The Society hosted a meeting for geography departments\(^1\) on equality and diversity initiatives, including applications for the Athena SWAN Charter, on Monday 20 February 2017. There were representatives from 15 institutions present.

**Background**
The Society is committed to supporting the higher education geographical community to advance equality and diversity in geographical teaching, research and learning. One route by which this is being addressed in institutions is through the Equality Challenge Unit’s (ECU) *Athena SWAN* Charter Mark (for gender equality) and *Race Equality* Charter Mark. Further ways in which the Society is providing support for equality and diversity in geography may be found on our website, at: [www.rgs.org/equalitydiversity](http://www.rgs.org/equalitydiversity). ECU’s Athena SWAN Charter addresses academic staff across all disciplines, professional, technical and support staff, and trans staff and students in relation to their equality, representation, progression into academia, journey through career milestones, and working environment.

**Agenda for meeting**
The meeting consisted of presentations from departments and short table discussions on a range of themes:

- **Departmental reflections on Athena SWAN journeys:**
  - Alison Blunt, Queen Mary, University of London
  - Tristan Sturm, Queen’s University Belfast

- **Lessons from being a panel assessor/panel feedback**
  - Becky Briant, Birkbeck, University of London
  - Keith Bennett, University of St Andrews (via notes)

- **Themed table discussions and feedback on challenges and opportunities:**
  - Influencing cultural change
  - Applications across large/diverse faculty / 'straddled' departments
  - Supporting professional services staff
  - Pipelines and supporting progression

Notes from discussion are in this document.

\(^1\) Where reference is made to 'department/s', it is intended to refer to any administrative unit below institutional level (e.g. school, faculty) that delivers geographical research and teaching.
Departmental reflections on Athena SWAN journeys

Queen Mary, University of London – Bronze award holder, applying for Silver

Professor Alison Blunt (Queen Mary, University of London) described the School of Geography’s journey to a successful Bronze application in April 2016, and plans for an application for Silver in April 2017. Alison co-chairs the SAT with the School’s Head of Administration, Dr Anna Dulic-Sills. Although the School has a relatively well-balanced gender profile, including at professorial level (equal numbers), and an existing focus on part-time and flexible work, fieldwork diversity policy, and ongoing research on student attainment and success, there were other areas that benefitted from greater attention to equality and diversity.

The School worked with an external consultant to review their existing processes and communications, which they found to be helpful. They also found that dedicating a whole day for the SAT to review the entire application and all the data in detail (half a day focusing on staff data; half a day on student data, the latter including student representatives from the SAT) helped to form a clear overall narrative. The School has recently invited the Chair of a SAT in another department at QMUL to act as a critical friend and lead a staff focus group, which helps to share knowledge and experience.

An equality and diversity anonymous suggestion box has elicited such ideas as: including sexuality in the School’s fieldwork diversity policy; reviewing the height of teaching lecterns in temporary teaching spaces; mixed gender toilets. The School also has an Equality and Diversity Newsletter, which reports on the work of the E&D Group (which includes the SAT) and progress on our Athena SWAN action plan, reports on responses to the suggestions in the feedback box, and includes a staff profile (currently featuring SAT members).

Alison described the time and sustained effort needed to build up a departmental culture and ethos that supports equality and diversity. Those discussions are now embedded into staff away days and central to the Department’s activities through its strategic plan.

Work for the Bronze submission saw the school build on existing work through: an equality and diversity audit of School strategy, key principles, handbooks and marketing material (one area of change in the last case has been that while prospectus photos were diverse in gender terms, they often showed men working alone and women working together); including E&D as standing item on School Board and SSLC agendas, and in student inductions, reviewing PhD adverts, and offering unconscious bias training to staff. Looking ahead to Silver, the School has demonstrated impact within their institution (e.g. College take-up of the department’s research on attainment and success; recommendations for childcare for Saturday open-days), regionally and nationally (through presentations and knowledge exchange).

Queen’s University Belfast – Silver award holder

Dr Tristan Sturm (QUB) described the work of the School of Geography, Archaeology and Paleoecology towards its Silver Charter Mark award. The School has recently merged with the School of Architecture, Civil & Structural Engineering to form a joint School of Natural and Built Environment. The School of Architecture, Civil & Structural Engineering was unsuccessful in their last Athena SWAN application, so the next faculty-level application (Silver Renewal, 2018) will be a significant challenge for the merged SAT.

Tristan discussed the differences in culture and activities between the departments making up the new faculty, and between the past applications from the different departments. He described the challenges of creating a shared culture of equality in a faculty split across multiple geographical locations. This prompted a discussion about the structure of SATs in large and diverse faculty (e.g. use of faculty SAT and departmental sub-SATs).
Although some momentum has been lost since the last Silver application, there are a number of areas in which the School has continued to make progress, including: increasing visibility of Athena SWAN and equality and diversity initiatives more broadly; staff and postgraduate student surveys;

Tristan, a probationary lecturer, also highlighted the challenges of making requests and influencing cultural change from a relatively junior position and with little historical knowledge of the department. Participants at the meeting identified at least four other departments where Athena SWAN champions or SAT leads were new lecturers or post-doctoral researchers when appointed, highlighting an area for further investigation.

