

Athena SWAN Feedback – April 2016

Gold Department

Please note that the below feedback is not an exhaustive appraisal of every point made in the submission. Additionally, while feedback is offered to applicants on each section of the form, it should be noted that applications to the Athena SWAN Charter are assessed “in the round”.

Department and institution name:	Queen's University Belfast – School of Biological Sciences
Level of award applied for:	Gold
Letter of endorsement from Head of Department	
<i>Commended</i>	<i>For future consideration</i>
Examples of success and impact are provided, including the promotion of women. Key goals are identified, with supporting data provided. Data are used and honestly acknowledged, including the loss of the two female professors. Athena SWAN is integrated into new initiatives and progress has continued during a period of change.	Inclusion of specific examples of actions which will address the key issues identified.
The self-assessment process	
<i>Commended</i>	<i>For future consideration</i>
The Self-Assessment Team (SAT) membership includes a range of staff including the Head (an ex officio member), technicians and post-graduate research (PGR) students. SAT membership is included in the workload model. The SAT report to every School Board meeting. An Athena SWAN Champion is a member of the School Management Board. Staff surveys and discussion groups were conducted. External consultants and critical friends were used. Secondment of postdoctoral researcher to assist with data collection and analysis.	Clarity on how work is distributed among the SAT, for example the makeup of subgroups. Inclusion of survey response rates. Representation of postgraduate taught (PGT) and undergraduate (UG) students on the SAT.
A picture of the department	
<i>Commended</i>	<i>For future consideration</i>
Information is clear and easy to follow. Context for the reorganisation processes is provided. 10 years of data are presented in places. The proportion of senior lecturers and readers who are female has improved and is now 50%. The proportion of staff who are female has been maintained. Progress and analysis of issues is evidently ongoing. Recommendations from the previous action plan are becoming standard policy across the Faculty.	Student data could be more consistently disaggregated by course (the disaggregation on p.17 was commended) with gender disparities targeted. Data on all degree classifications to be presented.
Supporting and advancing women's careers	
Key career transition points	
<i>Commended</i>	<i>For future consideration</i>
Overall, positive progression is seen. Unconscious bias training will become a mandated element of recruitment training. Substantial increase in applications from women for lecturer positions. Responsiveness to the fact recent female appointments were from overseas, with associated actions, including	Statements to be substantiated with further detail provided, for example to which actions are the ongoing similar success rates of candidates attributed (p.33). Further exploration of the differential promotion success rate. More detail on participation in the activities noted across the department, including changes since the last

