

EDC15D006

Title: Athena SWAN – Report on Progress and Next Steps
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Issue

To inform the Committee of progress within the Athena SWAN initiative pursuing gender equality in all subjects at UEA

Recommendation

The Committee is asked to note content for information

Resource Implications

None for the Committee to agree at this stage.

Risk Implications

Achievement within this framework to Silver standard is linked to NIHR funding. Additionally, other funding bodies view Athena SWAN as evidence demonstrating activity supporting equality, which is increasingly becoming a requirement linked to funding.

Equality and Diversity

The focus of this initiative is the pursuit of gender equality within all subjects following the widening of this initiative to Arts, Humanities, Social Sciences, Business and Law subjects in July 2015.

Timing of decisions

n/a

Further Information

The first paper to the Committee about Athena SWAN was in November 2011 addressing the question of membership (EDC11D001)

Background

Athena SWAN is a framework, very widely adopted within the Higher Education Sector originally as a means of progressing equality for women in STEMM subjects. Following the widening of this initiative to all subjects from July 2015, gender equality as a whole is now the focus. Achievement within this framework has recently been linked to funding streams, principally from the NIHR, with HEFCE and RCUK also making clear statements about the need to evidence progress in equality as part of funding applications/awards.

Athena SWAN – Report on Progress and Next Steps

ATHENA SWAN AWARD LOG AT NOVEMBER 2015			
YEAR	ROUND	UNIVERSITY/ SCHOOL	LEVEL
2012	APRIL	UEA	BRONZE
2013	APRIL	BIO	BRONZE
		PHA	BRONZE
	NOV	MED	BRONZE
2014	APRIL	RSC	BRONZE
		ENV	BRONZE
		NSC	BRONZE
	NOV	MED	SILVER
		PSY	BRONZE
		BIO	SILVER
		PHA	SILVER
2015	APRIL	CMP	BRONZE
		MTH	BRONZE
	NOV	UEA	<i>BRONZE (RENEWAL) - WIP</i>

1. Current Position

Since the last Equality and Diversity Committee in May 2015, the results of the two Bronze submissions put forward for the Schools of Computing Sciences and Mathematics have been confirmed as successful. Due to the volume of submissions received in each round of Athena SWAN detailed feedback has not been received but is expected by the end of November. Awards will be collected at a ceremony at the University of Oxford in December, The table above shows our progress to date with the University Bronze Renewal being our sole submission in the forthcoming November round.

The central E&D Office supports a measured approach, NIHR pressures notwithstanding, partly because a failed submission has a detrimental impact on morale within a School but also because of the substantially increased length of time before results and feedback are received from the Equality Challenge Unit. This can delay the chance to resubmit by at least a year. The value of 'distance travelled' when aiming for Silver cannot be over-emphasised. This can take different forms, but measuring impact in itself can involve working on initiatives for around a year. The awarding Panels take evidence of impact seriously so although writing the submission well is clearly important it is the underlying work and its effectiveness over time which is paramount and which must be demonstrated.

Normally, discussions are held during the final month of the submission's preparation and a decision reached between the School and the Equality Office, however, if there is a difference of opinion between the School and the Equality Office regarding the timing or standard of a submission it has been agreed that a short paper reflecting both views will be put forward from the Equality Office to the Chair of the Athena SWAN Central Steering Group (ASCSG), along with copies of the submission, and that his decision will be final.

Following the increase in submissions being handled internally it was recommended that Schools establish their own deadlines prior to the E&D Internal deadline to help avoid last minute rushes which are less easy to support effectively with the increase in activity.

2. Changes to the Equality Challenge Unit

Athena SWAN is managed by the Equality Challenge Unit, the national body established in 2006 to support the Higher Education Sector in issues of equality and diversity, particularly in respect of protected characteristics. As reported to the last Equality and Diversity Committee in May 2015, a number of changes were introduced at national level to the Athena Charter and Framework as well as to the operation of the Equality Challenge Unit itself.

In summary the changes were:

1. HEFCE would no longer be in a position to fund the Equality Challenge Unit.
2. A 'Subscription Model' is being adopted from January 2016 with fees on a sliding scale based on each respective HEI's income. Fees range from £4-20k per annum, the cost to UEA being in the region of £17k.
3. The subscription covers membership to Athena SWAN and the cost of an Institutional submission – however all School submissions will continue to attract a fee of £500. This is to cover the cost of administering the judging Panels.

As part of the new Subscription Model our annual fee would include:

1. Membership to ECUs equality charter marks (currently the expanded Athena SWAN and the new Race Equality Charter Mark)
2. Information, advice and training, access to the advice line, publications and train the trainer sessions for equality and diversity staff
3. Research and evidence, including annual statistical reports for staff and students and benchmarking data.

There will also be discounted rates on additional services such as bespoke consultancy, training, seminars and events.

Since the last Equality and Diversity Committee in May 2015, ET has approved support of the new Charter, including the expanded range of underpinning principles and the formal commitment from the University to continue with the revised Athena SWAN gender equality framework. ECU has confirmed UEA's re-commitment and this enables us to make submissions under the new Post-May 2015 templates.

3. UEA Institutional Submission

The UEA renewal Bronze submission is currently being drafted with the aim of submitting at the end of November 2015. Text is currently being drafted prior to circulation to selected members of the ASCSG for comment prior to submission.

