

EDC16D003

Title: *Restructuring of the Athena SWAN Central Steering Group*
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Issue

To request approval to restructure the Athena SWAN Central Steering Group (ASCSG).

Recommendation

The Committee is asked to approve the reformation of the Central Steering Group to provide greater drive and direction from a senior level to effect the changes needed to bring the University to Silver level in the Athena SWAN framework within the next three years.

Resource Implications

The restructure will involve commitment to attend three meetings per annum from a number of senior academics and managers.

Risk Implications

Without the engagement of Directors and Senior Academics it will be unlikely that the University will attain Silver Athena SWAN. This in turn could affect our performance in attracting both funding and staff and in REF 2020.

Equality and Diversity

The focus of this initiative is the pursuit of gender equality, originally within STEMM subjects, but widening to Arts, Humanities, Social Sciences, Business and Law (AHSSBL) subjects from July 2015. The University is currently at Bronze Institutional Award level and holds seven Bronze School awards and one Silver School award.

Timing of decisions

The initiative requires support now to enable the University to move in a measured way towards its next goal of Silver University level Athena SWAN award. The restructure of this group will engage Directors and Academics who are most effectively placed to agree and implement changes in practice.

Further Information

The first paper to the Equality and Diversity Committee about Athena SWAN was in November 2011 addressing the question of membership (EDC11D001), subsequently agreed by ET and with a commitment to the Charter by the Vice Chancellor at the time. The current Vice Chancellor has recently committed to the new, expanded Athena SWAN charter which extends the reach of the framework to Arts and Humanities as well as to broader staff groups and a wider range of protected characteristics (the key focus remaining gender).

Background

Athena SWAN is a framework, adopted across within the Higher Education Sector as a means of progressing equality for women in STEMM subjects (extended to Humanities and Social Science subjects from May 2015). 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.

1. Background

As part of our commitment to driving forward work towards the Athena SWAN Charter Mark awards across the University the Athena SWAN Central Steering Group (ASCSG), a sub-committee of the Equality and Diversity Committee, was formed in 2012. The membership of the group has changed and expanded as our work has extended, until recently involving all Schools in two Faculties and beginning to engage with others in HUM and SSF. Currently, the membership comprises:

- PVC Research & Enterprise (Chair)
- Head of Equality & Diversity (Secretary)
- Project Officer (Equality and Diversity)
- Human Resource Managers x 4
- Athena SWAN Leads x 12
- JIC Senior Equality Champion

All Schools are expected to be involved in Athena SWAN with those not engaged to date coming on board during 2017. This puts pressure on the existing group structure to the extent that the meeting becomes non-productive with so many members and direction is lost. Additionally, to give the University its best chance of reaching Silver a smaller team able to focus on key strengths and weaknesses is likely to provide greater impetus and agility as the University moves towards a Silver submission.

2. Proposal

It is proposed to reform the ASCSG, creating:

- a. A smaller sub-group reporting to the Equality and Diversity Committee and focussing on the central direction of the University on gender equality as agreed by the Committee. In particular, this group will consider areas key to Athena SWAN in which we can achieve synergy and consistency effectively in all Faculties. This group would have the seniority to effect the appropriate changes needed to implement agreed strategy to take the University to Silver level within the next three years.

Suggested membership is:

- PVC Research (Chair)
- Human Resources Manager(s)
- Head of Equality and Diversity
- Project Officer Equality and Diversity
- Faculty PVCs (Deans)/Senior Faculty Managers x 4
- Chair of ResNet

It's suggested this group meet three times per annum to review progress against the Action Plan and consider evidence and any required additional actions ready for the next submission which we aim to be of Silver quality.

- b. A network of Athena SWAN Leads to meet and exchange best practice internally and from the broader sector.

Suggested membership:

- Head of E&D
- Project Officer E&D
- Faculty E&D Project Officers
- Athena SWAN Leads
- HR Manager(s)

The PVC Research/Faculty PVCs would be invited to one meeting per annum to maintain the direct connection from Self Assessment Teams to Senior Management.

It is suggested this group meet twice per annum.

3. Approval Sought

Approval is sought from the Equality and Diversity Committee to make these changes during the 2016/17 Academic Year.

Helen Murdoch
Head of Equality and Diversity
October 2016