

## **EDC17D002**

**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 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(Renewal) award at University level, 12 Bronze awards at School level (of which 8 are still current - RSC and NSC have been replaced by HSC, BIO, MED and ENV have achieved more than one award over time) and three Silver awards. All Schools at UEA are now involved in Athena SWAN with all Self-Assessment Teams except two (which are in hand) having been set up with meetings taking place.

Since the last Equality and Diversity Committee in May 2017, results have been received from the April 2017 round in which two submissions were made, and we are delighted to confirm that the School of Economics has achieved a Bronze award and the School of Environmental Sciences achieved Silver (both awards are included in the figures above). Both awards represent significant achievements for the Schools following long periods of preparation. Economics is only the second School of Economics in the UK, and the first in England, to achieve an award (the overall first being Edinburgh).

There is a continual 'shuffling' of priorities for future rounds dictated by the readiness of Schools to go forward. No Schools have gone forward in the November 2017 round but two or three are anticipated in April 2018 and five in November 2018. However, this position may change again. The School of Psychology took the step of delaying their Silver submission having hoped to go in April 2017. This has proved wise as the statistics from the Equality Challenge Unit show this to have been a tough round:

Overall success rate: 59.5%  
Success at level desired: 42.0%  
Success at lower level: 17.0%

85 awards were conferred:

11 universities	10 Bronze, 1 Silver
72 departments (i.e. Schools)	48 Bronze, 21 Silver, 3 Gold
2 research institutes	1 Bronze, 1 Gold*

\*John Innes Research Institute

143 applications were received and assessed by 42 panels involving 217 panellists. 85 awards were conferred: 4 Gold, 22 Silver and 59 Bronze.

We note that our partner institution JIC have achieved Gold status – congratulations have been sent and a meeting is scheduled between the Director of the Institute and UEA's PVC HUM & Professor of Film and Media.

## 2. Next Steps

The University has four key challenges over the next three years:

- I. All AHBSSL Schools to achieve minimum of Bronze awards by REF 2020.
  - II. All Schools to retain award levels already achieved
  - III. STEMM Schools to move to Silver where possible
  - IV. University to achieve Silver University status.
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- I. All AHBSSL Schools have Self-Assessment Teams in place and have meetings scheduled for 2017-18.
  - II. Work with Schools who are already award holders is ongoing. Some are opting to aim for Bronze Renewal in their next submission while others have begun work towards Silver. A

key aspect of this is to what extent a School has managed to keep up the right level of activity since their first award and this has varied greatly between Schools. There is always a risk that an award may be lost. Since gaining a new member of the team, the Equality Office has been able to organise 'pre-meets' with Leads to help ensure the next agenda is targeted effectively.

- III. Most STEMM Schools at UEA have been involved in the Athena SWAN process for around five years. Those that are particularly affected by funding where Athena SWAN is rated as part of the bidding process are keen to work towards Silver (e.g. School of Psychology, School of Health Sciences). There are also Schools holding Silver who will need to work towards retaining the award. Norwich Medical School are preparing their resubmission at Silver level. It should be noted that Warwick Medical School lost their Silver award in the last round and are now Bronze award holders. It is not definite that Silver is always automatically retained.
- IV. The University is likely to make its resubmission in April 2019. The Athena SWAN Central Steering Group will focus on what activity is needed, judging from current trends, feedback from a forthcoming survey and the most relevant actions from the Bronze Action Plan to help the University meet the requirements of a Silver submission. Analysis of best practice is also taking place in the Equality Office looking at successful submissions by those Universities who have gained Silver under the new framework. The next ASCSG meeting will be on 9 January 2018.

### **3. The Difference between Bronze and Silver Award Level**

A particular challenge for Schools (and the University) is the movement from Bronze to Silver award level. With accumulating experience, we are becoming more able to guide Schools effectively in this respect. A member of the central E&D team attended an ECU consultation day 'From Smart Actions To Impact'. The ECU also provided some additional feedback at the most recent Eastern Regional Meeting in Cambridge on 11 October 2017.

All the information gleaned will be included in a presentation to Athena SWAN Leads in January at the next Athena SWAN Central Operational Group meeting. The key points are included at Appendix 1. The main learning points for submission work are to determine how work will be evaluated in its initial design and then to ensure monitoring over time is effective.

### **4. Sector Developments**

Discussions around the merger of the ECU/LfHE and HEA continue. A shadow Board has been established with representatives from each body to determine the direction of the merger. There is currently no timescale in place, but it has been confirmed that the 2018 subscriptions for each body will continue as normal and that despite the merger Athena SWAN and the submissions process will continue as normal. One of the key issues for the shadow Board to address is the physical location of the merged body due to rents/leases on existing buildings being due to expire at different times.

### **5. Athena SWAN Central Steering Group**

The Athena SWAN Central Steering Group will meet in January 2018. The group will be chaired by Prof. Sarah Barrow, PVC HUM and Chair of the Equality and Diversity Committee. Thanks are noted to Prof. Fiona Lettice for her hard work, leadership and support of the initiative during her time as Chair.

*Helen Murdoch/Matthew Gooch  
October 2017*

### Impact and Beacon Activities

From a session presented by the Equality Challenge Unit on demonstrating Impact and defining Beacon Activities.

#### ***Impact (Silver)***

Definition: Impact is not just having taken action but evaluating the effect of the action and evidencing how this has improved gender equality and the culture of a department or institution.

An example of impact is:

- The promotions success increased to xx% as a result of holding an annual promotions workshop

An example which does not demonstrate impact is:

- After a year we had 100% attendance at the promotions workshop.

The non-impact example would be considered as demonstrating progress.

Work where Schools 'make progress' is considered to be at Bronze Renewal level. Demonstrating Impact takes work to Silver level.

Impact can be demonstrated by:

- changes in process
- changes in criteria
- changes in practices

which have brought about positive changes in gender equality.

To show impact you need to:

- indicate what has changed
- indicate how is it benefiting male or female staff or students
- indicate whether any new concerns have arisen
- indicate how will you improve things further

In order to understand your impact you need to:

- Know and understand your baseline
- Consult with Staff and Students
- Be clear from the start what you are trying to achieve
- Monitor the right indicators of change regularly

Schools or Institutions renewing awards do not have to submit the previous Action Plan but this can be included as an appendix with a column to show impact made and reference to it throughout the submission. The previous Action Plan does not count towards the word count.

#### ***Beacon (Gold)***

Gold indicates the School or institution has become a beacon of achievement on gender equality. To demonstrate this level you must be a leader in implementing changes to achieve gender equality in the sector.

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Gold applications need to show:

- Significant and sustained progression
- A well-established record of activity and achievement in gender equality complemented by data and evidence of continued impact.
- The beacon element: this comprises going beyond good practice, for example, developing benchmarks for the sector for the relevant discipline or being involved in significant outreach activities.
- Athena SWAN is completely embedded into a School or institutions culture and practices
- The School or institution have championed and shown leadership in good practice in gender equality in the field and sector.
- The School or Institution have become beacons of achievement, having significantly sustained change and addressed challenges across the department.