

Athena SWAN Feedback – November 2017

Department application feedback

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”.

Institution and department and name:	University of Bradford – School of Chemistry and Biosciences	
Level of award applied for:	Bronze	
1. Letter of endorsement from head of department		
<i>Commended</i>	<i>For future consideration</i>	
<p>Strong letter of support demonstrating personal commitment.</p> <p>Honest assessment of the challenges that they face, including a summary of progress to date.</p> <p>Discussion of plans to support a range of protected characteristics.</p> <p>The application is supported by consultation.</p> <p>Commitment to feed good practice up to the institutional level.</p> <p>Identification of the link between quality of research and equality and diversity performance.</p>	<p>Clearer information about whether/how resources are allocated to support Athena SWAN activities</p> <p>There is significant focus on Chemistry – a greater discussion of Biosciences might have been useful (although the panel appreciates the Head Of School’s background in this regard).</p> <p>Potential for greater specific reference to gender.</p>	
2. Description of the department		
<i>Commended</i>	<i>For future consideration</i>	
<p>Clear diagrams outlining the structure of the School and its governance arrangements, situating the School in the wider Faculty and university.</p> <p>All staff and PhD students are invited to staff meetings.</p> <p>Some discussion of how technical staff are included.</p> <p>Clear evidence of including staff at all levels, e.g. in restructuring.</p>	<p>Reflection on whether the fact that the Equality, Diversity and Opportunities Committee feeds only into the Executive Committee is appropriate (though the panel noted that this is partly address by Action Point 2.1.1).</p> <p>Consider including the gender of staff members in Figures 2.1 and 2.2.</p>	
3. The self-assessment process		
<i>Commended</i>	<i>For future consideration</i>	
<p>The SAT seems to be very well administered, and has achieved a lot in a tight timescale.</p> <p>Figure 3.1 provides useful context to demonstrate the journey and progress of the SAT.</p> <p>The commitment to support, resource and action on further gender equality is apparent.</p> <p>Sensitivity regarding non-binary staff survey respondent.</p> <p>SAT members have clear roles and responsibilities as part of their membership.</p> <p>Meetings are minuted.</p> <p>Having Faculty leadership on the SAT suggests that it will link up into wider university work.</p> <p>Reasonable representation across different role types, experiences, and responsibilities.</p> <p>Commitment to SAT membership being in the workload allocation model (though it is not yet).</p> <p>Wide-ranging consultation process, with an 80% response rate to staff survey and consultation with leavers and staff on family leave.</p>	<p>Greater clarity about how the SAT is held to account.</p> <p>Reflection as to whether Action 3.1.1 will sufficiently remedy issues with representation on the SAT: the lack of UG or MSc students, or post-doctoral researchers, and the underrepresentation of part-time staff (only one at 0.8).</p> <p>Clarity as to why the School is benchmarking against hand-picked local universities.</p> <p>Consider how the staff leading the SAT are supported and not over-burdened, especially as they are at Grade 8.</p> <p>Consider whether greater engagement could be sought with students, beyond email.</p>	

