

Name of institution	Imperial College London	
Date of application	April 2016	
Award Level	Silver	
Date joined Athena SWAN	2005	
Current award	Date: November 2012	Level: Silver
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Imperial College London

Dr Ruth Gilligan
Athena SWAN Manager
Equality Challenge Unit
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28 April 2016

Dear Dr Gilligan,

This university is more committed to the promotion and implementation of the Athena Charter than any I have been associated with previously. When I arrived at Imperial as the first Provost in 2013 I admit to being surprised that Imperial had an institutional Athena Silver Award, and that the majority of the 19 STEMM academic departments were fully on board and either holding or actively working towards awards. I was surprised because this was not the (uninformed) impression I had of Imperial. Wasn't Imperial too focused on winning research grants and chasing league table places to care about such 'soft' issues as gender equality? I could not have been more wrong. I quickly realised that my role as Provost is to accelerate the enormous progress already made, and to lead by example.

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Professor James Stirling CBE FRS FCGI
Provost

My personal commitment to Athena stems from more than 30 years working in a traditionally very male-dominated scientific discipline. The arrival of Athena in 2005 finally gave us the framework to address the issue in a systematic way, and I have been an enthusiastic supporter ever since. When I became head of department in my previous job, I committed to 'going for gold', an award which was finally achieved shortly after I left.

Since 2013 I have made the promotion of Athena a central part of both my own agenda and the College's strategy. Early actions were to (i) create and chair a new committee, the Academic Gender Strategy Committee (which oversees Athena activity and reports directly to the Provost's Board), (ii) create a new senior post, the Provost's Envoy for Gender Equality, and (iii) make clear on my first round of Departmental visits in 2013/14 that commitment to achieving gender equality was non-negotiable. I require this of every new Head of Department and Dean that I appoint. We have, I believe, made great strides in embedding this commitment in our institutional culture. Our new College Strategy for 2015-20 makes this absolutely clear.

We have some superb role models. When Alice Gast was appointed as President in 2014 she was the first woman to lead Imperial in our 107 year history. She is equally passionate about promoting gender equality. We both welcomed the expansion of Athena in 2015 to include all staff.

This application lists in great detail the data that inform our policies and actions, the work we have done (and what still needs to be done) and the successes we have achieved. Evidently there has been progress. The proportion of female professors is currently 15%, nearly twice what it was ten years ago but still compares unfavourably with the proportion of women on our academic staff, 20%.

I am personally committed to advancing gender equality at Imperial. A Provost might be tempted to measure his or her success in office in terms of the institution's success in research grant income, citations, prizes, student satisfaction surveys, world rankings etc., but I would count an institutional Athena Gold Award, in recognition of all we have done to advance and support women, as my greatest achievement. We are not yet at that stage. We still have so much more to do and we may not get to the very highest level during my tenure, although it will not be for want of trying.

Yours sincerely,



Professor James Stirling CBE FRS FCGI
Provost