4. The Sainsbury Laboratory

Preliminary discussions have taken place between the School of Biological Sciences (BIO); the Sainsbury Laboratory (TSL); Equality Office and the Science Human Resources Manager to establish whether because of the close working relationship and shared employment responsibilities an Athena SWAN submission at Silver would be appropriate as a joint submission between BIO and TSL. An additional meeting is scheduled to make a final decision, although preliminary data for both BIO and TSL has been obtained for analysis.

5. Conclusion

The University is making clear and timely progress within the Athena SWAN framework having secured 9 departmental Bronze, 1 departmental Silver as well as the Institutional Bronze Since April 2012. UEA's Bronze Action Plan has made significant steps forward to support the Bronze Renewal being made in November 2015 as well as development of work under the extended Athena SWAN framework. The Equality and Diversity Committee will be kept informed of progress.

Key Elements of the Internal Threshold

Feedback from all submissions as well as Equality and Diversity Office experience on Athena SWAN judging panels shows there are a number of areas already covered by central policy which are critical to achieving an award at Bronze level and which must show sustained progress and impact for any higher award level.

Experience shows that failure to address the key areas below either singly or severally, will result in a failed submission. Therefore, Schools must ensure that these areas are properly addressed. Submissions which do not address one or all of the areas below will be returned for further work by the School.

Schools are strongly advised to use the resources on the Blackboard site, including consideration of successful recent internal and external AS submissions, and to exchange best practice within and across Faculties. The Feedback Log and Log of Best Practice should also be referred to as part of building the submission.

The key areas for inclusion in the threshold are:

- **Recruitment (staff)/Admission (students):** Admission data has so far proven very robust (as far as conversion from application to acceptance goes) for all Schools in respect of gender equality. Schools also take training requirements seriously for recruitment and are mindful of the need for balanced panels. **Work needed here centres more on review of documentation, use of Search Committees, and wording in further particulars/adverts, consideration of other positive action measures.**
- **Outreach:** although often innovative from a subject point of view, activities seem to vary considerably in how far any protected characteristics are considered in design/delivery.
 - more formal evaluation will be needed under the new Athena SWAN framework;
 - consideration of content of outreach activities from a gender perspective and including consideration of other protected characteristics
- **Induction:** most Schools have not had formal inductions in place or, where there has been induction, it hasn't been available for all staff groups. SCI have introduced a clear, practical induction document and checklist, stemming from work in BIO. This model could be used in other Schools/Faculties where a gap exists in this practice.
- **Appraisal:** a clear central policy exists for appraisal but few Schools have been engaging in this work. Schools must work with their HR Manager to ensure practice is in place and is meaningful to participants. Again, this element is seen within the Athena SWAN process as a key building block underpinning successful development of talent and with research suggesting different, inherent, gendered behaviours.
- **Mentoring:** Most Schools seem to prefer to develop their own arrangements for mentoring, however, where possible Schools should work with Faculty Managers to try and ensure some consistent, cohesive practice is in place. Mentoring has emerged both in international research and via our own staff surveys as something which is, not exclusively but, particularly valued by women and not only at early career stages but also with senior roles, at each level presenting distinct challenges. Although it may be appropriate for different subject areas to pursue mentoring differently, or for reasons of size of School, this is an area where synergy between Schools and Faculty management could achieve consistently improved practice.
- **Promotion:** the Green Book is awaiting central review, however, Schools participating in Athena SWAN will need to ensure they are communicating the current document and process proactively to all staff and not screening out potential promotion candidates in a subjective manner. This is an area which is clearly key to the career pipeline and in which

gendered behaviour and the opportunity for bias is well documented by international research. Schools should engage with their HR Managers to explore the possibility of an annual Q&A question or workshop as has been done in MED and Schools in the SCI Faculty.

- **Flexible working:** the University has clear HR policies covering flexible working and other family friendly options. All Schools now have an Equality and Diversity web page and it's recommended that this is used to proactively promote such policies so that all staff are aware of potential options along with a slide on available School and Faculty plasma screens. Templates can be provided by the central E&D Office and links shared to illustrate this – proactive review or discussion at Faculty level would add valuable support.
- **Training opportunities/career development:** the new Athena SWAN framework specifically requests staff training uptake by gender for academic (Bronze) and academic and support staff (Silver). This also links to improvements to appraisal with prompts to ensure development opportunities are discussed as a matter of course for all staff groups. Within Athena SWAN this is perceived as another of the key elements underpinning career progression and within which different trends in behaviour can be observed by gender.
- **Workload Models:** again, UEA doesn't have one consistent approach but the Athena SWAN framework expects a clear, transparent process which can demonstrate fair loads without gender bias. Heads of School should ensure they've liaised with Faculty level about this as a recent review took place and there may be new guidance to observe.
- **Committee Membership:** Heads are now prompted by the E&D Office on an annual basis to think about gender balance in their key committees. It is an area to which attention is needed well before making a submission to Athena SWAN.
- **Invited Speakers:** This is an area which can be substantially improved with specific attention ahead of preparing a submission and which attracts attention from judging panels. Schools need to consciously ensure consideration is given to gender balance in invited speakers, as well as considering other aspects of diversity.
- **Staff and student consultations:** where these are scheduled Schools can help achieve multiple goals by considering areas linked to gender equality for feedback in all consultations and particularly by ensuring surveys are devised so results can be disaggregated by gender, as a minimum, but additional characteristics wherever possible.