%
-	Oxford	15	10	0	25	60%	40%
6	Queen's	18	12	0	30	60%	40%
7	Cardiff	15	8	3	23	65%	35%
-	Leeds	15	8	0	23	65%	35%
-	York	13	7	2	20	65%	35%
10	Nottingham	17	8	0	25	68%	32%
11	Warwick	18	8	2	26	69%	31%
12	Queen Mary	14	6	2	20	70%	30%
-	Sheffield	14	6	0	20	70%	30%
14	Manchester	17	7	1	24	71%	29%
15	Liverpool	19	7	1	26	73%	27%
16	Imperial	14	5	0	19	74%	26%
17	Bristol	24	8	0	32	75%	25%
18	Cambridge**	19	6	0	25	76%	24%
-	Glasgow	19	6	0	25	76%	24%
20	Edinburgh	17	5	0	22	77%	23%
21	Durham	18	5	1	23	78%	22%
22	Southampton	15	4	2	19	79%	21%
23	KCL	17	4	0	21	81%	19%
24	Birmingham	20	4	0	24	83%	17%

* excluding vacant; ** data for Cambridge is for 2012 calendar year

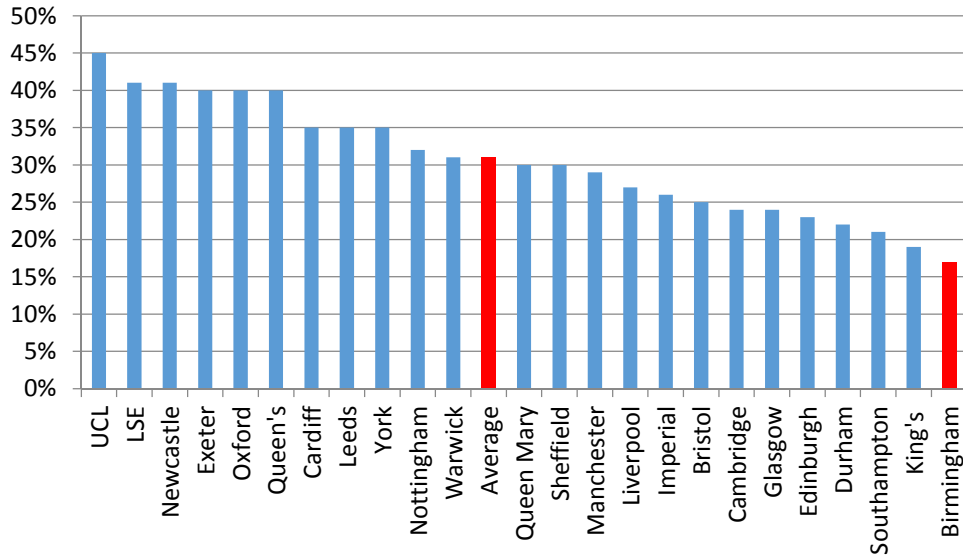


Figure 2: Percentage of female members of Council at Russell Group Universities, 2012-13

EXECUTIVE BOARD

Birmingham is ranked 18th out of 24 in terms of the percentage of female members of the Executive Board of Russell Group Universities for the academic year 2012-13. 23% of Birmingham's Executive Board members were female, compared with a Russell Group average of 28%.

There is only one female VC among the Russell Group Universities – Professor Dame Nancy Rothwell at the University of Manchester. This percentage of 4% is considerably below that of female VCs at British universities as a whole which, as [Figure 3](#) shows, stood at 14.2% in 2012. The average size of an executive board is 11 members with a high of 18 at UCL and a low of 5 at LSE. The average percentage of female members of Russell Group executive boards is 28% ($\sigma = 9.2$) with a high of 44% at Cardiff and a low of 10% at Durham (see [Figure 4](#) and [Table 5](#) below). Again, there are only weak correlations between the percentage of female members of an Executive Board and Executive Board size ($r = -.047$, $n = 24$) and between the percentage of female members of an Executive Board and the percentage of female professors at a university ($r = -.209$, $n = 24$), neither of which were statistically significant. As such, neither Executive Board size, nor the size of the pool of female professors from which academic female members of an Executive Board are drawn (academics being the largest type of member on an Executive Board) can explain the size of female membership of an Executive Board.

