ATHENA PROJECT

Case Study No 15

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

SWAN BRONZE AWARD MARCH 2006

The University of Edinburgh joined the Athena SWAN Charter in 2005 and was awarded Bronze SWAN recognition in March 2006. The recognition award is valid until March 2009.

THE UNIVERSITY

The University is one of the largest HEIs in the UK, with over 17,000 full-time undergraduate students and over 1,700 taught postgraduate students on over 160 programmes. The University is a leading research university employing a fifth of Scotland's HE research staff. The number of staff in 5*-rated units of assessment, as measured for the 2001 Research Assessment Exercise is fifth highest in the UK. Edinburgh has over 3,000 research postgraduate students.

In the 2001 RAE the College of Science and Engineering (where the majority of SET staff work) ranked fourth in research excellence in the UK. 94% of the College's staff are in units with 5 or 5* ratings. The College consistently gains high ratings for teaching quality. In 2004/05 the College had over 5000 undergraduates, just under 1500 postgraduates and 1,700 staff. The staff in SET areas are in the seven schools in the College (the Schools of Biological Sciences, Chemistry, Engineering and Electronics, GeoSciences, Informatics, Maths, and Physics) and in the School of Biomedical Sciences in the College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine.

BACKGROUND

Since August 2002 the University has organised its academic activities into three large Colleges, each headed by a Vice-Principal. There are 21 Schools, 7 in Science and Engineering, 4 in Medicine and Veterinary Medicine and 10 in Humanities and Social Sciences. Each Head of College reports to the Principal. The Heads of Schools (senior academic staff) report to their respective Head of College.

The University has a planning process that is bottom up and top down. At University level there is a 5-year strategic plan (currently 2004-8) with three core strategic goals, three cross-cutting supporting goals, and within that six operational priorities, one of which is promoting opportunity and diversity. Each College produces its own plan, informed by the annual planning round during which each School develops its plan for the following year. There are also longer term plans at College and School level. Delivery against the strategic plan is monitored annually against a series of targets, one of which is to increase on a year-on-year basis the proportion of new female appointments at lecturer, senior lecturer, reader and professor level.

WORK IN SUPPORT OF CHARTER PRINCIPLES

Edinburgh has a good record of equality and diversity initiatives and work to determine its SET baseline.

Edinburgh's Athena report, completed in 2000, indicated that significant improvements could be made to encourage women to remain in their academic careers in SET. The report produced a substantial list of recommendations for action at all levels. The University is currently exploring the effectiveness of the recommendations which have already been acted on (the use of appraisal, the use of fixed term contracts and development needs analysis) and prioritising the recommendations not yet adopted or actioned. It is already clear from the latest promotions round that progress is being made, especially in culture-influenced behaviour by Heads of Schools.

Data analysis and reporting

Edinburgh's equal opportunities technical advisory group (EOTAG) was created in 2000. Its members include staff with special interest and skills in data analysis and equality and diversity. It is convened by the senior Vice-Principal who is the Principal's nominee on E and D across the University. EOTAG produces annual reports which provide comprehensive statistical reports on the position and progress of the E&D policy at university and college level. These reports have highlighted the need for further in-depth qualitative research and indicate actions to be taken within the E&D Action Plan. The University had recently participated in an Equal Opportunities Commission's gender equality pilot, the aim of which was to formulate guidance to organisations on meeting the requirements of the new 'positive duty' legislation.

The University invited the Institute of Physics (IOP) to review the gender imbalance in the School of Physics in 2005. The IOP report will provide the basis for launching changes in that School, and the lessons from this will be transferred to other SET schools.

The University recently reviewed its equality and diversity structure and strengthened it with the creation of a more senior position, the Equality and Diversity Manager. This will enable Edinburgh to drive forward its agenda. In addition, there is an overarching management board which prioritises resources for action, and a University E&D committee to which the College E&D committees report. Finally, each School has its own E&D Co-ordinator. The co-ordinators all receive appropriate training from the Equality and Diversity Manager.

In the last five years there has been the launch of a mentoring scheme as well as a Springboard women's development programme. Both of these have received extremely positive feedback, and are supported financially by each of the colleges HR budgets.

THE SELF- ASSESSMENT PROCESS

There were a number of steps taken to gather the information needed for self-assessment. Initially, a review of the information available on the University's websites, including:

University Strategy: Outlines the core strategic goals of the University

Equality and Diversity Strategy and Action Plan: University's policy and action plan for implementing equality and diversity initiatives.