**Experiences as a panel assessor / lessons from panel feedback**

Dr Becky Briant (Birkbeck, University of London) reflected on her experiences as an Athena SWAN panel member, and on the feedback received for Birkbeck’s Bronze Athena SWAN application.

Becky described Birkbeck’s unique structure/nature (small department, 9 staff, with evening teaching for predominantly part-time mature students). She noted the importance of applications being made at the level of management/decision-making, and highlighted the need for the ECU to provide clearer guidance for small departments.

Lessons from her experience as a panel assessor included:

- Know that your application that will be read by HR professionals alongside academics. Describe your department and any peculiarities.
- There are tensions between the form and the assessment criteria: capturing cultural change cannot just be a box-ticking process, but then form tends towards that. A clear central narrative is crucial, using numerical and qualitative data to evidence your current status and future actions.
- Clear data presentation will help the panel. Use staff survey data in your descriptive section. What does the data show are the main issues? What actions are we prioritising?
- Set SMART actions. Use your staff survey responses alongside other data to create measurable baselines in order to measure change and impact. Put a named SAT member or group to track each action.
- If you are re-applying or renewing, return to the Panel's feedback (the Panel will see their feedback alongside your updated application). Show progress on original action plan.  
  o For Silver applications, show ambition, cultural change, intersectionality and awareness raising.

Becky also recommended SATs use a Moodle page or similar as a central repository for SAT documents, and suggested that SATs should meet monthly in the lead-up to an application or twice-monthly otherwise.

Professor Keith Bennett (University of St Andrews) sent the following notes to share with the meeting:

*These notes have been generalised to protect the confidentiality of Athena SWAN panel meetings.*

The panel I was on was predominantly non-academic staff (mostly senior university admin staff). I was in fact the only member who was both academic and working in an area relevant for the depts under discussion. I think this is a bit unfortunate from Athena SWAN's perspective, as it makes it harder to pick up issues that are subject specific, either to give credit, or to notice that they were missing. It is also important from an applicant's perspective - the people on the panel may very well not be familiar with your area.

Much attention was given to evidence. Applications are scrutinised in detail, para by para, in relation to the Athena SWAN criteria. It was important that statements were backed up with evidence. It was important that
statements were joined up (for example, a questionnaire reveals concern in an area, this is discussed, a remedy is developed, it is included in the action plan).

Head of Dept letter is important. It should not only be enthusiastic, but should also include examples of specific changes that have been especially helpful. In other words, also evidence-based.

The whole process of formation and running of the SAT should be documented. It is ok to say that some people were, shall we say, co-opted - just tell it how it was. The SAT should be as varied as possible, by grade, gender and anything else. Indicate roles within SAT and in writing the application. Be specific about meeting frequency.

Use data copiously and reflect on it, all of it, specifically. Try to allow appropriately for confidence intervals on eg ratios - not much can be done statistically with a gender balance in a group of 10, but if a group happens to be much larger, use some stats cautiously and appropriately. Keep graphs as consistent as possible, in colour scheme, and axes (don’t mix graphs by numbers with graphs by proportions gratuitously). Data is required for three years min - but more is better, use it if you have it. Showing trends (or lack of trend) is important. There is a word limit, but not a data limit - use graphs to save words in the text.

Honesty is appreciated. It is understood that some things go well, others not so well - mention it, explain why, define the action. Gaps in data may well be noticed.

Action Plan should join up to the text. Within the text, indicate (eg with a bold number) which action plan item corresponds to the point in question. The action plan should not include anything that has not been discussed in the text. The action plan items should be achievable within a defined timescale, with people named as being responsible for it and for actually doing it.

**Themed table discussions and other feedback**

*Influencing cultural change*

Participants in this discussion covered:
- A top-down approach to cultural changes can be antagonising and patronising
- The challenge of “invincible” senior management
- Try to avoid your SAT having a simple/"predictable” split, e.g. by gender, or junior/senior
- Addressing presentee-ism
- Could there be collective/disciplinary principles for ways of working? Shared understandings for certain matters, or better ways of sharing good practice across discipline?
- Embedding cultural discussions into formal processes, e.g. making equality & diversity discussions part of meetings on other (“unrelated”) matters

*Applications across large/diverse faculty / 'straddled' departments/schools*

Participants in this discussion covered:
- How do HODs collaborate within a faculty-wide process? Need for SAT representation and prompting; school management puts Athena SWAN on the agenda for meetings
- Data:
  - HESA codes – what do you use? What can we benchmark against – geography departments could/should share more information between them?
  - Are three-year data points too narrow for big groups
  - Aggregating data up, and disaggregating down – scales of analysis may not always be the same for each department
- The problem of survey data for “small” representations within larger cohorts
  - Women in engineering
  - Small departments within faculty of small and big departments
- More clarity needed from ECU on treatment of a) small departments, and b) large faculty cross-cutting multiple (disparate) departments
• The pressure of ‘losing face’ – what do you say in front of other departments?
• Challenge of different working practices

Supporting professional services staff

Participants in this discussion covered:
• Different experiences for those in different job types (e.g. gender split between office staff vs technical staff)
• Tensions between institutional and departmental levels of decision-making, e.g. staff work in department but are line-managed by faculty or institution. Their participation in culture matters, but cannot always be influenced.
• Moves between departments
• Visibility of, and opportunity for, flexible working (more limited than academics?)
• Effective processes are identifying and promoting staff, and offering training opportunities
• When including them in Athena SWAN, especially SAT, who is best person to include at departmental level?

