



UNIVERSITY
WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP
PROGRAMME



BUCS
British Universities
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BUCS & FA WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP PROGRAMME IMPACT REPORT 2024/25

This report provides an overview of the impact of the
BUCS and FA Women's Leadership Programme
2024/25



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The FA and BUCS Women's Leadership Programme (WLP) is a **transformative and empowering experience** for aspiring female and non-binary leaders in football.

This report is based on feedback from the 2024–25 cohort of participants and their accelerators (mentors), highlighting the programme's profound impact on their **personal and professional growth**, its role in building **networks**, and its significant contribution to **industry awareness and readiness** for its participants. Participants widely recognise WLP as an "important and necessary programme" that provides "life-changing opportunities".

Crucially, WLP's positive influence also extends beyond the participants to the dedicated accelerators, who also report **significant professional and personal development** through their mentorship roles. This feedback highlights the programme's holistic approach to leadership development within the football and higher education ecosystems.

WLP SUPPORTS STUDENTS TO DEVELOP IN 4 KEY AREAS



Industry Awareness

Increases understanding of football leadership



Networking

Builds robust connections within the industry



Professional Growth

Enhances career skills and opportunities



Personal Growth

Transformative experience for personal development

KEY STATISTICS FROM THE 2024-25 COHORT

100% of participants rated their overall experience as 4 or 5 out of 5, indicating extremely high satisfaction.

+100 The Net Promoter Score (NPS) for the programme is an outstanding +100, with an average of 9.8/10. 0% of participants or accelerators score the programme less than 8/10.

95% of participants would recommend WLP to other students.

100% of accelerators would recommend being an accelerator on WLP.

100% of accelerators would recommend being an accelerator on WLP.

100% of participants agreed that WLP contributed positively to their personal development.

94% of participants agreed it positively contributed to their professional development.

89% of participants felt "more confident in their abilities" due to participating in the programme.

100% of participants felt incredibly proud or very proud of their connection to the Women's Leadership Programme.

100% of participants reported an increased "awareness of the leadership qualities needed to inspire others" and developed "a love of life-long learning and reflection for developmental action".

INTRODUCTION TO THE WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP PROGRAMME

BUCS & FA Women's Leadership Programme (WLP) is a *"transformative"* and *"empowering"* experience, providing a critical platform for aspiring female and non-binary leaders within the football landscape as described by the participants themselves. It is more than just a training programme, it's an immersive learning experience designed to unlock potential, build confidence, and create lasting networks. As one participant shared, they applied because it would *"help me build my confidence and learn a bit more about myself"*. Others were inspired by peer recommendations, with former participants heavily encouraging new applicants. Some joined to gain clarity on their career aspirations within football, expressing sentiments like, *"I knew I wanted to work in football, but I didn't really know what, so I was just trying to put two and two together. I thought this programme would help me"*.



The programme's design is praised for its ability to create a *"safe space"* where individuals can push their limits and develop their personal brand. The environment is described as supportive and celebratory, making participants feel *"seen and important"*. This initial positive impression sets the stage for what participants overwhelmingly describe as a *"once in a lifetime opportunity"*. The feedback gathered showcases that WLP is not just beneficial, but *"essential"* for developing leadership in women, especially in the football industry where they have historically faced many barriers.

PROGRAMME SATISFACTION AND ADVOCACY

WLP has achieved exceptionally high levels of satisfaction and generated widespread advocacy from both participants and accelerators. This unanimous endorsement demonstrates the programmes success in meeting and exceeding expectations.

Participant Satisfaction & Recommendation:

100% of participants rated their overall experience as 4 or 5 out of 5, indicating extremely high satisfaction.

+100 The Net Promoter Score (NPS) for the programme is an outstanding +100, with an average of 9.8/10. 0% of participants or accelerators scored the programme less than 8/10.

Participants expressed deep gratitude and appreciation, with comments such as: *"This has been an amazing experience. All the staff have been incredible. Thank you"*. Another participant noted, *"You have something so special here and the work you do is so appreciated"*. One participant stated, *"It has changed my life and made me so much more confident"*. The enthusiasm is clear, with participants advising anyone unsure about applying to *"Absolutely apply. It's a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity"* and *"Go for it - it will challenge and change you in ways you didn't expect"*.

Accelerator Satisfaction & Recommendation:

Accelerators also show unanimous support, with 100% recommending being an accelerator on WLP. Most responses rated their likelihood to recommend at 9 or 10 on the NPS scale.

Accelerators provided powerful testimonials, highlighting the personal and professional growth they experienced: *"This experience has truly changed me as a person - personally and professionally"*. Another reflected, *"I was a shell of myself when I first started vs now. I feel I have grown in confidence and become a better person"*.

The desire to make a difference was a key highlight for accelerators: "Too many favourite moments to pick, but feeling like I've made a difference stands out most".

PARTICIPANT SKILL DEVELOPMENT

WLP has been highly effective in significantly enhancing participants' personal and professional skillsets, with a particular focus on building confidence and self-belief.

