Athena SWAN recognises advancement of gender equality: representation, progression and success for all [http://www.ecu.ac.uk/equality-charters/athena-swan/](http://www.ecu.ac.uk/equality-charters/athena-swan/)

**GENDER EQUALITY in HSK online link**

**Athena SWAN Champion’s Update – Wendy Wills**

I am pleased to report that the University considers that HSK is leading the way for other Schools in terms of our gender and diversity work under the Athena SWAN Charter. We are the only School aiming to submit for a Silver award in April 2017. If we are successful the University will consider aiming for an Institutional Silver award in 2018. Securing a Silver award means HSK (and the University) needs to show that we are aware of where our staff or students face possible inequality of opportunity but also that the steps we are taking to address this are starting to have an impact. There are many positive signs that this is the case but we cannot be complacent.

You may have seen the attractive posters (right) around the School stating that equality is not a ‘women’s issue’ but a human rights issue – to achieve equality of opportunity we need all staff and students working together, to harness each person’s potential and to help maximise their satisfaction with working or studying in HSK.

**Staff opportunities available in new Development Network**

The newly launched Development Directory has evolved as a comprehensive way to bring together staff development opportunities in one online location.

The courses have been grouped into categories largely according to their content, and at the beginning of each section you will find a summary of the courses with an indication of how frequently they are run.

You will also find a link to the “dates pages” - a calendar-style list of all the courses on offer for the academic period 2016-2017. These dates will be updated and new courses added at the start of each semester, but for the latest listings you will need to log in to the HR Core Portal and search for the workshop title. This is also where you will be able to book onto a workshop.

**Improving the experiences of trans staff and students in HE and colleges**

The support of managers and colleagues, staff, and fellow students helps to ensure a positive experience for trans people who decide to share their trans history, identity, or decision to transition. The Equality Challenge Unit’s guidance will enable and inform those providing support through:

- answering common questions
= outlining how to develop an inclusive culture and non-discriminatory policies
= offering practical tools and templates

You can download the guidance from the ECU website.

ECU will be running webinars in early 2017, introducing the guidance and answering any questions you may have. These will be followed by a series of workshops. Further details will be available on the ECU website in due course.

The Equality Office will also be organising more Transgender Awareness workshops. Dates will be confirmed soon.

‘External Roles’ series sheds light on balancing external opportunities with UH roles

As part of our ongoing initiatives for Athena SWAN, the Equality Office hosted the third in our series of ‘External Roles’ talks, where attendees were warmly welcomed by Dr Susan Grey (Director of the Doctoral College) and invited to listen to four colleagues who gave excellent presentations on their respective personal experiences of managing external roles in addition to their University roles:

Dr Grace Lees-Maffei (Creative Arts): ‘Beyond the Institution: Building an International Research Profile’

Professor Brian Littlechild (HSK): ‘Engaging with national and international agencies, committees and associations to increase our profile and opportunities for research, publications and impact’

Jane Turner (Education): ‘Science Education in Primary Schools: UH working with the policy makers and leading stakeholders’.

Marina Buswell (HSK): ‘Taking opportunities, my role on the advisory board of a local start up’

The event received great feedback with some staff commenting:

‘It has inspired me to become a reviewer and to explore my options more widely in terms of external roles’ and ‘It gave a very interesting insight into the lives of fellow professionals despite very different career trajectories, I learned something important from each speaker’

You can find copies of the speakers’ slides together with a summary of the Q&As and discussions that followed on our StaffNet Pages

Unconscious Bias workshops available to all
*ALL managers and those recruiting staff or students encouraged to attend*

14 Mar 2017, 09:30-11:00 or 11:30-13:00, R110
26 Apr 2017, 13:00-14:30 or 15:00-16:30, C402
18 May 2017, 13:00-14:30 or 15:00-16:30, W125
12 Jun 2017, 13:00-14:30 or 15:00-16:30, E351

These workshops support our work towards embedding an inclusive culture at the University of Hertfordshire by equipping participants with the tools to recognise and address unconscious bias in their interactions with prospective and existing staff and students. The 90 minute workshop is highly recommended and is open to all staff. It can be booked through your HR Core Portal.
Domestic Abuse Workshop opens discussion on safeguarding staff

On 19 October 2016 HSK organised a seminar and workshop to highlight the importance of employer support in cases where staff are the victims of domestic abuse. This event was well attended, comprising UH staff – including the new Head of HR, Phil Clarke – and external guests, including a representative from HPFT, and Lara Norris, manager of Home Start Hertfordshire, a local charity that helps families in crisis.

