



## Athena SWAN Silver Departmental award application template

**Name of institution:** *Cardiff University* **Year:** 2010  
**Department:** *School of Optometry and Vision Science*  
**Contact for application:** *Prof. Tim Wess and Miss Anna Courage*  
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**Date of university Bronze SWAN award:** 2009

Applications at Silver level should demonstrate what the department is doing in addition to university-wide policies to promote gender equality and to address challenges particular to the discipline.

**At the end of each section state the number of words you have used.**

Click [here](#) for additional guidance on completing this template.

We recognise that not all institutions use the term 'department', and that there are many equivalent academic groupings with different names. If in doubt, contact Athena SWAN staff in advance to check whether your department, or equivalent, is eligible to apply.

It is preferable that the contact person for the application is based in the department.

### **Letter of endorsement from the Head of Department**

An accompanying letter of endorsement from the Head of Department should explain how SWAN plans and activities contribute to the overall university strategy.

The letter is an opportunity for the Head of Department to confirm their support for the application and to endorse and commend any activities which have made a significant contribution to the achievement of the university and departmental mission.

The letter should not exceed 500 words.

## 1. A picture of the department

*Provide a pen-picture of the department to set the context for the application, outlining in particular any significant and relevant features (maximum 300 words).*

The Cardiff School of Optometry and Vision Sciences is the only optometric training department in Wales, and one of the largest in the UK. The School comprises 25 academics (10 females) 13 post-doctoral fellows (8 females), 48 post-graduate students (23 females), 10 eye clinic staff (8 females) and 12 support staff (7 females).

Our mission is to achieve the highest quality vision research in order to facilitate the early detection and diagnosis of eye diseases and their successful treatment. Our ability to deliver outstanding vision research is confirmed by the School's performance in the 2008 Research Assessment Exercise, in which over forty per cent of research outputs were assessed at a quality that is internationally excellent or above. 21 of the 24 academic staff were submitted for the 2008 Research Assessment Exercise. Of these 21, 7 were female. Of the 3 staff not returned for the exercise, only 1 was female.

The BSc Optometry received one of the highest student satisfaction rates in the UK (98% NSS 2009). We promote international exchange of staff and students. Our success is built on the research and "research led teaching" expertise of our academic staff and the quality of the research facilities available in the School. Equality and Diversity is a mainstream activity within the School to ensure staff wellbeing, embedded by the Equality and Diversity committee, chaired by the Head of School. The recently formed Postgraduate training centre now means that we provide short courses, delivered flexibly for eye healthcare professionals.

Integral to the School is its Eye Clinic where third year students conduct eye examinations as part of their training. The Eye Clinic is also open to the general public and offers a full eye health service. Also on offer are innovative Special Assessment and Low Vision Clinics which are internationally recognised as centres of excellence for patients with special needs.

**Words: 310**

## 2. Gender Data

### Student data

- (i) ***Numbers of males and females on access or foundation courses*** – comment on the data and describe any initiatives taken to attract non-traditional groups of women to the courses.

Foundation courses at Cardiff which enable people who often have a non-scientific background to move into healthcare studies commenced in 2007/08, therefore the data available relates to Academic year 2007/08 and 2008/09. Table 2 Appendix A, shows that in 2007/08 the percentage of females was 83%. In 2008/09 the percentage of females is 100%. The number of students on the foundation course is quite small. As a proactive measure to attract non-traditional groups of women to the course, the Head of School and a female lecturer, who is a role model for women in science, regularly give talks on science topics to local secondary schools. They also attend school careers fairs to communicate the availability of the foundation course and to encourage women from all backgrounds to apply. Analysis of the background of our foundation students shows that the majority have an arts background and wish to transfer their education to STEM subjects. We are aware that the proposed intake for 2010 contains significantly more male entrants than previous years. The admissions officers have now undertaken Equality and Diversity training to make sure that they are aware of the gender implications of the recruitment process.

**Words: 195**

- (ii) ***Undergraduate male and female numbers*** – full and part-time – comment on the female:male ratio compared with the national picture in your discipline. Describe any initiatives taken to address any imbalance or negative trends and the impact to date. Comment upon any plans for the future.

