Athena SWAN:
Impact and the new charter framework
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University of Sheffield – ECU consultancy day
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Advancing equality and diversity in universities and colleges
Outline

= Introduction

= Measuring impact

= Beacon activities
  – Pause –

= ‘Post-May pitfalls’

= Intersectionality

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Introduction

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Athena SWAN Charter

= Recognition scheme of excellence in women’s employment in STEMM

= 2005: 10 members
= 2016: >140 members

STEMM = Science, Technology, Engineering, Maths, Medicine

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Athena SWAN: post-May 2015

= Recognition scheme of commitment to gender equality across institutions

= Expanded to take in AHSSBL and professional and support staff

= Adapted from Athena SWAN and ECU’s gender equality charter mark trial (GEM)

= Based on consultation with the sector

AHSSBL = Arts, Humanities, Social Sciences, Business, Law

STEMM = Science, Technology, Engineering, Maths, Medicine

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What is it all about?

- Commitment to removing barriers that contribute to underrepresentation
- Taking a targeted approach to issues that may be of internal or external origin

≠ Producing reports
≠ Platitudes
≠ Planning to “suggest”
≠ Operating a deficit model

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Award holders

= 617 award holders

= 88 university awards
   = 78 Bronze, 10 Silver

= 16 research institute awards
   = 13 Bronze, 3 Silver

= 513 departmental awards
   = 344 Bronze, 161 Silver, 8 Gold

April 2016 round:
   = 158 submissions
   = 100 awards
   = 65% success rate
      ▪ 68% Pre-May
      ▪ 60% Post-May

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Measuring impact

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Award levels

Bronze
- self-assessment and analysis
- identify issues and challenges
- plan activities on a solid foundation

Silver
- additional to Bronze
- evidence of impact and achievement

Gold
- additional to Silver
- significant record of activity and impact
- beacons for gender equality and good practice

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Silver and Gold: measuring impact

= Raw numbers
= Roles and voice
= Take-up
= Qualitative data
= Applications

“Our 2013 survey showed that only 29% of women and 47% of men considered criteria to be clear. After implementing actions x, y and z, our 2015 survey reported that 69% of women and 77% of men considered them clear.”

What’s changed? How is it benefitting (female) staff? Any new concerns? How will you improve things further?

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Actions to deliver impact

= **Change** processes – e.g. annual consideration for promotion?
= **Change** criteria – e.g. what is ‘essential’?
= **Change** practices – e.g. need all jobs be advertised as full-time?

Awards booklets compile examples of good practice

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Internal promotions panel

King’s College London
Dental Institute

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Maternity mentoring scheme

University of Edinburgh
School of Biomedical Sciences

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Postdoctoral network

University of Oxford
Department of Oncology

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Relaxing undergraduate entry requirements

Queen’s University Belfast
School of Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering

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Restructuring of undergraduate course

University of Cambridge
Department of Physics

N.B. The department’s work on exam question structure with respect to gender is available here: http://bit.ly/1R7LAd8

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Provision of room for breastfeeding and rest

University College London
Institute of Neurology
Unconscious bias observers

University of York
Department of Chemistry

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Postdoctoral teaching associate posts

Royal Holloway, University of London
Department of Psychology
## Complex issues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Planned action/objective</th>
<th>Rationale (i.e. what evidence is there that prompted this action/objective?)</th>
<th>Key outputs and milestones</th>
<th>Person responsible (include job title)</th>
<th>Success measure and outcome</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>1. An annual workshop on promotion, for all staff, to be run in the department.</strong></td>
<td>43% of all staff and 62% of female staff report a “poor” understanding of criteria, believed to be contributing to low application rates. Since the workshop is for all staff, attendance will not mean identifying the fact that you are planning to apply for promotion, but staff will learn about criteria in an informal and accessible forum.</td>
<td>4 months prior to the upcoming promotion round-annually Evaluation to be undertaken after each workshop, and on completion of each promotion round. Review of data to be undertaken in Spring term, in 3 years’ time. Outcomes reported in next submission.</td>
<td>Head, HR, SAT to input</td>
<td>100% of staff attend the first workshop. 80% of female staff report a “good” or “v good” understanding of criteria in next annual survey, compared to baseline figure of 32% in 2014. 15% women apply for promotion before 2017, compared to baseline figure of 4% over past three years.</td>
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Measuring impact and hitting targets
An example...