Plans to improve data collection described. Full-day drafting sessions and sub-groups to consider different sections. Beginning to consider intersectionality. Ambitions of applying for a Silver award, with preparations for this underway.	
4. A picture of the department	
4.1 Student data	
<i>Commended</i>	<i>For future consideration</i>
Monitoring intake of students and targeting outreach activities where there is underrepresentation. Benchmarking data, both local and national is used. Show better than average gender parity, including in recruiting female students onto Chemistry courses. Identify the under-representation of men as an issues in some cases. Bursaries to University of Bradford graduates to study on masters programmes; consider providing a gender breakdown of the recipients of these. Student ethnicity data is presented, with an honest assessment that this is not reflected in the School's staff make-up.	Would benefit from more reflection and analysis linked more closely to actions. Consider the inclusion of more contextual information about the BSc Integrated Science. Consider further exploration of the significant drop in numbers from UG to PG, notwithstanding the comment that students are "more interested in employment than further study" (p.26). Reflection as to whether the PhD completion rate is particularly high, and if so whether an action is required to interrogate this further. Consider using national and discipline-specific benchmarking for this.
4.2 Academic and research staff data	
<i>Commended</i>	<i>For future consideration</i>
Some good analysis and detail in this section. No significant gender bias in use of fixed-term contracts. Working group to investigate staff on fixed-term contracts. Reworked criteria for progression in consultation with academic staff. Pay protection for redeployed staff.	While the overall gender balance in the school is good, this hides significant imbalance in different directions in Chemistry and BMS (Figure 4.12). The analysis in this section obscures it. Consider separating and analysing Chemistry and BMS data, and setting specific actions where appropriate. No data is presented from the interviews which are mentioned with staff leaving the school. The panel commented that the one woman promoted to professor seems to have become a 'poster women' for the department – reflection on whether this is appropriate, and how she is supported. Some parts are a little lacking in action, e.g. around progression to senior levels. Further reflection on the gender imbalances between Grades 8 and 9. Reflection on the fact that half of female professors are on temporary contracts. Consider presenting part-time and fulltime staff as a percentage of the total male or female staff group to help identify trends (Table 4.3).
5. Supporting and advancing women's careers	
5.1 Key career transition points: academic staff	
<i>Commended</i>	<i>For future consideration</i>
New appointee committee. New starter guide to enhance induction. Have identified issues with the induction process. Interview panels include at least 25% female representation, which is higher than the university policy. Action to introduce a buddy system for new starters.	In some places a challenge is identified but it does not lead to an action point, e.g. differences in perceptions of usefulness of induction (p.37). Consider exploring additional strategies to enhance recruitment more broadly, and female recruitment in particular, beyond wording in adverts, e.g. positive

<p>100% success rate for promotions over the last three years (Figure 5.3), although reflection as to why no women applied for promotion in 2015 and 2016.</p>	<p>action. Clarify support for the female professor who is line manager or mentoring eight staff (p.38). Reflection on feedback for staff unsuccessful in gaining promotion. Consider an action to ensure greater gender parity in staff submitted for REF 2021, given the disparity in REF 2014. Consider an action to review the induction process overall (notwithstanding staff feedback regarding support and Action 5.1.3 to enhance awareness and increase completion). There is significant responsibility placed on line managers; clarity as to how they are supported. Consider whether unconscious bias training should be compulsory for interview panel members.</p>
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5.3 Career development: academic staff

<i>Commended</i>	<i>For future consideration</i>
<p>The panel commended the School for their positive approach overall in this section. Workload allocation model includes time for training and grant writing. Training uptake data has been provided, with female numbers increasing; consider exploring the decrease in male participation in training (Figure 5.4). Iterative feedback in academic re-grading process. Review panel for promotions is twice yearly. Good access to leadership development training, e.g. through GENOVATE, Aurora and WiSE, with one staff member acting as an Aurora role model. New mentoring scheme for doctoral students. 'How-to' guides for PDR process. Both academic and professional and support staff are supported to attend Bradford Leader. Staff feedback is being used to inform changes to the promotions system (pg.41). Annual research Away days, although consideration as to whether there are any barriers to participation, e.g. are they held within core hours?</p>	<p>Greater reflection on how only 50% of staff report understanding promotions process, and there is a gender split. This might have merited stronger action, e.g. through a peer-learning scheme. Consideration of whether the 75% uptake of PDR is sufficient, and whether it could be made mandatory. No specific reference is made to post-doctoral researchers in section (iii). Consideration of whether any lessons could be drawn from the discontinuation of the training scheme on 'realising your research potential'.</p>

