Athena SWAN Annual Report for 2019

Karen and Perry have now been at the helm of the E&D team for 1 year during which time effort has been focussed on our next Athena SWAN application. The institute is required to reapply for a renewal of the current award or apply for Silver by November 2020. The focus during the year has been geared towards an application for the Silver award. In preparation for this, Perry attended an Advanced HE course on “thinking like a panellist” and Karen attended an Advanced HE course “going for Silver”.

During 2019, there has been a national consultation and review of Athena SWAN process, but the main outcome of the review is still awaited. However, what is currently known is that the process for a renewal of Bronze has been slimmed down.

The parental leave advisor was renamed the family leave advisor to reflect that many staff may have caring responsibilities across the lifespan, not only for young children. Alex Johnstone, formally a family leave advisor has changed roles and is now the new mentor advisor, taking over from the Emeritus Professor Williams who retired in November. Karen Taylor will continue as the sole family leave advisor.

The annual Institute survey was undertaken in early October. There was a very good completion rate of ~79% for staff survey and an excellent completion rate of 86% for the student survey. In the 2019 survey we introduced a new section to gauge the impact of Athena SWAN actions. This section will provide information for the evidence base for demonstrating impact of our actions in future Athena SWAN applications.

During 2019, we initiated communication of Athena SWAN news and events via the Institute’s fortnightly newsletter. This was noted as a positive development in the survey with 69% of respondents agreeing that this promoted the values of Athena SWAN in the institute.

The 2019 survey revealed that communication from Senior Management could be improved. This was communicated to IEC and as a result the director has initiated a monthly update via the Rowett/Athena SWAN newsletter.

Comments on the lack of visibility of the Athena SWAN webpage were made both in the staff and student surveys. Visibility of our webpage is important not only for providing useful information for staff and students at the institute, but as window to the Rowett as a place to work for prospective job applicants. Increasing the visibility of the webpage is being addressed together with updating of the webpage to provide information that may be useful to both staff and early career researchers.

Feedback from the Survey – both staff and student surveys indicated that the STEM presentations had made a small number of people think about their career development. This is precisely what these seminars are aimed at doing. Unfortunately, in 2019 the speaker for the STEM seminar cancelled very close to the presentation day (early September) and we were not able to find a replacement before the end of the year. However, a speaker was re-arranged for January 2020.

The school funded six SMMSN female staff to attend the Advanced HE leadership development course aimed at addressing the under representation of women in leadership positions. Karen Scott and Julia Mitchell are Rowett representatives on this course.

The unconscious bias training seminar in 2019 was a school wide seminar given by Peter Sharp, the University’s Employment Solicitor.
Via the newsletter, we asked if there was any interest in holding another institute wide promotion seminar. There was no response to this request. However, we have initiated bookable one to one appointment at specified times during the year with HR to discuss promotion. These appointments are available not only to those seeking promotion but also line managers who are looking to support staff with their promotion application. The first sessions (one morning, one afternoon) were held in November 19 and were well subscribed.

On the social side, the 2019 Christmas party was a success again! – Many thanks to Karen for taking up the baton on the organization of this fairly late on in December. Although a few members of the running club have moved on, the club continued throughout 2019.

During 2019, Karen and Perry attended meetings of the School Equality and Diversity team, under the direction of newly appointed head of school Prof Siladitya Bhattacharya (Bhatty). During 2019, the idea of applying for a school award was suggested and discussed. Initially, for various reasons the conclusion was that institutes would still apply for their own award. However, during the year, discussion on a school award has gathered pace and it has been recently agreed that the School will apply for an Athena SWAN award by November 2021 (Bronze or Silver yet to be decided). This will have implications for our own Athena SWAN application as any award the school receives will replace awards held by the individual institutes.

It was agreed at School level that the care support fund which provides funds for paying for additional care or children or family members to allow researchers to attend a conference or similar activity should be extended to post-graduate students. Across the school in general there have been very few applications, and none were from Rowett staff or PhD students in 2019.

Best wishes

Perry Barrett and Karen Scott (EDT co-leads)