

# **Gender equality in research: sharing ideas**

**Gary Loke**

**Head of Policy, Equality Challenge Unit**

**October 2016**

# Introductions and roles



Equality Challenge Unit

= Introduce yourself and your interest in the group

## Who we are

Equality Challenge Unit (ECU) is a UK national agency which works to further and support equality and diversity for staff and students in higher education institutions across the UK and in colleges in Scotland.

**Our approach is evidence-based**, using research to identify and change practices that unfairly exclude, marginalise or disadvantage people.

# What we do



- = Qualitative and quantitative research
- = Information, advice and guidance
- = Sharing good practice
- = Equality charters – Athena SWAN and Race Equality
- = Events, conferences, seminars and networks
- = Training, consultancy and bespoke services

Advancing equality and diversity in universities and colleges

# The UK context



- Leaky pipeline in academia
- Equality law and the duties on universities
- Equality initiatives and links to funding: top-down and bottom-up

# Athena SWAN Charter



- = Originally a recognition scheme of excellence in women's employment in STEMM
- = **2005:** 10 members
- = **2016:** 137 members
- = Now covers all academic disciplines
- = Now operates in UK, Republic of Ireland and Australia

**STEMM = Science, Technology, Engineering, Maths, Medicine**

Advancing equality and diversity in universities and colleges

# Athena SWAN: award levels



## Bronze

- 🏆 self-assessment and analysis
- 🏆 identify issues and challenges
- 🏆 plan activities on a solid foundation

## Silver

- 🏆 additional to Bronze
- 🏆 evidence of progress and achievement

## Gold

- 🏆 significant record of activity and impact
- 🏆 beacons for gender equality and good practice

Advancing equality and diversity in universities and colleges

# Athena SWAN: award holders



- = 568 award holders
  
- = 84 university awards
  - = 75 Bronze, 9 Silver
  
- = 13 research institute awards
  - = 10 Bronze, 3 Silver
  
- = 471 departmental awards
  - = 315 Bronze, 149 Silver, 7 Gold

267 applications in 2015  
Success rate  $\approx$  70%



# Athena SWAN: how does it work?



= Complete application; win award; repeat

= Athena SWAN requires applicants to:

1. **Collect** data (quantitative and qualitative)
2. Critically **analyse** data
3. **Identify** reasons for exclusion and under-representation
4. Develop a 4 year **action** plan (post-May) to address these
5. Show **progress** over time

= individualised approach of deep analysis

Advancing equality and diversity in universities and colleges

# Why does it work?



- = Set up by and for the academic and research community
- = Led and championed by senior academics: buy-in from the top
- = **Requires thorough self-assessment and reflection to understand individual data and challenges**
- = Promotes staff consultation and engagement
- = Awards are only valid for 4 years

# The benefits of Athena SWAN



= Equality work delivers benefits to research

“We began a program of change in our practices and culture to enhance our position as a world-leading, research-led Chemistry Department. The Athena SWAN process has been immensely helpful in this... Our increased collaborative working has led to our Research Volume increasing from £8M in 2007-8 to £13M this year.”

**Department of Chemistry,  
Imperial College London**



Advancing equality and diversity in universities and colleges

# The benefits of Athena SWAN



Equality Challenge Unit

= Equality work delivers excellent research

“Since 2012 the Division has run a monthly research-planning meeting. Primary investigators (PIs) of all grades are invited to present plans for grant applications, or papers in preparation. Senior PIs and department heads make constructive comments, offering focused peer review to maximise the chances of success. The meetings start at 4:00 pm, as agreed following consultation... allowing the maximum number of people to attend. If individuals with caring responsibilities are unable to make this time, the meeting is either moved on an ad hoc basis, or financial support for childcare is offered... cement[ing] a culture of teamwork and shared knowledge in our Division; it allows detailed feedback and nurtures opportunities for further collaboration. As a result we have had several successful collaborative grant applications [22 in 2014, up from 7 in 2012].”

**Division of Transplantation Immunology,  
King's College London**



Advancing equality and diversity in universities and colleges

# But... where to start



- = What barriers do you face?
- = What is within your ability to change?
- = Who can you influence?

# Contact



Gary Loke

[Gary.loke@ecu.ac.uk](mailto:Gary.loke@ecu.ac.uk)

 [@ECUGary](https://twitter.com/ECUGary)

Advancing equality and diversity in universities and colleges