

DEPARTMENT OF BIOLOGY

**Minutes of the Athena SWAN Working Group held on Monday, 5th November 2014**

Present: Keir Bailey (KB), Amanda Barnes (AB), Boris Bongalov (BB), Adrian Harrison (AH), Jane Hill (JKH), Richard Waites (RW), Lorna Warnock (LW)

Apologies: Helen Coombs (HC), Ian Graham (IAG) Janina Pirozek (JCP), Jon Pitchford (JWP), Jen Potts (JP), Betsy Pownall (MEP), Mel Smee (MS)

In Attendance: Calvin Dytham (CD), Andrea Johnson (AJJ)

**14/019 Biology Athena Web Site**

It was noted that this has been updated with recent events and pictures of the recent Gold award ceremony are now on the website. Work on the site will be ongoing with new news stories and achievements being added as appropriate. JKH explained the layout of the site, and the type of information that was stored under each tabular heading.

Members were encouraged to send stories/links/photos of anything that would be appropriate for inclusion on the website to JKH/AJJ. It was noted that the Biology homepage currently has a link (under the Athena Swan logo) to the iGEM project with a picture of the team. It was agreed that this should be moved to the ‘News and Achievements’ section of the Biology Athena Swan site in due course. AJJ will arrange accordingly. **AJJ**

**14/020 Minutes of the Meeting of 21 July 2014**

The minutes of 21st July 2014 were agreed as an accurate record. JKH explained that in order to progess action points more quickly she, JCP and AJJ would meet in advance of the termly Working Group meetings to discuss ongoing things.

**14/021 Matters Arising from the Meeting of 21 July 2014**

JKH proposed that the minutes of the July meeting would be best picked up through the Agenda so will be discussed in more detail later. However, there were three items that were itemised on the Agenda, and these would be looked at first.

1. *Clarification of revised date for the provision of staff/student date to the ASWG and provision of data for the APR*

It had previously been agreed to have a single census date of 1st December each year for all statistical information, with the intention of bringing the data to the Spring meeting. Thus data gathered with a census date of 01/12/2014 would be brought to the Spring 2015 meeting of the Biology Athena Swan Working Group.

1. *LinkedIn*

Promoting the use of LinkedIn was a suggestion that came about from the last meeting; it was felt that this would be helpful to keep a track of where our leavers go. To this effect it had been proposed that something be added about joining LinkedIn to the letter that is sent out to PhD students when they graduate. It may also be possible to convey the desired use of LinkedIn to postdocs who leave the department. The Athena group was keen to push this, but it was felt that wider departmental support/use of LinkedIn was required.

1. *Feedback from the Biology Postdoc Society regarding priority topics for further investigation and analysis*

AB reported that at the Postdoc Society meeting the discussion relating to LinkedIn had been a little negative. The use of exit questionnaires were discussed and arising from this it was felt that it would be good if York usernames could be kept active after an individual leaves. It was noted that the issue about keeping York usernames active after individuals leave has been raised at University level (Senate) and more would be known about this in due course. This will be reviewed once there is more information from the University on their plans.

**Action**

A topic for discussion had been ‘why do people apply to York’, and the Postdoc Society had felt that individuals came because the post that they applied for was in their area of research rather than any other consideration. However, the Postdoc Society had felt it would be useful to have a website or noticeboard highlighting issues/schemes that York have that would be of interest/value to postdocs (eg summer students).

The Postdoc Society had looked for suggestions about ways in which the Athena Swan Group could address any issues, and it was noted that some things can best be addressed by things like mentoring. The system needs to be monitored when it is place to ensure it is working as intended. Discussion needs to take place regarding how this would work and whether postdocs could mentor PhD students (this was thought to be a good idea as it would be good experience for both parties). AB reported that MS would be putting a survey together for postdocs to discuss some of these aspects in general. In addition, mentoring will be discussed further between JKH and JCP and it was noted that there is a new document out from HR on the mentoring process.