The event was opened by Athena SWAN Champion Wendy Wills and was followed by presentations from Professor Shulamit Ramon, on Domestic Violence and Wellbeing; Dr Michele Lloyd, on Media Representations of Domestic Violence; and Celia Wildeman on Midwife Involvement in Preventing and Responding to Domestic Violence in Pregnancy.

After these informative and engaging talks, there was a panel discussion on how UH, as an employer, could provide practical and effective support for staff experiencing domestic abuse, whether physical, emotional, or otherwise. The panel consisted of UH staff and external guests with lived experience of domestic abuse. The importance of managers taking time to listen to staff who have courageously opened up to them was emphasised, as well as the usefulness of flexible working to accommodate court dates, social care visits, and the option of paying salaries into alternative bank accounts where an abuser does not have access.

Phil Clarke and Min Rodriguez, Heads of HR and the Equality Office, took away useful information to discuss with Central colleagues with a view to informing and consulting about future practice. UH is committed to providing a safe and respectful place to work for victims of domestic abuse, and to be approachable to staff experiencing these difficulties.

Menopause Network update

At the last meeting in January, Diane Danzebrink, who is a member of the British Menopause Society Women’s Voices Involvement Panel and an ambassador for the British Menopause Society, came to talk to the group. The main focus of the meeting was on coping with disrupted sleep, previously identified as a particular issue for women going through the menopause. Diane is trained in Yoga Nidra, a guided meditation technique which can reduce stress and promote more restful sleep. She guided the group through a 20 minute meditation which was well received by all, the majority of whom had no previous meditation experience. Having the opportunity to take time out in a quiet space away from the immediate stresses of the work environment was identified as something that could be beneficial for women going through the menopause.

In other news, we have submitted an abstract entitled ‘How can we support menopausal women in the workplace?’ based on the findings of a focus group held in 2016, for an upcoming meeting of the British Society of Population Studies on the Menopause, Health and Culture. The aim of the workshop is to collate current research on the menopause, specifically its cultural and socio-economic impacts.

Working Parents’ Network update

Following the interest generated by HSK and LMS in launching a School-level Working Parents’ Network, the University has been inspired to take this up centrally, to be run by the Equality Office.

On the 25th of January the new UH Working Parents’ Network held its first meeting in the Chapman Lounge, which proved to be enjoyable for all! Lunch was followed by a short activity called ‘Meet the parents’ which was designed to introduce unfamiliar people, gain insight into some of the
challenges working parents face and tips they have for coping, as well as gauge interest and collect ideas on possible future activities. A colourful summary may be found on the StaffNet Parent events page.

If you would like to join the network, please email s.goler-solecki@herts.ac.uk. More information on upcoming meetings and events may be found on StaffNet.

Parents Supporting Parents (PSP) Buddy Scheme

Are you planning for or taking a parental (maternity/paternity/shared) or adoption leave? Have you just returned from one? Do you have questions about the process or experience you’d like to share? Then the Parents Supporting Parents (PSP) Buddy Scheme might be for you.

We are currently looking for volunteers who would like to participate in a new informal support scheme for parents set up by the Equality Office. Parents Supporting Parents (PSP) aims to link parents together in order to facilitate peer-support and advice around parental leave and balancing the demands of work with home and family life.

Prospective parents are paired with a ‘Buddy’ - a member of staff who can provide support based on their own experience of the parental/adoption leave and return processes. We welcome individuals from all areas of the University who are willing to listen, empathise, share personal experience and advice and offer a small amount of their time on a regular basis.

The scheme would most benefit those who are thinking about, planning, taking or returning from parental leave and is open to members of staff and PhD students of all genders (and their partners). The relationship will ideally help you to anticipate some of the issues involved and to manage these on your return.

Please see the PSP StaffNet page for more information on how to get involved with this scheme.

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