Pipelines and supporting progression

Participants in this discussion covered:
• Good practices that might be adopted:
  o Supporting ECRs – double-weighting / less heavy workload – take into account, PGCert commitments; up-front teaching time/other constraints
  o Availability of and information about bridge funding
  o Mentors for post-docs who are NOT their PI
  o Five year plans
  o Research mentoring open to everyone ad hoc
  o Mid-career researchers might need mentoring too, especially for research. Opt-in, not their HOD, appraiser or PI.
  o (Look at) Effectiveness of probation processes and approvals
• Encouraging external esteem indicators
• Mentoring/role models beyond as well as within departments
• Annual meetings for staff with HOD

Other resources and advice

Past applications, action plans, and advice for making applications:
• Via www.ecu.ac.uk and www.rgs.org/equalitydiversity

(Notes from past Athena SWAN geography network meetings are also at that RGS-IBG link.)

ECU: http://www.ecu.ac.uk/equality-charters/athena-swan/
RGS-IBG (for disciplinary questions): rhed@rgs.org

Email lists:
• Athena SWAN Charter members’ network: athenaswan@jiscmail.ac.uk
• Athena SWAN geography: geography-athena-swan@jiscmail.ac.uk
• Equal Opportunities administrators: ADMIN-EO@JISCMAIL.AC.UK

Become an ECU panellist: http://www.ecu.ac.uk/get-involved/become-charter-mark-panellist/
The Society hosted a meeting for geography departments on equality and diversity initiatives, including applications for the Athena SWAN Charter, on Monday 19 September 2016. There were representatives from more than 20 geography institutions present.

**Background**
The Society is committed to supporting the higher education geographical community to advance equality and diversity in geographical teaching, research and learning. One route by which this is being addressed in institutions is through the Equality Challenge Unit’s (ECU) Athena SWAN Charter Mark (for gender equality) and Race Equality Charter Mark. Further ways in which the Society is providing support equality and diversity in geography may be found on our website, at: [www.rgs.org/equalitydiversity](http://www.rgs.org/equalitydiversity)

ECU’s Athena SWAN Charter addresses academic staff across all disciplines, professional, technical and support staff, and trans staff and students in relation to their equality, representation, progression into academia, journey through career milestones, and working environment.

**Agenda for meeting**
The meeting included three presentations and concluded with short table discussions on a range of themes:

- **Departmental reflections on Athena SWAN journeys:**
  - Hester Parr, University of Glasgow
  - Hilary Geoghegan, University of Reading

- **From data to SMART actions:**
  - Gabriella Caminotto and Ruth Gilligan, Equality Challenge Unit

- **Themed table discussions and feedback**

Notes from discussion are in this document.

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1 Where reference is made to 'department/s', it is intended to refer to any administrative unit below institutional level (e.g. school, faculty) that delivers geographical research and teaching.
Departmental reflections on Athena SWAN journeys

University of Glasgow

Hester Parr (University of Glasgow) described the SWAN @ GES (Geography and Earth Sciences) journey, which has key goals of maintaining equality, supporting collegiality and work-life balance. You can find out more about their activities at http://swanges.org.uk/

Hester demonstrated how the School has progressed from 'introducing and educating', to 'embedding longer-term cultural change', and is working towards maintaining a 'watching brief' (but continuing to encourage more nuanced cultural change). She noted the importance of communicating change as a way of educating. Actioning gender equalities measures and engaging in gender equalities 'talk' can be troubling and difficult for some colleagues, but it is possible to encourage buy-in if everyone feels part of the process.

Hester also described how early institutional buy-in with a passionate introduction was balanced against limited resources and exemplars for departmental applications, which are now more widely available. GES used surveys, a dedicated website, and focus groups at various points, as well as watching how their data profile was changing over time. The school has hosted international visitors to speak on their experience of gender, diversity and equality matters, and lobbied for change at institutional level. All of these fed into decision making and action planning. Some examples of areas that have received attention include: gender and promotion (improving understanding of process/criteria by using workshops and PDRs to discuss criteria and set goals) and work/life balance (themed “pizza socials” help to build collegiality and open up discussions – with staff providing views on improving the workload model; tweaking fieldwork commitments for staff with caring roles; and having a new email policy).

Looking ahead to a possible Silver Athena SWAN application under the new scheme, the school is aspirant but realistic. The Silver application represents an opportunity for a greater vision for change, and areas for GES to focus on include: engaging and encouraging professional staff; more engagement with ‘diverse diversities’ and sensitive handling of different views about equality.