<p>recruiting in multiples and providing information about Athena SWAN.</p> <p>Use of role-models in recruitment.</p> <p>On-boarding process.</p> <p>A mentoring scheme and plans to include mentoring activity in the workload model.</p> <p>Shadowing of senior management roles.</p>	<p>submission.</p> <p>Detail on the under-pinning processes. The panel were only provided with this submission, so context is needed.</p>
Career development	
<i>Commended</i>	<i>For future consideration</i>
<p>The large number of varied activities to support career development in different directions.</p> <p>Improvements to appraisal for postdocs, including a new appraisal proforma.</p> <p>Looking at development support for careers outside academia.</p> <p>All students have at least two supervisors and independent reviewers.</p> <p>Student peer mentoring and a strong culture of mentoring between PGR and early career researchers (ECR).</p> <p>The statistics and coding R clinic, which is led by women.</p> <p>Start-up grants.</p> <p>Balancing gender on all teaching modules.</p> <p>The track record of women applying for fellowships and awards.</p> <p>Engagement of students in the management of the School.</p>	<p>Inclusion of uptake data for appraisal.</p> <p>Details of the formal induction.</p> <p>Consideration of the gender of supervisors (whether students can request supervisors of a certain gender).</p> <p>Higher student response rates could be targeted.</p> <p>Further consideration of whether there are gendered patterns in attendance at particular workshops.</p>
Organisation and culture	
<i>Commended</i>	<i>For future consideration</i>
<p>Women are well represented among committee chairs.</p> <p>Embedding an inclusive culture, including ECRs.</p> <p>Positive approach to workload modelling, which is monitored for gender, and explicitly limits teaching and administrative work.</p> <p>The template for the new workload model will incorporate gender.</p> <p>Support for use of sabbaticals.</p> <p>Dragon's Den initiative (the gender split of the 'dragons' would be useful to know).</p> <p>Range of social events.</p> <p>Meetings held in core hours.</p> <p>Strong outreach activities.</p>	<p>Inclusion of historic data on committee representation to demonstrate any improvements in female representation. Comparative, historic data regarding fixed term contracts could also be provided.</p> <p>Clarity regarding whether the committee members are academic staff or include professional and support staff.</p> <p>Reflection on the representation of women on the promotions and research committees.</p> <p>Reference to the gender of those in senior roles, for example cluster Directors.</p> <p>Inclusion of data to evidence improvements.</p>
Flexibility and managing career breaks	
<i>Commended</i>	<i>For future consideration</i>
<p>Good maternity return rate.</p> <p>Some staff have taken dependant leave.</p> <p>Proactive approach maternity leave return support.</p> <p>Academic staff are offered a period of six months without teaching on their return from maternity leave.</p> <p>Maternity leave costs are covered for research grant funded staff whose grants do not provide maternity cover.</p>	<p>Mention of why the staff member did not return from maternity leave.</p> <p>More consistently validated statements, including data. For example, staff feedback regarding flexible working, uptake of childcare vouchers, and use of keeping in touch days.</p> <p>Detail of how consistency and fairness are ensured in regards to informal flexible working.</p> <p>Consideration of shared parental leave.</p>
Any other comments	

<i>Commended</i>	<i>For future consideration</i>
Promoting Athena SWAN beyond the institution. Work-shadowing scheme for secondary school students. General overview of positive beacon activities is provided.	Indication of the success of activities through data.
Action plan	
<i>Commended</i>	<i>For future consideration</i>
Colour coding of action plan progress. Comprehensive update provided (some of these details could have been included in the main body of the submission). Some bold targets for the future, including for promotion. The new action plan is comprehensive and addresses issues from the start to end of the pipeline. Overall, action plan is Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound (SMART). Recognition of areas where influencing the university is appropriate.	Inclusion of further new actions: As with the rest of the application, there is an emphasis on continued development, rather than new ambitions. More specific timescales for actions, with milestones included. Responsibility for actions to be allocated to individuals.
Case study: impacting on individuals	
<i>Commended</i>	<i>For future consideration</i>
Range of supportive activities presented, covering a variety of issue areas. Mentoring for new starters. Bridging funding provided. Staff are working flexibly. One case study is a professional/ support staff member.	██████████ return to work was partly motivated by the contract's end date, which is not reflective of the narrative around maternity support provided earlier. Further information about ██████████ experiences, as the panel highly commend the fact promotion was twice achieved while working part-time.
Final Comments	
The panel commend the overall, positive progression and the implementation and embedding of good practice initiatives around recruitment (particularly acknowledging the international applicant pool) and support for early career researchers and students. The Dragon's Den initiative was another particularly positive initiative. The panel do consider there to be a lack of detail on the under-pinning processes in the department. The panel are only provided with this submission, and not any prior applications, so context is required. The lack of detail regarding context, vagueness in places and some unsubstantiated statements present difficulties, but evidence is provided by the progress report on the previous action plan and key achievement summary.	
Good Practice Example	
A good range of support for those taking maternity leave, including six months without teaching on return to work.	
Recommended Result	
Gold renewal	
Comments on the application (presentation, format, etc.)	
The shades of blue used in figures are quite similar. The panel did not find Table 1 easy to read and commented on the fact it was split over two pages.	