



# Diversity in the Science Sector

A Biochemical Society position statement | **May 2014**



**Biochemical Society**  
Advancing Molecular Bioscience

The Biochemical Society is committed to ensuring equal opportunities in the molecular biosciences. We believe that a lack of diversity across the scientific community represents a loss of potential talent to the UK.

The Biochemical Society endorses the view that the scientific workforce should reflect the make-up of UK society and thus include fair representation from groups that have been traditionally disadvantaged. Individuals from lower socio-economic backgrounds, certain ethnic minorities, women, and people with disabilities are all currently under-represented in education, training and employment related to science<sup>i</sup>. The Society recognises that under-representation may be across the molecular biosciences as a whole, or may be concentrated at specific career stages (e.g. at more senior levels). There is a well-established and powerful business case for supporting increased equality and diversity in the science workforce, in addition to moral and ethical considerations<sup>ii</sup>.

The Biochemical Society supports the view that in order for the sector to change, we need to fully understand how and why inequalities arise and persist in bioscience and ensure that the challenges and complexities of removing these inequalities are recognised by individuals across the career spectrum. This includes the 'mainstreaming' of diversity issues amongst the management of research institutes, universities, industry and in decision making for funding bodies, in order that such issues are routinely considered when taking decisions. The Society is committed to raising the profile of this issue by undertaking and disseminating our own research, supporting that of others, and collaborating with other partners, particularly the Society of Biology, to develop a stronger policy framework.

A more complete understanding of equality and diversity issues will allow us to develop evidence-based strategies to increase the participation and retention of under-represented groups in science. We acknowledge that there is no 'quick fix' for the problems that exist, but that with openness and appropriate action, biases will be eliminated. We commend, fund and support the efforts of the Athena SWAN Charter award scheme<sup>iii</sup> that recognises good practice with regards to gender equality in UK institutions. We would hope that such an approach could be instigated looking across a more complete range of diversity issues.

The Biochemical Society believes that it is vital that the bioscience community reflects the make-up of UK society and that barriers, perceived or otherwise, to entering a career in the molecular biosciences are dispelled.

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<sup>i</sup> Campaign for Science and Engineering, *Improving Diversity in STEM*, May 2014

<sup>ii</sup> Royal Society 2014 'A Picture of the UK Scientific Workforce'

<sup>iii</sup> Evaluating the effectiveness and impact of the Athena SWAN Charter  
<http://www.ecu.ac.uk/publications/files/advancing-women2019s-careers-in-STEMM-evaluating-the-effectiveness-and-impact-of-the-Athena%20SWAN%20Charter.pdf/view>

The Biochemical Society exists for the **advancement of the molecular and cellular biosciences**, both as an academic discipline and to promote its impact on areas of science including biotechnology, agriculture, and medicine.

We achieve our mission through our publications and journals, scientific meetings, educational activities, policy work, awards, and grants to scientists and students.

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