University of Reading

Hilary Geoghegan (University of Reading) described the SAGES (School of Archaeology, Geography and Environmental Science) journey towards their successful Silver application in the November 2015 round. She encouraged departments to encourage each other and share good practice, rather than treating it as a competition. She described the institutional structure in place at Reading, which includes job-sharing Deans with responsibility for equality and diversity matters, a supportive HOD and Head of School, a school-level position for the Athena Swan coordinator (her role), and an institutional Equality Officer.

Hilary identified a number of ways to get people involved in the Athena SWAN process, such as: using data to identify what’s important/relevant, recognising equality work in workload models, securing funds to deliver actions, avoiding ‘women only’ events and issues, and being persistent! As a result of these, SAGES has delivered cultural change in parental leave, mentoring and flexible working. Alongside this, SAGES used fieldwork as a common theme for all the disciplines which would engage both students and staff, through a one-year programme involving a website/blog, conference and YouTube videos.

In terms of preparing for an Athena SWAN application, Hilary encouraged departments to gather, understand, and use data, in action planning. She particularly highlighted the importance of using both qualitative and quantitative data, of gathering these consistently and regularly, and of exploring these in detail with the SAT.
Hilary encouraged departments to share, adapt and improve on each other’s ideas, using published action plans and applications to see what would work. She also encouraged use of the network of geography departments (the jiscmail list, and meetings at the RGS-IBG) to share ideas, ask questions and raise issues – don’t go it alone!

From data to SMART actions

Gabriella Caminotto and Ruth Gilligan of the Equality Challenge Unit made a presentation to the workshop on presenting data in a relevant way, identifying and evidencing impact, and developing SMART plans. They encouraged departments to collect, analyse, identify and act on their data, using consistent and regular methods for collecting and analysing data, a clear format for presenting data (especially for non-familiar audiences), and in-depth and honest self-reflection.

Using data

Departments should plan for gaps and delays in collecting and analysing, and document these if they cannot be addressed. Analysis should apply appropriate filters to identify issues and trends without omitting or masking issues; gender-specific analysis is expected. Qualitative data can help to identify the “why” of quantitative data trends; it is especially useful where quantitative data gaps exist. However, a strategic approach is often needed to ensure a high response rate; time surveys carefully to avoid ‘fatigue’. Where used, quotes should be representative and insightful.

The application should use and present data in a reflective, not simply descriptive way; this will be more likely if the SAT have used data in a critical, honest, strategic, holistic and consultative way in the lead-up to the application.

Disaggregate your data to make trends clear, e.g. consider whether human and physical geography show the same patterns. Make reference to actions within your discussion of the data (e.g. within a box below the relevant paragraph – references to actions are not included in the application word count), to signal to the panel that you have identified the issue and an action.

Data should be recorded/gathered to allow future evidence of the progress and impact of initiatives (planning for Silver). This means having measurable actions (not just a tick box exercise of completing an action) – did it work? How well did it work? The types of data that might help to measure progress include: staff numbers; changes in representation (proportions); increase/decrease in applications; take-up of a particular initiative/activity; qualitative responses e.g. reflections on process or mind-set changes.

Action planning

Data can help to frame the context and identify issues; this leads into action planning by setting a baseline for measuring change. Your actions should cover four years, and be SMART-S (specific, measureable, achievable, realistic, timebound, and strategic) – the panel should see that they are appropriate for your issues in your context.

A good action plan should:

- Have clearly defined responsibilities (a named person/position)
- Not be front-loaded – have milestones throughout the action plan duration
- Set targets
- Move beyond (but still do) monitoring
- Have specific actions, not broad groups of actions described as an activity
- Have evidenced rationale – why do an action? Link actions to issues
= Be referenced in the body of the application (e.g. “We found xyz, which is possibly exacerbated by abc. Action 123 will address this…”). References to actions are not included in application word count.

= Be specific to institutional/departmental issues (don’t just copy ‘trendy’ actions from other institutional plans if they don’t fit your issues/needs)

= Be ambitious, but realistic

= Consider gender specificity

= Be measurable (quantifiable/numerical?) via milestones and evaluation methods

For departments considering making an application for a Silver Athena SWAN award, Bronze action plans should be included in your application with annotations demonstrating progress; the Silver action plan can then build on this.

Themed table discussions and other feedback

Data informed narratives: What data do/ could you collect? How do/could you use data better? How could your data be presented?

Participants in this discussion reflected on:

● The importance of moving from the subjective to the objective

● Who has data?
  o Finding out who in your institution has the data? Whose responsibility is it to collect it? Who in the department knows where to get it from?
  o Are there institutional data collections (e.g. surveys) that you could use? Are they differentiated by subject/department for analysis?
  o How data are collected (by ECU, by institution, by department) could matter if they are being compared, especially in terms of definitions of certain groups

● Surveys:
  o How questions are worded matters.
  o Should departmental surveys replicate questions at institutional level for comparison?

● Data collection/handling
  o What to do about very small numbers?
  o Numbers in and out of categories (but overall little change) can represent big shifts within a department
  o Data is part of the process, not the end-goal. Collection and analysis is iterative.
  o Importance of setting up continuous data (e.g. for year on year, or group by group comparisons)
  o Does collecting more data mean more questions? How do we know when to stop?
  o Benchmarking might mean translating between scales/data collection methods

How can we (prepare to) demonstrate impact?

