



UPGRADING AN ATHENA SWAN BRONZE AWARD TO SILVER

SWAN Champion School
of Mathematics & Physics:
Prof Adele Marshall



ATHENA SWAN APPLICATION

Queen's Gender Initiative

SWAN Champions

School Bronze ATHENA SWAN Award – 2011

University Silver ATHENA SWAN Award - 2012

School Silver ATHENA SWAN Award – 2013

BRONZE APPLICATION

SWAN Champions Meetings

Self Assessment Team

Data Collation & Analysis

Preparation of submission

SWAN Steering Group

THINGS THAT WORKED WELL

The Self Assessment Team

The SWAN Champions

- The Champions group
- Peer assessing

THINGS THAT DIDN'T WORK WELL

Data collation

- Admissions Office
- Personnel Office
- School Office
- Equal Opportunities Office
- UK data

Finding time and evidence for initiatives to be the factors making a difference

MATHS & PHYSICS SCHOOL ACTION PLAN

The Long-Term Aims of the School in 2011 were to:

Recruit more
Female Staff

JUNO
Practitioner

GPA Champion



FEEDBACK

“The panel felt that a more consistent approach to data would be advantageous (showing maths and physics data in all cases) as the differences between maths and physics are substantial particularly at UG level. Also more up to date benchmarking data should be used.

The panel felt that not enough was in place for a Silver award, but that a Bronze award would be appropriate. If the School puts in place the bulk of the identified action it should be in position to make a strong Silver award submission next year. “

We had identified the challenges within the School, worked through an action plan of how to deal with these but had little evidence of progress.

SILVER APPLICATION

Take on board the Bronze feedback

Produce evidence of progress

Measures to assess impact of Action plan

Learn from other successful submissions

Get lots of feedback

APPLYING FOR SILVER AFTER BRONZE

- The Head of School's letter

“Overall the panel felt that the letter was good but would have liked stronger personal commitment to have been expressed on the part of the head of school.

The letter outlines a number of initiatives that are underway and things are moving forward, although it is not necessarily clear what their outcome is yet.”

- Looked at other Head of School letters
- Got Feedback from our 2 external members of the SAT
- Meetings with the Head of School

BEFORE

To whom it may concern,

The School of Mathematics and Physics at Queen's University Belfast wishes to apply for an Athena SWAN Silver Award.

The self assessment team (SAT) has extended its membership to also include PhD students and postdoctoral research assistants. Our activity related to the Athena SWAN has significantly increased and is continuing to gain momentum as staff and students become more involved with new initiatives as the culture of the School evolves. A new mentoring scheme for undergraduates in Mathematics has proved to be a major success and is currently being extended to all undergraduate students in Mathematics and Physics in the next academic year.

The SWAN agenda is supported at the highest level within the School, thereby giving us a mandate for SWAN initiatives. This has enabled us to identify actions which can redress the balance of women in both Mathematics and Physics. I fully endorse this action plan and application, and believe that attaining a Silver Award would provide further impetus for us to achieve a significant translation of female PDRAs into junior and, ultimately, senior academics posts.

AFTER

Dear Sir/Madam

As Head of School of Mathematics and Physics at Queen's University Belfast, I am delighted to personally endorse this application for a Silver award, progressing from Bronze in 2011. Historically, within the sciences the subject areas of Mathematics and Physics have had among the poorest records in the representation of women, and it is a top priority of the School to rectify this. I recognise the importance of ensuring the full representation of women in Physics and Mathematics at all levels, and the need to identify challenges and develop action plans to address this. Through these plans, I wish both to develop and maintain a more female-friendly culture in the School, and attract a better representation of women at all levels, particularly at senior level where we have the greatest gender imbalance.

Supported by a committed SWAN Self Assessment Team, we have worked exceptionally hard at addressing all of the feedback we obtained from our previous SWAN submission (which received a Bronze award). We have fully embraced the SWAN Charter, ensuring the complete integration of SWAN into all

and academic gender balance. In particular, I am personally delighted to report an upward trend in female academic staff in the School from 11% in 2011, to 14% in 2012, to at least 19% in 2013.

staff member from reader to professor. To further this success, our School has been instrumental in changing the appraisal form for the entire University so that it now asks all staff to routinely consider their career progression.

