

DEPARTMENT OF BIOLOGY

**Minutes of the Athena SWAN Working Group held on Wednesday, 9th September 2015**

Present: Helen Coombs (HC), Calvin Dytham (CD), Adrian Harrison (ABH), Erin Haskell (EH), Jane Hill (JKH), Janina Pirozek (JCP), Richard Waites (RW) and Mel Smee (MS)

Apologies: Amanda Barnes (AB), Paul Genève (PG) and Jen Potts (JP)

In Attendance: Andrea Johnson (AJJ)

**15/023 Minutes of the Meeting of 27th May 2015**

The minutes of 27th May 2015 were agreed as an accurate record.

**15/024 Matters arising from the Meeting of 27th May 2015**

1. *15/012 Future Meetings and communication between members*

It was noted that timetabled meetings had now been arranged for the period up to summer 2016, and that AJJ had set up a google group to aid communication between the members.

1. *15/014 (I) Engagement of undergraduate students: ideas for summer term activities*

New undergraduate reps had still to be appointed, and it was proposed that two undergraduate reps should be found once term had commenced. RW reported that elections wold be held at the beginning of term. It was agreed that JKH would send an email out at the start of term asking for two reps to join the group. **JKH**

It was noted that the activity proposed to engage undergraduate students after the exam period in summer term had been postponed. New activities would be discussed with the new undergraduate representatives in due course, and further discussion could be held with Amanda Barnes/Lorna Warnock to get their views (i.e. engaging through careers). It was agreed that further discussion should take place after the new u/g reps had been appointed, to explore options for summer term 2016.

1. *15/014 (ii) Staff Survey 2014: discussion of data and agreed actions to follow up*

It was noted that the ASWG website now incorporated a paragraph about the findings of the latest staff survey and gave links to the Biology HR website where the staff survey results were comprehensively provided.

1. *15/014 (iii) PhD Survey Results 2014*

The results of the PhD survey, organised by Keir Bailey in December 2014, were now available on the ASWG website.

1. *15/014 (iv) Pay Gap Data*

It was noted that an anonymised analysis of ‘staff pay gaps’ and a second analysis of ‘age at promotion’ had now been placed on the ASWG website. It was further noted that ‘age at promotion’ would also be discussed at the next academic staff meeting.

1. *15/015 (vi) Mentoring*

JKH advised that she still had to talk to the University Athena Group about setting up an ‘Office for Post-Doctoral Affairs’ (as has been done at the University of Cambridge) to look after postdocs. It was acknowledged that this is a group of staff that often slips through the different support networks in the University. **JKH**

HC reported that she recently attended a faculty meeting about what the faculties can do for departments, and it was queried if perhaps this is something that can be done from the research faculty perspective. It was agreed that much more could be done more centrally (as it ties into the Concordat) but the mechanism of how to do this needed clarification. HC advised she would report back if anything arises from this. **HC**

**Action**

1. *15/016 Developing a Resource Library*

JKH advised that she would speak to JCP separately about this proposal. **JKH/JCP**

1. *15/017 Changes to Athena Swan nationally*

At the last meeting, there was discussion about the changes that would be made to the Athena Swan charter, and a document had been tabled that had been put together by Linda Whiting (Equality and Diversity Office). Relevant documents relating to the changes have now been added to the Biology ASWG website.

**15/025 Review of Statistics Collected**

Our regular census date is 1st December each year and AJJ confirmed that updated charts with the 2014/15 data were now available and the histograms used in the Gold submission had been updated accordingly. These have also been pasted into a copy of the gold submission document. It was agreed that the updated data should be considered at meetings as a regular activity, and the ASWG looked through the updated graphs to comment on the data.

**Figure 1** related to undergraduate student numbers which had been discussed at the May 2015 ASWG meeting. It was acknowledged that the total number of students will rise next year and it will be interesting to see if gender ratios change. There would be two years data for the BMS degree course and it would be useful to see the split between Biology, Biochemistry and BMS student intake. It was noted that this will come through via Tableau in due course.

**Figures 2 and 3** related to Masters’ and PhD student numbers. There were no evident trends for PhD student numbers. The new MSc by research degree would have an impact on Masters’ student numbers, and there will be a one year hiatus for taught courses.

**Figure 7** related to undergraduate degree classifications awarded to females. The previous pattern that females are more likely to get good degrees (2i and 1st) is less evident.

It will be useful to break down these data into more degree classifications for analysis, and consider the gender split of 3 and 4 yr. programmes. Data are available from Tableau.

**Figure 11** showed academic recruitment. After an initial increase in the proportion of female lecturers in the Silver renewal period, this now seems to be a downward trend in **Figure 9** (Academic Staff by Grade). This is partly because women are getting promoted to senior lecturer and professorial grades. There was discussion of ways to improve the gender split of applicants. In practice, however, this may be difficult to achieve.

JKH reported that when the gold submission was made, our target was to raise the % of female applicants by 20%. The current numbers are better than they were, but not reaching the target yet. More discussion on this is needed.

Some initiatives have already been put in place (i.e. the use of the Athena logo on candidate briefs) and it was acknowledged that women may be more likely to be appointed to teaching-focussed roles. HC advised that Chemistry have had similar discussions about increasing applications from females, and have seen a similar downturn. Chemistry highlight family-friendly activities, the AS logo and offer flexible working. However, they have a relatively small field of candidates and there is no obvious solution to redress the lack of female applicants.

JCP reported that there is software available into which the text of adverts/candidate briefs can be inputted to highlight text that is not gender friendly. HR is using the software for a year as a test, and it will enable HR to advise departments about wording of adverts/candidate briefs.