“Our data indicate **one crucial point** at which women leave an academic career – the transition between postdoc (68% women) and independent research group leader (36% women)”

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Measuring impact and hitting targets
Initial action

“To address this, around 2012, we made the language in advertisements more neutral, for example, avoiding phrases like ‘world leader in the field’, which we thought may discourage female applicants”

However, the proportion of women applying did not increase and remained at <30%

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Measuring impact and hitting targets
New action

We therefore chose to implement positive action to identify and personally invite talented female candidates to apply to group leader positions.

Four women were invited who would not have applied otherwise.
Measuring impact and hitting targets: Evidence

All were subsequently offered positions, of whom 3 accepted.

“When I saw the job advert, my initial response was I’m not ready for this job yet. If I hadn’t been encouraged to, I don’t think I would have applied.”

6 new group leader positions appointed at 3F:3M

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Beacon activities

Advancing equality and diversity in universities and colleges
Beacon activities

“Gold departments should be beacons of achievement in gender equality and should champion and promote good practice to the wider community.”

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Silver + ‘outreach’ = Gold?

Not quite!

= “Significant and sustained progression and achievement...

= “A well-established record of activity and achievement in working towards gender equality should be complemented by data demonstrating continued impact.”

To be a beacon, must be a leader

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What are beacon activities?

Championing and promoting good practice within UCL, the MRC and the wider STEMM community has come naturally as a result of our efforts to sustain progression and achievement in promoting gender equality, on the journey to applying for Gold.

– UCL MRC Laboratory for Molecular and Cellular Biology, April 2016
Gold departments...

= are beacons of achievement, having significantly, sustainably and demonstrably addressed challenges across the department

= champion and show leadership good practice and gender equality in the sector and the field

= have completely embedded Athena SWAN

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Questions?

Next...

‘Post-May pitfalls’

Intersectionality

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‘Post-May pitfalls’

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Athena SWAN: key changes

= Covers AHSSBL
= Inclusion of professional and support staff
= Broader focus on gender equality
= Inclusion of trans staff and students*
= Consideration of intersectionality*

Transition period:
May 2015 – November 2016
From April 2017 on, all applicants must use Post-May 2015 process

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Consultation responses

Do you foresee any challenges or opportunities the new areas present for your institution?

= “Intersectional approach, equality for all - very important, inclusive and powerful”
= “Potential to ensure that Athena... becomes embedded and more inclusive”
= “Opportunity to have male colleagues realise that ‘gender’ means them too!”
= “Opportunity to highlight the imbalance in some departments, where an female admin staff support an male academic staff”
Consultation responses

Do you foresee any challenges or opportunities the new areas present for your institution?

but...

= “Resource implications to submit a comprehensive submission”
= “The process will be diluted by the breadth that will be required”
= “Getting the trans issue taken seriously, and overcoming resistance based on the perceived cheapness of zero-hours staff”

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Expanded charter: success rate

= Success rate improving...
= But still slightly behind pre-May data
  – April 2016:   60% vs 68%
  – November 2015:  56% vs 68%

= Explained by relative familiarity?
= But key trends observed

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Pitfalls

= gender equality more broadly

= professional and support staff

= ‘defining the project’

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Professional and support staff (PSS)

“Professional and support roles are defined to meet specific business need, therefore if individuals wish to progress they need to move from one role to another as vacancies arise. This sector-standard practice supports financial sustainability.”

or...

“Not promoting professional and support staff is cheaper, so we won’t challenge that.”
Inclusion of PSS

When Imperial College’s Chemistry Department received its Athena SWAN Gold award, I was asked to give a speech at the award ceremony. I took the opportunity to talk about what I described as the “Institutional Apartheid” that operates throughout the higher education system between academic and professional support staff. In my observation, hierarchical microaggressions are endemic within the HE system...

As soon as we allow one group of people to be treated differently than another then it becomes OK to treat any group differently that another, whether that be based on race, gender, sexuality... Clearly, it is not.
ECU expertise: PSS

Gabriella Caminotto currently finishing PhD

Including PSS: some more opportunities

- Redefining how institutions see themselves and their culture: e.g. challenging ‘us vs. them’, making all staff feel valued and developed
- Considering the bigger picture in order to effect culture change:
  ‘A university which is quite content to see all its secretaries as women with an unbreachable glass ceiling on their opportunities [...] is unlikely to make progress towards greater gender equality among its academic staff’ (Finch, 2003: 133).

