



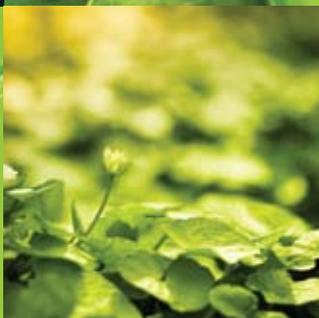
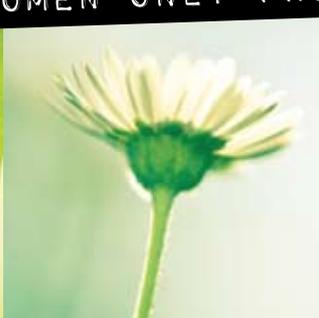
# AURORA

FUTURE • CHANGE • GROWTH



#LFAurora

WOMEN ONLY PROGRAMME



Inspiring  
Leadership

**Leadership  
Foundation**

for Higher Education





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FUTURE • CHANGE • GROWTH

Since Aurora began 3477 women from 139 institutions have participated, with 1029 women attending in 2016-2017 alone. This highlights the huge commitment of the sector to achieve gender equality and invest in the development of current and future women leaders. It also represents a unique opportunity to embed strong networks to enable pathways to share best practice, insights and experiences. This innovative development process is for women up to senior lecturer level or professional services equivalent.

## WHAT'S IT ABOUT?

Aurora has been introduced to help address the under-representation of women in senior posts in higher education as outlined in the Leadership Foundation's Stimulus Paper 'Women and Higher Education: Absences and Aspiration' by Professor Louise Morley (January 2013). Many influential stakeholders including vice-chancellors, Hefce and the Equality Challenge Unit agree the situation calls for immediate action to encourage more women to enter leadership. Feedback tells us that higher education institutions would like to support more women to apply for leadership roles and feedback from women suggests that early leadership development would facilitate this.

Aurora has been designed to take a partnership approach with universities and higher education colleges. This involves the institution making a commitment to provide mentors and role models as well as participants so that the issues and challenges of leadership progression for women are recognised more widely across the university or higher education college.

## WHAT DOES AURORA COVER?

Aurora addresses core areas associated with leadership success:

- Understanding organisations and the sector
- Developing leadership behaviours, skills and knowledge
- Identifying and overcoming barriers and obstacles
- Growing confidence and a leadership identity
- Building networks, coalitions and support processes

Aurora addresses these areas by using a combination of: development days (four, at approximately monthly intervals); an action learning set and self-directed learning that complements the key themes and supports participants' own development needs and in-house mentoring.



## PROGRAMME STRUCTURE

**Aurora is a multi-faceted development initiative. The subjects of the conference style development days are:**

### IDENTITY, IMPACT AND VOICE

Participants will investigate the nature of leadership and leaders and what it means to them, learn about the importance of visibility and 'voice' and start to consider the leadership skill set they already have. Current challenges facing participants will be discussed along with what the participant wants and can offer within a leadership role.

### POWER AND POLITICS

The nature of HEI culture and politics will be investigated by looking at human motivations and influences. Participants will be encouraged to develop networks and make lasting supportive connections. At this development day participants will be placed in action learning sets that meet on a pre-set day at a venue agreed by members of that group.

### ACTION LEARNING SETS

The middle day of the programme is set aside for a full-day of action learning. The participants of each set will be seated at the same table on the Power and Politics day and it will be the responsibility of the set to agree a venue and manage the action learning process on the day. There is no external facilitation. Participants of each set will utilise the sessions to air their personal work-related challenges and seek support through the action learning process to identify solutions and next steps. Whilst only one formal action learning set is scheduled it is anticipated that institutions will support Aurora participants in maintaining these sets as a positive approach to problem solving and as a way of developing networks, sharing good practice and learning from experience.

