
SUPPORTING THE WOMEN IN STEM AGENDA

A Guide for Student officers



Equate Scotland is Scotland's gender expert in science, engineering, technology and the built environment. We make a positive difference to women in these sectors of education and industry.

Interconnect is our network for women studying STEM and the built environment at colleges and universities in Scotland. We offer students opportunities to network with women professionals and employers, meet women studying similar subjects and enhance their career development.

EQUATE Scotland

interconnect
studentnetwork

Women in STEM is an issue high on the agenda for education, government and industry. Here are our tips for how student officers can support and raise the profile of women STEM students on campus.

Support Interconnect Student Champions

Interconnect Student Champions are ambassadors for the network within their college or university. These women students are passionate about their course and the Interconnect Network.

The role involves contributing new ideas and giving feedback for the development of Interconnect, engaging new students in the network, bringing women together on campus for events and supporting Interconnect student groups.

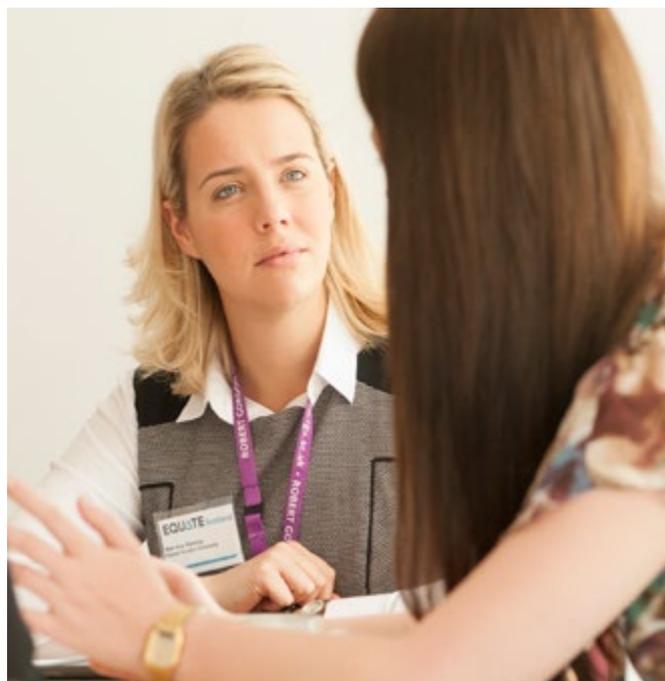
You can work with these students to promote Interconnect activities to the student body and offer the support of the Students' Association for on-campus events. You can also involve the student champions in wider Students' Association activity relating to equalities and student opportunities. Many universities offer their students the HEAR Enhanced Academic Transcript which gives details of extra-curricular activities that students have been involved in.

You can make a case for Interconnect Student Champions to be given official recognition for their role. Abertay University is currently the only institution we are aware of doing this in 2017/18.

Develop Interconnect Student Groups

We encourage and support students to set up their own Interconnect student groups and societies at their college or university. By joining a group on campus, students can get to know other women studying similar subjects to them, run their own social and industry events and create links with academic staff and graduates from their institution.

You can support students to set up a group and help them access funding and development opportunities within your institution.



“Having an Interconnect student group at our university allows women students from different courses and year groups to meet each other. It’s so much more than something to put on our CV.”

University of Strathclyde student.

Work Experience for Women in STEM

Research for our 'Rising to the Challenge' report highlighted the importance of work experience for women in STEM. 64% of respondents wanted industry work placements embedded in their STEM qualifications.

Equate Scotland offers undergraduate women studying STEM and the Built Environment work experience through a paid work placement programme. CareerWiSE works in partnership with employers across Scotland to provide 12-week summer placement opportunities to help women get their first experience of industry.

We would encourage you to promote CareerWiSE at your institution and encourage students to make the most of employer engagement activities on campus. You can also review career advice offered within your institution to identify any gender bias that may be affecting the number of women entering STEM industries and roles.

Diversity in the Curriculum

An inclusive curriculum is an important part of tackling gender inequality in STEM fields. With women engineering students less likely to move into engineering employment, despite having similar career aspirations to men, research suggests that there is a difference between experiences on STEM courses. Previous work done by NUS Scotland (2011) states that “a supportive learning environment in which all perspectives are valued helps all students to be more confident contributors”.

Ways you can take this forward at your college and university are:

- > Check out the HEA website for lots of information on inclusivity in the curriculum. Also have a look at NUS Scotland’s previous work in this area.

Start a conversation within your institution about how inclusive your curriculum is:

- > How well are women represented in STEM book lists and reading?
- > Is diversity a clearly acknowledged dimension in the taught curriculum – for example: do women and men use the built environment in the same way?
- > Student feedback of modules and programmes - is evaluation broken down by gender? Are there gender differences in students’ feedback to programmes and modules?

Equate Scotland has been piloting a two hour workshop called Confident Diversity with engineering students in Scotland. Get in touch to find out more.

Recruiting Women STEM Students

In order to encourage more girls and women into STEM it is important for them to be able to interact with current students as role models. You can encourage your institution to recruit women STEM students as ambassadors and aim for a 50:50 gender split when involving ambassadors in outreach activities and open days.

You can also encourage staff involved in outreach to request that schools aim for a 50:50 gender split when

pupils are involved in any STEM activities. They could also offer girls-only STEM activities.

The language used in materials promoting STEM courses can often inadvertently be aimed at men. This can have a huge impact on the recruitment of women. Take some time to look over your institution’s website and prospectus to make sure the language is inclusive.

Institutional activity: SFC Gender Action Plan and Athena Swan

In 2016 the Scottish Funding Council set targets for colleges and universities to address the gender imbalance in courses. Each institution has been tasked with developing a Gender Action Plan (GAP) to ensure that no course has an extreme gender balance (75:25) by 2030. NUS Scotland have written a fantastic briefing that includes ideas for how student officers can get involved in the GAP at their institution.

Equate Scotland offers training for institutions developing their GAP and includes reminders to universities and colleges to work with their Students’ Associations. To ensure that the gender action plan process is inclusive of women in STEM and led by evidence and expertise we would welcome student officers recommending this training to their institutions as best practice.

All universities in Scotland have committed to the ECU Athena Swan Charter which recognises work undertaken to address gender inequality within Higher Education. Most institutions have appointed an Athena Swan Coordinator or Champion who manages this activity. Get in touch with them to find out about opportunities to involve students in this.

What Next:

To find out more about support available from Equate Scotland for students and institutions go to www.equatescotland.org.uk or contact us at info@equatescotland.org.uk

Please turn over for further resources.

Equate Scotland Resources

- > Interconnect Student Network
- > Careerwise Student Placement Programme
- > Positive Action Project
- > 'Rising to the Challenge' Report
- > Higher Education Services

Other Resources

- > HEA 'Embedding Equality & Diversity in the Curriculum'
- > NUS 'Liberate the Curriculum'
- > NUS Scotland 'Student Engagement in Gender Action Plans'
- > WiSET 'Ensuring STEM Outreach Tackles Gender Stereotypes'

Join Us !

 equatescotland.org.uk/students

 @theicnetwork

 interconnect@equatescotland.org.uk

Edinburgh Napier University, Craiglockhart Campus,
Room 1/41, 219 Colinton Road, Edinburgh, EH14 1DJ
info@equatescotland.org.uk

equatescotland.org.uk

