Athena SWAN Silver department award application

Name of university: Newcastle University

Department: Institute for Cell and Molecular Biosciences (ICaMB)

Date of application: November 2014

Date of university Bronze and/or Silver Athena SWAN award: Bronze award July 2009; renewed November 2012

Contact for application: Professor Dianne Ford

Email: dianne.ford@ncl.ac.uk

Telephone: 0192 2085986

Departmental website address: http://www.ncl.ac.uk/camb/

The ICaMB Athen SWAN self-assessment team
<table>
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<th>Abbreviations and References</th>
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Reference to individual SAT team members in the narrative is by their initials: CA Chrissie Aldridge; JB Jeremy Brown; LC Lucy Crouch; RC Rita Cruz; DF Dianne Ford; CH Colin Harwood; JK Joanna Keith; IK Iaroslava Kos; BL Bob Lightowlers; SM Suzanne Madgwick; CP Catherine Pyle; JQ Janet Quinn; NR Nancy Rios; BS Bill Saint; LW Luisa Wakeling
1. **Letter of endorsement from the head of department: (500 words; attached)**

2. **The self-assessment process: (997 words)**
   
a) **The self-assessment team**

Our SAT is broad, to include all personnel categories (support staff and all academic grades; open-ended and fixed-term contracts), plus PhD students. Women make up the larger proportion to ensure robust representation. Men, including the Director and other senior academics, play an active role.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Role/Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>Christine Aldridge</td>
<td>RA in ICaMB for 11 years. Two young children. Working flexibility in ICaMB affords her and her academic husband good life-work balance with 2 young children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeremy Brown</td>
<td>Senior lecturer with a dual academic-career family. He and his partner commute 50 miles (in different directions), balancing work commitments with two younger children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucy Crouch</td>
<td>Post-doctoral researcher in ICaMB on a fixed term contract. Member of the IPA. Lucy’s partner of 9 years is in Scotland, so she balances work with weekend commutes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rita Cruz</td>
<td>Marie Curie Fellow. Rita works 9 month rotations with an industrial partner in the Netherlands, thus flexibility is essential.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dianne Ford</td>
<td>Chair and ICaMB Athena SWAN academic lead, Professor of Molecular Nutrition, member of ICaMB Executive Committee. Dianne has provided support and mentorship for 15 years to female PhD students and postdoctoral scientists in her group. She is single mother to a teenage son.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colin Harwood</td>
<td>Professor of Molecular Microbiology, career spanning over 40 years. Colin was involved in establishing the Equality and Diversity policy of the Society for General Microbiology.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joanna Keith</td>
<td>Institute Manager; member of the ICaMB Executive Committee and IRSG. Joanna was supported by ICaMB to undertake part-time postgraduate studies while bringing up a young family.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iaroslava Kos</td>
<td>International PhD research student with a one year old daughter.</td>
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**Bob Lightowlers.** Institute Director for 3 years. Bob sees one of his most important challenges as addressing the academic staff gender imbalance in ICaMB.

**Suzanne Madgwick.** Wellcome Trust Career Re-entry Fellow. Suzanne returned to ICaMB after a 6-year career break as a full time mother and is one of our case studies.

**Catherine Pyle.** SAT secretary) and PA to the Director. Catherine has worked at the University for 20 years, and in ICaMB for 10 years. She and her university-employed husband have seen a major positive shift to support working parents while bringing up 2 children.

**Janet Quinn.** SAT Vice-Chair, Professor of Eukaryotic Microbiology, member of IRSG. Jan has taken two periods of maternity leave. Her children are now 8 and 7 years old. She is the Institute’s Women’s Promotion Champion and mentorship coordinator.

**Nancy Rios.** Faculty Athena SWAN Project Officer; member of the University SAT. Nancy is a single mother to two young children and works part time and flexibly.

**Bill Saint.** Management of ICaMB infrastructure and technical services. Previously Equality Officer for the local branch of UNITE. Bill’s wife has been unable to work since 2004 so he mixes care issues with work responsibilities.

**Luisa Wakeling.** PhD then RA in ICaMB. Appointed in July 2014 as a Teaching Fellow (open-ended) in the School of Dental Sciences. Luisa was supported to gain extensive teaching experience and a qualification (ITLHE) in parallel with her research. Luisa was instrumental in IPA. She has a 5-year-old daughter.
b) The self-assessment process

Our team was assembled in November 2013 and meets monthly at times compatible with home commitments. All members are invited to add agenda items and may raise any other issues. Meeting notes are posted on our internal web pages. Discussions are open and informal and we aim that meetings are enjoyable and that members speak candidly.

We also work as smaller task groups, for example to establish a pilot mentorship scheme (LW, DF, JQ, LC; Section 4), organise an Equality in Academia day (LW, DF, CP, CH; Section 5), conduct the staff survey (BS, JB, DW, LC, CP, JK), develop and update the ICaMB Athena SWAN web pages (CP, SM).

All staff and PhD/MPhil students were invited to complete a web-based equality survey in May 2014. The Director was very proactive in encouraging participation by email notification and reminders and presented a summary of the findings at an open forum. The IPA (Postdoctoral Researcher) and PANIC (PhD student) groups sent out additional targeted requests to participate. The survey was adapted from the HE STEM Staff Culture Survey. The 32 questions covered issues such as the participation and promotion of women, workplace culture, the commitment of leadership and management to gender equality, and ICaMB’s reputation for gender equality. Responses were anonymous, but respondents had the option to indicate their staff category. Table 1 provides response statistics. We provide a summary of our key findings and actions in Section 5.

Table 1. Staff equality consultation survey minimum* response statistics

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Staff category</th>
<th>Percentage in category who responded</th>
<th>Percentage female respondents in category</th>
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<tr>
<td>Researcher</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fellow</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lecturer</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Lecturer</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reader</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professor</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative/clerical support</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical/scientific support</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD student</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
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*Some respondents (19% female) did not indicate staff category

External consultation and input has included SAT representatives attending relevant Faculty and University events, including Athena SWAN North East Forums in Durham and Newcastle. The experience of CH in working on the equality and diversity policy document of the Society for
General Microbiology also informed our working. Professor Hilary Lappin-Scott, PVC at Swansea University who champions equality in academia and was the guest speaker at our Equality in Academia event (see Section 5) and provided suggestions for raising awareness of the Athena SWAN agenda, including participation in SoapboxScience (Section 4 “Outreach activities”). DF and JK met Katie Perry, Chief Executive of the Daphne Jackson Trust at the “Women & Change in Higher Education” conference (Newcastle and Durham Universities) and discussed with her support for our female Research Fellows, as a result of which we will promote Daphne Jackson and other fellowships to eligible women in parallel with ICaMB IRES fellowships (Action plan 1.6, and Section 4 “Key career transition points”).

**c) Future plans for the self-assessment team**

Monthly SAT meetings will continue to be synchronised with the monthly ICaMB Executive Committee meeting, which has the equality agenda as a standing item. DF will continue to chair the SAT and sits on the Executive Committee. We welcome new SAT members (RC was inspired to join by our Equality in Academia event) and will ensure the balance of representation remains appropriate. To implement and monitor our Action plan we have set up an annual diary of standing items that includes all actions.
3. A picture of the department: maximum (1996 words)
   
a) A pen-picture of the department

![Diagram showing structure of Newcastle University and ICaMB](image)

**Figure 1.** A schematic diagram to show ICaMB in relation to the structure of Newcastle University. Yellow shading/outlining/arrows highlight all ICaMB structures and activities. ICaMB is one of 6 research institutes in the Faculty of Medical Sciences (FMS). None of the research institutes has governance over teaching. The School of Biomedical Sciences (SBMS) has governance over undergraduate teaching and the FMS Graduate School has governance over postgraduate teaching. Research and academic staff in ICaMB provide teaching to undergraduate and postgraduate courses, and PhD students supervised by staff in ICaMB register in ICaMB.
Newcastle University comprises three Faculties - FMS (Medical Sciences), SAgE (Science, Agriculture and Engineering) and HASS (Humanities and Social Sciences) - run by an executive of 11 members (2 women). The University was awarded Athena SWAN Bronze status in July 2009, which was renewed in November 2012.

