

# Athena SWAN Feedback – April 2017

## Bronze Department

Please note that the below feedback is not an exhaustive appraisal of every point made in the submission. Additionally, while feedback is offered to applicants on each section of the form, it should be noted that applications to the Athena SWAN Charter are assessed “in the round”.

<b>Institution and department name:</b>	University of Cambridge - Institute of Astronomy
<b>Level of award applied for:</b>	Bronze
<b>Letter of endorsement from head of department</b>	
<i>Commended</i>	<i>For future consideration</i>
Letters from both current and incoming heads. Current head demonstrates personal action undertaken. Speaks to feedback previously returned to the institute. Embedding of Athena SWAN highlighted. Good summary of key points of the submission (although how priorities will be addressed could be clearer).	
<b>Description of the department</b>	
<i>Commended</i>	<i>For future consideration</i>
Clear, concise overview. Helpful organogram (which could be enhanced by showing genders of key role-holders). One of two deputy directors is female. Inclusive approach to committee membership. Gender balance among technical staff.	
<b>The self-assessment process</b>	
<i>Commended</i>	<i>For future consideration</i>
Action to develop workload model for fixed-term academic researchers (particularly given subsequent information on their teaching activity, p.21). Formal recognition of SAT involvement. Clear table showing diversity of self-assessment team (SAT) membership. Links to university work and ‘buddy’ scheme. Specific surveys undertaken (although incomplete at time of submission). Plans for future committee representation.	Limited representation of professional and support staff (PSS) and students on SAT. As the SAT is large SAT, further clarity on roles (who had responsibility for what on the team). Reference to future meeting frequency after submission is vague.
<b>A picture of the department</b>	
<i>Commended</i>	<i>For future consideration</i>
5 years’ worth of student data included. Progression analysis is useful (Table 4.3). Training for recruiters and line managers. Clear commitment to outreach as tool to support student recruitment. Strong analysis of staff data.	Proportion of women in undergraduate year 4 appears lower than year 3. Lower attainment may explain this (despite the lack of statistical significance) and the panel suggests support be targeted to students that may be on the cusp of a 2:1 in year 3. Inclusion of data on PGR completion. Any challenges associated with the appointment of partners (p.23).
<b>Supporting and advancing women’s careers</b>	
Key career transition points	
<i>Commended</i>	<i>For future consideration</i>
Evident consideration of equality as defined beyond	Short-listing data to be included.

<p>gender considerations.  Three of last six Eddington prize lectureships awarded to women.  Unconscious Bias training.  Recognition of importance of non-tenured researchers (large range of actions proposed).  Astro-Postdoc Committee.  Limited attrition between PhD and researcher levels (which is a better situation than the national benchmarks).  Use of gender neutral language.  Action to ensure representation of SAT on all appointment committees.  Issues with induction being actioned.</p>	<p>Data on completion of training mentioned.  Clearer strategies for promotion support. Appraisal is infrequent relative to the sector standard (annual) and it is unclear how staff are made aware of opportunities (albeit the institute as a whole has a good track record on promotion).</p>
Career development	
<i>Commended</i>	<i>For future consideration</i>
<p>Extensive training available at university level (although more detail on the specific departmental training would be welcome, as well as detail on uptake and feedback).  Post-appraisal review meeting.  ‘Dignity@Work’ contacts.  Action to set up a diversity forum.</p>	<p>Appraisal to be offered annually.  Some more proactive support for career progression/planning (staff and students) may be beneficial.  Qualitative data on support for students (it is recognised that gathering this is in train).  Analysis of data on grant applications, values applied for and success rates by gender. Support for grant applications could be more mainstreamed.</p>
Flexibility and managing career breaks	
<i>Commended</i>	<i>For future consideration</i>
<p>Extension of contracts during maternity leave (although the example of a three month leave is unfortunate – this is very short).  Departmental administrator discusses return before this occurs (although line managers should also be engaged in this).</p>	<p>Clearer approach to providing cover for academic and research staff.  Data on uptake of KIT days.  Further quantification of the ‘satisfaction’ with flexible working.  It is unclear whether staff that go part time may return to full time.</p>
Organisation and culture	
<i>Commended</i>	<i>For future consideration</i>
<p>Recognition of importance of decision-making taking place in hours people are able to attend (albeit the mechanism to ensure this is a compromise).  Consultation on meeting times is welcome.  Graduate students able to meet with female external speakers in closed session before lectures.  Annual survey on departmental culture.  Qualitative data used well in this sub-section.  Variety of social activities.  Range of outreach activities and recognition of contributions of students.</p>	<p>Some staff have reported experiencing bullying and harassment in the workplace. This is important regardless of whether there is “gender bias” in rates of reporting. Measures in place to support staff and line managers should be clearer.  Gendered analysis of duties undertaken, in relation to the workload model.  Clearer response to seminar timing issue.  More information on what schools are targeted and gender balance in participation of school students.</p>
Further information	
<i>Commended</i>	<i>For future consideration</i>
<p>Useful information from survey.  Benchmarking against wider School (although some areas where the institute outperforms the school still warrant focus, e.g. regarding ‘regular and constructive feedback’).</p>	<p>Survey data presented here to be better integrated into the main body of the submission.  There is a gender gap between men and women in their feeling able to report bullying and harassment (amongst other issues noted on p.48).</p>

Reflection on stress in the workplace. Action to investigate salaries of postdoctoral researchers. Code of conduct for conference attendees.	Actions on PSS are very underdeveloped (APs 49 and 50, p.48).
<b>Action plan</b>	
<i>Commended</i>	<i>For future consideration</i>
Overall there is a good range of actions, appropriately targeted to issues identified throughout the narrative. Clear commitment, with many actions already in train.	Rather a lot of responsibility rests with the Department Administrator. Action plan is rather frontloaded and some deadlines appear somewhat arbitrary. Scope for more ambition in some targets, e.g. APs 45 and 46. Success measures in general could be more developed. Clearer prioritisation of actions.
<b>Final Comments</b>	
The panel commends the SAT's work to embed Athena SWAN in the institute. A greater degree of reflection on learning from the previous submission would have been welcome, but good work is evidently underway and actions are already in progress. Overall, the application is well-rounded and identifies issues well, with plans in place to tackle discrete matters. There are a number of examples of commendable practice, including the formation of the Astro-Postdoc Committee and the introduction of a code of conduct for conference attendees.	
<b>Good Practice Example</b>	
Formation of the Astro-Postdoc Committee (three members of which are SAT members), and which organises support events, such as regarding managing stress	
<b>Recommended Result</b>	
Bronze	
<b>Comments on the application (presentation, format, etc.)</b>	
The action plan font is very small and rather blurry.	