

EDC16D006

Title: Athena SWAN – Report on Progress and Next Steps
Author: Helen Murdoch
Date: 21 February 2017
Circulation: Equality and Diversity Committee – 28 February 2017
Agenda: EDC16A002
Version: Final
Status: Open

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 a range of funding. Athena SWAN is viewed as robust evidence by a number of funding bodies, demonstrating activity supporting equality. Additionally, REF 2020 is likely to require evidence that all Schools are involved in Athena SWAN to a minimum of Bronze standard.

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 May 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 May 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. Most recently it is believed that REF 2020 will link evidence of Athena SWAN to Units of Assessment.

Athena SWAN – Report on Progress and Next Steps

1. Current Position

The University has so far achieved a Bronze and Bronze (Renewal) award at University level, 11 Bronze awards and a Silver award at School award.

Since the last Equality and Diversity Committee in October 2016, three further submissions have been made, all at Silver level by the Schools of Biological Sciences, Health Sciences and Pharmacy. Results are expected at the end of April. Three Schools are currently preparing submissions for the April round: Economics (Bronze), Psychology (Silver) and Environmental Sciences (Silver). All three Schools will be using the post-May 2015 framework as the 'old' framework is no longer accepted. This involves a broader range of data and includes Professional and Support staff so increases the challenge for the Schools, in addition to stepping up to Silver level for two of them.

Almost all Schools at UEA are now involved in Athena SWAN, with plans in place to meet with the remaining Schools (International Development and Social Work), to initiate the process with them by the end of March 2017.

The current plan of submissions and renewals is shown below for 2017 – 2019, although a degree of flexibility has to be retained to allow for postponing a submission to create a better chance of success or the inevitable occasional fail. The timetabling is tight and juggling School's ambitions for a higher award, a higher number of Schools, renewal dates and potential failed submissions before the REF deadline will become more challenging over the next two years. Recruitment for an additional member of the team is now under way, with interviews taking place on March 3rd. 25 applications were received for the post providing a good range of candidates for shortlisting.

February 2017 Forward Planning		REF deadline					
		30/04/2017	30/11/2017	30/04/2018	30/11/2018	30/04/2019	30/11/2019
FACULTY							
UEA		SSSS					
SCI	BIO						®
SCI	PHA						®
SCI	ENV	BB??	®				
SCI	MTH			SS??	®		
SCI	CMP				®ss		
SCI	CHE						®
FMH	MED		SS?	®			
FMH	NSC (HSC)						®
FMH	RSC (HSC)						
SSF	PSY	SS??		®			
SSF	ECO	BB??					
SSF	LAW			BB??			
SSF	DEV					BB??	
SSF	EDU			BB??	BB??		
SSF	NBS		SS??				
SSF	SWK					BB??	
HUM	PPL						
HUM	AMA		BB??				
HUM	HIS					BB??	
HUM	LDC				BB??		
Number of rounds:		1	2	3	4	5	6

2. Sector Developments

A UniversitiesUK (UUK) and GuildHE review of higher education sector agencies took place during 2016, led by Sir David Bell, Vice Chancellor of Reading University. Its recommendations were published at the end of January, one of which is to merge the Equality Challenge Unit (ECU), the Higher Education Academy (HEA), and the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education (LFHE) into a single body. It is envisaged that the new body would retain the name of the Equality Challenge Unit, supporting institutions to meet strategic challenges relating to equality and diversity, learning and teaching and leadership and governance.

The aim is for the new body to approach equality and diversity in a more holistic way. The review also suggests a relatively short timescale for this to take place. It is not clear what impact this will have on the timetable for Athena SWAN awards or whether results will be further delayed by the potential upheaval as the three bodies combine.

3. Athena SWAN Assessment Panels

The Equality Office has continued its engagement with the Athena SWAN Assessment Panels with Matthew Gooch acting as Panel Chair and Pascale Gallagher participating on her second panel, for the November 2016 round.

Panel experience provides useful context to the submission process and is valuable to support the work which continues across the University on Athena SWAN.

It was noted in the current panels that fewer submissions were included as the documents under the post May 2015 framework are substantially longer. It's not clear whether this will delay results.

4. Athena SWAN Central Steering Group

The Athena SWAN Central Steering Group has been split into two groups, strategic and operational, as agreed at the Equality and Diversity Committee in October 2016. The first meetings took place in January 2017. Particular attention will be paid to communication between the two groups as this is a key issue for some Leads. The Strategic (ASCSG) group meeting focussed on the Bronze Renewal Action Plan, key trends in data, and improvement on appraisal return and central recording. The Operational (ASCOG) group focussed on future communications with the ASCSG, improving the content of future meetings and potential speakers to invite to share best practice. The division of the two groups will be reviewed in approximately 18 months to ensure the structure is working effectively.

Helen Murdoch
February 2017