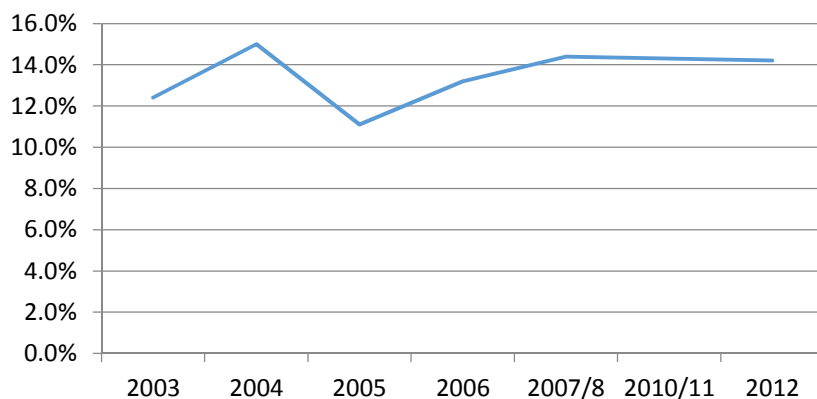


Figure 3: Percentage of female vice chancellors, 2003-2012 (data taken from Centre for Women & Democracy 2013: 25).

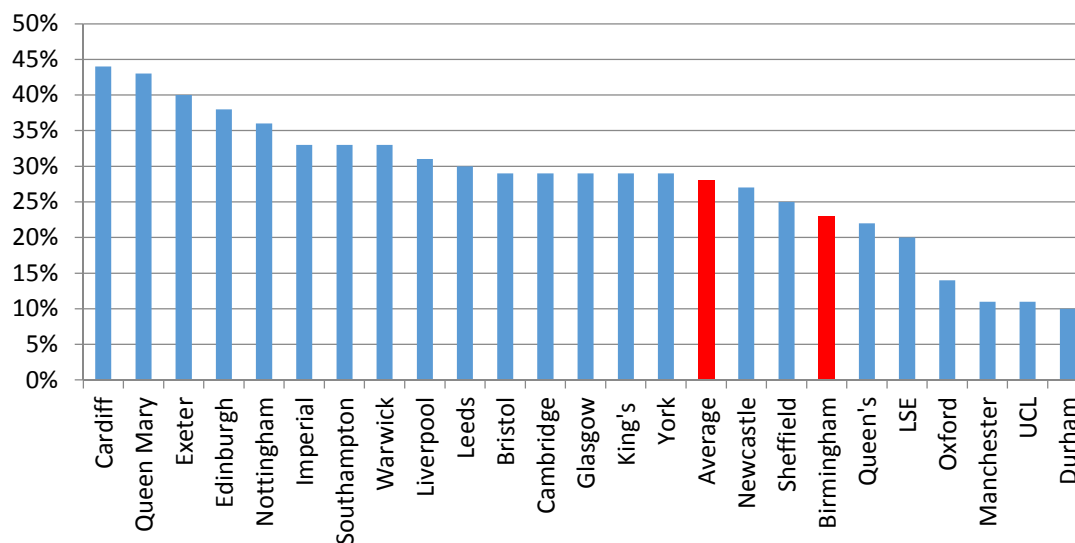


Figure 4: Percentage of female members of Executive Boards at Russell Group Universities, 2012-13

Table 5: Male & Female Members of Russell Group Executive Boards (or equivalent) for 2012-13

Ranking	University	Male	Female	Vacant	Total*	% Male	% Female
1	Cardiff	5	4	0	9	56%	44%
2	Queen Mary	4	3	0	7	57%	43%
3	Exeter	6	4	0	10	60%	40%
4	Edinburgh	10	6	0	16	63%	38%
5	Nottingham	7	4	0	11	64%	36%
6	Imperial	6	3	0	9	67%	33%
-	Southampton	10	5	0	15	67%	33%
-	Warwick	8	4	0	12	67%	33%
9	Liverpool	9	4	0	13	69%	31%
10	Leeds	7	3	0	10	70%	30%
11	Bristol	5	2	0	7	71%	29%
-	Cambridge	5	2	0	7	71%	29%
-	Glasgow	12	5	1	17	71%	29%
-	KCL	10	4	0	14	71%	29%
-	York	10	4	0	14	71%	29%
16	Newcastle	8	3	0	11	73%	27%
17	Sheffield	9	3	0	12	75%	25%
18	Birmingham	10	3	0	13	77%	23%
19	Queen's	7	2	0	9	78%	22%
20	LSE	4	1	0	5	80%	20%
21	Oxford	6	1	0	7	86%	14%
22	Manchester	8	1	0	9	89%	11%
23	UCL	16	2	0	18	89%	11%
24	Durham	9	1	0	10	90%	10%