The Institute for Cell and Molecular Biosciences (ICaMB) is one of six Research Institutes in FMS (Figure 1). The Institute was formed in 2003 when FMS was restructured to separate teaching and research between schools and institutes. Our first Director was one of two female directors. In contrast to all other FMS institutes, ICaMB has no clinical academic staff but focuses on fundamental exploration to provide the foundation for applied biomedical research. We perform internationally-competitive research in a vibrant, supportive and collegiate atmosphere.

ICaMB consists of 178 staff and 112 PhD students. Of the staff, 138 are academic (29 Professors, 16 Lecturers/Senior Lecturers/Readers, 10 Fellows, 83 RAs) and 40 are support staff (28 technicians, 10 administrators and 2 computing officers). We have gender balance across our support staff, student and RA groups, but not our academic staff. We are working hard to address this imbalance through initiatives to increase recruitment of women, in particular Research Fellows (IRES Fellows; Section 4 “Key career transition points” and Action plan 1.2) and through action to improve the retention of women and develop them towards more senior roles (mentorship and leadership/assertiveness training [Section 4 “Key career transition points” and Action plan 2.1, 2.2, 2.3], PDR (optionally with a female colleague) [Section 4 “Career Development” and Action plan 2.4], targeting and supporting through promotions applications [Section 4 “Career Development and Action plan 5.1”]).

We aim to cultivate the strengths in all ICaMB members and to provide the best work environment we can for career and personal development. For example, ICaMB was a University champion for exploring flexible working. As a result of lobbying, we were given and took the opportunity to pilot a scheme in 2006 that now operates across the University (since 2007).

Our prime goal to provide internationally-competitive research must be underpinned by a commitment to teach and train the future research leaders of both genders. We therefore need to identify and take action to address the reasons for our failure to convert promising young female scientists into senior academics. We thus committed to provide mentors to all staff, and in particular to establish female academics as role models and mentors for female postdoctoral RAs and postgraduate students (Section 4 “Key career transition points”). Many of our actions now raise the visibility of women in science and raise expectations of our young female scientists, including hosting high-profile women speakers at seminars and at equality and diversity events (Section 4 “Organisation and Culture”, Section 5 and Action plan 6.1, 6.2, 6.3), through increasing visibility of our own women (for example, through our annual research away day; Section 5 and Action plan 6.4) and through providing support to excel in the PhD examination (“Student data” below and Action plan 6.5).

ICaMB is split on two sites ~200 metres apart. Although this is close, we are aware that good communication is essential. We provide a weekly email newsletter and have a substantial social media network (Action plan 9.2) including our bi-weekly blog that is written by a small team of academics (50% female). ICaMB has also established thriving postgraduate (PANIC) and postdoctoral (IPA) societies that provide personal development, social and academic events. We
hold a weekly Friday lunch-time PI meeting, where news items are followed by a short presentation by one academic each week.

b) Data for the past three years

Student data

- ICaMB staff teach on undergraduate programmes with a gender ratio (>50% female) in line with the national profile.
- We are taking action to redress a bias against female students selecting undergraduate and masters research projects in ICaMB.
- PhD student numbers are gender-balanced and in line with the national profile.
- Applications from female students for undergraduate degree courses outnumber applications from male students and success rates are equal.
- Applications for PhD appear to be gender-balanced but we need a mechanism to capture full data.
- Female students out-perform male students at BSc and masters levels.
- Completion statistics for female and male PhD students do not differ but we identified a need and are taking action to support and encourage more female students to excel in the PhD examination.

(i) Numbers of males and females on access or foundation courses

ICaMB does not run access or foundation courses.

(ii) Undergraduate male and female numbers

ICaMB staff contribute to BSc Hons in: Biochemistry, Biomedical Sciences, Biomedical Genetics, Biomedical Sciences with Medical Microbiology, Pharmacology and Physiological Sciences. We report student numbers (Figure 2), but we have no direct influence because these programmes (including recruitment) are managed by the School of Biomedical Sciences (SBMS). Gender ratio of these students (>50% female) is in line with the profile nationally.

Figure 3 shows data for undergraduate students taking final year research projects in ICaMB, which indicate a bias against selection of ICaMB projects by female students. The research project module leader observes that female students typically select projects in more clinical/applied areas than represented by ICaMB’s research portfolio. Thus, after discussion, she took action to address this imbalance by promoting ICaMB research, and in particular research of our female scientists, to the student group at her introductory presentation in October 2014. In addition, DF presented a personal career profile and showcased her research in ICaMB to year 1 undergraduate students at the forum “Biomedicine Plus”, which aims to introduce students to research in the Faculty and inspire academic career choices. Data on project uptake for 2014-15 (available in December 2014) and the following 2 years will indicate the impact of these actions, which we will continue if effective and augment if necessary.
Figure 2: Comparison between the percentage of BSc students in SBMB and *nationally who were female (bars). The secondary plot (line) shows the total number of BSc students (female and male) in SBMS. *Source: https://heidi.hesa.ac.uk/; undergraduate students studying Genetics, Microbiology, Molecular Biology, Biophysics & Biochemistry, Pharmacology and Toxicology.

Figure 3: Comparison between the percentage of total BSc students and those who undertook research projects in ICaMB who were female (bars). The secondary plot (lines) shows the total number of students (female and male) who undertook research projects in ICaMB and total number of BSc students.
Images showing women as positive role-models used to promote ICaMB research projects to BSc students

(iii) Postgraduate male and female numbers completing taught courses

ICaMB does not run postgraduate taught courses. However, students on the MSc in Medical Sciences (managed through the Faculty Graduate School) may take research projects in ICaMB. Figure 4 shows data for these students (5 only, all female) compared with the cohort as a whole.

Figure 4: Comparison between the percentage of total MSc students and those who undertook research projects in ICaMB who were female (bars). The secondary plot (lines) shows the total number of students (female and male) who undertook research projects in ICaMB and total number of MSc students.

(iv) Postgraduate male and female numbers on research degrees.

Numbers of female and male PhD students have remained approximately equal and aligned with national figures (Figure 5). Students taking the MRes (managed by the Faculty Graduate School) may take research projects in ICaMB. Figure 6 shows data for these students, revealing a pattern similar to undergraduate research project selection with a slight bias against selection by female students. DF is Degree Programme Director for the MRes and will explore with student representatives how best to promote ICaMB research to female students.
Figure 5: Comparison between the percentage of PhD/MPhil students in ICaMB and *nationally who were female (bars). The secondary plot (line) shows the total number of PhD/MPhil students (female and male) in ICaMB. Data include one part-time female PhD student in all three years and one part-time male PhD student in 2011-12. MPhil student numbers were 1 female in 2011-12 and 2012-13 and one male in 2011-12. * Source: https://heidi.hesa.ac.uk/; postgraduate students undertaking research in Genetics, Microbiology, Molecular Biology, Biophysics & Biochemistry.