Participants in this discussion considered:

● Planning for evaluation:
  o Uptake (‘bums on seats’)
  o Scale of 1 to 5 for all events, collect gender
  o Use measures before and after - who attended/participated, what they did next, what happened one year on (positive and negative)
  o In-depth feedback via focus groups
  o Use evaluation to develop new actions (next steps)

● Staff surveys (specific to Athena SWAN) – regular, consistent, comparable

● Setting quantifiable targets (e.g. # number of applications from promotion by YYYY)

● One-to-one interviews for more complex measures, e.g. adoption of department guidelines at university level; where and how they are used, and impact
How can we encourage a shared view of equality across a department/school? (or, can we juggle competing views and have success?)

Participants in this topic discussed:
- The importance of managing expectations
  - Set the context
  - SATs could offer a “state of the department” statement, then survey views on that
- Use town halls to introduce the issues collectively
- Consider ways of challenging (male) privilege which avoid defensiveness
- Consider who is “selling it”
  - e.g. VC vs HoD.
  - Who are the champions? Male academics with strong reputations?
- Use external speakers/seminars to share a range of views and share benefits of greater equality/diversity
- Openly discuss what the department view/goal of equality is before moving to the actual application and actions.

What action planning can we do with/for professional and support staff?

Participants in this discussion reflected on:
- Enhancement and engagement events that are for all department staff
- Engaging everyone in the work of the university (teaching and research):
  - Ways for technical staff to gain buy-in for research projects
  - Recognise/acknowledge the contribution that professional and support staff make to key university processes / student experience / departmental life
- Training and development opportunities that prepare them for their next job, not enhance their current job (training above grade)
- Not presuming, as academics, that you know what the concerns of professional and support staff are

Other resources and advice

Past applications, action plans, and advice for making applications:
- Via www.ecu.ac.uk and www.rgs.org/equalitydiversity

(Notes from all past Athena SWAN geography network meetings are also at that link.)

ECU: http://www.ecu.ac.uk/equality-charters/athena-swan/
RGS-IBG (for disciplinary questions): rhed@rgs.org

Email lists:
- Athena SWAN Charter members’ network: athenaswan@jiscmail.ac.uk
- Athena SWAN geography: geography-athena-swan@jiscmail.ac.uk
- Equal Opportunities administrators: ADMIN-EO@JISCMAIL.AC.UK

Become an ECU panellist: http://www.ecu.ac.uk/get-involved/become-charter-mark-panellist/
Notes from meeting for geography departments, 11 March 2016

The Society hosted a meeting for geography departments on equality and diversity initiatives, including applications for the Athena SWAN Charter, on Friday 11 March 2016.

Background
The Society is committed to supporting the higher education geographical community to advance equality and diversity in geographical teaching, research and learning. One route by which this is being addressed in institutions is through the Equality Challenge Unit’s (ECU) Athena SWAN Charter Mark (for gender equality) and Race Equality Charter Mark. Further ways in which the Society is providing support equality and diversity in geography may be found on our website, at: www.rgs.org/equalitydiversity

Changes to the Athena SWAN Charter affecting geography departments
ECU’s Athena SWAN Charter was established in 2005 to encourage and recognise commitment to advancing the careers of women in science, technology, engineering, maths and medicine (STEMM) employment in higher education and research. Some geography departments were eligible to make applications under this scheme e.g. where staff/students fell into physical geography and earth sciences subject areas. This was the “pre-May 2015” application form and process.

In May 2015 the charter was expanded to recognise work undertaken in arts, humanities, social sciences, business and law (AHSSBL), and in professional and support roles, and for trans staff and students. This means all geography departments are eligible to make an application. The charter now recognises work undertaken to address gender equality more broadly, and not just barriers to progression that affect women. This is the “post-May 2015” application form and process.

ECU’s Athena SWAN Charter covers women (and men where appropriate) in:
- academic roles in STEMM and AHSSBL
- professional and support staff
- trans staff and students
In relation to their:
- representation
- progression of students into academia
- journey through career milestones
- working environment for all staff

1 Where reference is made below to “department/s”, it is intended to refer to any administrative unit below institutional level (school, faculty) that delivers geographical research and teaching.
The rest of this document contains notes and information from the meeting.

**Introduction to the Athena SWAN Charter**
*Ruth Gilligan, Athena SWAN Manager, Equality Challenge Unit*

[These notes are accompanied by Ruth’s presentation slides in PDF.]

The presentation outlined the evolution of the Athena SWAN Award from STEMM-focused to covering all disciplines. The differences between the pre-May 2015 and post-May 2015 processes were explained; applications are:
- not just about sciences (now extended to all disciplines)
- not just about one gender (attention is given to career progression for all)
- not just about academics (professional and support staff are included)
- expected to have a more complete data analysis
- expected to address four years from the point of application

Some geography and earth sciences departments have made applications under the STEMM-focused programme (pre-May 2015) and *award holders can be found on the ECU website*. With the expansion of the scheme to all disciplines, geography departments are now welcome to make an application at any time after their institution has received a Bronze Athena SWAN award. Most will now use the post-May 2015 application process.