Equal Opportunities Technical Advisory Committee (EOTAG) reports: Comprehensive statistical reports on the position of the University.

Human Resource Policies

Springboard Women's Development Programme

Women's Network

Athena Project

College Plans 2005-2006

University Restructure Review

Committees

To expand on this information a number of individuals were contacted to provide specific information on the history, current initiatives and evaluation of the schemes that had been implemented (e.g. staff development, policy and communication). During the self-assessment process the project team liaised closely with the HR teams in the Colleges to ascertain the success and effectiveness of HR policies implementation.

DEVELOPING THE ACTION AGENDA

From the latest EOTAG report (early 2005) three areas were identified as the key priorities for 2005/06:

> Occupational segregation amongst clerical staff (predominantly female) and servitorial staff (predominantly male)
>
> Student progression and success in terms of first/upper second class (male student attainment is markedly weaker than women's, especially in science)
>
> Careers in Science (female drop off after post- graduate training)

The College of Science and Engineering E and D committee will be discussing the female careers issue and will feed it in to work to be carried out over the next year with each of the Schools to make positive changes (work on the other two areas is also being carried forward).

A primary short-term challenge will be to raise the awareness of gender balance within SET. Ultimately, all staff should not only understand the business case for E and D but should support its principles and values to the point where they are the norm and unexceptional.

Four SET schools have nominated themselves to undergo self-assessment. The self-assessment activities will in themselves contribute to elevating the awareness of gender issues within the schools seeking an award and also the other SET Schools in the University. The University will make most of these opportunities to influence staff, and commence the process of changing the underlying culture. One School, Chemistry, has a gone a long way to achieving this and a challenge for the college is to use this good example, getting academic to influence and persuade academic (peer to peer) rather than rely on HR or others to do the influencing. Peer to peer methods are far more likely to be successful.

The University has undertaken two CROS surveys and one ASSET survey. The data from these is being used to identify the effectiveness of the career planning and review for researchers and the professional development review for new lecturers and any issues for staff participating in them. Edinburgh is introducing a number of development packages focusing on leadership and management. This strategy is designed to ensure that individuals have these skills before they are appointed to management roles. Furthermore, there is a concentration on the softer skills which includes awareness of equality and disability issues. The recent Analysis of Development Needs Project has highlighted a number of areas where development of staff is required. Discussion will now take place to identify the best methods of improving the skill sets of existing staff, and to ensure new staff are given appropriate training on or close to their commencement of employment.

The University has made a commitment to increase the proportion of new female appointments at senior lecturer, reader and professor level. It is at these levels that academics begin to take on additional responsibilities. The University Strategy has also highlighted that the development of all staff members is a priority. Within this, leadership and development remains a key focus.

The long-term challenge is to proportionately increase the number of women within the University in all academic teaching and research grades, with specific attention paid to senior academic positions. Edinburgh does not underestimate the challenge this presents because their monitoring clearly shows that once women enter the applications and promotion processes they are at least as likely as men to be successful. What therefore the University has to address is the factors that may inhibit applications and inevitably it will take a number of years to see the effects slowly work their way through to the senior academic grades.

THE PLAN

SET baseline and academic profile

The Equality and Diversity Strategy Action Plan is currently being reviewed. This will provide additional actions.

The latest report EOTAG report identified three key priorities, which included careers in science (female drop off after postgraduate training). An action plan is currently being developed.

Key career transition points

1. The University has undertaken two CROS surveys and one ASSET survey. The data from these is being used to review the implementation and effectiveness of the University's career planning and review for researchers and professional development review for new lecturers
2. Additional training on recruitment and selection for staff, targeting those who are recruiting RA's and lecturers.
3. Further action to ensure all appropriate staff receive skills training prior to selection and appointment to management and leadership positions.
4. Evaluation of mentoring scheme via qualitative surveys and analysis of quantitative data on the progression of female academics.
5. University review of the use of fixed term contracts to be reported Summer 2006
6. Working practices will be an ongoing concern.
7. The Pay and Reward Modernisation Project includes a specific sub-project looking at harmonising and modernising all the University's terms and conditions of service. The opportunity will be taken of further developing and promoting flexible working arrangements and the need for the employer to meet employee's commitments for dependants (whether children or adults).
8. Pay and Reward Modernisation Project will consider, amongst other things, the progression of employees between and within grades to ensure that promotions are on an equitable and transparent basis. This project is timetabled to be implemented by August 2006.

Culture change and gender balance in decision making

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