



In 2012, Royal Holloway, University of London had a roughly even split between male and female lecturers. But at the professorial level, in line with many other universities, men outnumbered women by four to one.

This prompted the university, which was one of the first in the UK to offer women higher education, to take action. In 2014 it launched an initiative called “Enabling Women Academics Through the Promotion Process”, which aimed to increase the proportion of female professors from 24.1 per cent to 35 per cent over five years.

Based on a scheme at the University of Tromsø in Norway, female academics were offered coaching, CV support and workshops on the promotion process. Women were welcome to attend with babies, or over Skype, to fit around other commitments.

Of the 26 women who have participated in the first two cohorts of the scheme, 16 have since been promoted, with three becoming heads of departments and seven becoming chairs in their subject areas. After the latest promotion round, the proportion of female professors has risen to 26 per cent. A third cohort is now under way.

The judges said they were “won over” by the university’s commitment to the academic progression of women. “It is astonishing that in 2016 this is still an issue across academia, but the actions that have followed Royal Holloway’s ambition have reaped rewards with an increase in the percentage of female professors,” they said, adding that they were particularly impressed that the university was using multiple interventions to make a difference.