* excluding vacant

ADVICE FROM EXPERTHR

“There is no specific legal requirement for employers to advertise every job vacancy that arises. However, the risk in recruiting friends, family or other contacts of current employees without advertising a vacancy externally is that this may give rise to allegations of unlawful discrimination. Where the workforce is predominantly male or female, or comprised of, for example, a particular racial group, informal recruitment methods such as word-of-mouth or personal recommendation perpetuate the existing imbalance and restrict the choice of applicants. This can constitute indirect discrimination against the sex or race that is under-represented in the workplace. As a result, applicants who do not hear about a vacancy until it is too late to apply for it because candidates have been sought through an informal recruitment exercise may be able to claim discrimination on the basis that the recruitment method was a discriminatory arrangement.”

(available from: <http://www.xperthr.co.uk/faq/is-there-a-legal-requirement-for-employers-to-advertise-every-job-vacancy-that-arises/91037/#91037>)

CONCLUSION

BUCU welcomes the recent initiatives launched by University management under the banner of ‘The Year of Equality’. In particular and in relation to gender equality, BUCU fully supports the University’s commitment to both the Aurora Leadership Programme and Athena SWAN and the introduction of a new policy on workload for those returning from parental leave. However, as the findings outlined above suggest, there is a long way to go before the University of Birmingham can be compared favourably to other Russell Group universities in terms of female presence on governance bodies. As such, BUCU will be pressing University management to also introduce the following policies or initiatives:

- Extend the equality pay audit to include:
 - details of the percentage of male and female staff (and also BAME staff and staff with disabilities, etc.) at individual spine points rather than pay bands (particularly in terms of professorial pay banding)
 - College-level and, where possible, School-level specific information in order to identify particular problematic pockets;
- Return to the previous policy of the two University nurseries being non-surplus generating parts of the University;
- A University-wide commitment, as far as possible, for all meetings, research seminars and teaching (beyond life-long or similar learning aimed at those in employment) being held within a family-friendly timeframe to ensure that those with caring commitments can make a full contribution to the research culture and decision-making process of the institution;
- For University management to make explicit exactly how: ‘The impact of maternity leave and part-time working on academic outputs is taken into account in promotions and other employment criteria’.

This is a non-exhaustive list. If members of BUCU wish to suggest other equality policies and initiatives that the University of Birmingham should introduce (whether in relation to the focus of

this report, gender, or other areas (e.g. race, disability, sexuality, etc.), then please email admin@birminghamu.org. All suggestions will be considered by the Branch Committee and, if adopted, proposed to University management.

APPENDIX

METHOD

The data were collected from the websites of the twenty-four members of the Russell Group of Universities and, if not readily available, through email or Freedom of Information requests between November 2012 and May 2013. The male and female membership and vacancies of the three main governance institutions – ‘Senate’, ‘Council’ and ‘Executive Board’ (or equivalents – see [Table 6](#) below for definitions) – for the academic year 2012/13 were recorded. In cases where names did not clearly indicate the sex of a member (e.g. Prof. J. Smith; Alex Bloggs), an additional web search was undertaken to determine whether the member was male or female. [Table 7](#) outlines which institutions/positions in each university were included under each of the three categories. Most institutions for most universities did not pose a problem in terms of categorisation. However, as detailed below, a few institutions were more difficult to place, in particular the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge whose governance arrangements are not always directly comparable to other members of the Russell Group.