Key Skills & Attributes Developed:

- 100%** of participants agreed that the FA WLP has increased their awareness of the leadership qualities needed to inspire people.
- 100%** of participants agree that the FA WLP has encouraged a love of life-long learning and reflection for developmental action.
- 100%** of participants agree that the programme has improved their ability to connect with people through the quality of their communication and influence.
- 94%** agree that after completing WLP, they are more confident in themselves and what they can accomplish.

This was a dominant theme, with participants stating the programme *"helped develop my confidence so much in both a football landscape, but also just generally in my personal life"*. Another added that it taught her to *"trust myself, my knowledge and to be able to demonstrate confidence clearly"*. Participants shared that they now feel *"more confident in their abilities"* and *"significantly more equipped for the workplace"*.

- 94%** agree that from completing WLP, they are now more equipped to cope with pressure, deal with setbacks, and remain resilient and effective.
- 89%** agree that from completing WLP, they are more able to analyse information and think outside the box to develop solutions to problems.
- 83%** agree that WLP has made them more able to plan activities, set goals, manage and organise resources and their time.

Tangible Outcomes & Self-Perception:

- Participants described feeling *"more aware of the opportunities available"*.
- The programme helped participants realise they are *"more capable than I think"* and taught them to *"back myself"*.
- One participant, now a club captain at university for the next academic year, highlighted how WLP enabled her to present everything confidently to her teammates in order to achieve the role, something she *"would not have done"* before the programme.

WLP successfully empowers participants by equipping them with a variety of skills and a newfound belief in their capabilities, setting a strong foundation for their future endeavours as they enter the football industry.

PARTICIPANT KNOWLEDGE DEVELOPMENT & CAREER CLARITY

WLP has proven instrumental in significantly broadening participants' understanding of the football industry, clarifying their career pathways, and strengthening their resolve to pursue roles within football.

89% of participants agree that completing WLP has prepared them to undertake a role in the football industry.

Increasing Knowledge of the Football Industry:

94% of participants agree that WLP has opened their eyes to the range of opportunities available in the football industry.

The programme provided insights into the *"many roles there are within football"*. The same participant further shared, *"I wouldn't have even thought about some of the roles that I've learned from this programme"*.

100% of participants agreed that completing WLP has supported them to build a stronger network in the football industry.

Participants gained awareness of the importance of networking and the vast array of current opportunities. A participant noted, *"the amount of people I know in the industry now from this programme is crazy...you learn so much about what is actually out there by being a part of WLP"*.

The realistic nature of tasks provided *"insightful"* learning, with participants engaging in real-life data and problems, showcasing how football clubs operate and challenges that are being solved in the industry right now.

Career Clarity & Future Ambitions:

61% of participants confirmed they are now "clearer on what football opportunities they want to pursue".

WLP helped participants connect their passions with viable career paths. One participant described finding her direction from the learnings she gained on the programme: *"I knew that I love football and I'm so passionate about Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI), but I didn't know how I could marry them up and what roles actually exist? And now I know I feel very sure of myself and of what I want to do next. But I wouldn't have been able to do that without WLP."*

The programme successfully acts as a navigational tool, providing participants with the knowledge and confidence to map out their potential professional journey within football.

REDEFINING LEADERSHIP FOR PARTICIPANTS

The WLP has reshaped participants' understanding and practice of leadership, moving them beyond traditional, often stereotypical, views to embrace more authentic and inclusive forms of leadership.

Beyond Stereotypes:

Participants learned that a good leader is *"beyond just the stereotypical thing of, you've got a role, and you've got the biggest, loudest voice in the room...it's about appreciating everyone's role and how to get the most value out of other people"*. This highlights a shift towards valuing collaboration and diverse contributions over hierarchical power.

Participants learned that *"being the leader in the room isn't always about being the loudest person"*. One participant emphasised, *"you can be your own leader and still lead in an efficient and effective way"*.

The programme revealed that *"little things inside you... small transformations"* can make you a better person and a leader, even if you don't immediately recognise it yourself, others will.

Authentic Leadership:

A key takeaway for many was learning *"to back myself and have confidence from my own experiences and skillset as well"*. One participant shared *"I'm not a very extroverted person, and I'm never going to be the loudest person in the room, but I just need to believe that I have the knowledge and experience to bring to the table"*.

Participants learned not to compare themselves negatively to others: *"Not comparing myself to other people. My goal post is different from someone else's goal post"*. This builds a greater sense of personal value.

WLP has significantly *"shaped my perception of myself as a leader"*, enabling participants to embrace their individual leadership styles rather than conforming to perceived norms. This redefinition of leadership empowers participants to lead authentically, valuing their unique strengths and the contributions of every team member, leading the way for a more diverse and inclusive leadership landscape in football in the future.

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING FOR PARTICIPANTS

WLP effectively integrates challenging, practical experiences that push participants out of their comfort zones, leading to accelerated personal and professional development. These moments, though sometimes daunting, were consistently cited as highly developmental for participants.

Programme Highlights:

- The practical tasks were among the most enjoyed aspects of the programme.
- Peer connection in a safe, inclusive space was highly valued.
- The *"dancing and quiz during Residential 1 showed how quickly we became a community"* and how everyone quickly felt *"so together and close with people you'd never met 3 days prior"*. This initial shared vulnerability created strong bonds across the cohort.
- Small group sessions with accelerators, including *"walks and talks when discussing the books and our why"* were highly valued.



