Tackling Gender Equality through Athena SWAN

Faculty for Business and Law

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Session overview

• Considering differences
• What is Athena SWAN
• Discussion of research findings
• Gender pay gap
• Strategies to mitigate bias
Never Have I Ever

- Been afraid to show affection to a partner in public for fear of violence.
- Been told to “go back where you came from.”
- Been called a slur.
- Been stopped by the police for doing something innocuous.
- Been misgendered.
- Lived in a country where I couldn’t communicate with my native language.
- Been followed by someone, despite expressing disinterest.
- Not seen anyone who looks like me on TV while growing up.
- Not been able to physically enter a building because of lack of accessibility options.
- Had to use a different name to get respect.
- Even if there is no one within the group that a statement applies to, can take stock of privilege.
What is Athena SWAN?

• Award for work on gender equality in HE demonstrating national level of achievement
  • Bronze, Silver and Gold, departmental and Institutional
• Set up 2005 and run by Equality Challenge Unit
• Self assessment based on evidence, supported by 4 year Action Plan
• Submission measured against set criteria
• Independent assessment leads to award
• Application process framework through which develop robust 4 year Action Plan which will deliver change – so not just a tick box????
Ten Athena Swan Principles: Commitment to:

1. Recognise talents of all
2. Advance gender equality, particularly loss of women across career pipeline & absence from senior roles
3. Recognise differences across disciplines (STEMM and AHSSBL)
4. Tackle the gender pay gap
5. Remove obstacles at major points of career progression
6. Address short-term contracts
7. Tackle discrimination against trans people
8. Demonstrate senior commitment
9. Make structural and cultural changes
10. Consider intersectional of gender and other factors
Contradictions of Athena

• (i) attempts to incorporate intersectionality and trans inclusion;
  • Issues with collecting data, binary approach.

• (ii) the workload and personal cost of Athena SWAN;
  • Excessive workload, recognition of committees to undertake the submission.
  • Women unduly burdened as they are more likely to volunteer.
  • Challenges from male senior colleagues reluctant to be seen in a negative light.
  • Emotional labour toll due to negotiating opposition to submission.
  • Promotions on hold until successful award.
  • Holding women to account for collective failings.

• (iii) the perception of Athena SWAN as a ‘box-ticking’ exercise.
  • Prestige of university to improve its competitive advantage.
  • Benchmarking exercise making

Tzanakou and Pearce (2019)
Bias

• Affinity bias – recruiting and promoting people with similar interests, experiences and backgrounds to existing employees (halo effect)

• Confirmation bias – rewarding employees disproportionately based on their educational experiences, where they lived or their names.

• Name bias – US led research found white names receive 50% more interview call-backs than African American sounding names (horn effect)
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<th>A male colleague on a job interview panel ruled out the best candidate, a woman, because, he said, “what if she has problems with the children and has to leave halfway through the day”. She said: “At that point we didn’t even know if she had children.”</th>
<th>A female colleague noted, speaking up during a meeting it would frequently be brushed aside, but if a male colleague then raised the same concern or idea those at the meeting would say “that’s great”</th>
<th>“I find it very frustrating that you’re just told that your publication record is inadequate, you’re not going anywhere, when it’s due to my career break as a consequence of having children. It’s absolutely ruthless.”</th>
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<td>“Despite being high achievers academically, many of women we questioned doubted their own success and ability within the faculty environment.”</td>
<td>A female professor asked advice regarding appointing a research fellow, “although they were my first choice having a baby seems to be distracting them”</td>
<td>There are a lot of problems, bullying and people being aggressive. I’m talking about big problems, fundamental problems, the fact women are referred to as ‘that stupid woman’.</td>
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Gender Bias

• https://www.youtube.com/embed/rDrfNgFwHew
Gender pay gap

- Academic gender pay gap will take 40 years to close
- Experts warn much more is left to do to reduce inequality, as male advantage grows at 46 institutions
- The national average pay gap in UK HE is 15.1% (2018)