Table 6: Definitions of governance institutions included in study

Governance Institution	Definition
Senate	The highest academic body of a university, responsible for academic policies, management and standards
Council	The (executive) governing body of a university, responsible for strategy, finance and assets
Executive Board	The senior management team of a university chaired by the vice chancellor or equivalent, responsible for steering and the implementation of strategy and policy

With regard to the University of Oxford, it was decided to include the Council in both ‘Senate’ and ‘Council’ categories and not include the institution of Congregation in any category. Although Congregation is the ultimate legislative body of the University, composed of virtually all academic staff and certain research support staff, administrators and librarians, Oxford’s Council is the executive and actively managing governing body and so was included in the ‘Council’ category. In relation to the ‘Senate’ category, as the University’s website states, “Oxford does not have a Senate. The General Board of the Faculties, which had previously overseen the academic business of the University, was merged with the Hebdomadal Council to form the current Council as part of the North reforms [in 2002]. The Council now takes academic policy decisions”. Furthermore, Oxford does not have a formal executive board. It was decided, in this instance, to include the Vice Chancellor (VC), Pro-Vice Chancellors (Pro-VCs) and Registrar in this category.

With regard to the University of Cambridge, it was decided to include the Council, rather than the Regent House, in the ‘Council’ category. The University’s website states that the Regent House is:

[T]he governing body and principal electoral constituency of the University. It has more than 3,800 members, including University Officers, and Heads and Fellows of Colleges. It makes and amends the regulations that govern the University.

and that the Council is:

[T]he principal executive and policy-making body of the University, reporting to the

Regent House. It has overall responsibility for administration, defining the University's mission, planning its work and managing its resources. It also deals with relations between the University and the Colleges. The Council includes 16 elected academic members, four external members and three student members.

Table 7: Names of governance institutions included in survey by category

University	Senate	Council	Executive Board
Birmingham	Senate	Council	University Executive Board
Bristol	Senate	Council	VC's Advisory Group
Cambridge	General Board of the Faculties	Council	VC, Pro-VCs & Registry
Cardiff	Senate	Council	VC's Office
Durham	Senate	Council	Senior Management Team
Edinburgh	Senatus Academicus	University Court	Senior Management
Exeter	Senate	Council	VC's Executive Group
Glasgow	Senate	University Court	Senior Management Group
Imperial	Senate	Council	Rector & Management Board
KCL	Academic Board	Council	Principal & Principal's Central Team
Leeds	Senate	Council	VC & VC's Executive Group
Liverpool	Senate	Council	Senior Management Team
LSE	Academic Board	Council	Directorate & Secretary
Manchester	Senate	Board of Governors	Senior Officers*
Newcastle	Senate	Council	Executive Board
Nottingham	Senate	Council	Management Board
Oxford	Council	Council	VC, Pro-VCs & Registrar
Queen Mary	Senate	Council	Senior Executive
Queen's	Academic Council	Senate	Management Board
Sheffield	Senate	Council	University Executive Board
Southampton	Senate	Council	University Executive Group
UCL	Senate	Council	Provost & Senior Management Team
Warwick	Senate	Council	Senior Management Team
York	Senate	Council	Senior Management Group

* Does not include Chancellor or Pro Chancellors

Although the Council covers some areas covered by other Universities' Executive Boards and the Regent House is the ultimate governing body of the University, it was decided to include the Council in the 'Council' and not any other category, due to the large size of the Regent House and the fact that members of the Council include students and external members. The General Board of the Faculties was included in the 'Senate' Category, as its principle duty is "to advise the University on educational policy and to control resources. It is responsible for maintaining a high standard of teaching and research". Similarly to Oxford, Cambridge does not have a formal executive board; the VC, Pro-VCs and Registry were included in this category.

With regard to other universities, it was decided to include the Secretary, as well as the Directorate, in the LSE's 'Executive Board', due to the important role the Secretary plays in the day-to-day running of the School. Confusingly, the 'Senate' for Queen's University Belfast is called The Academic Council and the 'Council' is called Senate but each fulfills the role as defined above. The body included in the 'Executive Board' category for the University of Manchester is the Senior Officers but the Chancellor and Pro Chancellors listed on the Senior Officers webpage have not been included in the membership count within this category. None of the University 'Courts' (or equivalent) – a body which usually has a much larger membership and which usually performs a key ceremonial and advisory role – were included in the study, as they do not play such a central role in the governance of a university as the three institutions covered here.

