

# Athena SWAN Annual Report 2017

*School of Geography, August 2017*

# ATHENA SWAN CHARTER

## Background

The Athena SWAN Charter recognizes commitment to advancing women's careers in science, technology, engineering, mathematics and medicine (STEMM) employment in higher education. During the year in which the Charter celebrated its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary, it was expanded to recognise work undertaken in arts, humanities, social sciences, business and law (AHSSBL), in professional and support roles, and for Trans staff and students.

## Athena SWAN Principles

As a member of the Charter the School of Geography has signed up to and is actively engaged in the following principles:

- We acknowledge that academia cannot reach its full potential unless it can benefit from the talents of all.
- We commit to advancing gender equality in academia, in particular, addressing the loss of women across the career pipeline and the absence of women from senior academic, professional and support roles.
- We commit to addressing unequal gender representation across academic disciplines and professional and support functions. In this we recognise disciplinary differences including: the relative underrepresentation of women in senior roles in arts, humanities, social sciences, business and law (AHSSBL) and the particularly high loss rate of women in science, technology, engineering, mathematics and medicine (STEMM).
- We commit to tackling the gender pay gap.
- We commit to removing the obstacles faced by women, in particular, at major points of career development and progression including the transition from PhD into a sustainable academic career.
- We commit to addressing the negative consequences of using short-term contracts for the retention and progression of staff in academia, particularly women.
- We commit to tackling the discriminatory treatment often experienced by Trans people.
- We acknowledge that advancing gender equality demands commitment and action from all levels of the organisation and in particular active leadership from those in senior roles.
- We commit to making and mainstreaming sustainable structural and cultural changes to advance gender equality, recognising that initiatives and actions that support individuals alone will not sufficiently advance equality.
- All individuals have identities shaped by several different factors. We commit to considering the intersection of gender and other factors wherever possible.

Professor Alison Blunt  
Head of School

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## What have we done so far?

Following our Bronze award application submission in April 2016, we were delighted that our application was successful.

Athena SWAN SAT co-chairs Professor Alison Blunt, Head of School (HoS) and Dr Anna Dulic-Sills, Head of Administration (HoA) commented: "We are very proud of this achievement and recognition of the School's commitment to gender equality for all students and staff. Equality underpins our strategic aims, values and ethos, and is essential in achieving the School's mission of delivering outstanding research, education and career opportunities for all staff and students. Our new Equality and Diversity Committee is implementing our Action Plan and building on our success by preparing an application for a Silver Award."

The application feedback has helped shape our work in this past year. The Equality and Diversity (E&D) Committee evolved from the School's Athena SWAN Self-Assessment Team (SAT), expanding the remit beyond gender equality and is considering other protected characteristics.

The E&D Committee has worked intensively over the past year on an application for a Silver Award, which we submitted in April 2017.

The School has been implementing and delivering actions from the action plan, and some highlights are:

- Unconscious bias – The School is committed to offering continuous support to its staff in training within E&D matters. Unconscious bias training is now mandatory for all our staff and is being offered by the university's Centre for Academic and Professional Development.
- Staff Survey – The School is committed to conducting a staff culture survey on a regular basis. The survey helps us identify issues that need to be considered by the Committee. We continuously achieve a high response rate – this year's response rate was an amazing 94%, which shows the immense support of our staff for the School.
- UG-PGT diversity video production – Our masters and undergraduate students are currently undertaking a project of producing a short video on diversity issues at QMUL. We are looking forward to seeing results of their collaboration!

The E&D Committee has met in person ten times in this academic year. Some developments that are worth noting include:

- Suggestion box – The E&D suggestion box is located at the School's Reception in Geography Building. E&D Committee discusses all suggestions and looks into implementation of suggestions or forward them to relevant School, Faculty or university committees.
- Regular E&D newsletter – this newsletter highlights the important issues that are brought to attention to all staff and students in the School.
- Staff Focus Group – plans are underway for Staff Focus Groups where issues such as paternity/parental leave, induction to the new staff will be discussed.

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- Members of our E&D Committee attend external local, regional and national meetings where good practice is shared between other UK Schools/Departments who have been awarded, or are in the process of applying for, Athena SWAN Charter awards.

The further self-assessment process in the year since we submitted our Bronze application, E&D Committee agreed to prepare a Silver level award application for the April 2017 submission, and we are currently awaiting the outcome.

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## What did we achieve since our Bronze award?

Our journey from Bronze to Silver represents our continued commitment to gender equality. Our 2015-19 strategy this commitment is evidenced by:

- Teaching our first-year students about E&D, the Athena SWAN Charter and showing a video about unconscious bias (c.100 students annually);
- Athena SWAN Charter principles included in induction talks for all UG, PGT and PGR students and induction meetings for all new staff;
- Unconscious bias training for all staff;
- A new prize for inclusivity in our annual photography competition.

The implementation of our action plan has resulted in:

- Gender equality at Professorial level (50%F: 50%M) exceeding the benchmark of 21%;
- Near gender equality of seminar speakers (47%F: 53%M);
- Two E&D positions on our student society committee;
- 96% of staff in 2017 (51% F: 42%M :7% undeclared) agreed that there were female and male role models (51% in 2016);
- Most meetings are held in core hours resulting in 83% (50% F: 45%M :5% undeclared) of staff agreeing that meetings are held to enable those with caring responsibilities to attend (60% in 2016);
- Changes to our recruitment procedures have supported six fixed term contract staff to gain open-ended contracts;
- New exit procedures, with 100% completion rate;
- An increase in female committee representation (80%F from 20%F) and as chairs;
- 100% of staff complete appraisals, with 82% (50% F: 44%M: 6% undeclared) finding their appraisals helpful;
- 100% of staff complete one-to-one induction with HoS or Head of Administration (HoA);
- Gender-balanced REF Working Group and reviewers for internal reading.

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## What's next?

Following the feedback from our Bronze award, we will be focusing on implementing and delivering actions from our action plan in the next academic year:

- Ensure that our E&D Committee is representative of all sections of the School;
- Communicate E&D information and increase awareness of all protected characteristics via our on-line learning portal;
- Enhance our promotion of masters programmes with the aim to increasing interest from male and BME applicants;
- Work with the university's HR Directorate to address the lack of promotion opportunities for PS staff;
- Eliminate all possible instances of zero-hour contracts by implement and monitoring effectiveness of new Teaching Associate and demonstrating contracts;
- Work on increasing transparency of information available for parental/paternity leave and flexible working, including a channel for impartial advice;
- Ensure training is given to minimize any possible instances of unsupportive behaviours.

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