Including PSS: some more challenges

- Promotion vs progression: how can we act on the leaky pipelines?
- ‘Dead man’s shoes’: mobility and progression
- Training for ‘current’ role: investing in PSS development
- Challenging the wide-spread view that ‘admin’ is ‘mothers’ work’, and that flexibility is not suitable for higher-level roles

My doctoral research:

- Focusses mainly on one case-study (a UK HEI representative of the sector in terms of gender imbalance)
- Aims to give voice to an under-researched staff category in HE:
  - ‘The forgotten workforce’ (Mclean, 1996); ‘The invisible workers’ (Seekess, 2004); ‘The forgotten cog’ (FG2)
  - ‘The second-class citizens of academia’ (Hosley and Allen-Collinson, 2009: 157); ‘Us vs. Them’ (Dobson and Conway, 2003)
Intersectionality

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Women are not a homogenous group

- LGB women
- Older women
- Pregnant women
- Asian women
- Women carers
- Academic women
- Married women
- Trans women
- Religious women
- Professional services women
- Younger women
- Single women
- Black women
- Disabled women
- Married women
- Pregnant women
And neither are men!

Disabled men

Single men

Black men

Younger men

Professional services men

Older men

Asian men

Men who are carers

Academic men

Married men

Religious men

Trans men

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Intersectionality

“Intersectionality means recognising that people’s identities and social positions are shaped by several factors, which create unique experiences and perspectives.”
22.4% of professors are women.

1.8% of professors are BME women.

7.3% of professors are BME.

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BME: not a homogenous group

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The lived experience

Academic flight: how to encourage black and minority ethnic academics to stay in UK higher education
Summary report

Improving the experiences of international staff in UK higher education
Summary
‘There is only one other black academic in my area and I sometimes get mistaken for her even though we look nothing alike.’

White and Black Caribbean, female, Russell Group university (interview)
‘If it is the case that UK higher education wants to have more minority ethnic academics then consideration would need to be given to how race discrimination occurs. Not overt, but in day-to-day micro-aggressions.’

White and Black African, male, now based overseas (interview)
'The difficulty is when you go higher up the ladder. I think they are quite happy to have you as a casual lecturer, you don’t have a proper contract, a pension, you find a lot of casual lecturers. And also they are happy to have you right at the bottom.'

Asian, female, now based overseas (interview)
‘One of the reasons why there is still such racial inequality in academia is that race equality has never been made a priority. Not a real priority. When you work in academia you know what the priorities are because they are the things that senior and middle managers are monitored on, are assessed by, people’s promotion depends on them. And there is no one in academia, there is no kind of role in academia where your promotion and your progress and your assessment depends on achieving race equality amongst staff... race equality in terms of staffing... have never been priorities. If they were priorities then they would be number one on the agenda at the breakfast meetings of senior staff. They are not there.’

White and Black Caribbean, male, Russell group university (interview)

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’There were a couple of other candidates. So, I was waiting, all fine. A man came up from where the interviews were taking place, to collect me. So he came up, turned his back to me, and said my name, obviously a female name. I had to tap him on the shoulder and say, “that’s me.” He said, “are you sure?” And I am telling you, I am not exaggerating anything. So I said “yes, I am [name].” He said, “come down and do your presentation.”…

We had to go down two flights of stairs. In that time he asked me two more times: “are you sure you are [name]?”...By now I was really pissed off. And I had to go in and give my presentation and I was thinking: I don’t think I want to work here...

I thought ok, I am here now, I can’t just walk out. My blood pressure is now, you know, rushing to your head. I walked into this room, full of white academics, literally there was a sharp intake of breath…’

Black Caribbean, female, now based overseas (interview)
Final thoughts

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Athena SWAN challenges

- Requirement for robust self-assessment
- Success rate rarely >70%
- Common reasons for being unsuccessful:
  - Poor action plan that is not **SMART**
  - Lack of senior management **buy-in**; team lacks influence
  - Descriptive, rather than analytical narrative
  - Applications not **identifying** issues raised by the data
  - Action plan not **targeted** to issues raised
  - Inappropriate balance between monitoring and **proactive** action

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= Evidence of **sustainable** change
= Women – improved visibility, increased self-confidence, enhanced **leadership** skills
= All staff – positive differences in career satisfaction, **development** opportunities
= Administrative and technical staff report a greater sense of **belonging**

“[Athena SWAN is] the most effective lever for change I have come across in 12 years of equality work.”

– Institutional champion

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Further information

- Website
  www.ecu.ac.uk/equality-charters/athena-swan/

- Email
  athenaswan@ecu.ac.uk

Questions?

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