The Athena SWAN Charter has ten principles; departments are asked to reflect on six of these in applications and action plans. They will not be asked explicitly about: the gender pay gap, support for trans staff and students, and intersectionality, which are asked for in institutional level submissions. Departments should think about these issues in the context of institutional work.

Athena SWAN Principles:

1. Recognise talents of all
2. Advance gender equality
3. Recognise disciplinary differences
4. Tackle the gender pay gap
5. Remove obstacles
6. Address short-term contracts
7. Tackle discrimination against trans people
8. Demonstrate senior commitment
9. Make structural and cultural changes
10. Consider intersectionality

Key changes to the application process for departments making an application in the future are:

- Inclusion of professional and support staff
- Questions about REF & RAE
- Support for grant applicants
- Four year award (and action plan)
- Aggregated, extended word count

[Application process, on the ECU website]

**Advice for making a successful application**

Disaggregate your data to make trends clear, e.g. consider whether human and physical geography show the same patterns. Make reference to actions within your discussion of the data
(e.g. within a box below the relevant paragraph), to signal to the panel that you have identified the issue and an action.

Your actions should cover four years, and be SMART-S (specific, measureable, achievable, realistic, timebound, and strategic) – the panel should see that they are appropriate for your issues in your context. Don’t forget to plan how you will measure the impact of your actions.

Common reasons for being unsuccessful:
- Poor action plan that is not SMART
- Lack of senior management buy-in; team lacks power
- Descriptive, rather than analytical narrative
- Applications not identifying issues raised by the data
- Action plan not targeted to issues raised
- Inappropriate balance between process and proactive action
- Changing the women not the processes

Questions and discussion about applications

Participants raised questions about promotions; staff retention; salaries and pay gaps; zero-hours contracts/casual/adjunct/seasonal staff; presentation of pipeline data; intersectionality and crossover with Race Equality Charter Mark; applications at school vs discipline/department.

Promotions and retention
While departments are usually obliged to follow university-wide policies and processes for promotion, it is useful for the panel if these can be made explicit. Description of where the department/school has input to the process (e.g. representation on promotion panels; nomination of individuals for promotion) can be helpful in identifying issues, as can feedback from staff on their experience of the promotion process. Staff retention might be considered in the context of the progression pipeline, including where there are bridging/redeployment positions.

Salaries and a gender pay gap
The gender pay gap is primarily addressed in institutional applications. Departments may address this if they think it is important to their activities (this would usually only be at Silver and Gold level applications, if it was undertaken), but care should be taken to maintain anonymity. Participants acknowledged the wide diversity of promotion and pay-related processes between institutions, and the large inequalities that can exist within contract grades within institutions (e.g. the professoriate). It was noted that if staff self-report an issue with the gender pay gap in departmental Athena SWAN surveys, SATs should address this in their application.

Zero-hours/casual contracts
ECU is working on an FAQ which will be published in the near future. The draft FAQ is below, which may be expanded upon before publishing:

Data on ‘zero hours staff’ also covers casual staff, including student demonstrators, adjunct staff, associate lecturers, graduate teaching assistants, etc, and these staff should be included in question 4.2 (ii). You may exempt data on one-off contracts such as for a single lecture. It is advisable to give a short account of the types of staff covered by this designation in your department, possibly even with some proportions, if available. Data on this cohort need not be included in the subsequent data-focused questions of the supporting and advancing women’s careers section, but consideration should be given to the experience of and consideration given to these staff in the career development section. Depending on how these contracts are used, it is suggested that a particular focus on how staff are supported to transition to contracts offering more stability, and how these contracts might be used to support the transition from student to staff member, may be relevant.
Applicants should also consider that staff on permanent contracts may include a number of staff whose contracts are funding dependant (the likelihood of this has increased since The Fixed-term Employees (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2002). Particular focus on the support for staff on funding-limited contracts is encouraged.

**Presentation of pipeline data**
Pipeline data should be presented in the way that makes the most sense to the submitting department. This may mean disaggregating by subject or some other variable. Disaggregating can also help to identify issues within career stages.

**Intersectionality and a crossover with the Race Equality Charter Mark**
Intersectionality is the consideration of how multiple factors intersect to influence social positions and identity, e.g. sexuality, gender, race, disability, age, and religion. Institutions are asked to consider intersectionality in their applications, but this is not required at department level (though departments may reflect upon intersections where relevant to their circumstances). The Race Equality Charter Mark has been launched to specifically consider the career progression of black and minority ethnic staff and students. It is separate to, but aligned with, Athena SWAN. There will be shared learning, but no plans to merge the awards in the short term.

**Applications at faculty/school/department/discipline**
The ECU use the term department to apply to a range of units that sit below institution-level awards. There are precedents for a wide range of successful submissions from very small departments to large faculties, but administrative units should give consideration to the need to disaggregate data for substantially different programmes/lines of work and the benefits of consistency (e.g. of data collection for upgrade/renewal). See Pages 16-19 of the post-May 2015 Athena SWAN handbook for more information.

