

Athena SWAN Workshop - Going for Silver Group

24th March 2016

Aims and Objectives:

The application guidelines state that in addition to the future planning required for Bronze, Silver awards recognise that the department has taken action in response to the previously identified challenges and can demonstrate the impact of the actions implemented.

The purpose of the meeting was to promote awareness of the requirements for Silver, and to share the learning from departments with Silver awards in the Faculty of Medical Science.

Key advice from Silver award holders:

- **Be prepared**
Allow plenty of time to work on the application. It may be useful to divide tasks between working groups. However, an overall editor is still required. Departments can apply for an extended word count if required.
- **Be honest**
Don't hide problems – propose a solution wherever possible. Reflect on the challenges as well as the successes of the last 3 years. Don't be afraid to state what you are proud of.
- **Be ambitious**
Set targets above national benchmarks. Review applications from competitor departments and consider what they are doing / planning.
- **Be realistic**
Although it is important to be ambitious, it is equally important to be realistic about what you can achieve in the next four years. Reflect on the reasons why previous targets may have changed or not been met. Consideration will be given to changing priorities and issues which are outside of the departments' control.
- **Be creative**
Don't be afraid to try something different – assessment panels like innovative solutions to problems.
- **Be inclusive**
Try to include members of the department in culture changes - two way communication is really important.
- **Make the application look attractive**
Photographs, quotations and organisational diagrams help to provide a picture of the department and break up the text in an application.

- **Providing evidence is crucial**
Collect data to demonstrate the impact of your activities. Where and when was the event held? Who attended (numbers/grade/gender)? What was the aim of the event, and did feedback from participants suggest this was achieved?
- **A strong letter of support is required**
The letter of support from the Head of School is important as it sets the tone for the application. The letter should demonstrate personal commitment to the Athena SWAN principles and self-assessment process. The letter should include examples of achievements over the last 3 years as well as priorities for the next 4 years.
- **Take on board feedback**
Refer to the assessment panel's feedback on the previous application - particularly in relation to the areas which could be improved. Feedback from the internal review panel can also be useful in highlighting areas for improvement.
- **Participate in assessment panels**
Taking part in an assessment panel meeting can be a really useful learning experience. The Equality Challenge Unit advertise for panellists twice a year. It is also possible to attend panel meetings as an observer. The Equality Challenge Unit provide a contribution towards travel expenses for both panellists and observers.

Additional questions from Bronze award holders:

- **How / where should we include consideration of intersectionality?**
Under the expanded Athena SWAN Charter, departments are required to consider intersectionality in terms of how individuals' identities have been shaped by several different factors.

Intersectionality will be discussed in further detail at the first Cross Faculty Forum meeting, which will focus on the expanded Charter. However, the Equality Challenge Unit has recently published some guidelines which departments may find useful to refer to:

<http://www.ecu.ac.uk/equality-charters/athena-swan/athena-swan-faqs/intersectionality/>

Departments may also find it useful to engage with the School of English Language and Linguistics, who are due to submit an application for a Bronze award under the new criteria in April 2016 (contact: Dr James Annesley).

- **How much consultation should be demonstrated?**
Ideally, consultation with both staff and student groups should take place to inform the self-assessment process. Actions should be identified from consultation exercises should be reflected on throughout the application and clearly linked to the Action Plan.
Reflect on any differences in opinion, and whether the opinions stated are representative of wider groups.

- **How should we provide evidence of impact?**

Photographs from events and quotations from focus groups / surveys can be used to provide evidence. Anonymous quotations can be used to protect confidentiality. Feedback forms can also be used following events to measure an increase in the awareness of policies, practices and procedures.

Impact can also be demonstrated in terms of data. For example, an increase in the number of female academic appointments / applications for promotion. Formal records of training can also be obtained from SAP.

Developing new actions, policies and practices in response to issues identified during consultation with staff and student can also be considered as evidence.

- **Should the Case Studies focus on academic staff or include Professional Support Staff?**

The application guidelines state that two case studies should be included to demonstrate how the department has supported the career development of staff. For example, supporting Fellowship applications and other career development opportunities, support following return from maternity / paternity leave, offering flexible working etc.

One case study should be based a member of the Self-Assessment Team. The second case study should be based on another member of the department. Following the meeting, the Equality Challenge Unit has confirmed that applications made under the expanded Charter can include case studies on Professional Support Staff.

Follow up actions:

- The sharing of good practice across departments is essential. Departments are encouraged to engage with Institutes with Silver awards as critical friends during the application process.
- Reciprocal support can be provided for facilitating focus groups.
- Electronic copies of successful applications can be downloaded from the University's Athena SWAN web pages: <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/about/athena-swan/awards/>
- The SAgE Faculty Athena SWAN Project Group will hold a further session to identify potential barriers to achieving Silver, and positive actions which can be taken by the Faculty to support this process.

In addition to the **future planning** required for Bronze, Silver awards recognise that the department has taken **action in response to the previously identified challenges** and can **demonstrate the impact** of the actions implemented.

