Athena Committee

Thursday 24th October 2013
14:00 – 16:00
SALC 2, Level 5, Sherfield Building
South Kensington Campus

Minutes

Present:  Professor Dot Griffiths  Chair
          Mr Rob Bell              College Athena SWAN Coordinator
          Professor Alex Blakemore FoM Ambassador
          Dr Dorothy Buck          Mathematics
          Dr Patricia Hunt         Chemistry
          Miss Linda Jones         Physics
          Mrs Darakshan Khan       Materials
          Dr Cleo Kontoravdi       Chemical Engineering
          Ms Gale Lewis            Public Health
          Professor Clare Lloyd    NHLI
          Ms Karen Makuch          CEP; FoNS Ambassador
          Professor Ann Muggeridge ESE; FoE Ambassador
          Ms Sandrine Nurboja      Life Sciences
          Dr Panos Parpas          Computing
          Mr Graeme Rae            Bioengineering
          Dr Jane Saffell          Medicine
          Dr Victoria Salem        FoM Athena SWAN Coordinator

Agenda Item                              Action
1. Welcome
   (1) The Chair welcomed all present to the first meeting of the Athena Committee

2. New Two Tier Structure
   (1) The Chair explained the reasons for the restructure of the Academic Opportunities Committee (AOC) and the creation of the Tier 1 strategy committee and this Tier 2 Athena Committee. The Chair emphasised that the new Committees are still a work in progress and will develop further.

   (2) Professor Muggeridge asked whether this Committee may be too focused on Athena SWAN applications rather than actions. The Chair agreed that actions are key, and that Athena SWAN should be used as a framework for action. Gender aspects that fall outside of Athena SWAN can be brought to this Committee, and reported to the Tier 1 Committee as necessary.
3. **Terms of Reference for Athena Committee**

(1) The Committee discussed the proposed Terms of Reference and suggested alterations (attached). The Terms of Reference will be a standing agenda item as the Committee develops. **Mr Bell**

4. **Athena SWAN Feedback on Applications**

**CEP Bronze Application, April 2013**

(1) Ms Makuch reported that CEP’s application had been unsuccessful. Little had been done before the departmental committee was established and the self-assessment process took place in a short time frame. The feedback criticised the way that data had been presented, the lack of a Professor on the committee, and wanted more detail on historic shortcomings.

(2) Dr Saffell highlighted the advantage of a member of the department’s management board sitting on the committee, in order to demonstrate support and committee. Ms Makuch confirmed that the HoD was on their committee.

(3) Due to CEP’s unique nature and focus the department experienced difficulty gathering comparison data, which Athena SWAN may not have fully appreciated. The Committee was unanimous that applications need to be very clear and explicit. Professor Muggeridge commented that ESE had also experienced problems with comparison data due to the mixed nature of their department. National data provided by Mr Bell was used in their successful Silver application but also data from other Athena SWAN departmental applications.

(4) Professor Blakemore reminded the Committee that large departments can apply in advance to Athena SWAN for an extra 1,000 words in their applications. Otherwise departments may wish to use diagrams and figures.

(5) Ms Makuch and others asked if it would be possible to repeat the April 2013 Athena SWAN workshop organised by Mr Bell as it had been very helpful. **Mr Bell**

**Chemistry Gold Application, April 2013**

(6) The Chair congratulated Dr Hunt and Chemistry on their successful Gold application. Dr Hunt will report on the feedback received at the next Committee meeting.

(7) Dr Saffell asked if Chemistry could present their work to the College. The Chair said that the Tier 1 committee is planning to present Athena SWAN successes and best practice at a HoDs meeting. **Chair**

(8) The Committee asked if a pool of volunteers at Imperial with Athena SWAN panel experience could be used to provide feedback on draft applications and mock panels. Dr Salem noted this would be particularly useful for Public Health and others submitting in November. Mr Bell will maintain such a list and organise feedback. All Committee members will be included on the list unless they opt out. **Mr Bell**
College Silver Application, November 2012

(9) The Chair reported that the verbal feedback she received was more positive than the written feedback. The written feedback is available on the SharePoint. Mr Bell commented that the feedback will always find something to criticise but generally is constructive.

(10) The Chair reported that the President and Rector’s Letter of Support had been praised, including Imperial’s Pledge to Academic Women (see attached). The Chair asked if more should be made of the Pledge. It was suggested the Pledge could be a recruitment tool and improve Imperial’s external reputation. Dr Saffell noted that the Pledge aligned with the Athena SWAN Charter principals. Professor Blakemore said that the Pledge was a good statement but needed to be evidenced with action. The Chair will raise the idea of re-launching the Pledge at the Tier 1 committee, and will investigate printing new cards.

(12) Dr Saffell noted that the feedback praised “the appointment of two Athena SWAN coordinators in each department by the head of department, one of which is a man”. The Chair explained that this was aspirational guidance for departments.

(13) As the feedback praised “Monitoring departmental action plans against the university action plan”, Professor Muggeridge asked if it would be worthwhile cross-referencing the College Action Plan (attached) in departmental applications. Dr Salem stressed the importance of departments going beyond the institutional norm. Mr Bell agreed but advised that departments should be aware of institutional activity and resources. The Chair stated that the departments will be expected to give a formal report to the Committee on their Action Plan progress.

(14) The issue of data was raised, and in particular staff recruitment. This data from HR is sometimes incomplete, e.g. absence of interviewed candidates. This issue was raised previously at the AOC, and HR replied that they provide all data they hold from iRecruitment. The Committee discussed possible reasons, including candidates not completing the recruitment monitoring form and departments not sending the data to HR. Mr Bell, with the help of departments, will investigate this in the new year.

