Athena SWAN School Newsletter – Winter 2015-16

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/)

Welcome to the first Athena SWAN School Newsletter. As you know, the School achieved the Athena SWAN Bronze Award in November 2014. The Athena SWAN process has given the School the opportunity to assess its current situation with regard to gender equality, to pinpoint barriers identified by staff and students, and to put an action plan in place to ensure that the School continues to support its staff and students. The Athena SWAN School Assessment Team (SAT) is now preparing to submit for the Silver Award, in November 2016; we need to show the progress we have made and its impact on staff and students.

The Athena SWAN charter

Since May 2015 the charter has been expanded to ensure that all work to tackle gender equality is recognised and encouraged. We aim to engage all colleagues and students in the Athena SWAN process, irrespective of gender or job role. Athena SWAN is concerned with representation; the progression of students into academia; our journey through career milestones; and the working environment for academic, professional and technical staff in the School.

Action planning

Our Athena SWAN Bronze Action Plan contains 18 actions designed to support academic staff\(^1\) at all levels of their careers. We have summarised some key points from our Bronze action plan here:

- Support and encourage early career academics to take active roles in School and University-level committees.
- Review the process by which Chairs of decision-making committees in the School are appointed, and consider rotation.
- Engage more male staff and students in the ongoing School Athena SWAN process.
- Develop a formal School mentoring scheme
- Consider how staff with caring responsibilities could be better supported.

Posters

Look out for posters with the Athena SWAN logo appearing around the Wright Building and Health Research Building – these are designed to celebrate and raise awareness of some of the work we are doing. These will be updated regularly.

Events

We are organising a series of informal events in 2016, some in collaboration with the School of Life and Medical Sciences, to give staff an opportunity to discuss a range of topics. Issues we are aiming to cover include: achieving a better work/life balance (**10th February**, email Laura Davidson-Dean to

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\(^1\) Female academic staff were the focus of the Bronze application, in line with the former Athena SWAN charter; the emphasis for the Silver application is on exploring and achieving gender equality for academic, professional and technical staff, in line with the expanded charter.
book a place, l.r.davidson-dean@herts.ac.uk); celebrating International Women’s Day (10th March –
join us on a walk followed by coffee/cake) and Men’s Day; acknowledging and celebrating staff
outreach/external roles; coping with the menopause at work; and sessions for parents and other
staff with caring responsibilities.

**HSK staff – celebrating academic, professional and personal achievements**

Katerina Finnis, UH Athena SWAN Officer, has been interviewing staff to create a series of profiles. Some of these are on the Athena SWAN School website², some have been published on the
www.jobs.ac.uk website³, and others will feature on posters around the School. Staff interviewed so
far have talked to Katerina about their career development; achieving a work/life balance;
involvement in the women-only leadership programme, AURORA; and how they have made use of
KIT (Keeping In Touch) days during maternity leave.

We would be interested in interviewing more male colleagues, students and more professional or
technical staff about challenges they have faced developing their career while balancing work or
study with other responsibilities – get in touch with Katerina if you are interested in being
interviewed (k.finnis@herts.ac.uk).

**Winter Newsletter Profile**

“When you are valued and supported, immediately you feel motivated to develop yourself”

Dr Nirmala (Mala) Arunasalam writes: I became a Visiting Lecturer at the University of Hertfordshire
and, as the students’ feedback on my training was very positive, I was encouraged to apply for a
permanent Lectureship, which I secured in 2004. On completing the Postgraduate diploma in
Teaching and Learning at the University, I became a Senior Lecturer. I then started my Doctorate in
Education (EdD) in 2008 and obtained my award in 2013. There is nothing more blissful than
knowing that you do not need to wake up at an unearthly hour to write your thesis!

On completion of my Doctorate, I participated in Aurora: a women-only Leadership Development
Programme. I heard from women all over UK who had gone up the ladder, their struggles,
challenges and achievements and I felt something in me change. The encouragement and support
from my mentor at the University also motivated me to start to seek opportunities to develop
myself. I am now a Role Model on the Aurora programme as I am keen to support other women
progress in their chosen paths.

I am currently developing my research and international presence and, recently, I became a Senior
Fellow of the Higher Education Academy. It’s all happening at the moment, though I do not know
where it is all going! [this is an edited version of Mala’s longer profile from the jobs.ac.uk website].

³ [http://www.jobs.ac.uk/careers-advice/academic-case-studies](http://www.jobs.ac.uk/careers-advice/academic-case-studies).
To ensure you are kept informed about the work the School Assessment Team is doing we are hoping to use ‘Department Liaisons’ to cascade information to students (or their tutors), academic, professional and technical staff. We have some Liaisons in place, as follows:

Physiotherapy: Anna Anders A.Anders@herts.ac.uk
Adult Nursing and Primary Care: Carys Armstrong-Griffiths c.armstrong-griffiths@herts.ac.uk
CRIPACC: Tina Gibbons t.a.gibbons@herts.ac.uk
Nursing (Children’s, Learning Disabilities, Mental Health) and Social Work: Brian Littlechild b.littlechild@herts.ac.uk

Snippets and news

Flexible working is an issue of interest to many of us; we came across this article about the possible downsides of this practice and thought it provides some interesting points for discussion. http://www.theguardian.com/money/2016/jan/02/work-life-balance-flexible-working-can-make-you-ill-experts-say

Forthcoming actions/what’s next?

There is an enormous amount to do before we submit for the Athena SWAN Silver award in November 2016. Surveys and focus group consultations will be undertaken with all grades of academic, professional and technical staff (including visiting lecturers); undergraduate, taught postgraduate and research students over the spring and early summer. We need your help with this! Please respond when you are invited to complete a questionnaire or to attend a focus group – without your input we cannot build the narrative about what it is like to study or work in HSK – and then we cannot work to make improvements.

The next Athena SWAN newsletter will be published in the spring – do get in touch if you have ideas about topics you would like to know more about.

The Athena SWAN School Assessment Team

Chair Karen Betton (k.s.beeton@herts.ac.uk); Champion Wendy Wills (w.j.wills@herts.ac.uk). For a full list of SAT members please visit the website http://www.herts.ac.uk/apply/schools-of-study/health-and-social-work/about-the-school/women-in-health-and-social-work