### CORE LEADERSHIP SKILLS

Core Leadership Skills will introduce the underpinning skills needed by all leaders and managers in higher education. Participants will consider their value set and their purpose in higher education, how to influence and negotiate as leaders and how to develop a compelling leadership narrative.

### ADAPTIVE LEADERSHIP SKILLS

Participants will be introduced to the main principles of adaptive leadership and how these are relevant to women. Participants will be encouraged to consider how to adopt an experimental mind-set and how to identify leadership archetypes. How to have courageous conversations, regulate distress and identify the barriers to leadership will also be considered. The day is about using adaptive leadership to enhance performance and success.

## SPECIAL FEATURES

### Self-directed learning:

To get the most out of taking part in Aurora we have provided a selection of online resources. These include reading, reflection, activities and challenges. These materials and information can be accessed throughout Aurora and are updated throughout the year. They echo the subjects of the development days – participants may follow the stream that precedes or follows the development day they are about to attend or have just attended; or they can focus on a stream that particularly interests them and follow it throughout the programme. Those with more time may choose to engage with all of the streams for the duration of the programme. For more instant discussions amongst Aurora participants there is an Aurora community Jisc mail list.

### Mentoring:

Aurora participants are required to have a mentor to support and guide them throughout and after the end of the formal learning process. Usually these mentors will have been identified by the university or higher education college's 'Aurora Champion', the central human resources or staff development department and may be part of an existing mentoring scheme. Mentors may be male or female (depending on the preference of the mentee) and be well established and knowledgeable members of the institution who will usually be more senior than the Aurora participant.

## WHO CAN APPLY?

Aurora is for women up to senior lecturer level or professional services equivalent in a university or higher education college, ambitious for a career in the sector and interested in exploring leadership and management as one option for progression.

As we are asking for an institutional commitment, in most circumstances applicants will have been selected by the HEIs to take part in the process.

## MORE INFORMATION & HOW TO APPLY

 [www.lfhe.ac.uk/aurora](http://www.lfhe.ac.uk/aurora)

 [aurora@lfhe.ac.uk](mailto:aurora@lfhe.ac.uk)

 [#LFAurora](https://twitter.com/LFAurora)



“Schemes such as Aurora are hugely important in enabling women to explore their leadership aspirations and abilities in a supportive environment, and to develop their leadership potential. Many of our former participants have found the ‘cohort’ nature of the scheme, the shared learning and the mentoring it provides invaluable.”

**Professor Jane Norman, Vice-Principal and Aurora Champion,  
University of Edinburgh**

“An important element of the Aurora journey was a colleague recommending that I participate in the programme. It was very important for me to hear someone say “I believe in your potential as a leader”.

The Aurora programme has inspired me to think of myself as a leader. It has shown me that I can be a unique leader; that I can remain authentic to myself and don't have to conform to a masculine model of leadership. Aurora has encouraged me to start taking risks, daring to say ‘yes’ to things that terrify me. As I have taken small steps this has given me confidence to take bigger steps. Even before I have a formal leadership position, I can do leadership acts now.”

**Aurora participant**

“I found the programme to be pioneering in so many ways. The carefully crafted cumulative structure underpinned by mentoring allows for rich participant discussions and learning. The guest speaker input is excellent, it was impressive to hear such inspiring senior women in leadership sharing very honest accounts of their personal journeys.”

**Dr Mary Collins, Senior executive development specialist,  
Royal College of Surgeons, Aurora Role Model**

“I have applied for my first job in 15 years and if I hadn't been on the programme I probably wouldn't have so its given me the confidence to do this.”

**Aurora participant**

“Aurora created a safe place to think about how to do things and for personal reflection; to press pause and think about where I'm going. It was so supportive.”

**Dr Michelle Millar, Senior Lecturer,  
National University of Ireland, Galway**

“It's a most bizarre effect to enter a room full of women, professional women, the energy felt different and more supportive, really positive.”

**Aurora participant**

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