UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE UNION

Gender pay gaps and higher education institutions 2005-6

In 2005-6 the average pay of full-time academic staff in the UK was £38,933, according to data from the Higher Education Statistics Agency. Average pay for male full-time academics was £41,053; average pay for females was £35,250. Female average pay was 85.9% of that of their male colleagues; in other words, there was a 14.1% gender pay gap in favour of male academics.¹

Gender pay gaps differed according to the type of higher education institution.² The widest gaps were at universities established before 1992. These pre-92 universities comprised members of the Russell Group (research-intensive universities with large numbers of students)³; members of the 1994 Group (smaller research-focused institutions)⁴; and other pre-92 institutions.

The biggest gap, of 18.5% on average, was at institutions belonging to the Russell Group. The next widest gap, of 15.4%, was at other pre-92 universities, closely followed by a 15.0% gap at institutions belonging to the 1994 Group (table 1).

At the other end of the pay gap spectrum were the universities established after 1992 – the post-92 institutions – where there was a 6.8% gap on average. The narrowest gap, of 5.6%, was at higher education colleges and specialist higher education institutions.

Statistical analysis showed significant differences in the size of the gender pay gap in each comparison between Russell Group, 1994 Group and other pre-92 institutions on the one hand, and post-92 and HE/specialist college institutions on the other hand (table 2).⁵ There were no significant differences between any of the groups of pre-92 institutions when compared with each other. Neither was there a significant difference between post-92 institutions and HE/specialist colleges.

There is a number of reasons why the gender pay gaps were higher in the pre-92 institutions, compared with post-92 and HE/specialist college institutions. A number of pre-92 institutions employed clinical academics, who tended to have large pay gaps in favour of male employees. Pre-92 institutions also employed large numbers of relatively low-paid research-only academics, whose presence would serve to widen the gaps. The data may also reflect trends in the employment of academic staff, with institutions employing staff on the basis of nationally-agreed pay scales having narrower pay gaps than institutions using locally-determined rates of pay, which tend to produce larger pay gaps.
The national Pay Framework agreement of 2004 may also be a factor: pay and grading structures implemented under the Framework use job evaluation as a way of providing equal pay for work of equal value. Although the majority of institutions had not implemented the Framework in time for the collection of the 2005-6 HESA data, it is possible that those who had implemented the Framework in 2005-6 had narrower pay gaps because of job evaluation. However, this may be unlikely, because the majority of ‘early implementers’ of the Pay Framework agreement were in the pre-92 sector.

Table 1 HEI groupings and gender pay gaps 2005-6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number of institutions</th>
<th>Average gender pay gap %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Russell Group</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other pre-92</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994 Group</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>post-92</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HE/specialist college</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: analysis of HESA data carried out by University and College Union

Table 2 Tests for statistically significant differences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Comparison with</th>
<th>1994 Group</th>
<th>Statistical significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Russell Group</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other pre-92</td>
<td></td>
<td>.143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>post-92</td>
<td></td>
<td>.000*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HE/specialist college</td>
<td></td>
<td>.000*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994 Group</td>
<td>Other pre-92</td>
<td>.998</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>post-92</td>
<td>.000*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HE/specialist college</td>
<td>.000*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other pre-92</td>
<td>post-92</td>
<td>.000*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HE/specialist college</td>
<td>.000*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-92</td>
<td>HE/specialist college</td>
<td>.880</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

Source: analysis carried out by University and College Union

UCU research

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Endnotes

1 Source of mean average salary data: Higher Education Statistics Agency; percentage calculations: UCU. Academic staff include full-time teaching-only, research-only and teaching-and-research clinical and non-clinical staff. The data exclude London Weighting. The HESA data are based on a census of all academic staff; the government’s Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings, which also provides average salaries of academic staff, is based on a sample and excludes research-only academics. HESA does not accept responsibility for any inferences or conclusions derived from the data by third parties.

2 The data in this analysis excluded UK higher education institutions where fewer than 30 female full-time or fewer than 30 male full-time academics were employed.

3 For membership, see http://www.russellgroup.ac.uk/index1.html

4 For membership, see http://www.1994group.ac.uk/

5 A significance level of 0.5% was used in all the comparisons.