

Athena SWAN Newsletter

April 2019



Welcome to our first Business School Athena SWAN Newsletter!

This Newsletter has been created to offer insight into the activities of the Athena SWAN committee, and in this first edition, we will showcase some previous events we have been involved in, upcoming events that may be of interest, the story behind the picture in the banner above, as well as an introduction of Dr Thereza R.S. de Aguiar and Professor Donald Hislop, the Co-Chairs of the Athena SWAN Committee.

Also included are a Q&A session with Professor Keith Bender, former Co-Chair of the Committee, reflections from Mrs Lindsay Tibbetts and Professor Neva Haites, and the student perspective presented by Sarah Sophie Reick.

We hope you enjoy this letter, and consider contributing to it yourself in future.

Athena SWAN Research Workshop, 24th April 2019

Dr. Shamima Haque, Dr. Allan Sim and Ms. Pamela Cumming organised a research workshop to showcase research on gender issues at the Business School. The workshop offered members of staff and PhD students the opportunity to present their work. There was also a poster session for undergraduate students. For more information, please contact Dr. Shamima Haque: shamima.haque@abdn.ac.uk



Dr Thereza R.S de Aguiar and Professor Donald Hislop

Dr. Thereza R.S. de Aguiar, Co-Chair

I was delighted when Prof. Bender invited me to take part in the Athena SWAN Committee in 2017. I am extremely proud to work in an environment that reflects on inequalities and puts gender at the core of the discussions. I am confident that the Business School together will find its own way to realise that an equal and fair space is possible for everyone. I would like to thank everyone for the support that the Committee is receiving, and I will keep working hard to make good progress in order to keep our Athena SWAN recognition.

Professor Donald Hislop, Co-Chair

I am delighted to become co-chair of the Business School's Athena SWAN committee, which plays a very important role in addressing issues of gender equality, and hope to continue the excellent work undertaken by Keith Bender and the rest of the committee thus far.

Donald was appointed Co-Chair in February 2019

Q&A

*with Professor
Keith Bender*

Q: How do you think the Athena SWAN initiative is influencing the University of Aberdeen Business School?

A: At any point in time, it is hard to quantify the impact of Athena SWAN on the Business School. However, looking back at the journey over the last four years, we can see a dramatic increase in awareness around gender in particular, but also around equality and diversity in general. I truly believe that we have moved beyond thinking of Athena SWAN as simply a legal, tick box obligation for gender equality to something that is more fundamental – thinking about gender across an academic career from secondary school through to retirement. Have we ‘changed the world’ yet? Well – no, but we have started changing awareness which is the key first step on that journey. It will be a long one, but I am confident that the momentum is going the right way.



Mrs Lindsay Tibbetts and Professor Keith Bender

Q: Can you give a testimony related to your own experience?

A: My personal journey has paralleled the development of the Athena SWAN initiative, growing to know that issues around equality are deeply rooted and the challenges to ensuring equality are both vast and subtle. I have learned from everyone I have worked with on the Athena SWAN committees, but I am particularly grateful for the close work with, first, Zoe Morrison, who I worked with to write the Bronze Award application and then with Thereza de Aguiar who took over when Zoe left. In addition, working

with very enthusiastic female and male students who are deeply passionate about the initiative has been encouraging to know that the status quo will be challenged by upcoming generations too. Engaging with others across the University and, indeed, in other Business Schools has given me a much broader appreciation for the challenges faced by women and newfound gratitude for the creative ways in which people are approaching equality. It has been a privilege to work with many talented colleagues and students, and I look forward to seeing what new things they will accomplish in the coming years.

Reflections by Mrs Lindsay Tibbetts

We have just celebrated the 100th anniversary of a limited number of women in the UK getting the right to vote but it was not until 1970 that the Equal Pay Act came into force. In my previous working life, outside academia, I rather naively thought that the battle had been won - barring a few skirmishes. Then I moved into academia. Whilst I am energized to be working in one of only a handful of Business Schools in the UK to have achieved the bronze award for Athena SWAN, the need for such a scheme is all too clear. Out of 12 schools in the university only one is headed up by a woman. Within our own School we have only one full-time female professor. The first step in solving any problem is recognising that there is in fact a problem. For the School the starting point was recognising and, importantly, articulating those problems.

On a personal level it woke me up to the reality of the situation and made me recognise that if we wanted progress responsibility lay not only with the institution but also with us as individuals and colleagues. Hence my acceptance of the role of Deputy Head of School.

Clearly there are structural issues which need to be addressed if gender equality is to be truly embedded across the institution and the School. We need to understand more clearly what the barriers to progression are and the School's Athena SWAN team are working hard to identify the issues. To date they have identified 7 main work streams which seem to encapsulate these issues:

- Promoting Gender Equality;
- Student Recruitment,

- Attainment and Progression;
- Staff Recruitment and Induction;
- Staff Career Progression;
- Research;
- Flexible Working;
- Communication and Governance.

I commend the project to my fellow colleagues and encourage everyone to support the team by engaging with the process and sharing your experiences. Once we identify the barriers we can work towards practical solutions.