Figure 6: Comparison between the percentage of total MRes students and those who undertook research projects in ICaMB who were female (bars). The secondary plot (lines) shows the total number of students (female and male) who undertook research projects in ICaMB and total number of MRes students.
Ratio of course applications to offers and acceptances by gender for undergraduate, postgraduate taught and postgraduate research degrees.

For undergraduate degrees, success rates for female and male applicants are the same and applications from female students outnumber those from male students (Figure 7).

![Figure 7: Proportion of applicants and entrants for BSc degrees who were female (primary plot; bars) and proportion of female and male applicants who were successful (secondary plot; lines)](image)

PhD applications are made in the first instance to the Faculty Graduate School and are only ‘coded’ as applications to ICaMB after a process of identifying a likely supervisor for a good applicant. Some have been already pre-selected ‘informally’ by supervisors. Thus, the data available (Figure 8) are only a limited sample. There is no reason to believe that this sample, which indicates that applications received and offers made are gender-balanced, is skewed. However, given the importance of monitoring data annually in the future, we will establish with the Graduate School a process for handling applications that captures ALL applications relevant to ICaMB from the initial point of application (Action plan 10.1).
Figure 8: Number of female and male PhD applicants (primary plot; bars) and proportion of female and male applicants who were successful (secondary plot; lines)

(vi) Degree classification by gender

The percentage of female and male students achieving first class BSc degrees has increased, and the percentage of male students achieving upper second class degrees has also increased (Figure 9). This overall increase in achievement has been greater for male students, leading to a reduction in the percentage of students achieving these higher degree classes who are female. We see no need for action at this stage, since performance of both genders is improving. However, we alerted SBMS of this trend.
Figure 9: Undergraduate degree classification by gender. Each panel shows the data for a different degree class as specified. Bars (primary plot) show the percentage of the total students in the cohort of the specified gender who achieved the stated degree class. Lines (secondary plot) show the percentage of students awarded a degree of the specified class who were female.

All masters students (MSc and MRes) who undertook projects in ICaMB were successful, but a larger proportion of the female students were awarded the MRes with Distinction (Figure 10). Of the 5 (female) MSc students, 2 were awarded Distinction and 3 were awarded Merit.
Figure 10: MRes degree classification by gender. Data are shown in separate panels for awards made with distinction or merit, as specified. Bars (primary plot) show the percentage of the total students in ICaMB of the specified gender who achieved the stated award. Lines (secondary plot) show the percentage of students in ICaMB awarded a degree of the specified class who were female.

PhD completion statistics (Figure 11) show equal success for female and male students overall, but variability across years. Of 3 female students who did not complete by their deadline of 2013-14, one (international) withdrew in year 1 for family reasons, and declined the option offered to defer her studies. A second of these students withdrew later in her programme after receiving considerable support from ICaMB, including a change in project and supervisor. The third student has completed laboratory work and is receiving support to complete the thesis.

Figure 11: PhD completion statistics by gender. Bars (primary plot) show the percentage students of the specified gender who completed within 4 years. Lines (secondary plot) show the number of students of the specified gender due to complete.
PhD awards are not classified, but the Faculty recognises outstanding achievement by awarding a Doctoral Thesis Prize. Students are nominated by their examiners, and an internal committee selects the winners. Statistics for ICaMB (Figure 12) indicate either a higher rate of outstanding performance by male students, or possibly a selection bias. To address this imbalance the ICaMB postgraduate student society PANIC (Section 4 “Organisation and culture”), with support from DF, ran a lunch event for ICaMB PhD students. Three past winners from ICaMB (two female) spoke about the factors they thought led to their success and DF highlighted the imbalance and the importance of addressing this. Eighty-eight percent of all responses to a feedback survey were positive, and all respondents rated the session as good (75% rated as very good or excellent). Comments included “Great interaction. Excellent speakers” and “It was very inspiring!” The event will run annually each October (Action plan 6.5).

Figure 12: Proportion of nominees for and recipients of the Doctoral Thesis Prize who were female over the previous three years and over the full duration of the scheme (bars; primary plot). The secondary plot (lines) shows the total number of nominees and recipients (female and male) from ICaMB.

Staff data

- Women are underrepresented at all research and academic levels and the bias increases with grade seniority.
- We have actions in place aimed to redress this imbalance.
- There is gender parity in staff turnover.

(vii) Female:Male ratio of academic staff and research staff

Women are underrepresented among our academic staff, with a bias that increases with seniority (Figure 13). Moreover the proportion of women at professorial level (currently 10%) is below the national average. This gender bias is the single most important issue we have begun to address.
and must work assiduously to redress through implementation and monitoring of ongoing and planned activities, as indicated below and set out in detail in Section 4 “Key issues and actions”.

Figure 13: Research and academic staff profile. The upper panel shows the total number of staff by year at each grade as specified. The lower panel shows the percentage of female staff at each grade.

IRES Fellowships (Section 4 “Key career transition points” and Action plan 1.2), initiated in 2013, are a cornerstone of our strategy to redress this gender bias.

From August 2014 we introduced new mandatory wording in all job advertisements that clearly expresses our commitment to addressing gender and diversity issues and provides easy access to information on our working practices and policies that will support management of life-work balance, including flexible working (Section 4 “Recruitment of staff” and Action plan 1.1).

In September 2014 the ICaMB Executive Committee agreed that all staff who sit on appointment panels would receive unconscious bias training (Action plan 1.4). The University currently provides this training only to senior management (but has plans to roll out in the future). ICaMB will fund this additional commitment. As of November 2014, one member of the IRSG plus the
Institute Manager had received training. It was also agreed that all appointment panels would include at least one female representative.

We explain in Section 4 “Key career transition points” our planned action to address the increase in gender bias with seniority.

Women are well represented among technical (total 28; 15 women (54%)) and administrative/IT (total 12; 8 women (66%)) staff. ICaMB aims to develop the full potential of these staff. Two female technicians recently completed or are currently taking PhDs, with support from ICaMB. Joanna Keith, our Institute Manager, was supported to take an MBA and our Deputy Institute Manager, Amanda Temby, was supported to complete her degree. A new training scheme unique to ICaMB, which provides up to half the fee costs and up to half a day off a week to attend a further or higher education course, was initiated in 2014 and is being promoted to staff through PDR and on our web pages.

(viii) Turnover by grade and gender

Staff attrition is at more junior levels (Postdoctoral RAs and Fellows), and in most cases due to fixed term contacts ending. Until 2014 we did not keep records of staff leavers. However, all staff are now asked to complete a form on leaving to capture data on reasons for leaving and next destinations. The data in Figure 14 indicate that our actions to retain female RAs, which include cross-contract bridging funds (Section 4 “Key career transition points”), better support around maternity leave (Section 4 “Flexibility and career breaks”), mentorship and personal development/training (Section 4 “Key career transition points”) are having impact on an earlier trend for more women than men to leave. The 3 Fellows who appear as leavers in 2012–13 (2 female) were Marie-Curie Fellows (staff status but PhD trainees) and all become ICaMB RAs.
Figure 14: Research and academic staff who left ICaMB. The upper panel shows separately for female and male staff the percentage at each specified grade who left. The inset panel shows the same data for leavers at researcher (RA) grade only, grouped by gender, to show a trend towards lower attrition of female staff and increased attrition of male staff over time. The lower panel shows separately for female and male staff numbers of leavers at each grade.
4. Supporting and advancing women’s careers: (4978 words)

Key career transition points

a) Data for the past three years

(i) Job application and success rates by gender and grade

☐ The proportion of women appointed exceeds or equals the proportion of applications from women, but we receive fewer applications from women.
☐ We must increase applications from women to achieve gender parity in appointments.

