

## **Chemistry Athena SWAN News**

### **Athena SWAN Working Group: Request for graduate student members**

The Department of Chemistry strives to provide the facilities and the working environment that allows staff and students to contribute fully, to flourish and to excel. The Department provides support for all categories of staff in their applications for promotion, role reviews, awards and prizes and rewarding excellence nominations. The Department recognises the importance of representation of women at all levels in a subject that has traditionally been, and is still, male-dominated. The Athena Swan working group strives to address gender inequalities and ensure that there is a culture that supports equality and encourages better representation throughout the department. Support for women at all stages of their career is recognised as being extremely important.

The working group is very keen to recruit new graduate student members, if you are interested and would like to find out more please contact Helen Coombs ([helen.coombs@york.ac.uk](mailto:helen.coombs@york.ac.uk)). Membership is not onerous, attendance at meetings and any helpful suggestions and ideas is all we ask for!

Chemistry at York was the first academic department in the UK to hold the Athena SWAN Gold award for our commitment to women in science. The Gold Award was achieved in October 2007 and awarded again in October 2010. The Athena SWAN Charter recognises and celebrates good employment practice for women working in science, engineering and technology (SET) in higher education and research.

#### **More information on Athena SWAN can be found at:**

<http://www.athenaswan.org.uk/html/athena-swan/>

The Athena SWAN Working Group looks at current practices and procedures within the Department and considers ways of improving these to ensure fairness for all staff and students and raise awareness of equality and diversity. Examples of best practice are already embedded in many of the Department's activities but there are many areas where improvements can still be made.

### **New Website: Request for case studies**

Please see the Chemistry website for information on Chemistry Athena SWAN activities:

<http://www.york.ac.uk/chemistry/department/athenaswan/>

We are particularly keen on including more case studies, especially for men! Please volunteer to write a case study which we can include on the website.

### **Chemical *Inter*Actions: Request for Volunteers**

The "Chemical *Inter*Actions" society provides all departmental members (undergraduates, postgraduates and all staff including post-doctoral fellows) with an opportunity to exchange information about their own culture and, most importantly, to provide them with general information about the department, campus, or the city.

Volunteers to help run the society are requested, Meetings are held every Wednesday at 15.00 in A107 until the end of term and biscuits or cakes are provided as an incentive! Please come along to one of the meetings to find out more.

Chemical *InterActions* is planning a **Quiz night** on **30 January 2013**, starting at around **6.30pm** in **A102**. People are encouraged to bring along drinks and international themed food to share. The quiz will have several rounds: including scientific, local, international, departmental, and others  
Please contact [chem-interactions@york.ac.uk](mailto:chem-interactions@york.ac.uk) if you would like to attend

- We are also planning to host a guest lecture once a term on a "whacky" subject (confectionery/brewing have been suggested)
- We have opened a new email address, [chem-interactions@york.ac.uk](mailto:chem-interactions@york.ac.uk) and have opened facebook and twitter accounts

## Recruitment Activities

All adverts for new positions within the Department will include the words "The Department of Chemistry holds an Athena SWAN Gold Award and is committed to supporting equality and diversity for all staff and students"

Candidate briefs (also known as further particulars) have been re-vamped to make them more attractive to candidates and to include more information about the ethos of the Department.

## Mentoring

We are hoping that mentors can be appointed for all new staff within the Department. A set of guidelines for both mentors and mentees will soon be available on the staff intranet.

## Athena SWAN Working Group Members

Robin Perutz (Chair), Helen Coombs, Sue Couling, Caroline Dessent, Verena Gortz, Kirsty Penkman, Paul Walton, Katie Read and Ruth Purvis (Post-doc Representatives)

Thanks to Luisa Ciano, a Graduate Student from inorganic chemistry who is shortly due to finish but has been a member of the working group for over two years.

*If any other staff members (include post-docs) would like to get involved then please contact a member of the working group.*

## Activities of Athena SWAN Members

Caroline and Robin spoke about how the Department came to get the Gold award at a meeting of The National Institute of Health Research Senior Investigators in Marlow. They found approximately 100 medical researchers who were very apprehensive about having to undertake Athena SWAN submissions. They also discovered that medics go to much posher hotels than chemists!

Robin also spoke to a meeting of physical scientists in Birmingham about Athena SWAN and found that their preparation had barely begun.