HEAD OF SCHOOL REPORTS ON PROGRESS

Undergraduate proportions: female representation has improved.

- In 2011: Higher proportion of female students on Maths courses compared to UK average
- In 2013: Higher proportion of female students on both Maths and Physics courses compared to UK average

Percentage of female research student up from 2011 for both Maths and Physics

School with an upward trend from 11% in 2011, to 14% in 2012, to at least 19% in 2013.

APPLYING FOR SILVER AFTER BRONZE

- The Self Assessment Team

“The panel felt that the self-assessment team membership showed a good spread of career stages/levels, although perhaps the panel could have had more connection to QUB's central initiatives.

The panel felt that the frequency of panel meetings was very good and liked that the panel planned to meet regularly in the future.

The panel was not clear on how much internal consultation there had been. Has there been consultation that had not been mentioned?”

- Provide evidence of the connection to QUB's central initiatives
- Explain the consultations and seek for more feedback in next submission

B) ACCOUNT OF SELF ASSESSMENT PROCESS

- School SAT
- Working with Central Initiatives
- External Consultation



APPLYING FOR SILVER AFTER BRONZE

■ A picture of the department

The panel was not clear whether significant progress had been made. Is the departmental culture changing?

The panel welcomed that data were shown for maths and physics separately in some cases, but would have wanted to see this throughout the submission given that the national gender profiles for maths and physics are significantly different.

Are the combined data hiding issues?

The proportion of female applications is falling but this is not highlighted.

The panel noted that more recent benchmarking data for physics are available from the IOP (09/10): the proportion of female physics lecturers is now over 20%.

Charts such as Figure 4 are misleading.

The panel was unhappy with the statement “encouraging flatness” (p 13). Women are underrepresented at staff levels and clear actions should be in place to address this issue.

Conclusions that there is “no gender bias” need further consideration. Has quality of applicants been taken into account?

The figures in Table 8 need checking. Also the statement that 30% of female applications for PGR were made an offer needs checking (should be 42%).

Statements such as “systems of assessment are becoming gender neutral” are sweeping. What is happening to bring this about? Has the quality of input changed? How do the data for maths and physics compare?

How does the fact that the School is the only one to offer Maths & Physics in Northern Ireland affect the issues under consideration?

Overall the panel did not get much of feel of what had been achieved/changed and what actions were planned.

Provide evidence of the connection to QUB’s central initiatives

APPLYING FOR SILVER AFTER BRONZE

- Supporting and Advancing Women's Careers

“The panel noted that some issues had been identified and that action had been identified, but that in some cases the actions had not been fully implemented, e.g. all recruitment panels should have at least one woman.

The panel noted that the School was in the process of improving the appraisal system so that it better supports promotion. The impression given is that the promotion system needs regularising, e.g. all staff could automatically be considered every year; their CVs could be examined every year”

Data on those eligible for promotion vs. those that apply and are successful would be more useful.

It would be useful to know the take up rates for induction and training.

Informal flexible working may suggest that flexible working isn't acceptable. Could check whether staff think that they can work successfully with formal flexible working arrangements. Why aren't staff applying to work flexibly?”

APPLYING FOR SILVER AFTER BRONZE

■ Action Plan

“The panel felt that the action plan underlined that there are a lot of intentions to put things in place.

The panel felt that success measures and completion dates could be better defined. Definite targets could be set. An example template is available that could have been used.

The panel felt that there could have been more detail in some of the actions. Follow up actions could have been added, such as continued monitoring, etc.

In a number of places the action plan was vague with use of words like “encourage” and “consider”.

Overall the panel felt that the action plan could be improved and that a number of issues were listed which should be in place already for a Silver award.”

APPLYING FOR SILVER AFTER BRONZE

- Case study: impacting on individuals

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INITIATIVES

Peer Mentoring for undergraduates

Personal Tutors for undergraduates

Website for women in the School, mailing list, facebook ..

Events are all gender balanced

Events specifically for females: “Women in Physics Day”

Committee gender balanced

Job adverts expressly say that female applicants welcome

Recruitment panels have female representation

Diversity training 100%

School Staff/Student survey

Appraisal form changed to include promotion



WHERE ARE WE NOW?

Culture has changed dramatically

Many more females in academia within the School

IOP JUNO Status

School Women's Forum

Working on our next submission to renew Silver in April 2016