Figures 15, 16 and 17 summarise the data.

Figure 15: Applications by gender. The primary plot (bars) shows the percentage of applicants for posts at each grade as specified who were female. The secondary plot (lines) shows the total number of applicants.
Figure 16: Appointments by gender. The primary plot (bars) shows the percentage of appointments to posts at each grade as specified who were female. The secondary plot (lines) shows the total number of appointments.

Figure 17: Application success by gender.

In each year and for all types of post more men than women applied and more men were appointed. However, success rates for women were generally higher. Thus, to address our staff
gender imbalance we must attract more female applicants. The research portfolio of ICaMB may align with areas of the sector, such as chemistry, where there is a similar gender bias (contrasting with medical departments where research is more applied). Other applications report a positive influence of female-friendly recruitment material and web presence. We have revised several aspects of our advertisement process to encourage more women to apply (Action plan 1.1, 1.2, 1.5 and “Recruitment of staff” below). Also all posts will be advertised on the WISE website.

IRES Fellowships, our scheme to recruit high-calibre newer researchers, (see “Key career transition points”, below), were available in 2012-13. Male applicants outnumbered female applicants. Appointments (3; 1 woman) reflected the applicant gender ratio, pointing to a lack of gender bias in the selection process.

A single lectureship post was advertised in 2011-12. More men than women applied but a woman (Dr Paula Salgado) was appointed and was subsequently successful in winning her first major grant (MRC). Paula has commented positively on the support she received from ICaMB: “Preparing the first grant application is a big challenge which was made easier by the great support I had from more experienced colleagues in ICaMB. Their critical reading of my application, as well as fruitful discussions on my research plans, were essential to the continuous improvement of my application and to its ultimate success. There was a wide range of people willing to help me succeed: from experts in my field to those who lent their expertise as former MRC board members to potential collaborators. This multitude of views and discussions was not only helpful in the writing process but it also allowed me to establish a clearer research plan. This open and supportive attitude has been the hallmark of my experience to date at ICaMB, where I feel I can grow and develop my career”.

There were appointments at professorial level in 2011-12 and 2012-13, both men. In future we will be more active in seeking and supporting female professorial applicants. We will ask staff to suggest women to appoint in areas we identify as strategic. Our ongoing actions to raise the profile in ICaMB of senior women scientists from other institutions will, we hope, prompt a good response and increase awareness of potentially-suitable appointees (Action plan 6.1, 6.2, 6.3 and “Organisation and Culture” below).

(ii) Applications for promotion and success rates by gender and grade

- Women and men across all grades are equally successful in achieving promotion.
- More men apply for promotion, but this difference reflects the existing gender bias in staff numbers.
- An appointed women’s promotion champion works with the Institute Director to identify candidates.
- Women in ICaMB are involved in promotion decisions.

Data are summarised in Figure 18.
Figure 18: Applications for promotion and outcomes by year, grade and gender. Bars show total applicant numbers and are shaded as shown in the key to indicate the number that were successful or unsuccessful. (*Promotions to higher grade within staff category)

At each annual promotions round, the ICaMB Director informs staff by email and gives all the option of a one-to-one meeting. Applicants write and submit a case for promotion to the Faculty.
If the Director supports the application he provides a statement. The process is thus initiated by the applicant.

There were more applications in total and at each grade from men than women. Although this skew is in proportion to the existing gender balance we must nonetheless encourage more women to apply, particularly since our staff gender bias becomes progressively more pronounced with seniority. Thus, the Director now consults with a ‘women’s promotion champion’ (currently JQ) to consider every woman from lecturer grade upwards, and if they should be encouraged to apply. This practice was initiated for the current round, thus evaluating impact will be a long-term action (Action plan 5.1). For research staff, the current notification system will be augmented by requiring PIs to consider whether any members of their group are eligible for promotion.

To involve women in ICaMB in promotion decisions, we nominate candidates for election to the Faculty Promotions Committee. Dr Judith Hall (Senior Lecturer) is a current representative, and was preceded by DF.

b) Key issues and actions

(i) Recruitment of staff

- All appointment panels must include female staff.
- Our IRES (fellowship) scheme is a key mechanism through which we aim to increase recruitment of female academic staff.

We have a standard advertisement and role description template for all posts, which we recently revised to encourage applications from women by including the statement “ICaMB is committed to the Athena SWAN Charter for women in science”; with a URL to our Athena SWAN web pages. All role descriptions state our commitment to considering flexible working (Action plan 1.5).

As of 2014 we require that all appointments panels include women (Action plan 1.3). The Institute Manager ensures adherence by requiring information on the panel composition. We encourage convenors to invite senior female RAs and Fellows to join panels, which alleviates the workload of female academic staff and, importantly, develops these younger selectors (who, like all staff, will be required to undergo unconscious bias training; Action plan 1.4).

Our Independent Researcher Establishment Scheme (IRES) is a key strategic mechanism through which we aim to recruit female academic staff by encouraging applications from women and invoking positive action during selection and recruitment. This innovative programme provides salary and support – including mentoring and personal development - for 5 years. Successful IRES Fellows will be offered permanent academic positions. Our expectation is that IRES Fellows ultimately reach professorial grade. We are working harder to promote the scheme to women. In the first round (2013) 20 applications (25% of the total) were from women; 2 women were in the short-list of 8; 3 Fellows were appointed and 1 was a woman (Josana Rodriguez). In future cycles we will ask staff to promote the scheme to women they know. We will welcome applications from women re-entering academia after a break and will support such women also through other suitable fellowship schemes (Action plan 1.6), which is already embedded practice (see our case study on Dr Suzanne Madgwick). Adverts will include the statement on our commitment to the
principles of the Athena SWAN charter and link to our web pages and will be placed on the WISE web site. Short-listing and selection will be by a panel with gender balance.

Other female Fellows – both new recruits and ICaMB RAs developing independence – add to our growing base of future senior female academic staff. Yulia Yuzenkova and Claudia Schneider are Royal Society University Research Fellows and Suzanne Madgwick is a Wellcome Trust Career Re-entry Fellow. Claudia won her fellowship before joining ICaMB, however both Yulia and Suzanne received expert academic input into their applications and support from ICaMB that was instrumental in their success.

(ii) Support for staff at key career transition points

- Data show we need to support progression of female research and academic staff to senior positions.
- To augment existing provision for research fellows we ran a pilot mentorship scheme for postdoctoral researchers, which was highly successful and has been rolled out.
- We engage in an additional cross-institute mentoring network for research students and staff.
- We fund bridging between fixed term contracts and have retained more women than men through this scheme.

We have introduced bespoke mentorship schemes to support junior female research and academic staff to progress to more senior grades.

The ICaMB mentorship scheme for Postdoctoral Researchers is led by JQ following a highly successful pilot between March and June 2014, which involved pairing 4 female RAs with 4 senior female academics (3 from ICaMB, 1 from a different institute). Luisa Wakeling, a senior RA and SAT member, ran the scheme with the aim of ensuring it best met this group’s needs. As RAs obtain academic input from their PI, we aimed that this scheme should focus on long term career goals. All mentors underwent training provided through the SDU. Guidance, preparation and feedback documentation was provided. All mentees provided very positive feedback, including the examples below.

“I feel very motivated and keen to start making some progress towards applying for independent funding”

“It helped a lot that the mentor and I got on well and were at ease discussing things”

“Although I have over two years remaining, I think it is important that consideration of future career aspirations is not left until the last minute”

“One of the most helpful aspects was hearing that someone thinks I have a chance of obtaining funding and progressing on this career path”

Twelve ICaMB academic staff (6 female) have now provided their details for our mentors’ database.

