

EDC15D009

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 the broader range of 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

1. Current Position

Since the last Equality and Diversity Committee in November 2015, detailed feedback has been received for the Schools of Computing Sciences and Mathematics following their successful Bronze submissions in April 2015. Both schools have reviewed their feedback and are currently addressing the areas raised for future consideration/improvement.

Our sole submission in the November 2015 round was the University Bronze Renewal, the outcome is expected in April 2016.

The University currently holds a Bronze award at University level, 9 Bronze awards at School level and a Silver School award. The Schools of Chemistry, Economics and Politics, Philosophy, Language and Communication Studies are expected to make submissions in the forthcoming April round, the latter two schools making applications under the Post-May 2015 template. All will be at Bronze level.

The Equality & Diversity Office have supported the Equality Challenge Unit (ECU) in January by continuing to act as Athena SWAN Panellists with the extra responsibility of acting as Panel Chairs for a variety of submissions made in the November 2015 round.

A key aspect which came out during the Panel work was the importance of evidence showing impact and “distance travelled” when aiming for Silver and this cannot be over-emphasised. 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.

The current plan of submissions and renewals is shown below for 2016 – 2018.

		NIHR					
		30/04/2016	30/11/2016	30/04/2017	30/11/2017	30/04/2018	30/11/2018
FACULTY							
UEA		SSSS					
BIO	SCI		SSSS			R	
PHA	SCI		SSSS			R	
ENV	SCI			SSSS	R		
MTH	SCI						R
CMP	SCI						R
CHE	SCI	BBBB					
MED	FMH					R	
HSC	FMH		SSSS		R		
PSY	SSF			SSSS		R	
ECO	SSF	BBBB					
LAW	SSF			BBBB			
DEV	SSF						
EDU	SSF						
NBS	SSF						
SWK	SSF						
PPL	HUM	BBBB					
AMA	HUM						
HIS	HUM						
LDC	HUM						

B = BRONZE; S = SILVER;
R = RENEWAL DEADLINE FOR AWARDS ALREADY GAINED

2. Changes to the Equality Challenge Unit

Since the last Equality and Diversity Committee in November 2015, the University has subscribed to the ECU Subscription Model which took effect in January 2016. The current subscription level is £15k per annum with a small discount having been applied in lieu of our membership under the former scheme for this first year.

3. The Sainsbury Laboratory

A decision has been made by the School of Biological Sciences (BIO) to delay a discussed collaboration on a submission with the Sainsbury Laboratory (TSL). BIO are aiming to make their Silver submission in November 2016 and due to the differences in practices at TSL, as well as the differences in composition of staff, it was agreed that a collaboration at this stage would not be advisable. However both units will work closely together and the BIO ASSET Group which oversees the Athena SWAN activities in BIO now has representation from TSL with the longer term aim of submitting jointly on Athena SWAN.

4. Athena SWAN Eastern Regional Meeting

The University hosted the London and South East Athena SWAN Regional Network meeting in January in the Enterprise Centre. This was attended by representatives from 14 universities and research institutes as well as the ECU. These meetings provide an opportunity to network and share good practice and very positive feedback was received from a number of attendees. We extend our thanks to Professor Yvonne Tasker for taking the time to attend the event.

5. Athena SWAN Central Steering Group

The Athena SWAN Central Steering Group took place in January where an overview of the recent University renewal submission was provided as well as the current submission plan for 2016/2017 as outlined in point 1 above. A majority of the meeting was used for the exchange of best practice which included input from the Equality & Diversity Office on examples from recently successful external submissions. Each School representative was asked to provide an example of best practice which had worked well in their respective school.

6. Equality Challenge Unit Panel Chair Training

The Equality & Diversity Office undertook ECU Panel Chair training in December in preparation for the Assessment Panels for the November round which took place in January.

The ECU have made both Panel Chair (face-to-face) and Panellist Training (webinar) mandatory to ensure that consistent decision making is made in assessing applications. Unconscious Bias was included as an important element in both training sessions. All Chairs and Panellists will be required to complete training once every 3 years, which goes some way to addressing the University's concerns over the consistency of the feedback provided for our own submissions which we highlighted to the ECU last year.

7. Faculty of Science Athena SWAN/Equality & Diversity Project Co-ordinator

Recruitment is currently taking place for an Athena SWAN/Equality & Diversity Project Co-ordinator to support the work in the Faculty of Science on Athena SWAN, particularly in relation to progressing the School Action Plans, which are submitted as part of the application process, and setting up systems for the recording of local data which forms part of the expanded criteria for future submissions.

The closing date for applications was 22nd February and interviews are scheduled for 14th March. The post is available on a full-time indefinite basis and whilst funded by and based in the Faculty of Science the role holder will be managed by the Head of Equality & Diversity and work with the Central Athena SWAN/Equality & Diversity Project Officer.