The following sections were accompanied by the following resources:
- The meeting slide pack, with headings as below
- Notes from the Athena SWAN workshops held at the Annual International Conference 2015 (organised by Ian Cook (Exeter) and Hilary Geoghegan (Reading))
- Advice, guidance and suggestions from institutional Athena SWAN teams (see example links at the end of this document).

**Getting started, maintaining momentum – teams, applications and cultures**
[Slides 3-5]

Participants discussed the challenges of creating a culture/ethos of equality in a department or school, starting with the self-assessment team. Feedback from discussion groups (see questions in slide 5) is summarised below.

**Self-assessment teams (SATs):**
- Participants contrasted experiences of institutions with centralised/professional support services (or an external consultant) for making Athena SWAN applications and those where Departments had full devolved responsibility. Involvement of equality & diversity professionals is recommended.
- Wide variation in how workload was allocated and reflected. Approaches included: a pool of hours shared amongst self-assessment team members according to tasks allocated; another is to recognise work as counting towards promotion (but not necessarily in
workload model); recognition of work going beyond admin responsibility into research? In some cases, only the application lead was given recognised hours.

- Consider workload allocations extending beyond the application to ensure time allowed for action delivery.
- It was noted that workload should be shared fairly to avoid ‘women doing all the work’, and to avoid meeting fatigue amongst those undertaking data collection and analysis.
- Teams should seek to avoid having junior staff undertake all the data analysis, as presenting difficult findings could create tension and dissension.

*Cultures of management* – supportive management cultures can help to avoid some of the issues of over-worked self-assessment teams, in particular where someone with the authority to make and direct change, and to recognise and appreciate efforts made, sits on the SAT.

**Supporting progression**

[Slides 6-8]

Participants discussed the barriers and enablers to career progression at different stages of the career pipeline. Feedback from discussion groups (see questions in slide 8) is summarised below.

**Barriers to progression:**

- Exist at every stage in the career pipeline and are often stage-specific. Are intersectional; gender is not the only factor creating inequality.
- Are both linked to the individual’s personal circumstances (their work-life situation), the university’s strategic priorities (e.g. promotions in key research areas), and the structural context (e.g. top heavy department creates blocks). Policies and processes need to be able to allow departments to recognise this and adapt as needed?
- Gaining and losing ‘reputational footholds’ with changes to line management – this especially the case for individuals making a combination of tangible and intangible contributions to departmental success
- Goalposts keep moving (especially where institutions often change promotion criteria or process). Promotion processes are often very institution-specific, especially in senior grades.

**Enablers for progression**

- Nature of the department and what they need, and how well they develop staff to meet that (short and long-term)
- Goodwill for policies and processes, e.g. flexibility around caring arrangements (children and others) – good work/life blend is wanted by everyone, not just parents
- Aligned value and judgment systems – everyone understands how they will be assessed for promotion by peers, and that is consistent from year to year, and subject area
- Staff mentoring; personal encouragement; writing retreats and similar opportunities; the cultivation of valuable experiences to encourage individuals to meet promotion criteria
- Departmental ethos needs to live beyond the HOD, and to be adopted by successive HODs
- Training in unconscious bias etc can be useful for recruitment and promotion panels, but should not be treated as tick-box training, rather an opportunity to create a safe space to discussion issues of how to confront our own bias.
- Anonymised applications (for professional and support staff) can make a big difference to diversity in short-listing stage; departments might also have an impartial observer watch recruitment/interview panels for bias (looking for evidence-led decision-making).

**SMART- action planning and measuring impact**

[Slides 9-10]

Participants discussed common issues facing departments, using examples drawn from a range of departmental Athena SWAN applications. They drew up actions and discussed approaches for
measuring impact. Refer to notes above on *Advice for making successful for applications and Demonstrating impact* for more information.

Participants suggested that a future meeting could include reflections on successful (and unsuccessful) actions from departments who have already been through the Athena SWAN application and renewal process.

**Wrap-up**

The day ended with a conversation about the importance of reflectiveness at multiple levels, incorporating judgment and subtlety in our self-assessments, along with showing appreciation for the “small acts of generosity” that take place in departments every day.

It was agreed that another meeting should take place, most likely in late September 2016. More information will be shared by RHED.

**Resources and advice**

Past applications and action plans
- Via [www.ecu.ac.uk](http://www.ecu.ac.uk) and [www.rgs.org/equalitydiversity](http://www.rgs.org/equalitydiversity)

ECU: [http://www.ecu.ac.uk/equality-charters/athena-swan/](http://www.ecu.ac.uk/equality-charters/athena-swan/)
RGS-IBG (for disciplinary questions): [rheed@rgs.org](mailto:rheed@rgs.org)

Email lists:
- Athena SWAN Charter members’ network: [athenaswan@jiscmail.ac.uk](mailto:athenaswan@jiscmail.ac.uk)
- Athena SWAN geography: [geography-athena-swan@jiscmail.ac.uk](mailto:geography-athena-swan@jiscmail.ac.uk)
- Equal Opportunities administrators: [ADMIN-EO@JISCMAIL.AC.UK](mailto:ADMIN-EO@JISCMAIL.AC.UK)

