

Tapping all our Talents Review 2018

Section 1: In brief

Q1 Do you believe progress has been made towards achieving gender equality in the STEM workplace in Scotland since 2012? (Yes/no).

Yes

Q2 If yes, what action(s) do you believe have had the greatest impact on improving gender equality in STEM in Scotland? (List maximum of 3).

1. Drive towards Athena Swan in Universities
2. Drive towards gender equality on governing bodies and boards
3. Increased awareness of gender differences in career paths.

Q3 Where you do not believe progress has been made, or could be improved upon, what do you believe have been the key limiting factors? (List maximum of 3).

1. More awareness still needed of the different career pathways which may differ with gender.
2. Respond more positively with strategic objectives to address the above.
3. Analyse how it affects promotion pathways between genders.

Q4 Which of the recommendations made in the 2012 Tapping All Our Talents report do you believe should be prioritised going forward? (List maximum of 3).

1. Tackle the gender pay gap.
2. Raise organizational awareness.

Q5 What further recommendations (if any) would you make to policy-makers, educators or employers to tackle gender inequality in STEM in Scotland? (List maximum of 3).

1. Strive to ensure where possible an equal gender balance on all committees and Boards starting with the committee conducting this review which is not balanced.

Section 2: In detail

Women in STEM in Scotland 2018

Q6 What lessons do you believe have been learned from initiatives undertaken since 2012 to tackle gender inequality in the STEM workforce across the public, academic and/or industry sectors? Examples of good practice would be useful.

From the perspective of the Universities, I think we need to give much more thought as to how we can support our female talent during times when they are also fulfilling family commitments in terms of maintaining active contact with their discipline and contributing in a manner consistent with their other responsibilities. I also believe this would be beneficial in allowing them to “hit the deck running” when they return to academic life. Quantity and quality are not the same and we should value the quality of contribution that can be made on a part-time basis.

Q7 In 2018’s economic, political and social context, what do you consider to be the key influencers (positive and negative) on gender equality in STEM in Scotland?

The issue of gender equality in STEM (in its broadest context) is in ensuring that the best skill set is available to drive the economic, political and social agenda in Scotland. We need more scientists and

engineers and need to tap into and encourage the talent in the female population. Similarly, in the areas of medicine and veterinarian Medicine we need more doctors and vets and need to encourage more male candidates into these professions. It is about Tapping all our talents, both male and female. A key influence in my own understanding of the challenges facing women in the STEM areas has been the documentation of their career experiences by the Young Academy and the University of St Andrews.

Q8 To what extent do you believe that the issue of gender inequality in STEM is being recognised as a priority and to what extent do you believe that rhetoric is being met with action?

My perception is that gender equality has rocketed up the agenda in all aspects of public life and, as a result, action is being taken to ensure that equality of opportunity is considered as a factor in everything that is planned. As part of the RSE's Young People's committee, we are now always asking the question about how our activities impact on the equality agenda and what we can do more to encourage gender diversity.

Education

Q9 What do you believe should be done to encourage more girls and young women to engage with STEM subjects in early years, primary and secondary education?

Engagement with schools as early as possible is important. By the time they get to secondary school, the dies have been cast, decisions have been made and it is too late. Early years and primary school teacher should be supported in delivering STEM as something which is fun for both boys and girls. These teachers, (mostly women) are potentially important role models and if they have a positive attitude to STEM then this communicates itself to the girls they are teaching. Working with SSERC to engage with the primary school STEM programme would be a good way forward.

Q10 What innovative or impactful practice do you know of or believe should be taking place in universities and colleges to tackle issues of gender disparities in STEM subjects? What do you think can be done to embed STEM gender equality thinking across universities and colleges?

There are three parts to university/college initiatives to embed STEM gender equality;

1. Address the issue of the gender pay gap in a positive way, recognizing the return that will come to the university/college by closing the gap and encouraging female talent into the university/college.
2. Examine the promotion criteria recognizing the equal value to the university/college of research, teaching and leadership.
3. Instigate policies to support women on temporary absence from the university/college to maintain a connection with their school and discipline and to use what time is available during their absence to further develop their research/teaching.

Cultural Change

Q11 In what ways do you believe industry can lead by example to tackle inequality within workplace culture?

The initiative towards a gender balance on the boards on industrial companies sends out the right signal from the top. It must however be matched by policies similar to those advocated for universities/colleges.

Q12 What do you believe are the most effective ways to challenge and change deep-rooted attitudes and institutional culture in order to improve gender equality in STEM?

Documentation of experiences as mentioned before had a profound effect on me in challenging the culture and now it is always there at the forefront of my mind.

Q13 How do you suggest culture change can be measured in a meaningful way?

It is almost an impossible task to measure culture change in a quantitative way in that it is in the experiences of women who are entering a STEM career now and how they may reflect on that in say 10 years' time. Documentation of experiences is I believe critical and ensuring that the issue is talked about, not by women to other women but more generally in Society. It is a societal issue.