**MS/JKH/JCP**

**14/022 Feedback from Athena Swan on Biology’s Gold Award**

JKH presented feedback from Athena following Biology’s receipt of the Gold Award. The Working Group noted that the issues raised in the document could be addressed in time for the Department’s next submission.

It was queried whether the feedback should be made accessible, and it was agreed that it should be put on the Biology Athena website. AJJ will add this accordingly. **AJJ**

**14/023 Feedback from CD on Staff Survey results**

CD reported that 74% of staff had completed the survey (a response from 220 people), and the results can be viewed in quite a lot of different ways. Of those that had completed the survey, it was noted that 121 were female, 92 were male and 7 people did not disclose their gender.

Since the survey results had been made available, CD had been working with Mary Ashbridge to identify areas/issues within the Department that could be improved on. Their particular aim was to identify 3-5 areas where they were particularly concerned about some of the results and then develop an action plan to improve the Department’s performance in these areas.

In relation to the difference between men’s and women’s returns, CD reported that males are significantly more positive than females and young people are more positive than older ones. **Action**

Two specific questions, namely ‘Learning and Development that I have had at the University has helped me to do my job more effectively’ and ‘I believe there is a clear career path available to me at the University’ did not get particularly positive responses from females. It was further noted that only a third of women felt that changes made in the University over the last 3 years were for the better. Identifying training needs by gender could also be looked at. It was noted that there did not appear to be any significant difference in relation to management where there were similar numbers of males and females. Women in general had found performance review to be more helpful than men had.

CD reported that the survey results would be published on the Biology website as long as individuals’ anonymity was not broken. There would be a summary presentation which covered specific points of interest that could be downloaded. The data would also be presented both as a whole and separately by staff group (academic and support staff split). The Biology Athena Swan Working group will look at the data split by gender. It was noted that the ASWG may also wish to look at changes between the 2014 survey and the one held 3 years previously, although Chemistry had problems doing this because 2011 data are not easy to analyse by gender.

**JKH/CD**

**Action**

**14/024 Engagement of undergraduate students: increasing visibility of Athena Swan and brainstorming for new ideas (BB)**

JKH passed round the bookmarks that had been produced with the Gold logo. The bookmarks would be displayed in various locations around the Department and JKH asked the Working Group to let her know if they had any suggestions about how they could be further distributed.

Boxes of the bookmarks are stored in the Biology Admissions Office and there is also a banner made up to the same design. Monica Bandeira has agreed to look after the banner and will arrange for it to be put up on any appropriate occasion (eg Open Days). It was agreed that other staff may wish to use it (for example when hosting seminars/lectures, etc) and if so they should contact JKH in the first instance who would arrange for it to be displayed accordingly.

The Biology ASWG discussed whether it would be useful to have a session engaging undergraduates in gender discussions incorporated into the timetable and JKH advised that she would be happy to chair such a session. RW agreed that this could form part of the timetable, but it was noted that the format of the session would need careful consideration. It was noted that James Chong is the Chair of the post-exam discussion group and BB could discuss options with him.

Examples of the format could include small groups discussing different data sets and issues, and then getting together with conclusions. Students could be encouraged to put together a web article about famous female scientists. JKH would be happy to present some undergraduate gender statistics as part of the session. RW, as Chair of the BoS, reported that he would be willing for the session to go ahead and that the post-exam period would be a good time to do this. BB will therefore discuss this with James Chong and after that with JKH to agree what it should involve, and what approach to take. BB agreed to report back at the spring meeting, or before, with an outline of what will be done. **BB/JKH**

BB reported that an activity had been been run with some of the new first year undergraduates right at the beginning of term which involved them matching up photos of Biology staff to research and academic posts (i.e Research Associate, Senior Lecturer, Professor, etc). The aim of the exercise was to see if people resorted to a ‘gender-bias’. This did not seem to be the case although there was some deviation with Teaching Fellows (it was noted that there may have been some confusion over what the post titles meant). On the whole it had demonstrated that people did not resort to gender-bias and were open-minded. The exercise had been run by a second year student, and BB advised that they could find someone to run it again next year if this was deemed to be a good idea. It was suggested that in order to make use of the findings, BB should provide a written update outlining the purpose of the exercise, who took part (including how many individuals), what was done, what the conclusions were and how it led to the perception that our students are not gender-biased. BB agreed to provide a summary document to this effect and send it to AJJ so that it could be included on the Biology Athena website. **BB**