- [https://www.thegenderindex.co.uk/?ct=t%28EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_April_2022 %29&mc_cid=01b58706ae&mc_eid=9644685368](https://www.thegenderindex.co.uk/?ct=t%28EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_April_2022 %29&mc_cid=01b58706ae&mc_eid=9644685368)
Implications of bias in the workplace

- **Emotional** - increased anger, cynical, sad
- **Unfairness** - Disengaged and alienated
- **Turnover** - 3 times as likely to leave
Inclusion matters

• The most diverse companies are now more likely than ever to outperform less diverse peers on profitability.

• 2019 analysis by McKinsey finds that companies in the top quartile for gender diversity on executive teams were 25 percent more likely to have above-average profitability than companies in the fourth quartile—up from 21 percent in 2017 and 15 percent in 2014.

• More than a third of the companies in our data set still have no women at all on their executive teams.

• Representation of ethnic-minorities on UK and US executive teams stood at only 13 percent in 2019, up from just 7 percent in 2014.
Strategies to mitigate bias...

• Self reflection - acknowledge your privilege

• Inclusive leadership - communicating competing messages

• Sponsorship - gain an advocate and advocate for someone else.

• Engage with Charters – Advance HE, Athena SWAN and Race charters
What did Athena SWAN do for us?

• Set up of the Parents and Carers Network
• Enhanced bullying and harassment reporting including development of the student “Speak Up, Step Up” reporting tool into the staff “Report and Support” tool
• Ensuring interview panels have both female and male panel members
• Provision of Keeping in Touch (KIT) days for staff on maternity leave
• Funding for staff to undertake Aurora, Springboard and Navigator staff development programmes
• Introducing anonymous shortlisting for many roles
• Development of core training on diversity and inclusion, unconscious bias awareness, and anti-bullying and harassment
• Extended Christmas leave for all staff in 2020
• Improved gender balance in many areas including REF submissions
• Improved gender balance and representation in University course web pages, publicity material and images
Continued....

• Inclusion of student representation within our SAT
• Collection and consideration of student gender attainment gaps
• Equality Impact Assessments for new and updated policies
• Institution of the Athena SWAN Champion’s Fund to support targeted projects.
• Development of a consistent University-wide PDR process
• Revised promotion criteria for Professors and Readers together with the use of only one chair per year for all panels
• Implementation of a transparent and equitable institutional wide workload planning model
• Regular staff culture surveys and Athena Swan conferences
• Improved access to gender neutral toilet facilities.
• University engagement with the Girls Network
• Introduction of university wide staff mentoring program
Gibbs (1988) *Reflective Cycle*

**PARAGRAPH 1**
Describe what happened

**PARAGRAPH 2**
Describe your feelings and emotional responses

**PARAGRAPH 3**
Consider what was good and bad about your response.

**PARAGRAPH 4**
How do you make sense of the situation? (Use sources/theories/academic research to help you make sense of your reflection?)

**PARAGRAPH 5**
What general conclusion can you draw from the event? What specific conclusions can you draw from your experience?

**PARAGRAPH 6**
Based on your reflection, what would you do differently in the future? Do you have an action plan?
Next steps

• Consider your career goals
• Engage with reflective practice
• Consider your development needs
• How effective is your communication style
• Who advocates for you
• How will you support inclusivity
Thank you.
Questions?
References and further reading


• The Gender Index [https://www.thegenderindex.co.uk/resources/mark-hart-interview/?ct=t(EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_April_2022)&mc_cid=01b58706ae&mc_eid=9644685368](https://www.thegenderindex.co.uk/resources/mark-hart-interview/?ct=t(EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_April_2022)&mc_cid=01b58706ae&mc_eid=9644685368)


• Tzanakou, C. and Pearce, R., 2019. Moderate feminism within or against the neoliberal university? The example of Athena SWAN. *Gender, Work & Organization, 26*(8), pp.1191-1211.