The ICaMB mentorship scheme for Fellows is aimed to support Fellows to meet requirements to be offered a full academic position, thus has a more academic focus. The ICaMB Director, in consultation with the Fellow, arranges the mentorship team to be in place within three months of
the start of contract. In 2014 we embedded the option for female Fellows to request that the team includes a female woman.

ICaMB also participates in the **cross-institute Early Career Mentoring Network**, which runs as a ‘drop in’ scheme for research students and staff. Driven by suggestions from our student SAT members (IK and RC), a cross-institute group of students and RAs held a lunch event in November 2014 for the younger researchers to meet the volunteer mentors.

Women applying for promotion will be offered and encouraged to take up the opportunity to be paired with a senior female academic to support and advise on their application. DF undertook this role informally for a female colleague from a different institute, with successful promotion to professorship. As we review success, we will develop a more structured scheme if we see a need.

A scheme for providing bridging funding pending outcome of grant applications for staff at the end of fixed-term contracts is key to research staff retention and development. The scheme involves equal input from the Faculty, ICaMB and PI. Figure 19 summarises our use of the scheme. Of the 6 institutes in the Faculty ICaMB exceeds proportional use (funds more than 1/6 total), and over the previous 3 years funded approximately equal numbers of women and men. Well over half of all staff funded were retained and the proportion of women retained was higher than the proportion of men retained, thus the scheme is effective and has contributed towards achieving gender balance. Provision of bridging funding to smaller numbers of staff over time reflects that more staff now move seamlessly onto new grants, partly as a result of ICaMB’s strict adherence to Newcastle University’s policy on staff redeployment. This policy requires that all posts are filled by internal candidates if personnel meeting the role requirements apply.

![Figure 19. ICaMB and Faculty use of a bridging scheme to retain research staff named on submitted but outcome-pending grant applications. Data are split by year and gender. Bars plotted on the primary axis show the total number of staff in ICaMB who received bridging funds. The bars are split to indicate the number of staff subsequently retained or who then left, as in the key. Bars plotted on the secondary axis show the percentage of all researchers in the Faculty who received bridging funds who were in ICaMB.](image)
Career development

a) Key issues and actions

   (i) Promotion and career development

   - Annual performance development review (PDR) is the main tool for appraisal and identifying development opportunities.
   - Female academic staff are offered PDR by a senior female colleague.
   - We took targeted action to maintain an upward trajectory in PDR completion rates.
   - Appropriately-wide consultation with heads of other units underpins recommendations for promotion.
   - We finance bespoke development training for female research and academic staff.

Annual PDR is the formal mechanism though which performance is appraised. Completion data are presented in Figure 20.

![Figure 20. Completion data for annual Performance Development Review (PDR)](image)

The Institute Director carries out PDR for most academic staff. However, women may now undertake their PDR with a female colleague. PIs complete PDR for their research staff. Rates of completion had been improving, but dipped to 76% in 2012-13. We thus introduced a policy to motivate engagement by making completion a requirement for receipt of contract bridging funds. Completion increased to 83% in 2013-14. We are monitoring PDR and aim to keep improving completion rates. Our staff survey revealed that some respondents (>20%) felt they were not encouraged actively to take up career development opportunities. We thus added an additional question to prompt discussion of such opportunities to the standard PDR form.

Promotion criteria are defined by the University. We now point ICaMB staff clearly towards the relevant documentation via our Athena SWAN web pages. The mechanism for promotion is explained above (“Key career transition points” and “Career development”). The University gives parity of esteem to all three major criteria (Research and Innovation; Education and Teaching; Engagement Activities). Teaching is managed by teaching schools (primarily SBMS, but also the School of Dental Sciences and the School of Medical Education). Where appropriate, the Director consults with the relevant Head of School for information to include in his statement of support. The Director gives unbiased support in his statement to excellence in any of the three areas to ensure equal weighting in the promotions process.
Our staff survey indicated that all types of work are perceived to be valued. Fewer than 20% of respondents disagreed that the full range of skills is valued during PDR and promotion.

We promote and fund development opportunities through courses in and outside the University. For example, DF benefited from a three-day leadership development programme, followed by personal coaching, in 2011. Nominations for attendees (two from each Faculty) are invited on an annual basis. The Athena SWAN representative on the ICaMB Executive Committee (currently DF) will nominate targeted female colleagues (Action plan 2.3).

ICaMB has committed extra resources to run the Butterfly Programme for women’s development. The course is normally run by the SDU, thus available only to staff. To offer the programme to PhD students also, we are thus funding the programme ourselves. The two-day programme will run on 13 and 20 January 2015. Sixteen participants have registered; nine are PhD students. We will run the programme annually if evaluation by participants is positive (Action plan 2.2).

(ii) Induction and training

All new staff and postgraduate students receive a welcome pack, including key staff contact details and other general and role-specific information. However we recognised, partly through discussion among the SAT, that information in this format does not meet fully our aim that all new staff quickly feel welcome and well-oriented. In particular, some RAs join small research teams and thus have initially a small number of direct personal contacts. LC and LW thus consulted the IPA, who suggested a buddy system. The Institute Manager now oversees allocation of a ‘buddy’, to all new staff, usually from the home laboratory or, if more appropriate, from the wider staff pool (Action plan 8.1).

(iii) Support for female students.

- Formal University quality assurance processes endorse postgraduate student support in ICaMB.
- Students may specify gender choice for mentors and progress review panel members.
- Support to allow maternity leave is promoted to PhD students; Faculty policy was developed in response to practice in ICaMB.
- The Faculty student development programme includes training in equality and diversity.
- ICaMB supports the student-organised PANIC postgraduate student group, which has inspired similar groups in other institutes.

Newcastle University has a Code of Practice that specifies high standards of supervisory and pastoral support for research students, and monitors institute compliance. All reports for ICaMB (7 years) have been resoundingly positive, including with respect to student support.

All postgraduate students have a supervisory team including a lead supervisor who fulfils the role of personal tutor. The ICaMB Postgraduate Research Student Coordinator (Dr Tim Cheek) provides additional pastoral (and other) support. Dianne Ford had this role previously. She remains active in postgraduate student support (as Associate Dean for Taught Postgraduate Studies). TC supports
strongly the academic development of female students and can refer matters requiring female input to DF. PhD students in ICaMB have had mentors since 2002, and from 2014 the option to request a mentor of specific gender is promoted to students at induction, in their ICaMB handbook and on our Athena SWAN web pages. PhD students can now receive additional mentoring support through the cross-institute Early Careers Mentoring Network (“Key career transition points” above).

Career planning support is through several mechanisms, including specific Faculty workshops. Supervisory team input is crucial, and all supervisors are required to include personal development planning as a component of mandatory (monitored) formal supervisory meetings. Personal development is also addressed in students’ formal annual progress reviews (undertaken by two independent academic advisors). The ICaMB Postgraduate Student Committee discussed if students should be offered the option to have a woman on their progress panel, but decided such a measure was unnecessary providing the option to request a mentor of specified gender became policy.

We encourage and support senior female RAs and Fellows to undertake all of these postgraduate student supervisory and support roles to promote their own career development and avoid female academic staff having a disproportionate level of involvement compared with male colleagues.  

All new students receive an ICaMB induction pack and attend a workshop (that augments other activities delivered by the Faculty Graduate School).  The Graduate School has polices on maternity/paternity leave (developed as a result of practice in ICaMB; see “Flexibility and career breaks” below) and annual leave. These policies are highlighted at induction, copies are included in the induction pack and our Athena SWAN web pages link out.