Paul Walton has given his presentation 'Equality for Women in Science: Now, Sometimes or Never' to many different audiences in several different countries over the last few months. These include Trinity College, Dublin; CNRS, Paris; and the University of Siauliai, Lithuania. Many UK institutions and departments are interested in becoming Athena SWAN charter members and Paul has been active in advising several universities in their action plans. Additionally, following the announcement by Sally Davies, the Chief Medical Officer, that medical schools will need to have Athena SWAN silver status they can receive NIHR funding, some of the other funding agencies are exploring similar requirements. Paul has been invited to advise some of these agencies.

## Award Information

### **Professor Pratibha Gai named as Laureate for Europe in the L'OREAL-UNESCO Women in Science Awards for 2013**

Professor Pratibha Gai has been named as the Laureate for Europe in the L'OREAL-UNESCO Women in Science Awards for 2013. Pratibha, Chair of Electron Microscopy, heads the York JEOL Nanocentre and is honoured for the excellence of her research.

The York JEOL Nanocentre is a major long-term collaboration between the University's Departments of Chemistry, Physics and Electronics, the European Union, Yorkshire Forward and leading electron optics manufacturer JEOL.

Professor Gai's research was chosen by an International Jury chaired by 1999 Nobel Laureate Professor Ahmed Zewail. Nobel Laureate Professor Christian de Duve is Founding President of the awards. Professor Gai is the latest in a list of 72 women scientists honoured by the L'OREAL-UNESCO Women in Science Awards since 1998.

Each year, one Laureate representing each of five continental regions of the world - Africa and the Arab States, Asia (including Oceania and Pacific), Europe, Latin America and North America, is honoured. The 2013 Laureates will receive the awards in recognition of their contributions to science at a ceremony in Paris next March.



Professor Gai attended the University of Cambridge after initial education in India. She graduated with a PhD in Physics from the Cavendish Laboratory, specialising in electron microscopy, before establishing and leading the Surface Reactions group at the University of Oxford.

After senior research positions with DuPont, USA and as visiting professor at the University of Delaware, she came to York in 2007 as the Founding JEOL Professor of Electron Microscopy, with Chairs in the Departments of Chemistry and Physics. She is a Fellow of several scientific societies and was awarded the Gabor Medal and Prize of the Institute of Physics, UK in 2010.

## **Dr Kirsty Penkman Awarded Philip Leverhulme Prize**

The prize, with a value of £70,000, is awarded to outstanding scholars who have made a substantial and acknowledged contribution to their particular field of study, which has been recognised at an international level, and where the expectation is that their greatest achievements are yet to come.

The Prizes commemorate the contribution to the Trust's work by Philip Leverhulme, the Third Viscount Leverhulme and grandson of the Founder.



Dr Penkman was recognised for her work in the application of analytical chemistry to geochronology, archaeology and earth science. The rich fossil record from the last 2-3 million years (the Quaternary period) has revealed how plants and animals, including humans, responded to marked climate change in the form of a succession of glacial (cold) and interglacial (temperate) episodes. Recent advances in amino acid dating have revolutionised our ability to date this time period.

The ability to accurately measure the breakdown of proteins in fossil snails has already shed light on key geological and archaeological questions. Working with geologists, archaeologists, biologists and chemists from the Quaternary community has made this groundbreaking research possible.

Dr Penkman says: "The Philip Leverhulme prize will allow the development of amino acid dating frameworks across Europe. As well as exploring the use of additional novel fossil materials, we want to achieve methodological advances to provide faster analyses with improved resolution."

### **Rosalind Franklin Award 2013**

The Royal Society invites nominations for the Rosalind Franklin award. This is awarded to an individual to support the promotion of women in science, technology, engineering and mathematics in the UK. Nominees must be actively involved in research at a UK university, public or private research institution or in industry. Research must be in a scientific or technological discipline within the remit of the society, i.e. the natural sciences, including mathematics, engineering science, agricultural and medical research, the scientific aspects of archaeology, geography and experimental psychology. Nominees may be of any age, although it is anticipated that the award will be made to a mid-career scientist with a maximum of 20 years or equivalent postdoctoral experience. The recipient will be required to deliver a public lecture at the society about their research, which must be suitable for a non-specialist audience, including schoolchildren in the 16-19 year age group. The winner will receive a grant of up to £30,000 for activities to promote women in STEM in the UK and to support research activities.

<http://royalsociety.org/awards/rosalind-franklin-award/>

**For further information about the Chemistry Athena SWAN working Group and activities, please contact Robin Perutz  
([robin.perutz@york.ac.uk](mailto:robin.perutz@york.ac.uk))  
or Helen Coombs ([helen.coombs@york.ac.uk](mailto:helen.coombs@york.ac.uk))**