

WOMEN-SPACE LEADERSHIP AWARD 2026

GUIDANCE NOTES

The award seeks to recognise women leaders across different grades, in professional and academic positions. It recognises colleagues who play a role at different stages of careers, including management and leadership positions. Individuals work in Higher Education, in full time or part time roles and must adhere to the following:

- Staff Development professionals nominated by others in similar roles or by faculty
- Faculty who are nominated by Staff Development professionals, due to their role in supporting or learning professional development

OVERVIEW

The award is an acknowledgement of merit designed to recognise and celebrate the remarkable achievements of women leaders across Staff Development within the Higher Education sector. It serves as a beacon of inspiration, providing relatable role models and encouraging women to develop their leadership within their roles and if they desire to aspire to leadership roles and excel in them.

The vision is to create a world where women's leadership is normalised, enjoyed by all and valued equally to that of their male counterparts.

Nominations and shortlisted entries will be featured during the Festival, with the winner being announced on 10th November.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the award are to:

- Acknowledge and reward the outstanding leadership of women.
- Recognise women at different stages in their careers and experiences.
- Encourage more women to embody their own leadership styles.
- Increase awareness of the capabilities and successes of women leaders.
- Raise awareness of women's own power.
- Encourage more women to consider taking on leadership roles.

Staff Development Forum

Obsidian Offices
4 Chantry Court
Chester CH1 4QN

HOW TO ENTER

- Use the relevant sections of the form to describe why the individual should be considered for the award.
- Provide examples of demonstrable behaviours that the individual has role modelled in the workplace.
- Identify potential learning points for other colleagues.

JUDGING CRITERIA

The judging panel, which will comprise of representatives from our Partners and SDF Council, will look for nominations that:

1. Demonstrates **Leadership Excellence**: Innovation, Impact, Integrity, and the ability to inspire others.
2. Demonstrates the **SDF values** (see page 3) in the performance of their roles formally and informally.
3. Demonstrates collaboration within Professional Services and/or Faculty.

RULES OF ENTRY

To enter, the individual being nominated must be members of the Staff Development Forum. If you are not a member, [please read this guidance to become a member](#). Shortlisted entrants should be registered to attend the Festival.

The individual must be nominated by a colleague in their own institution or another, as long as you both are within the higher education sector.

KEY DATES

- **Deadline:** Thursday 8th October, End of Play
- **Award presentation:** Tuesday 10th November during the SDF Festival by a Partner Representative.

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SDF VALUES & SAMPLE BEHAVIOURS

Collaboration:

- work together to bring the best expertise and share knowledge with others
- provide opportunities for colleagues to connect to understand challenges
- deliver an inclusive culture/community where everyone feels included

Innovation:

- approach & embrace new challenges
- use technology & innovation to encourage learning and development
- seek feedback from others to make a greater impact & implement change

Sharing good practice

- promote a culture of sharing practice, trust, and continuous learning
- support their colleagues by sharing their ideas, initiatives, feedback
- encourage the sharing of ideas and allow everyone the opportunity to speak up

Inclusivity

- foster an environment where diverse voices are heard, respected, and valued
- actively challenge biases and advocate for equality to create a fair workplace for all
- promote inclusive leadership by empowering everyone to contribute their unique perspectives

Leadership

- lead by example and inspire others to develop their skills and grow
- encourage a culture of accountability and integrity to build trust within teams
- provide guidance and support to help colleagues achieve their full potential