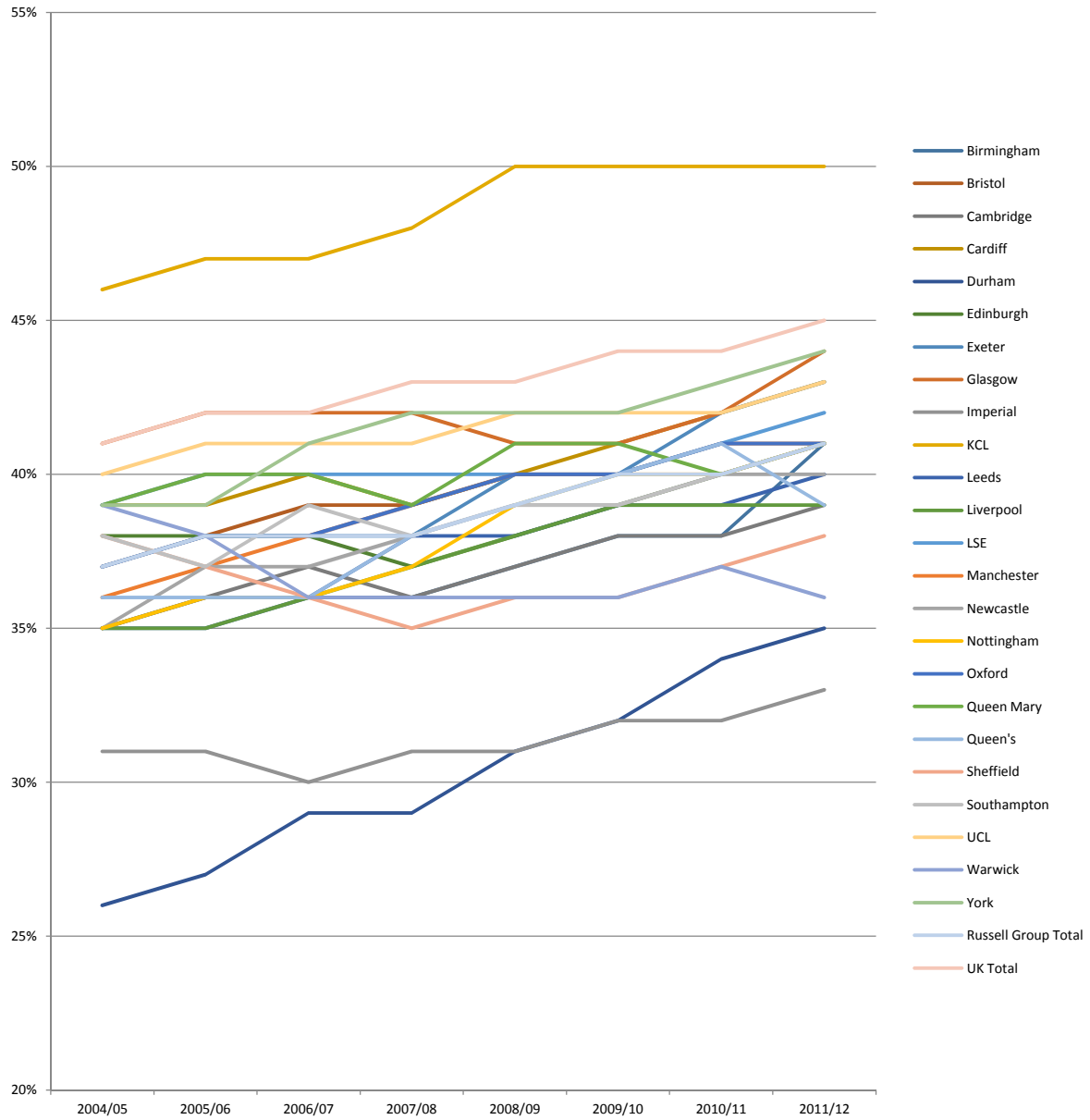


Figure 5: Percentage of Female Academics at Russell Group Universities, 2004/05 - 2011/12

