

ATHENA PROJECT

Case Study No 17

UNIVERSITY OF NOTTINGHAM

SWAN BRONZE AWARD MARCH 2006

The University of Nottingham 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 internationally recognised as a world-class centre for teaching and research. This success is built upon attracting, retaining, motivating and supporting academic staff of the highest quality. The University has a broad discipline focus with a total of 2,041 academic and research staff across six faculties, of which 1,418 are in the three faculties of science, engineering and medical health sciences.

BACKGROUND

Nottingham established a committee to represent the concerns and monitor the career progress of women in science, engineering and technology based faculties (WinSET). The Committee was also tasked with addressing the principles set out in the SWAN Charter on behalf of the University.

The committee's terms of reference are to:

Address gender inequalities across SET disciplines

Tackle the unequal representation of women in SET

Address the prevalence of short-term contracts which have a particularly negative consequence for the retention and progression of women in SET

Give active consideration to sustainable academic careers for women in SET

Embed equality and diversity issues at policy-making levels within the University

WORK IN SUPPORT OF CHARTER PRINCIPLES

Women in senior management and decision making

The University has established the APPLE (Academics and Administrators Professional Personal and Leadership Experience) Programme specifically for women which has developed from a previous Athena funded programme. This programme is for middle level academic staff (from Lecturer B to Reader level) and administrative staff. Delivered over nine months, the course focuses on developing leadership skills for women. The aim is to develop women at this level to aid their progression into more senior roles. The programme leads to the achievement of the Institute of Leadership Management qualification. Part of the programme focuses on interview and CV writing techniques. The first cohort was undertaken in 2004/05 and the second cohort is now underway. The course has between 60 and 70 delegates in each cohort.

The University recently undertook an Equality and Diversity audit of the gender composition of all committees. This audit identified that women were represented more on the operational committees such as the Equality and Diversity Advisory Group rather than the more strategic committees. All members of the first APPLE cohort were contacted and encouraged to seek membership of University strategic committees.

Nottingham has targets within its Human Resources Strategy and Action Plan for increasing the numbers of women within senior academic and technical roles. Progress reports on achievement toward these targets are provided on a six monthly basis to the University Gender Advisory Group and reported to the University Equality and Diversity Committee. This Committee in turn reports to Senate and Council. Regular progress reports are also provided via the WinSET Working Group, to the University Gender Advisory Group and to the Research Committee.

Career progression

The University offers Anne McLaren Fellowships to young women scientists and engineers who wish to establish a research career in the UK. This scheme is designed to offer support and flexibility to young women scientists and engineers by offering flexible working patterns, or allowing a move from full-time to part-time working to accommodate family commitments. It also offers the possibility of individuals being able to claim funds for family support and for reclaiming maternity leave. The Fellowships are offered on a guaranteed tenure for two years and to women who have submitted their PhD with no more than four years full-time post-doctoral experience.

THE SELF-ASSESSMENT PROCESS

The self-assessment was undertaken by the WinSET Working Group. The group has eight members who represent a broad range of scientific disciplines and who are at different career stages, from recently appointed post-doctoral researchers to established professors, providing a rich source of experience and knowledge of the issues and potential solutions.

The committee has management and policy support from Human Resources and Research and Innovation Services.

THE PLAN

SET baseline and academic profile

1. Headcount figures currently monitored through Human Resources will now be reported to the Women in SET Working Group and to Gender Advisory Group
2. Introduction of a target for increasing the numbers of women in academic and research roles within SET

Key career transition points

1. Implementation of a training course specifically for women moving from post-doctoral to lecturer, to mirror the APPLE programme for lecturing staff.
2. Introduction of additional specific mentoring for young academic staff
3. Obtaining feedback from the first cohort of APPLE delegates, review their achievements, motivations, applications and success rates and identify whether they would have applied for promotion even if they had not taken part in APPLE
4. Promotion reports to focus specifically on women in SET who are applying for promotion

Culture change and gender balance in decision making

Specifically target women in SET to take part in specific SET committees and University wide strategic committees