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Glasgow, Royal Holloway and York become Juno Champions

7 October 2011

The Universities of York, Glasgow and Royal Holloway University London have all been officially recognised by the Institute of Physics (IOP) for efforts made by their physics departments to reduce gender inequality.



Dr Tracey Berry receives Juno certificate

All three departments have met the five principles set out in the Juno Code of Practice, a set of actions recommended by the IOP to address the under-representation of women in physics higher education, and are now Juno Champions.

The Juno Code of Practice seeks to redress a long-sustained issue of under-representation of women at the very highest level of physics academia in the UK and Ireland. While approximately 20% of physics undergraduates and lecturers are female; the same can only be said of 5% of professors.

Accreditation of the three departments takes the total number of Champions up to six; they join the Universities of Cambridge, Warwick and Imperial College London.

James McNish, Diversity Programme Leader at IOP, said, "To effectively tackle the barriers to the progression of female physicists in academia, a department must undergo fundamental cultural changes.

"For this, a department needs to examine all aspects of how it operates to identify how to make changes in policies and practices for the benefit of all its staff and students.

"This is a challenging process, but all three of our new Juno Champions have shown how much can be achieved – their approaches to tackling the issues will act as beacons of good practice for others in the physics community."

The departments have all displayed a strong commitment to the Juno principles and developed practices that work towards creating a level playing field for all members, including the establishment of new channels for engagement and communication, and thorough reviews of staff experiences.

Professor Andrew Long, Head of the School of Physics and Astronomy at the University of Glasgow, said, "Obviously it is important to us to ensure that there is no discrimination, overt or hidden, against women in the School. In considering this question in depth, we have taken the chance to examine critically all of our internal processes, identifying and tackling any weaknesses found, and this has been to the overall benefit of all members of the School, male and female."

Professor John Saunders, former Head of Department at Royal Holloway University London, said, "We are enthusiasts for the IOP's Juno project; it is necessary and will have real impact.

"Our Juno journey has had a transformative influence on our own Department, to the benefit of all, promoting a stronger sense of inclusivity and engagement of all groups. We believe the evolving framework will help attract the very best women scientists, and support them in reaching their full potential."

Dr Irene D'Amico, Chair of the University of York's Department of Physics' Departmental Equality Committee, said: "The various stages of the award process are based on awareness, analysis and action. It's important first of all to recognise that the under-representation of women in physics is a problem, then to look critically at the current culture and practices, and to put into place an action plan to address gender imbalances.

"The Juno Champion award is recognition that we are improving the practices within the Department and ensuring that these are fair, friendly and inclusive. It's about creating a better, more efficient, productive environment for everyone, not just women."

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Dr D'Amico joined Dr Lyndsay Fletcher from the University of Glasgow and Dr Tracey Berry from Royal Holloway University London on Thursday 6 October to be presented with Juno Champion certificates at the IOP Awards Ceremony.