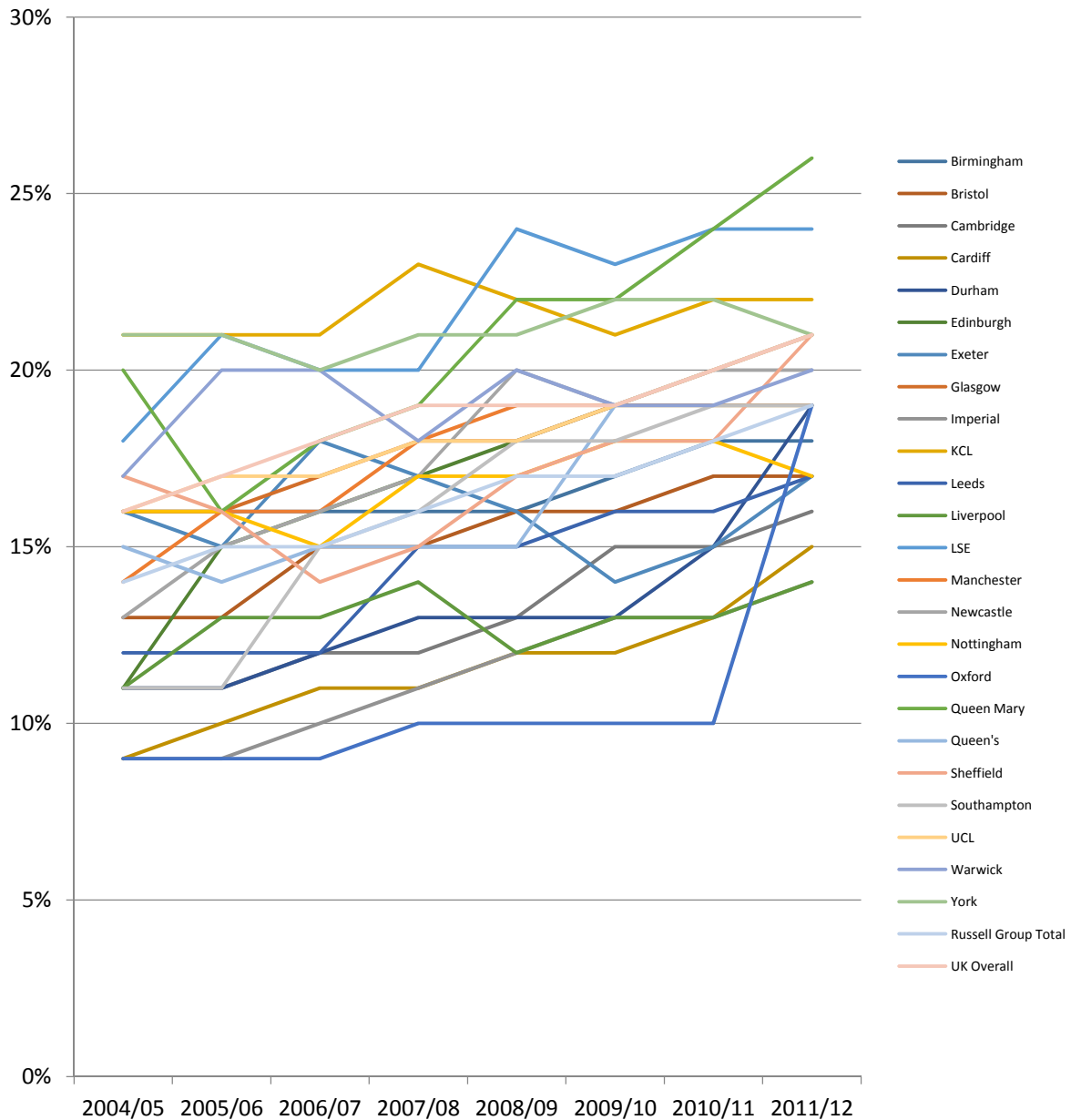


Figure 6: Percentage of Female Professors at Russell Group Universities, 2004/05 - 2011/12

CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS

BUCU aims for complete accuracy in its newsletter, blogs and other publications. All factual inaccuracies will be pointed out in future editions of the newsletter or BUCU Analysis if brought to the attention of BUCU.

If members wish to comment on any issues raised within this edition of BUCU Analysis or any other aspect of BUCU/UCU policy, they can do so through The Member's Voice column in the BUCU newsletter.

All requests made by staff and students of the University of Birmingham (whether members of UCU or not) for a right of reply will be considered by the BUCU Committee. The decision of the Committee will be final.

For corrections, clarifications and rights of reply, please contact newsletter@birminghamucu.org