The Faculty runs a researcher development programme, including a wide variety of training workshops. From 2014, this programme includes a workshop on equality and diversity in academia.

PANIC is an ICaMB-supported but self-organised group for our PhD students that meets for workshops/talks relevant to career progression and social activities. This vibrant group, which has a gender-balanced steering committee, has been a trailblazer for similar groups in other institutes and has run and supported equality and diversity-related events (e.g. “Excelling in your PhD examination”; Section 3) and our Equality in Academia event (Section 5).
Organisation and culture

a) Data for the past three years

(i) Male and female representation on committees

- Female representation on internal decision-making committees is low, but increasing.
- Female membership of our postgraduate student committee increased after we began to highlight the equality agenda to postgraduate students.

Since research institutes do not deliver teaching directly, we have no teaching committee(s). “Heads of Excellence in Learning and Teaching” (senior female academic (Dr Judith Hall) in ICaMB), represent institutes on the Faculty Learning and Teaching Committee and at University level. This appointment is made by the Institute Director, in consultation with the ICaMB Executive Committee (see below), thus the interests of female staff are considered (by inclusion of the Athena SWAN representative on the Executive Committee).

Our two major decision-making committees are the ICaMB Executive Committee and the Institute Research Strategy Group (IRSG). Women, in particular academics, have been and remain under-represented on both committees (Figure 21), but we replaced male with female academic staff on both committees in 2013-14 (Action plan 3.1). These replacements included a redistribution of roles on the Executive Committee and addition of a position for a female member (currently DF) with responsibility for equality and diversity, including overseeing delivery of our Athena SWAN action plan.

The ICaMB safety committee is composed of volunteer academic members who undertake specific responsibilities and support staff with specific posts. Thus, academic staff gender balance depends on a wish to participate. Figure 22 shows the composition. Female academics have not been on the committee since 2010-11, when a female professorial member stood down. We do not see a need for action to encourage women to join since senior support staff represent the interests of women and it is more important that our small pool of female academics have more influential committee roles.
Figure 21. Composition of the ICaMB Executive Committee (upper panel) and Institute Research Strategy Group (IRSG; lower panel). Total numbers of female and male committee members are shown as separate bars (primary plot), shaded to show the number of academic staff within this total. The secondary plot (line) shows the percentage of the total membership who were female.

Figure 22. Composition of the ICaMB safety committee. Total numbers of female and male committee members are shown as separate bars (primary plot), shaded to show the number of academic staff within this total. The secondary plot (line) shows the percentage of the total membership who were female.
Student volunteers sit on our Postgraduate Student Committee. Staff members are the Postgraduate Research Student Coordinator (Dr Tim Cheek) and postgraduate secretary (female). A previous male gender bias has reversed (Figure 23), which may be an impact of our actions to highlight the equality agenda, such as the inclusion (since 2014-15) of information at induction about our support for the agenda, our equality and diversity web pages, and training in equality and diversity now provided by the Graduate School.

![Figure 23: Composition of the Postgraduate Student Committee by year. The primary plot (bars) shows separately numbers of female and male members. The secondary plot (line) shows the percentage of student members who were female.](image)

(ii) Female: male ratio of academic and research staff on fixed-term contracts and open-ended (permanent) contracts

- There is gender parity in the proportion of staff on fixed-term and open-ended contracts.

Data are presented in Figure 24. All staff on fixed-term contracts are RAs or Fellows. The majority of staff at these grades (~80%) are on fixed-term contracts and there is no gender imbalance. We describe our bridging scheme to support staff on fixed-term contracts above (“Key career transition points”).
Figure 24: Research and academic staff on fixed-term contracts by year and gender. The primary plot (bars) shows staff numbers for female and male staff separately. The secondary plot (line) shows the percentage of the total research and academic staff cohort who were on fixed-term contracts.

b) Key issues and actions

(i) Representation on decision-making committees

- We must bring more women onto internal decision-making committees, while avoiding an unacceptable increase in work-load.
- Key to our actions in this area is the creation of an equality and diversity position, to be held by a female member of academic staff, on the ICaMB Executive Committee.
- We have a mechanism to review annually and increase female membership.
- We support and encourage female staff to stand for election/selection to influential University and external committees.

The Executive Committee and IRSG nominate new members as need arises but in future review of the composition of both committees will be undertaken annually by the Executive Committee (Action plan 3.1), where the member for equality and diversity will review gender balance. As we work to redress the imbalance we must avoid over-commitment by our small body of female academic staff.

We state our policy for female representation on appointments committees, including for IRES Fellowships, above (“Key career transition points”). Avoidance of “committee overload” is by achieving gender balance in proportion to female staff numbers (thus representation will grow with female staff numbers), and also by involving (and thus developing) our senior female research staff, as well as academic staff.
Our female academic staff sit on several influential Faculty and University committees, including Faculty Fellowship Committee, Faculty and University Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Committees, Graduate School Committee/Executive.

The University and Faculty operate transparent nomination and selection processes for key committees, in particular the Faculty Promotions Committee and Senate. Women in ICaMB and across the Faculty encourage female colleagues to stand for election. DF has served on both committees, having been nominated by female colleagues, and she nominated current female members of the Promotions Committee (ICaMB colleague) and Senate. The remit of the equality and diversity post on the ICaMB Executive Committee includes identifying suitable female nominees (Action plan 3.2).

Women in ICaMB sit on prestigious and influential external committees and funding bodies, including BBSRC research committees, Society for General Microbiology, British Mycological Society, MRC Non-clinical Career Development Panel, ECU- Athena SWAN pool of members. For committees that invite applications, calls are disseminated by the Institute Director to all academic staff. The remit of the equality and diversity post on the ICaMB Executive Committee includes encouraging suitable female staff to apply.

(ii) Workload model

- Our workload model includes work for the equality agenda.
- Parity of esteem is attributed to excellence in research, teaching or engagement.

The Faculty workload planning model has hours allocated to all roles, including work on women and science, and flexibility to add additional roles. The model is a key tool in facilitating an appraisal of the full profile of responsibility as part of PDR. We explain above ("Career development") how parity of esteem for different roles is attributed formally in the promotion process, and the importance of the Director’s statement in highlighting excellence in all relevant criteria.

(iii) Timing of departmental meetings and social gatherings

- Open staff meetings and our Principal Investigators’ research forum are at lunchtimes.
- Scheduling of all ICaMB committee meetings is restricted to between 10 am and 4 pm.
- We moved our seminar series from 4 pm to 1 pm and increased the number of presentations by female speakers, achieving gender balance.

We hold open meetings annually for all staff and quarterly for academic staff. These meetings are scheduled over lunchtime so staff with family and other responsibilities can attend. After recognising that the geographical spread of ICaMB and academic work patterns challenged collegiality, the Director set up a weekly PIs’ forum on Friday lunchtimes where all PIs get the chance to present their work annually. Attendance, including by female PIs, has stayed robust over 3 years.
Other institute meetings (Executive, IRSG, Safety Committee, Postgraduate Committee, Athena SWAN SAT) are scheduled between 10 am and 4 pm (core hours) to allow staff to apply flexible time management around out-of-work commitments (Action plan 9.3).

Social activities are scheduled to be as inclusive as possible and, where appropriate, allow staff to bring partners and children (e.g. our annual summer day event is in school holiday time).