Greatest Challenges & Developmental Moments:

- Participants described stepping outside their comfort zones as simultaneously their greatest challenge and most transformative experience.
- Public speaking and presenting, especially to expert panels and during Q&A sessions, were *"incredibly daunting"* but also the moments where participants *"grew most"*.
- Networking was a common challenge, with many feeling *"uncomfortable"* and experiencing *"imposter syndrome"* when speaking to people who already work in football. However, the programme helped them overcome these fears and made it *"much easier to settle into speaking and building connections"*.

These experiences taught participants to *"trust myself"* and *"believe in myself"*, transforming discomfort into learning and growth opportunities.

THE INVALUABLE ROLE OF ACCELERATOR RELATIONSHIPS (PARTICIPANT PERSPECTIVE)

The relationship between participants and their accelerators (mentors) was consistently highlighted as one of the **most valuable and impactful aspects** of WLP. Accelerators provided a crucial blend of personalised support, constructive challenge, and a safe environment for participants to reflect and grow.

Safe Space and Personalised Support:

Participants frequently identified their accelerator group as the place where they *"grew the most"* and had their *"favourite moments"*. One participant noted, *"getting to talk with my accelerator in our smaller group...those were my favourite moments"*. Another echoed this, sharing that, *"The time with my accelerator was the most valuable time"*.

Accelerators provided a *"safe space"* for participants, allowing for open and honest discussions. One participant mentioned, *"having that chat just sort of made everything a bit easier"* during stressful times.

The accelerators' support helped participants to *"reflect on the day and how we can be better during the rest of the programme"*, guiding (or accelerating) their learning and growth.

Challenge and Insight:

Accelerators actively challenged participants to think from different perspectives. Some found that their accelerator's challenge caused them *"to think about the bigger picture"*.

They helped participants gain self-awareness, noting things participants wouldn't even notice about themselves, providing a clearer idea of their own strengths and weaknesses.

The accelerators' expertise and guidance were also directly linked to practical outcomes, *"I've managed to get myself a placement next year through one of the accelerators on the programme"*.

The trusting relationships built with accelerators are fundamental to WLPs success, providing participants with the tailored guidance and a supportive environment necessary to unlock their full potential in such a short space of time.

THE IMPACT OF THE PROGRAMME ON ACCELERATORS: PROFESSIONAL & PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

The BUCS Women's Leadership Programme's positive impact is not limited to its participants; it also provides significant professional and personal development opportunities for the accelerators themselves. This layered learning is a key aspect of the programme's design.

100% of accelerators agreed that being an accelerator on WLP was a positive experience for them.

100% of accelerators would recommend this BUCS programme to a friend.

91% of accelerators agreed that the skills they have developed in this role will help them in their career and support them to fulfil their own career ambitions.

91% of accelerators agreed that the programme has positively contributed to their own personal and professional development.

Learning Through Mentorship:

- Accelerators reported *"tangible growth"* in participants' confidence, industry-readiness, and self-belief. They observed significant transformations, with one stating: *"My participant said she no longer recognises her SWOT from a year ago, that's the power of this programme"*.
- Mentoring students with less clear goals *"pushed me in ways I didn't think possible"*, demonstrating the reciprocal learning inherent in the programme.
- The programme directly contributed to accelerators' career progression. One stated, *"I'm about to start line managing for the first time and I have no doubt it's because of this programme"*.

Personal Reflection & Re-energised Passion:

- The accelerator experience prompted significant self-reflection, with one saying, *"It's helped me re-evaluate my own life and career goals"*.
- It served as a powerful reminder of their purpose and passion: *"WLP reminded me why we do our jobs and re-energised my passion for developing young people"*.
- Accelerators found personal validation, stating, *"This programme has helped me feel that I do have value to add, without having to be anyone else but me"*.

CONCLUSION

The BUCS & FA Women's Leadership Programme creates a **transformative and empowering environment** for current and emerging female leaders in football. It has delivered high-impact personal and professional development for its participants, fostering confidence, clarity, and ambition.

The programme has not only equipped participants with vital leadership skills, increased confidence, and clarified career pathways, but it has also developed a **strong, supportive community** and allowed for **mutual growth** for its dedicated accelerators. The **unanimous positive feedback and advocacy** from all involved highlight the programme's success and lasting legacy. Participants express deep gratitude and emotional connection, repeatedly calling it **"life-changing"**. They are eager to stay involved, with nearly all participants indicating interest in mentoring future cohorts. This desire to **"pay it forward"** speaks volumes about the profound impact and sense of purpose the WLP instils.

Similarly, accelerators express immense satisfaction and a renewed passion for developing young people, affirming the programme's ability to create a ripple effect of positive change.

By equipping its participants with the tools, clarity, and community to lead with confidence, WLP is not just shaping individuals, it's helping shape the future of the football industry for years to come.

"This programme has changed my life and given me confidence that I will carry with me forever."

