



## WSLA 2019 press report

- Academy helps advance gender-equity in sports industry's top jobs
- University project develops leadership competencies for those who work at highest levels
- Women-only cohort includes former captain of Afghan women's football team who established game in the country after fall of Taliban

AN ACADEMY which looks to address gender-imbalance in global sport leadership by supporting women to access jobs at the highest level has opened.

The initiative, known as the Women's Sport Leadership Academy (WSLA), is organised by University of Chichester to develop more female trailblazers across the worldwide sport sector. Nearly 35 people based in 17 countries have joined the programme to improve their leadership competencies and chances of employment in influential positions.

Senior Lecturer Dr Jordan Matthews, from the University of Chichester, is the chair of the 2019 organising group. He said: "WSLA was created to provide unique development opportunities for women leaders from around the world to step up, take the lead and make an impact. This residential week challenges what our participants think about leadership and how to enhance their practice."



The Academy, a week-long residential for participants, has been hosted at the University since 2014 to develop the confidence of female leaders and contributes to the international women and sport movement. Now in its sixth year, it has already helped nearly 300 graduates from 50 countries worldwide, and was recognised by the International Olympic Committee in its gender quality report.

Among this year's cohort is Khalida Popal, a former captain of the Afghan women's football team who helped establish the female game in the Middle Eastern country after the Taliban fell in 2004.



Facilitators for the week's content include former graduates of the programme from around the world.

The WSLA initiative is a programme of the Anita White Foundation, based at the University of Chichester, which intends to develop future women leaders of sport from the UK and overseas, preserve the heritage of the women and sport movement, and conduct and facilitate research and scholarly activity. It is developed and delivered by Females Achieving Brilliance (FAB) network of women in sport who hold leadership positions or have the aspirations to do so.



Pauline Harrison, co-founder of FAB and previous Chief Executive of England Netball, said: "A unique feature of the WSLA residential is the intercultural experiences shared between participants. Women from all around the world share ideas, values, and experiences to enhance their own leadership strategies in sport."

The WSLA initiative has been adopted across the world with a programme in Botswana and, since 2017, New Zealand where the University formed a partnership with the nation's Olympic Committee to help retired athletes transition into leadership positions.