

Women in Construction Engineering Event



Women make up 11% of the construction workforce and 16.5% of all engineers. This data alongside hearing influential female speakers share their stories at an Employer Advisory Board, were the main factors behind our desire to run this event. In addition, a few students have shared anecdotally with employability advisers about feeling isolated as a female and having difficulty speaking up in male-dominated classrooms.

Our aims were to expose the student cohorts to this; providing them with real-life stories to help them challenge stereotypes, strive for equality and network with positive role models.

The event was new for 2023 took place during a lunch time in March on the university campus, it was linked to International Women's Day but held later due to student timetables. The methodology of the event was based on a previous event for a specific non-vocational cohort. After liaising with relevant academics, the Employer Partnerships Officer and EDI leads in departments, the event was a success.

**Sheffield
Hallam
University**
Knowledge Applied

ACTION & APPROACH

We divided the event in two with six speakers sharing their career stories and promoted it to students of all genders.

Diverse speakers from local SMEs and larger organisations included:

- An entrepreneur and director of her own construction project management firm;
- A chemical engineering graduate originally from Poland who is from excelling in her career at a local SME;
- An electrical engineer from Pakistan who came to the UK as an international student and has since secured sponsorship;
- A chartered surveyor from a global business consultancy;
- Trustee of a local charity supporting Women in Engineering, Science and Technology.

We asked the speakers to share openly about their experiences and to share what they felt can be done to support women entering these industries and advice for current students. For the second half of the event, the speakers and students networked with one another over drinks and pizza.

IMPACT

The event was attended by 19 students from a range of courses and 10 academic staff members. Attendees included the committee of the newly formed *Womens' Engineering Student Society* and the *Gamechangers Society* for women in sport who were motivated by attending and gained new connections.

Feedback scores were overwhelmingly positive:

- The event was informative: 4.5 / 5
- The event was inspiring: 4.6 / 5

As a result of the event, students have said:

"Being a woman in engineering isn't an asset but a barrier that helps you stand out."

"I was really confused about how to get a job, but it really helped me to not give up."

A YouTube video was created of the speakers, so students unable to attend could benefit. The speakers are keen to participate again in future. We also received positive comments from a number of their employers and the event contributed to their corporate social responsibility aims.

CONCLUSIONS, LESSONS LEARNT & FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES

The event will be repeated during the next academic year, and hopefully become an annual occurrence. It will be improved further by having a longer planning period to help raise the profile of the events for students. Our university ethos focuses on **Curriculum Integrated Employability** so we aim for key messages reach a wider audience in future. We will do this by inviting relevant speakers into curriculum sessions, using photos and quotes from the event in curriculum and in the departmental buildings and continuing to circulate the video.

We will continue to share advice from speakers with students.

The feedback from event will also form part of a presentation at the national AGCAS conference, allowing the good practice to be shared as widely as possible. Student societies benefited from attending so advisers will continue to encourage and support these groups.