The School offers a full-time undergraduate course and Table 3, appendix A shows that in 2006/07 the percentage of females was 72%. The national picture (from HESA data) of this discipline in 2006/07 shows that the percentage of female is 65%. This shows that in 2006/07 the School attracted a higher percentage of females when compared to the national average. In 2007/08 the percentage of female undergraduate students in the School dropped slightly to 71%, whilst the national statistics show that for the same year, the percentage of females was 67%. The School still attracts a higher percentage of females than the national average. In 2008/09 the undergraduate percentage of females was 70%. Although the trend is downwards, this may not be significant and the School is mindful that we are above the national average for female UG students. We will undertake a Gender equality impact assessment in order to address potential recruitment bias.

**Words: 155**

(iii) ***Postgraduate male and female numbers completing taught courses –***

full and part-time – comment on the female:male ratio compared with the national picture in your discipline. Describe any initiatives taken to address any imbalance and the effect to date. Comment upon any plans for the future.

We at present do not have postgraduate taught courses. However, we are in the process of developing a suite of postgraduate taught courses, which would consist of a Certificate, Diploma and MSc in Optometry. There has been considerable demand from the Optometric community for the provision of Postgraduate Taught courses. This has been captured through a questionnaire given out to all Welsh optometrists that have accessed the School's short CPD courses, in which 85% reported that they would like the opportunity to undertake a Certificate/Diploma/MSc. The current short CPD courses are also over-subscribed. The flexible delivery of these courses should maximise access for all.

**Words: 104**

(iv) ***Postgraduate male and female numbers on research degrees – full and part-time – comment on the female:male ratio compared with the national picture in your discipline. Describe any initiatives taken to address any imbalance and the effect to date. Comment upon any plans for the future.***

In 2006-2008 all Postgraduate students were full-time. Part-time postgraduate studies are available on request. Table 4, Appendix A shows that of all the research students in the School (total of 43) in 2006/07, the percentage of females was 44%. The UK percentage for full-time female postgraduates in 2006/07 was 55%. The percentage of female postgraduates in the School was lower than the national percentage. In 2007/08, of all research students (total 47 students) the percentage of females was 38% (this percentage is lower than the previous year), whilst the national average for female postgraduates was 36%. The national percentage of female research students in 2007/08 was lower than 2006/07. This picture is mirrored in the School where the percentage of female students in 2007/08 is lower than 2006/07 but higher than the national percentage. In 2008/09, the percentage of female research students (50 full-time and 2 part-time, both females) was 42%.

The School's postgraduate student profile does not reflect the national picture. This may be because we do not provide postgraduate taught courses, and our provision of postgraduate research degrees in non-clinical research subjects. The non-clinical research subjects attract more students from a physical sciences background, therefore the route of recruitment to this is not usually from within the School.

**Words: 210**

- (v) **Ratio of course applications to offers and acceptances by gender for (ii), (iii) and (iv) above** – comment on the differences between male and female admissions and describe any initiatives taken to address any imbalance and the effect to date. Comment upon any plans for the future.

The School receives a higher number of applications from female students for the BSc Optometry. Data on offers and acceptances for undergraduate courses are shown in Table 5, Appendix A. For the three years, we can see that the total number of applications has decreased. However, the percentage of female applications, offers and acceptances are in the majority.

The percentages of applications, offers, and acceptances for each year are gender consistent. We are always cognisant of presenting a gender balance at recruitment fairs and also at School open days. As a result of Athena SWAN, we now emphasise female and male role models in undergraduate recruitment, by supplying information as web page profiles and at recruitment events. This will be informed by our Gender Equality Impact Assessment on recruitment. From this we will ensure that prospective postgraduate female students are made aware of the overall equal gender balance in the School, the opportunities for maintaining a work-life balance and that students can access a female personal tutor to advise on issues such as career progression.

**Words: 175**

- (vi) **Degree classification by gender** – comment on any differences in degree attainment between males and females and say what action you are taking to address any imbalance.

For the years 2006/07, 2007/08 and 2008/09; 87%, 76% and 92% respectively of the first class degrees were awarded to females. For the same years, the percentage of females obtaining 2.1 degrees were; 83%, 73% and 67% respectively. In all three academic years, females performed above the expected distribution level given the gender balance of each cohort. Table 6, appendix A shows that female students are less likely to obtain 2.2 and third class degrees (only one in the last 3 years). The School is currently undergoing a University Quality Assurance Review of teaching which will assess the gender implications of targeted study skills to address the gender imbalance in degrees awarded.