**14/025 Analysis of consequences of changes to A level requirements**

A document had been incorporated into the Agenda which gave an analysis of whether or not changes to the A level requirements for BSc/MBiol Biology might affect the gender ratio of u/g intake. Previously the requirement was for Biology, Chemistry and one other subject but this was amended to Biology and either Chemistry or Maths as the second subject. TH had done an analysis to see if the recent increase in applications from males was due to the introduction of Maths as an alternative to Chemistry.

Although TH did not attend the meeting, she had spoken to JKH in advance of it and the analysis document she had prepared was now on the Biology Athena website.

It was acknowledged that the increase in applications from males does seem to be institution-wide and the change to the A level requirement does not seem to be the reason for the apparent increase in male applications to Biology at York. The situation will continue to be looked at on a year-by-year basis in the future. Analysis of integrated MBiol degrees and BMS degree by gender will be carried out in future years.

**Action**

**14/026 Feedback from Athena-related Activities**

JKH reported that she attended a North East Regional Network Meeting recently and had also been invited to talk with Newcastle University about their anticipated application for a Bronze award. JKH is also providing advice to the British Ecological Society on their Athena aims relevant for a Learned Society.

JCP had reported in advance of the meeting that she had attended a meeting at Leeds in relation to women in leadership roles and network involvement.

It was noted that TH had been involved an event at the Yorkshire Museum in October to celebrate Ada Lovelace Day. The event had been run on behalf of Science Grrl, an organisation which aims to promote women in science, technology, engineering and maths.

In relation to the Science Grrl organisation, KB agreed to pass on the email address for the group to AJJ/JKH. It was felt that the group may be useful to engage with and there was someone at York within the Group who could discuss it further. **KB**

**14/027 Event for International Women’s Day 2015**

It was noted that next year International Women’s Day will be on the 8th March 2015. JKH reported that the University as a whole has not yet decided how to mark this and what event they will run, but something is likely to be put on centrally.

JKH asked the membership of the ASWG to email her if they had other suggestions of good speakers who could be invited. Names have been forwarded to the University.

**JKH/JCP**

**14/028 Wider Communication to Staff**

JKH advised that this would now form a regular Academic Staff Meeting Agenda item to encourage the group to think about what Athena-activities, aims and ongoing work should be communicated to staff and in what format.

Accordingly, it was proposed that JKH attend one of the general staff meetings to provide an update on Athena aims and activity. JKH could present certain gender statistics at the meeting and AJJ will ask Belinda Wade whether this would be an appropriate agenda item. **AJJ**

**14/029 Action Plan – agreed timetable of activities for next 3 months**

JKH updated the ASWG on the items that had been completed on the Action Plan, and ones which would be worked on over the next 3 month period.

AJJ will update the Action Plan to show achievements and ongoing work. Following this, JKH and JCP will meet to discuss progress on their specific and report back at the next meeting. Where action is required from other members of the ASWG, this will be noted separately in the minutes. **AJJ/JKH/JCP**

One of JKH’s actions was to progress the PhD survey and in discussing this, BB advised that the survey could be done via Google Docs. This was thought to be preferable. The survey can therefore be restricted to individuals with York usernames (and the usernames themselves can be kept anonymous). **KB/JKH**

**14/030 Any Other Business**

It was discussed whether the Athena Gold logo should be used by members of the ASWG at the bottom of their email signatures to further promote awareness of Athena Swan. It was noted that this proposal could be looked at further if it would help promote Athena.

**AJJ/JCP**

**14/031 Date of Next Meeting**

Week 6, SpringTerm 2015 (to be confirmed).

*AJJ - 28/11/2014*