The committee would like to thank Professor Bender for his enormous contribution and wish him all the best in his new post as the Interim Head of School. We also thank Professor Bender and Mrs Tibbetts for their continuing support of the Committee.

Professor Neva Haites, OBE - Some reflections on Athena SWAN

I was delighted to have been involved in the implementation of the Athena SWAN process at the University of Aberdeen. I had long been aware of the remarkable achievement of Dame Susan Jocelyn Burrell, a renowned astrophysicist, and the first woman to be elected President of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, and one of the



influential supporters of Athena SWAN. The University became an Athena SWAN member in 2011 and achieved Bronze status in 2012 and this would not have been possible without the support at the top from the Principal, SMT and Court, and the hard work of Professor Margaret Ross and others in driving forward the process.

Throughout my career, I became aware that there were many excellent female candidates for promoted positions were being overlooked or had barriers placed in their way for progression, and that a fundamental issue was the need for promotion committees to recognise caring responsibilities, and the impact that part-time working can have on comparative research outputs and other key factors that can influence promotions.

In my own career, I have been fortunate to have had good support from the teams I have worked with, and from my husband who saw no reason that I could not achieve all that I wanted to and that he should play an equal part in domestic responsibilities.

I have seen remarkable shifts throughout my career in both partners in a relationship taking on a more balanced division of family care, and I believe that Athena SWAN supports both women and men in this development with initiatives such as core meetings between 10am and 4pm. I was fortunate too in my Australian background which is perhaps less formal and traditional and therefore more open to promotion of female academics.

Achieving a balance between work and family or other interests is important and I would encourage women to think about all that you want to achieve in life and how to find the right balance. True equality goes beyond gender and in any team situation it's important to have honesty about skills, mutual respect and equal partnerships.

Talking to Professor George Boyne, I am aware of his deep commitment to Athena SWAN principles and I look forward to continuing Athena SWAN initiatives at the University.

Dr. Shamima Haque, Athena SWAN Research Leader

The Business School Athena SWAN committee recognises our ongoing commitment to the advancement and promotion of careers and personal development of women within the School. As Athena SWAN research lead, I am committed to the Athena SWAN initiative and am actively involved in improving gender equity in terms of research at Aberdeen Business School.

My role requires me to progress action plans on research carried out for Athena SWAN, and liaise accordingly with the Business School Research Committee. I believe that in order to improve the recruitment, retention and advancement of women in Business School, it is necessary to remove barriers and biases in research including funding, supervision, and REF submission, and ensure equity and diversity into school's research culture.





The Impact of Athena SWAN – a student perspective

My name is Sarah Sophie Reick and I am currently in my final semester of my undergraduate degree in Business Management and Psychology at the University of Aberdeen. I joined the Athena SWAN committee nearly two years ago upon entering my third-year, and I have felt joy and empowerment through working with such a diverse and compelling group of individuals.

For full article please see here: <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/business/blog/the-impact-of-athena-swan--a-student-perspective/>



Athena SWAN painting

It is great to see how art can create an engaging environment and stimulate discussions. At a recent event a painting and a poster were produced representing Athena SWAN initiatives.

“The painting represents an arc, which is a journey. It was created using recycled pieces of wood found at a fishing village in the surroundings of Aberdeen and uses gold, bronze and silver as colors to represent the Athena SWAN's award levels. It also uses green, blue and white to represent diversity and equality.”

Professor Ignacio Canales, the creator of the Athena SWAN painting

“I was asked to produce a poster, using Professor Canales' painting which was originally painted on wood, and I used the wood-effect background for the whole poster. I augmented the background with a selection of complementary words, before finishing with a faded trans-female-male gender symbol with the mathematical equal sign in the middle. I wanted to capture the ideals and spirit of Athena SWAN.”

Mr Andrew Mulhern, creator of the Athena SWAN poster

PREVIOUS EVENTS

LEVEL UP! CONFERENCE

2nd-3rd March 2019

The Business School Athena SWAN Committee presented at the 2019 Level Up! Aberdeen Conference. Level Up! is a student-led conference which has run every year since 2015 and is organised with the aim of bringing new skills and innovative and fresh outlooks in order to support and empower students.

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION WEEK

September 2018

The Business School Athena SWAN Committee took part in the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Week organised by the University College Union. We would like to give special thanks to Dr. Sola Kasim and Prof. Adam Price for the opportunity to talk about Athena SWAN at such a relevant event organised by UCU.

ECONOMICS AND BUSINESS SOCIETY 'WOMEN IN BUSINESS' EVENT

14th March 2018

Professor Keith Bender, Tanya Castell, MBE, the founder of the Scottish-based charity Changing the Chemistry which promotes gender diversity in the boardroom, and Paula Holland, Audit Director of KPMG Aberdeen all gave talks followed by a student-led debate. This was an inspiring event with very positive discussions.

For more information see - Economics & Business Society: <https://www.ausa.org.uk/societies/society/economics/>