The ICaMB seminar series, a programme of bimonthly talks, has run historically at 4 pm on Wednesdays. The programme has been rescheduled to 1 pm from the beginning of 2014-15 to make the programme more accessible to staff with family and other out-of-work responsibilities (Action plan 9.4). The series has always run in term time only, to avoid conflict with these kinds of personal responsibilities and also with conferences. These prestigious talks are an opportunity to ‘showcase’ excellent female scientists as role models. The Executive Committee appointed one of our female staff (Professor Caroline Austin) to coordinate the series from 2014-15, and the Director requested that all staff consider nominating female speakers. The proportion of women speakers rose dramatically to 55% (12/22) for 2014-15, compared with an average of 26% over the previous 4 years (16/62). The data are in Figure 25.  We will monitor and aim to sustain this shift in balance (Action plan 6.3).

![Figure 25. Gender balance of ICaMB seminar speakers. The primary plot (bars) shows numbers of female and male speakers separately. The secondary plot (line) show the percentage of speakers who were female.](image)

(iv) Culture

- Our staff and students view ICaMB as a good place for women to work
- We support our self-organised postdoctoral (IPA) groups, which has inspired young researchers in other institutes to form similar networks.

Fewer than 10% of all respondents in our survey disagreed with the statement that “ICaMB is a great place to work for women”.  Thus our staff clearly find ICaMB a female-friendly place to work.
The IPA (ICaMB Postdoctoral Association) runs in a similar way to the PhD student group PANIC and, like PANIC, has inspired similar groups in other institutes. These two groups come together for some of their activities and cross-institute events are also beginning to take place. We recognise, support and encourage these groups through many mechanisms including our web site, mailing lists, consultation, funding, providing a platform at our annual research day (Action plan 9.1 and Section 5). Inspired by these groups, our independent Research Fellows also meet as a group. This group plans activities for times that allow inclusion of members with the biggest external commitments (e.g. families and part time working arrangements).

(v) Outreach activities

☐ Our female scientists participate enthusiastically in outreach activities and have a strong and positive outward-facing presence.

The Leading Edge programme is a Faculty-wide initiative with strong participation by ICaMB. Groups of year 8 and 9 students in local schools and research/academic staff undertake 2-way visits. ICaMB works with 6 of the 12 schools currently involved in the scheme, including a girls’ school. Teachers are asked that pupil groups from mixed schools are gender-balanced. Figure 26 shows the involvement of ICaMB staff. The (male) lead for the programme in ICaMB identified an opportunity in 2013 when the scheme grew to include year 8 pupils to involve more of our female staff, by recruiting early-stage researchers, and thus promote visibility of these colleagues and inspire female pupils.

Figure 26. Gender composition of staff team involved in “Leading Edge” engagement activities. The primary plot (bars) shows participation numbers for female and male staff separately. The secondary plot (line) shows the percentage of female staff participating.

There are many other pockets of engagement activity involving ICaMB staff. Our newest female academic staff member (Paula Salgado) is particularly active and has given many public and media presentations, participated in SET for Britain and has a strong social media presence. Suzanne Madgwick (SAT member and case study) will soon train to become a STEM ambassador. Our staff survey revealed that staff perceive our female scientists to be represented positively in external-facing activities. The ICaMB blog, overseen by a group of 4 academic staff (2 female) is a cornerstone of our outreach activity and is viewed widely and recently profiled our new female Fellows.
Yulia Yuzenkova (left) and Claudia Schneider (right) and images representing their research as featured in a series of early career researcher profiles on the ICaMB blog (May 2014 and October 2014)

The ICaMB Director values participation in outreach activity and has supported promotion where these activities form a significant component of the case.

ICaMB will run a SoapboxScience event in summer 2015. This will be the first of these high-profile outdoor public events that showcase women scientists to take place in the North East of England. We will receive support from Professor Hilary Lappin-Scott, PVC at Swansea University, who coordinated the highly-successful event in Swansea in summer 2014, and was the special guest at our ICaMB Equality in Academia day in June 2014 (Section 5).

Flexibility and managing career breaks

- Numbers of staff taking parental leave or requesting flexible working are small, but we supported requests and staff now benefit from bespoke patterns of flexible working.

  a) Data for the past three years

    (i) Maternity return rate

    Numbers of staff taking maternity leave are low (2 support staff and 5 RAs in the last three years). Only one of these 7 staff did not return. This RA chose not to return despite us keeping her contract open.

    (ii) Paternity, adoption and parental leave uptake

    Two members of academic staff took standard paternity leave and two members of support staff took extended paternity leave. No members of staff have requested adoption leave, although it would be University policy to treat this as for maternity/paternity leave.
(iii) Numbers of applications and success rates for flexible working by gender and grade

Four support staff and two research staff who took maternity leave in the last seven years requested part-time working on return, which was granted in all cases. One of the research staff, on request, returned to 100% working after a short period. Two women (support staff, but the same option is open to academic staff) have bought one/two weeks extra annual leave to cover childcare responsibilities; 3 staff (2 male academic; 1 female support) have taken early flexible retirement to work reduced hours.

b) Key issues and actions

- ICaMB led the development of a flexible working policy in the University and encourages staff to benefit.
- Wherever possible, we provide enhanced support for maternity leave, including additional financial cover and support on return to work.
- A Faculty parental leave policy for research students was developed based on positive support given to a female student in ICaMB.

(i) Flexible working

The culture for research and academic staff is one of flexible working around fixed work commitments. Academic staff inform the Institute Manager if they are working away. Arrangements for flexible working for research staff are considered individually depending on the requirements of the research project.

ICaMB wished to introduce flexible working and thus piloted flexible working for the University. As a result, the University flexible working policy is now embedded. Core working hours are 9.30 am-4.00 pm, and support staff may work from 8.00 am until 6.00 pm to build up credit that allows up to one full day off every 4 weeks. Other University friendly-family policies, which ICaMB supports fully, are highlighted on our Athena SWAN web pages (Action plan 4.1) and include up to 2 days’ ‘special emergency leave’ every year, options to buy additional leave, a career break scheme, and flexible retirement (for those in the USS pension scheme).

(ii) Cover for maternity and adoption leave and support on return

Where a grant funder pays maternity leave for a researcher on a fixed-term contract, ICaMB negotiates with the Faculty to extend the grant by a term equivalent to the period of leave. Two women benefitted from this arrangement in the past year. As an alternative, ICaMB negotiates for the same funds from the Faculty to be used to back-fill the post. Both practices support continuity of research output by the researcher taking leave. Normal University practice is to make redundant staff on fixed term contracts that end during maternity leave. ICaMB uses bridging funding in some circumstances to extend such contracts to facilitate a return to continued employment, either on the same grant or on a new pending contract not yet in place (2 cases in the past 2 years).

JQ benefitted from support as below:
‘After returning from maternity leave I submitted an application to the BBSRC to continue the funding of a senior post-doc in my laboratory, Dr Deborah Thomas. Whilst this application was highly ranked by the BCB committee, it was just out-with their funding range. As Dr Thomas was already on bridging funds, I was concerned that I did not have enough time to try a further attempt to secure funding before the end of her contract. Consequently, I made the request that her bridging funds could be extended for a further 6 months. This was granted in full and provided much needed support in my attempt to rebuild my laboratory after a period of absence due to maternity leave. During the time covered by the extra bridging support, I secured a project grant from The Wellcome Trust (086048) entitled ‘Two-component signalling in Candida albicans’ which funded Dr Thomas for three further years.

ICaMB will negotiate with the Faculty relief from a return to teaching duties for up to 12 months after return from maternity/extended paternity leave to accelerate research productivity. We are currently lobbying the Faculty to adopt this practice as standard policy.

