

## UWE report 2025

The Leadership team at BFWG has continued to work during the last year following from the strategic review that started two years ago toward sustainability, increasing and retaining membership. We encourage members to participate in national roles at a board level to give a chance to wider age group to shape our immediate and longer-term future.

The BFWG website continues to be an important resource both for keeping our members informed and attracting new members. Each local branch has its own unique web address, it acts as a shop window including a picture gallery, the ability for people to contact us and an events programme which encourages guests to attend. We have a LinkedIn profile to attract new members through which we advertise our events that support doctoral students, such as research presentation day, scholarship awards and Funds for Women Graduates (FFWG) grants. Local groups encourage attendance through word of mouth and activities such as book groups, coffee mornings and inviting members to join events.

A seminar was organised by one of our members, Jelena Milisavljevic Syed at Cranfield University, aimed at young female researchers and postgraduates, to assess their needs and the support that BFWG/FFWG might consider; the discussion did raise the profile of our organisation. A survey was undertaken for feedback, though with limited information due to the number of attendees. A follow up from this initiative is being discussed within the leadership team to expand the survey with more specific outcomes and revision of the questions.

BFWG supported Graduate Women Scotland (GWS) to second their resolution, which deals with Equitable Rights for Postgraduate Researchers. The resolution seeks adjustments to laws and institutional policies in order to ensure that postgraduate researchers receive the same rights as those who are employed by their institution, with a primary focus on parental leave and equitable visa regulations for international students.

Recently I supported the leadership team with the new members meeting, to explain our USP in European and International connections. The induction meeting with new members had a special session related to our international links

I organised a national speaker event in November where the President of UWE Anne Negre was among a panel of experts discussing gender bias and AI, it was well attended by our members. A webinar was undertaken to inform members about the Bina Roy projects which are run by Graduate Women International (GWI). We gave examples of previous projects and explained the processes of application and assessment during the cycle. Thanks to Stacy, Executive Director for her help in sharing the information and inviting some previous project leaders to take part.

Meet & Greet event held in Belfast was very successful and well organised, it was attended by a record number from BFWG. The event established and renewed older acquaintances and friendships, this will have an impact at local and national levels among our members.

I continue with my role as convenor for the GWI project committee. Projects include the annual Bina Roy projects, as well as a new project established based on the Dr Meta seed fund; which is open to all NFAs who are members of GWI.

I had the opportunity to join GWI's delegation to the Council on the Status of Women at the United Nation (CSW69), and also being part of the UK civil society delegation. I found this a very rewarding time, making connections and getting BFWG's voice to the forefront of UK civil societies. This will put BFWG in partnership with voices influencing politicians at a global and European level.

BFWG has a varied programme, we had a theme of women in public life which was reflected in our Westminster seminar; the discussion was to encourage women to stand for election to Parliament and local government. A new feature this year has been provided by members of our academic awards and FFWG grants awardees alumni group, with a series of online meetings. This will enable us to keep in touch with the women researchers we have supported and to provide events to help develop their careers further. This is encouraging a network of younger members and showing our members what our link charities have supported throughout.

Funds for Women Graduates (FFWG) with BFWG went through a detailed process to modernise the constitution and secure the charity's future with reduced administration. The name and strong relationship with BFWG have been preserved. The charitable donations of FFWG amount to £240,000 annually in the form of grants to doctoral students of different nationalities who are studying in British universities and who find themselves in need.

BFWG Scholarship Fund Trust has been running for the past 25 years and continues to offer annual academic awards to women doctoral students for excellence in their studies. In 2025 the Trust has made four awards totalling £20,000.

BFWG also organised the annual Research presentation day. Entries were received from postgraduate students across the UK, eight were shortlisted to attend and present their work to a non-specialist audience, the day was both valuable and enjoyable. Prizes were given to the best presenter and runner up. The presentations were well structured with clarity of explanation and excellent response to questions. The winner was Pooja Kini with her yearlong field study in Jaipur regarding access to water in the slums (informal settlements). Outcomes also included networking among the young students, and friendship and mentorship from the academic input of the scholarship fund Trustees.

Finally, the BFWG has continued to take part with the National Council of Women (NCW), 6-0 (influential women's organisations in Britain) and National Alliance of Women's Organisations. BFWG supported a resolution with NCW to lobby concerning violence against women and girls.