5.5 Flexible working and managing career breaks

<i>Commended</i>	<i>For future consideration</i>
<p>This section is strong, with a range of problems and related actions identified, though in some places a little more reflection might have been useful, e.g. greater interrogation needed of the staff survey results about family friendliness of campus. Good discussion of university-level work, e.g. travel and expenses for breastfeeding mothers, access to support for women returners, risk assessments, etc. which are all good practice. Many initiatives seem to be in place to support flexible working and returning to work, including support for a gradual return to full-time working. 100% maternity return rate.</p>	<p>Consider an action to increase awareness of breastfeeding facilities, play areas and nappy changing facilities (p.44). Consider whether there are areas in which the School could build on university policy, e.g. summer club, childcare, etc. Consider exploring the gender imbalance in take-up of childcare vouchers (p.44). One request for flexible working was not approved (p.45), it would be useful to know whether the School has explored this further.</p>

Good consideration given to flexible working, not just family leave. Focus group to remove negative perceptions regarding barriers to career breaks (p.43).	
5.6 Organisation and culture	
<i>Commended</i>	<i>For future consideration</i>
One of the School's professors is a role model for leadership, and the benefits of her experience feed into School activity (p.46). Have started to collect data on staff perceptions of the core hours. Action 5.6.4 to assign Deputy Chairs of the opposite gender on decision-making committees, although reflection as to whether more is needed around how staff can gain the relevant experience to sit on or chair committees, and whether there are more creative ways to address this. Workload allocation model, including for technical staff. External committee work is included in the workload allocation model and discussed in PDR. Social media feeds, promoting visibility of role models Students get outreach activity logged on transcripts Core hours 10am-4pm.	The discussion of outreach (p.52) includes activities such as admissions, clearing and marketing that are more appropriately considered core business. Consider an action to address the low engagement of technical staff in social activities. Greater reflection on how low staff awareness of procedures might impact different areas of work (p.47).
7. Further information	
<i>Commended</i>	<i>For future consideration</i>
This section was used well to show how the School is engaging at Faculty level, situating the School in a wider context, and to reflect on the organisation and culture is across multiple buildings.	
8. Action plan	
<i>Commended</i>	<i>For future consideration</i>
The action plan was well-structured, and generally included significantly more information that had been available in the main narrative of the submission. The majority of action points were SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-Bound), with some good quantitative measures e.g. against the staff survey. There is clear evidence that data fed into the development of actions, e.g. from the staff and student surveys.	In some places the actions are not very specific, e.g. 'encouraging' unconscious bias training, or places where the action is to 'increase' without a specific aim. The actions could be better spread across the four years, and be more clearly prioritised. The responsibility for some action could be more specific, e.g. where they are attributed to 'EDOC'. Consider whether postdoctoral researchers are sufficiently represented in the planned actions. Line managers and mentors are responsible for many actions, but there is not discussion of training for them. Consider including baseline data so that progress and impact can be measured in future. Clarity as to how AP4.2.3 will make a change – what will the data be analysed for?
Final comments	
The panel commended the School on their reflective self-assessment and analysis of data leading to a clear and comprehensive action plan. However, in many places the panel wished that the School had gone a little further with the analysis and ambition for action, and there were some gaps in the data, for example regarding support for postdoctoral researchers. Further, the panel commented that combining Chemistry and BMD staff data obscured actions, and encouraged the School to disaggregate and analyse staff data by discipline and gender so that specific and targeted actions can be produced that may lead to greater progress and impact in future. Although the action	

plan was strong, the panel recommended the inclusion of baseline data so that progress and action can be measured in future, and to ensure that all actions are SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-Bound).

Result

Bronze

Good Practice Example

New appointee committee, and new starter guides to enhance induction.

If unsuccessful at the level applied for, please identify why it failed to meet the criteria

N/A

Comments on the application (presentation, format, etc.)

Summaries at the end of each section/question are helpful.

Raw numbers and percentages should be presented consistently throughout, for example, overview of School data on Page 7.

Some charts were difficult to read or interpret due to changing legends, small font sizes and blurry images.

There were some errors in calculations.

There were some significant issues with cross-referencing with the action plan.