Chair

Mr Bell

5. Ambassador Reports

(1) Ambassadors provided written reports (attached) before the meeting.

Faculty of Engineering

(2) Professor Muggeridge reported that a recent survey had asked if family life had impacted on work, but failed to ask if work had impacted on family life. Other faculties also received the survey. The Chair said that it was part of a Business School research project.

(3) Dr Saffell asked if all departments would share their surveys on the SharePoint. Mr Bell said that the Cultural Analysis Tool, developed by UKRC-WISE, is already available on the SharePoint. The Chair commented that the Royal Society may run the ASSET Survey again. It was suggested that surveys would be a good topic for the future Athena SWAN workshop.
Mr Bell reported that HR will be repeating the College-wide Staff Survey in 2014, and that there may be the possibility of including questions relevant to Athena SWAN. Mr Bell will report back to the Committee with further details, and Committee members are invited to contact him with potential topics. Dr Saffell suggested that a question on flexible working would be useful. Other Committee members agreed, but stressed that wording was important as many people may not perceive their informal arrangements as flexible working. Dr Hunt commented that case studies in applications are a useful way to illustrate informal flexible working. 

Professor Muggeridge reported that a new female lecturer had informed her that the Faculty list of ‘outstanding teachers’ consisted of 27 men. The list may be out of date and not take into account recent Teaching Awards. Professor Muggeridge will investigate further. Other Ambassadors should ask if their Faculty has a similar list.

Ms Makuch highlighted from her written report an incident regarding shortlisting in CEP. She noted that Athena SWAN is about reviewing and improving the process, rather than guaranteeing that women are shortlisted.

Ms Makuch highlighted from her written report that a female candidate had turned down an offer for an academic position. A number of Committee members commented that some postdocs believe that it is not possible to have a family life and an academic career. NHLI is holding a Bring Your Children to Work Day, and Medicine is planning a Research and Family Life Panel. The Committee agreed that similar events should be held by each Faculty, but also include care for elderly relatives. The title ‘Parenting, Caring and an Academic Career’ was suggested. Professor Lloyd and Dr Saffell will report back to the Committee, and their feedback used to plan future Faculty events.

The Silver Athena SWAN award requirement for NIHR funding in 2015 was explained for the benefit of Committee members unaware of the situation. Other funders such as the MRC and Wellcome Trust are considering similar actions.

Professor Blakemore highlighted from her written report the proposed changes at Athena SWAN, including an electronic system for applications, a minimum criteria threshold for applications, and whistleblowing.

Dr Salem reported that the Institute for Clinical Sciences is funded by the MRC and is proceeding with a joint Athena SWAN application.

The Chair reported that a portrait of Julia Higgins will soon be on display, probably in 58 Prince’s Gate. The Chair welcomes suggestion from Committee members on where to hang further portraits of women. 170 Queen’s Gate, SCR, JCR, and Queen’s Tower Rooms were all suggested.
6. **Current Applications Update and Q&A**

   (1) Bioengineering plans to apply in November 2014  
   (2) Materials will renew Silver in November 2013  
   (3) Maths is working through its Action Plan  
   (4) Public Health will renew Silver in November 2013  
   (5) Life Sciences is due to renew Bronze in April 2014. After staff changes, a new academic lead has been appointed, Professor Anne Dell. The department may need to agree an extension with Athena SWAN.  
   (6) Computing currently holds Bronze and will apply for Silver in November 2013.  
   (7) Chemical Engineering will renew Silver in April 2014  
   (8) Surgery and Cancer will apply for Bronze in April 2014.  
   (9) Medicine currently holds Bronze and plans to apply for Silver in November 2014.  
   (10) Chemistry is celebrating Gold and continuing to work through its Action Plan. One particular focus is available provision for PhD students who take maternity leave. Dr Hunt will feedback to the Chair so the issue can be taken to the Tier 1 committee.  
   (11) NHLI will renew Silver in April 2014.  
   (12) Physics is working through its Action Plan.  
   (13) CEP plans to re-apply for Bronze in April 2014.

7. **Athena SWAN Membership Fees Update**

   (1) Mr Bell reported that Athena SWAN had recently announced that membership fees will increase in 2014. The institutional fee will increase to £2,000 per annum. There will also be a fee for each departmental submission of £250 per department.

8. **Athena Lecture 2014**

   (1) The Chair reported that Professor Deborah Smith from the University of York has agreed to give the 2014 Athena Lecture.  
   (2) Professor Lloyd requested that the Lecture be publicised more extensively this year.

9. **Julia Higgins Award Announcements**

   (1) The Chair reported that the award announcement for this year’s Julia Higgins Awards will be made shortly.
10. **Date and Frequency of Future Meetings**

(1) The Committee agreed that there would be two meetings per term, consisting of a formal committee meeting and an informal workshop.

(2) A representative from each award-holding department should be present at meetings. Other departments are also welcome to send representatives.

11. **AOB**

(1) Mr Bell reported that he had recently updated webpages relating to [Athena SWAN](#) and [women at Imperial](#). He would be grateful for any feedback and suggestions on the web pages.

(2) Mr Bell reported that he had created a Mailman email list to distribute Athena SWAN and gender related information to interested individuals.

(3) The Chair thanked Professor Blakemore for her term as Ambassador for the Faculty of Medicine, which is due to end at the end of this year.

(4) Professor Blakemore recommended a lecture on 13 November at Imperial by a female Nobel laureate, Dr Elizabeth Blackburn.