

## **ATHENA PROJECT**

### **Case Study No 19**

## **KEELE UNIVERSITY**

### **SWAN BRONZE AWARD OCTOBER 2006**

Keele University, a member of the Athena SWAN Charter from 2005, was awarded Bronze SWAN recognition in October 2006. The recognition award is valid until December 2009.

#### **THE UNIVERSITY**

At Keele, in line with its founding ethos, most of the undergraduate programmes remain broad based, with the majority of undergraduate students studying for dual honours. The main exceptions are health and medicine, both important growth areas. In 1999 Keele was one of three universities selected for the establishment of a new medical school, and their first cohort of students started their studies in September 2002.

The University has around 7,000 full-time equivalent students, of whom 5,600 are full-time students on degree and diploma programmes. One-quarter of all students are postgraduates. The university's strategic plan 2005/10 sets a target of 8,500 students FTEs.

Science engineering and technology (SET) activity is located in two of the university's three faculties: the Faculty of Natural Sciences and the Faculty of Health, within four of Keele's seven research institutes and eight of the University's thirteen schools.

Keele continues to pursue high quality research in all academic fields. Research covers a wide range of topics in humanities, science, social science, health and medicine. In the 2001 Research Assessment Exercise Keele's Schools demonstrated research strength. Over 40% of the academic staff submitted to the exercise were located within units rated 5 or 5\*.

#### **BACKGROUND**

Keele is proud of its good track record over recent years in recruiting female academics to senior positions within the administration, currently counting amongst its female staff, the Vice-Chancellor, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, and two Faculty Deans, including the Dean of Natural Sciences. However, the university recognises that there is less female representation among staff at other levels of the organisation and that this is an area they need to address - one of Keele's core strategic aims is 'Optimising the contributions of our staff'.

Keele recognises that it is vitally important that students can be inspired by lecturers from all backgrounds, gender and nationalities, so that they can see that positions in academia and/or industry are within their reach. In this way the Athena SWAN initiatives planned to assist in recruiting a higher number of female staff within SET Schools will support Keele's aim of 'Enhancing the Student Experience'.

Keele also recognises that their biggest challenge will be changing the culture in some areas to ensure that gender representation is considered as a matter of course, and that a proactive approach is taken. Keele is determined to turn this aspiration into reality and see the Athena SWAN Charter membership as helping them to achieve this.

## **WORK IN SUPPORT OF CHARTER PRINCIPLES**

Currently the Vice-Chancellor undertakes a regular review of the salaries of male and female professorial staff. Equal Pay Audits will be undertaken as part of Keele's implementation of the new pay framework.

A programme of staff development is provided for contract research staff. The programme is being extended to be open to all staff to whom it may be of interest.

Research Supervisors often provide informal advice and encouragement to post-doctoral researchers, but no more formal system is in place to ensure that everyone has access to a mentor.

The University had a robust policy in place for gender balance on recruitment panels (*Guidance on Panel Membership* <http://www.keele.ac.uk/depts/uso/hr/Recruitment.htm>.)

The University offers part-time working and is committed to equality of opportunity for its entire staff, regardless of the number of hours worked. The University's policy states 'in order to facilitate this (part-time working) the university may create working arrangements, in accordance with managerial interests, whereby it can widen its recruitment pool, retain the valuable skills of existing employees who no longer want to work full-time, and enable staff to retain career development opportunities whilst working fewer hours.'

## **THE SELF-ASSESSMENT PROCESS**

Keele had recently re-organised, merging its departments into schools, and creating the research institutes which manage all research activity within the university. The self-assessment process was undertaken in the context of this recent re-organisation and with due consideration to the new management arrangements.

Keele chose to embed the self-assessment process into the normal business of the university. The self-assessment group will continue its meetings beyond its submission for recognition in June 2006. The group will continue to play an active role in considering ways in which to raise the profile of women in Science, Engineering and Technology (SET).

The Self-Assessment Group was chaired by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, and included male and female staff at different career points and with different backgrounds, including a postgraduate researcher and a member of the contract research staff. It was seen as important to open up discussion with early career staff, to ensure that the finished assessment reflected reality and practice rather than rhetoric and policy. The terms of reference for the group included the promotion of the presence of women in SET, and the promotion of career progression issues. The aim of the process was to open up discussion and to provide advice to Schools in examining their processes and comparing them to the good practice described in the *Athena SWAN Introduction to Good Practice Guide*.

## **DEVELOPING THE ACTION AGENDA**

Based on its analysis of baseline data, existing provision and any gaps they identified, the self-assessment group identified key issues and challenges and the short and longer term programmes to address them. For example they noted that there was little difference in the average age of male and female professorial staff; however women tended to achieve senior lecturer and reader levels earlier than men. The number of women applicants at professorial level was clearly outweighed by the number of men. The key actions identified to address this were:

- an active mentoring scheme for women staff

- the encouragement of heads of departments and other senior staff to encourage women to apply and to take an active interest in their development.

The group identified, as one of the key factors in the retention of women in SET, the support provided for women at key career transition points, in particular from post-doctoral level to junior lectureships, since this was the point where many potential female staff within SET are lost to the profession. The key actions identified to address this were:

- career planning advice should be built into the University's research supervisor training (recognising that much career advice should be provided by research supervisors)

- to investigate the possibility of reducing the number of laboratory classes held out of hours to allow for female or male students who may have caring responsibilities.

Regular reports will be made to one of the University's senior management meetings (People Topics Group) and will form part of the University's suite of regular management information reports. This should ensure that regular and accurate management information is available to university committees for monitoring the female profile in SET and that mechanisms are in place to then address any issues raised.

## **THE PLAN**

Keele has identified five key initiatives for the 2006/07 academic year:

### **Women's Career Development Programme**

A Senior Women's Networking Group has been established. It held its first meeting in March 2006. It will provide mentors for other female academic staff in SET and will chair groups of women at different career stages who will provide an informal locus for ideas, discussion and advice on SET career progression. The AWAKE (A programme for Women At Keele) programme will complement the existing Springboard Women's Self-development programme, and will build on the good practice of other institutions who have previously offered this type of programme. Timescale: 2006/7 academic year.

### **Lecture Series for Women in Science**

The 'Women in Science' lecture series will run over a two year period from 2006/7 to 2007/8. A number of high profile women speakers from SET will address audiences of staff and students, including post-doctoral contract research staff, with the purpose of raising the profile of women in SET and encouraging more women into the profession. The lectures will focus on the backgrounds and research undertaken by prominent women scientists within their specialised fields. Workshops with post-doctoral researchers will be held in conjunction with some of the lectures. Timescale- 2006/7 to 2007/8

**Career Planning for Early Career Staff**

The current programme of staff development entitled 'Early Career Research Management Programme' is being extended to be open to all staff to whom it may be of interest.

**Policy on Flexible Working**

The University is making its flexible working policy more transparent, with the aim of facilitating requests wherever possible. It is hoped that, as with career planning for post-doctoral researchers, this policy will assist with recruitment and retention of female staff in the sciences.

**Mentoring Scheme**

The University is reviewing its mentoring scheme for all new career staff (those with less than 5 years experience) in SET, to ensure it is running smoothly. A mentor will be provided from within the same Faculty, but not necessarily within the same disciplinary area. Principles of the scheme are currently being formulated. Responsible: HR Directorate. Timescale - October 2006.