There was discussion about whether the number of applications overall have dropped since the new candidate briefs came out and if they are considered to be too corporate. The new format may be off-putting to applicants. Some feedback that Chemistry had received was that applicants had felt that they were being treated like students again and that the new style felt like it was ‘dumbing down’. JCP advised that there had been some compromise about the content of candidate briefs and she would check with HR colleagues whether the average number of applications for academic posts have done down or not. **JCP**

**Action**

JKH queried if there was anything more that could be done around personal communication, i.e. making more effort in encouraging people to apply. JKH and JCP will look over other submissions from Universities that are available, to see if there are any good ideas emerging from those. **JCP/JKH**

JCP updated the ASWG on the new job titles for the former Biology Teaching Fellows. It was agreed that this was a big step forward, and the Biology website would be updated to reflect the new titles accordingly.

**Figure 10** showed research staff by grade, and **Figure 12** showed research recruitment.

**15/026 Other Data Collection**

1. *New Award*

Data requirements for the new Athena/ECU gender equality charter mark need to be anticipated. JCP will advise what changes are required and new information that is needed for departmental applications at the next meeting. It was further noted that a list of data for collecting in future (in addition to that gathered via Tableau) has been compiled and this can be updated as and when required. Individual offices/people will be responsible for keeping and retrieving the data, but AJJ will take on a co-ordinating role.

**JCP/AJJ**

1. *Outreach*

The collection of outreach data was also discussed. These data are no longer collected via the departmental census. Further consideration may be needed for how these data will be analysed. JCP advised she would talk to JBP and Rachel Cullivan to see what format these data are currently in and what/how this can be analysed by gender in future. It was noted that outreach may need consideration by a smaller focus group. **JCP**

1. *Departmental committee representation*

Data regarding departmental committees and gender ratio of membership of committees need to be regularly collected and monitored. Belinda Wade should be able to provide a list of Departmental committee membership/turnover as these data will be collected once a year (in June) for performance review purposes. JCP will ask Belinda for this information. **JCP**

1. *Information on teaching constraints*

This information will be gathered and Carol Wales will be asked to provide records of who has requested constraints (by gender), and requests have been addressed via the timetable.

1. *Seminar speakers*

The group needs to keep records of seminar speakers and the gender split, and JKH will ask the seminar organisers to provide this information each year. **JKH**

1. *Sabbatical requests*

JKH will also ask Belinda to keep records of sabbatical requests and to provide data by gender in the autumn term, once requests are submitted. **JKH**

1. *Gender of interview panel members*

It was noted that this information should be available centrally. It should be possible to retrieve the gender split of each individual interview panel. It was noted that clarification would need to be given to Central HR as to what is required, and then HR should be able to come back and let us know what they can provide.

On a related matter, it was queried whether the Department still had postdocs who were trained-up and who could sit on interview panels if needed. JCP advised that she would check with Glenda Foster if this is still the case. **JCP**

With u/g student interviews, it was noted that it was very unusual for there not to be a gender split on interview panels, and it should be possible to make checks to ensure that this is the case.

**Action**

**15/027 Update on the 2015 national survey of PDRAs by CROS**

JKH advised that she would get in touch with Leonie Jones in Chemistry (Leonie is Chemistry’s Employability and Diversity Officer) as Chemistry have analysed CROS data and had been able to compare results with the previous survey. **JKH**

JCP reported that she could retrieve the data that had come out of the previous CROS survey if this was deemed to be useful.

**15/028 Changes to the title of the Biology Athena Swan Working Group, Biology website and terms of reference**

It was agreed that the Biology ASWG should be renamed the ‘Biology Equality and Diversity Group - BEDG’.

In relation to the Biology website, it was agreed that the Gold Athena Swan award should still be shown prominently on both the main Biology homepage and the Biology ASWG website. The tab will be renamed to ‘Biology Equality and Diversity’, but it will still include Athena Swan. JCP and JKH will discuss relevant changes to the website accordingly. **JCP/JKH**

It was noted that the terms of reference for the Group would also need to be updated, and it was discussed who else should be asked to join the Group. It was acknowledged that Antje Kuhrs is the Department’s Student Disability Officer and it was agreed that she should be asked to join the membership. It was further felt that people from the Professional and Support staff groups should be asked to attend. JCP asked to defer consideration of this until the next meeting. **JCP**

**15/029 Report on Beacon Activities / News for the Website**

Key staff from the MRC Molecular Cell Biology Laboratory, UCL (including the Head of Department) were due to visit Biology on the 22nd September and a timetable for the visit had been put together, which included meeting University staff. It was felt that this would provide mutual benefits and would raise the profile of Athena Swan in the Department.

RW advised that Monica Bandeira had sent on an email from a school about how to make science exciting, and it was queried if a film could be done about enjoying science so that this could reach people and schools. This may make a good project for final year students, and it was suggested that they and/or 3rd year postgraduate students should be approached to see if they would be interested in doing a short film of themselves. It was noted that there were people in the Department with such expertise and RW knew of a student who may be interested. RW will progress this with Pen Holland accordingly, and will report back in due course. **RW**

JKH reminded members of the Group that if they had any items for the website they should let AJJ have them, along with a photograph where possible.

**15/030 Items to be communicated to the next Academic Staff Meeting**

It was noted that analysis of research grants and income by gender would be presented at the next Academic Staff Meeting.

**15/031 Date of Next Meeting**

Wednesday 4th November 2015, 11.00 am to 1.00 pm (revised time), venue Biology B/K157A.

*AJJ - 20/10/2015*