Search for institutional support materials with advice for making an application, for example…
- UCL Athena SWAN toolkit (has examples of data presentation): [http://www.ucl.ac.uk/hr/equalities/gender/1.%20UCL%20SWAN%20Toolkit-%202015.pdf](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/hr/equalities/gender/1.%20UCL%20SWAN%20Toolkit-%202015.pdf)
- University of Lancaster: [http://www.lancaster.ac.uk/hr/equality-diversity/AthenaSWAN-guide.pdf](http://www.lancaster.ac.uk/hr/equality-diversity/AthenaSWAN-guide.pdf)

*Self-Assessment Teams and application leaders should be aware that guidance given by other institutions may not reflect the latest award process for Athena SWAN – please use with caution and always consult the ECU website for the latest information.*

Become an ECU panellist: [http://www.ecu.ac.uk/get-involved/become-charter-mark-panellist/](http://www.ecu.ac.uk/get-involved/become-charter-mark-panellist/)

**Attendance**

The meeting was hosted by Stephanie Wyse, RGS-IBG. The following institutions were represented:
Birkbeck, University of London; Lancaster University; London School of Economics; Manchester Metropolitan University; Northumbria University; Queen Mary, University of London; University of Birmingham; University of Cardiff; University of Glasgow; University of Manchester; University of Southampton; University of Sussex; University of the West of England. They were joined by Ruth Gilligan, Manager Athena SWAN (Equality Challenge Unit).
Athena SWAN and geography

Notes from panel/roundtables at AC2015 workshops, and follow-up conversations

Workshop information

The following sessions, convened and chaired by Ian Cook (University of Exeter, UK) and Hilary Geoghegan (University of Reading, UK), took place at the RGS-IBG Annual International Conference 2015, on Friday 4 September 2015:

- Athena SWAN: Panel discussion (session 251)
- Athena SWAN: Interactive Workshop with Action Points (session 274)

The panel presentations and roundtable discussions from these sessions are summarised below.

Notes from discussion

The overall goal must be a framework for change, not just achieving the award. A long-term view of action planning is therefore essential if a ‘lived culture’ of equality is to be achieved.

The process can be difficult and time-consuming, but it has the potential to bring together groups of people who are passionate about these issues who might not have the opportunity to discuss it or bring about change before. It is an opportunity to hear different voices.

Bigger picture:

- This is not about being in competition with other departments
- Think about how you position Athena SWAN (e.g. for women vs for everyone) and how men and women will engage (the same? differently?). For example, what are the names of your Committees and initiatives? Is it clear what they do?
- Athena SWAN is one mechanism for cultural change, alongside other institutional activities
- Consider how this work will affect academics, professional and support staff, and students. This is not just an HR exercise.
- Keep the lines of communication open, from starting the application to delivering the actions -- “You said, we did!”

Attention should be paid to hierarchies, power, responsibility and task allocation within and across:

- Team preparing the application (who is doing the labour – how fairly has it been shared? Is there recognition in the WLM/WAM?)
- The overall process for change (who will deliver actions)
- The efforts to engage and gain ‘buy-in’ from (professional/support and academic) staff and students
- Committee turnover/progression – maintaining a balance of skills, visibility, levels of authority etc
Action planning is about making change over time – building steadily. Actions should be:
- SMART-S (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, timely, and strategic)
- Context specific – don’t adopt just adopt a ‘popular’ action from other universities/departments, think about how it will have an impact in your context for your particular gap/challenge
- Spread out over the three years
- Clearly linked to your discussion of data and experience/context
- Able to be delivered/acted upon by a new member of staff who was not involved in writing the application.
- Action plans should be living documents – how will you keep yours alive?

Data and other evidence:
- Disaggregate whenever possible
- Present clearly, well labelled
- Be honest about what data show; discuss gaps/issues – reasons for and solutions to
- Cross reference your discussion with actions
- Contextualise your data – what is your narrative/story? What does it say about your department?
- Ask someone who has not been involved at all to review your application – do the charts support the story? Are the aims and objectives substantiated? Are the actions clear?
- Starting and maintaining your paper trail, to evidence impact (in your Silver application!)

Sharing resources – find ideas from:
- Looking at past applications and action plans: your institution; other departments in your institution; other institutions and departments (especially Silver)
- Your institution’s equality and diversity office (or equivalent); regional coordinator networks for Athena SWAN or equality and diversity officers/initiatives
- ECU website
- Athena SWAN workshops from the ECU; Institutional outreach/impact workshops
- Mailing lists
- Acting as an observer or panel assessor for ECU for other applications

Geography is an interesting subject to benchmark. How you approach the data may depend on where your department sits (in terms of school/faculty being STEM or AHSSBL, for example)
- HESA Staff cost centres 111 (Earth, marine & environmental sciences) and 124 (Geography & environmental studies)
- HESA Student subject codes (JACS) F8 (Physical geographical sciences) and L7 (Human & social geography)
- What other codes reflect your department’s work? What other benchmarking is useful or appropriate?
- Not all data will be gathered institutionally – some are departmental only