The Faculty developed a policy on parental leave for PhD students in 2008 based on action in ICaMB to support a first year (MRes) PhD student who became pregnant. The same student received additional support from ICaMB through a further long period of leave during which her child was seriously ill, then support for an extension to the thesis submission deadline (in total full stipend for an additional 9 months). The student was awarded her MRes degree with Distinction and submitted her PhD thesis in November 2014.
5. Any other comments: (476 words)

Figure 27 summarises the key findings of our baseline staff survey.

![Figure 27: Summary of outcomes of the baseline staff survey](image)

We were pleased by the positive views our staff hold on the workplace environment and culture in ICaMB and that staff understand the need to address gender equality issues. The major area needing action was to provide easy access to information on policies and procedures relating to equality and diversity practices. We thus compiled all information and posted it on our web site. Reminders of the resource will be sent to staff annually and all new staff will be directed to the information. Generally we identified a need for direct action where more than 20% of respondents expressed a negative view. However, a very small proportion of staff expressed that they had experienced a situation where they felt uncomfortable because of their gender and/or that they were not confident their line manager would deal effectively with bullying, which we decided was unacceptable. Thus we now include on our web pages information on the relevant University policy and how to proceed to seek help (Action plan 4.1).

ICaMB hosted an “Equality in Academia” day in June 2014. Guest speakers were Professor Hilary Lappin-Scott (PCV at Swansea University, who champions the equality agenda), Professor Elaine Martin OBE (Professor of Industrial Statistics, Newcastle University) and Dr Paul Whybrow (Institute for Health and Society; first in Newcastle to obtain the Athena SWAN Silver award). Of 65 attendees 20% were male (8 academics, 2 RAs, 3 support staff), a level of engagement praised as unusual by our external guest speaker. Feedback from participants of both genders was resoundingly positive (e.g. from a male colleague: “It was very impressive. Dispelled any
suspicions I had about the motivation behind the process”). Building on this successful event, we will host one event each year where the keynote presentation is by a high-profile senior female academic, either speaking in an academic context (the prestigious ICaMB annual Baddiley Lecture) or addressing equality and diversity issues (Action plan 6.1, 6.2).

Images from our Equality in Academia day. From left to right: Professor Hilary Lappin-Scott, PVC at Swansea University promises us support to host the first SoapboxScience event to be held in the North East of England; Professor Elaine Martin OBE, Newcastle University inspires women scientists by explaining how early support and ambition lead to her success; Dr Paul Whybrow, Newcastle University, delivers a strong message about biases against women in science using humour; afternoon tea to follow gave the opportunity for some round-(or oblong!) table discussion and cakes.

We are pleased that our activities to address gender imbalance in ICaMB are gaining the support and enthusiasm of our postgraduate research students. IK and RC (research student SAT members) were invited by the Postgraduate Student Committee to attend their meeting to discuss issues relevant to our application for a Athena SWAN award.

Our ICaMB annual research away-day provides a platform for selected staff to showcase their most recent research. We also include social activities, and in 2013 the IPA and PANIC groups gave presentations of their activities. The organising committee has increased the proportion of women speakers, which has been achieved partly through giving a platform to more junior female colleagues.
Figure 28: Gender balance of speakers at the ICaMB annual research away day. The primary plot (bars) shows numbers of female and male speakers separately. The secondary plot (line) shows the percentage of speakers who were female.

Success of our gender equality actions requires the support of our staff body, who we keep informed by publishing the data that reveals the gender imbalance on our web pages (Action plan 7.1). We will provide annual updates on progress at open staff meetings.

6. Action plan (attached)

7. Case study: impacting on individuals: (960 words)
I am a Wellcome Trust Career Re-entry Fellow in ICaMB and a member of the SAT. I was a postdoctoral researcher in ICaMB for 3 years before taking a 6 year career break to have children and spend time as a full time mother.

My postdoctoral research was very successful and I enjoyed the research and the research environment. I was sure that I eventually wanted to pursue an independent academic career but nonetheless made the difficult decision to take a complete career break through the first few years of my children’s lives. Leaving the research I loved felt a huge risk, a risk that increased a year later when my team relocated to Australia cutting my main contact with ICaMB.

After 5 years completely away from science I began regular visits to my previous laboratory to discuss potential future research with Dr Mark Levasseur, with whom I had kept in contact. I also re-established other contacts and began to catch up the literature, with a view to putting together an application for a Wellcome Trust Career Re-entry Fellowship.

I admit to being more than a little apprehensive when it came to meeting the more senior members of ICaMB, which was necessary to facilitate my grant application. I expected to have to defend my decision to leave research then try to return, and also my decision to return initially on a part-time basis. Here I could not have been more wrong! It was clear from the beginning that I was only ever assessed on my scientific track record and future ambition. At every level within ICaMB I received nothing but support and enthusiasm for my desire to get back into research. The Institute Director and senior PIs extensively read proposals and set up mock interviews. Administrative staff helped me through the application process. Technicians and research assistants took time out to help me conduct preliminary experiments. I received this support while not even a member of ICaMB (a condition of the fellowship scheme).

I won my fellowship and began work (part-time) in January 2013. I received my first PhD student later that year (fully funded MRes/PhD programme awarded by the Faculty). An ICaMB drinks and social event shortly after my return proved a great time to meet senior PIs keen to show me around their labs and offer advice and the use of equipment. I feel I have the best of both worlds; I am a valuable institute member with an independent research theme, yet a mentoring team selected to ensure that I have access to expert advice. Recently I have been supported through a second application to the Wellcome Trust, successfully extending my fellowship by a further year and also increasing my hours from 60-80% FT as I have gained in confidence and my youngest son has settled in school. My work hours are fully flexible to fit around school activities and the nature of my long experiments.

I am proud to be a part of an Institute that celebrates and shares different experiences for the benefit of others. I am comfortable that I made the correct decision for my family and delighted that this is discussed in such a positive light within the Institute. From the beginning my knowledge of career re-entry has been used to promote flexible options for others, both via the ICaMB blog and through talking to our PANIC (PhD student) and IPA (postdoctoral) groups.
I moved to Newcastle in 2008, after completing my PhD at the University of Exeter, to work as a postdoctoral researcher in Dr David Bolam’s laboratory. After three successful and really enjoyable years, we submitted another grant application to continue some of this work. I was lucky to receive 6 months of bridging funding from ICaMB while we waited for the outcome of this application. During this time I became pregnant, and we also discovered the grant had not been funded. My bridging funds ran out 2 months before I was due to start maternity leave (Feb 2012) but Dr Bolam, together with the Institute manager Joanna Keith, found money to keep me employed until the start of maternity leave. While I was on maternity leave, Professor Harry Gilbert, with whom Dr Bolam shared laboratory space, offered me a 5 year postdoctoral position in the same field. I jumped at the chance to return to ICaMB and continue work on the gut microbiota, and I returned to work in October 2012.

I was worried about combining research with my family life, especially as my husband commutes to Edinburgh each day, meaning I am responsible for dropping off and collecting our daughter from nursery. Luckily, our daughter was able to attend a private nursery on University property, and Professor Gilbert was more than happy for me to go and breastfeed her at lunchtime for as long as I wished, and to leave early (for a post-doc!) to collect her and travel home by bus. I joined a team comprising another post-doc and a PhD student. Both were extremely sensitive to the time constraints I worked within and often swapped responsibility during long experiments to allow me to take my daughter home and put her to bed, then return later to relieve someone else.

Lis has just had a paper accepted in the discovery journal Nature and thus has reached very early, and while balancing family and work commitments, a pinnacle for which most academics strive throughout their career. This career breakthrough marks Lis out as an academic star of the future. Lis acknowledges that if ICaMB had not put in place bridging funds to support her up to taking maternity leave and offered her a new and flexible post to which she could return she would not have made this achievement.