

Athena Swan Report for 2020

Karen and Perry have now been co-leads for the institute's E&D team for more than 2 years. Although an action point in the current action plans states that the co-leads are replaced every 2 years, Karen and Perry decided to stay as co-leads to oversee the Athena SWAN renewal application which was due in 2020.

During 2019, preparations were underway for our application for an Athena SWAN silver award. During discussions at the School Equality and Diversity group, it became apparent that there was an ambition for a School Athena SWAN Bronze award application in the not too distant future. This changed the perspective on an application for Silver among several school E&D teams as any future School award would immediately supersede awards at the institute level. It was therefore decided (similar to other E&D teams of other institutes of the school who were also planning to apply for Silver) that we would apply to renew our Bronze award pending an application by the School. This decision was further reinforced with the publication of the independent review of Athena SWAN which recommended and implemented a reduced application process for a renewal of an existing award. A renewal application focusses on evaluating progress on the current action plan and looking forward with the identification of key priorities for future actions included in the future action plan.

Our current Athena SWAN bronze award was due expired in November 2020, but AdvanceHE (due to COVID) implemented a recommendation to extend current 4-year awards to 5 years on application for an extension. An extension was applied for and granted to the Rowett, and the current award is now valid until November 2021.

During 2020, Karen and Perry have been assembling the application for the renewal of our bronze award. The first draft has now been submitted to the University Athena SWAN coordinator for comment. It is our current intention to apply for the renewal of bronze award by the next deadline for applications in April 21. The future action plan was circulated to IEC and the EDT for comment and suggestions. Progress on the current action plan is a key part of the renewal process and we can report that of the 40 Action points contained in the 2017 Action plan, seven are on amber status, 3 red, with the remaining 30 successfully achieved. The Rowett no longer needs to fulfil the three 'red' action points which have all been superseded by University-wide plans.

The annual staff survey was carried out in October/early November. This was later than planned due to uncertainties caused by the pandemic. The response to the staff survey was again excellent. We aim to achieve a response rate of 75% of staff and we achieved 74.5%. The response rate of the student survey was 59%. This is a low response rate but a large cohort of students were in a transition between the end of their study period and submitting their theses so may not either have had time to complete the survey, or may not have considered the survey applicable to them. It was noticeable this year that there were more comments made in the open text boxes than previous years. This was very welcome, and rest assured all have been read and will be considered in future actions.

We introduced a new section into both the staff and student surveys to specifically assess the impact of COVID19 on projects and directly on staff and students. The data from the responses received has been conveyed to the IEC for consideration.

The 2020 survey revealed that communication from Senior Management is still an issue that could be improved. Comments received on this topic have also been conveyed to IEC.

The surveys show that the fortnightly newsletter continues to be appreciated by staff and students, with 86% and 65% respectively indicating that the newsletter promotes the values of Athena SWAN in the institute, and that it forms a good vehicle for other communication. We will continue to improve the content and profile of the newsletter.

Our Athena SWAN webpage was been updated and made more accessible. We have included a resource feature for staff and students on the webpage which is intended to make useful information easy to find. It is also intended as a window for future applicants for staff positions or studentships at the institute to quickly find out more about us. These two resource features are still in the process of being established with the student feature still in the very early phase of development. Once established they will be maintained to contain the most up to date information.

Social events took a big hit in 2020 due to COVID19 – no staff barbeque, Christmas lunch or party. However, Alasdair Lesson-Payne and George McIlroy instigated a monthly quiz which was very well received, attracting up to 40 members of staff for each round and a league table established to enhance the competitive spirit. A special Christmas edition of the quiz was rolled out for school participation and attracted 120 participants in more than 20 teams across the school – a great success! We are delighted that they plan to continue this into 2021.

The STEMM presentation in 2020 was given by Prof Soyoung Park of the Charité Universitätsmedizin Berlin / German Institute of Human Nutrition · Decision Neuroscience & Nutrition who gave a presentation on “Motives and Modulators of Human Decision Making”. This was an excellent presentation and well attended.