**Words: 112**

- (vii) ***Length of time for postgraduate completion by gender*** – *comment on any differences in completion times between males and females and say what action you are taking to address any imbalance.*

The University monitors the length of time for postgraduate completion as shown in table 7, appendix A. In 2007/08, 64% (9 students, 7 of which were female) of the students completed within the 4-5 year limit, whilst in 2008/09, 70% (7 students, 3 of which were female) of the research students completed their research degree within the 4-5 year limit. The trajectory for successful completion is therefore good, however we need to work more with both students and supervisors to provide the right support for students to submit their thesis on time. The University's Staff Development department offers a training course on Supervising Research Students. Every new member of School staff who has supervisory responsibilities is encouraged to attend this course. The School also has a system of establishing supervisory teams to provide extra support to postgraduate research students. PhD students have a probationary period of one year, during which time they have regular scheduled meetings with their supervisor to discuss progress and ensure the correct support is in place.

**Words: 170**

#### **Staff data**

- (viii) ***Number of male and female staff (academic and research) at each grade*** – *comment on any differences in numbers between males and females and say what action you are taking to address any underrepresentation at particular grades/levels.*

For 2007 and 2009 the School had a higher percentage of female researchers than SET Schools and the University. In 2008, the percentage of female researchers at School level dropped to be lower than SET Schools and the University. At Lecturer level, the School has seen a steady increase in the percentage of females, from 38% in 2007 to 43% in 2008, and 51% in 2009. At a Senior Lecturer and Reader grade, the percentage of females remained the same for 2008 and 2009; 29% in both years for female Senior Lecturers and 0% in both years for female Readers. This is lower than SET Schools and the University. At Professorial level, the School has 1 female professor, making the percentage of female professors 20% in 2009.

The School has implemented proactive measures to address the career progression of staff, such as the mentoring scheme, and also embraces the Women in Universities Mentoring Scheme (WUMS). The School will also benefit from the re-launched Cardiff Women Professors Forum, which supports aspiring women professors with coaching and mentoring. Cardiff is piloting a Confidence-Building programme for academic Women in the School of Engineering. Plans are to implement this throughout Cardiff SET Schools.

**Words: 199**

- (ix) **Job application and success rates by gender and grade** – comment on any differences in recruitment between men and women at any level and say what action you are taking to address this.

At a Researcher grade in 2007, the School received 34 applications. 20 of them were female. The success rate was one fifth for female applicants and approximately one third for male applications. The School did not recruit at any other level in 2007.

In 2008, the School received 8 applications at Researcher grade, 5 of which were from females. 4 female applicants were successful, in comparison to 3 male applicants and 2 were successful. At a Lecturer grade, the School received 4 applications, all of which from females, and 2 were successful.

Differences are small and only apply here to researcher and lecturer level. However, our application success rate is generally higher for females than the comparator SET school figures (see Table 2, Appendix B).

**Words: 125**

- (x) **Turnover by grade and gender** – comment on any differences between men and women in turnover and say how you plan to address this. Where the number of women in the department is small you may wish to comment on specific examples. Explain if turnover affects recruitment and promotion rates.

During the period 2007 to 2009, the average turnover in 2007 for females in the School was 8.3%. This is lower than the average turnover in SET Schools (9.0%) and lower than the average turnover of females at a University level (9.0%). In 2008, the average female turnover for the School increased to 12.5%, which is higher than SET Schools (6.8%) and the University (7.8%). In 2009, the average turnover of females in the School was 9.09%, which is slightly higher than SET Schools at 8.3% and is similar to the University average of 8.8%.

Destination tracking shows that Staff in the School generally leave to pursue the next step in their chosen career pathway, or because of the need to relocate. There is also a high percentage of research staff on fixed-term contracts within the School, which means that the turnover is generally higher amongst this group of staff.

**Words: 150**

- (xi) **Maternity return rate** – comment on whether your maternity return rate has improved or deteriorated and say how you plan to improve further. If you are unable to provide a maternity return rate, please explain why.

The University has a robust work-life balance scheme that is fully implemented in the School, available at:

<http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/humrs/staffinfo/policyprocedures/recources/Work%20Life%20Balance%20Arrangements.doc>.

Maternity leave return rates have improved year-on-year over the last three years. Six members of staff in the School have taken maternity leave and returned within the last three years, compared with two that did not return. Above and beyond the University policy, the School has adopted a proactive approach of regular discussions with individuals due to go on maternity leave, particularly in terms of re-distribution of work and handover. The allowance of flexible use of accrued annual leave whilst on maternity leave, the range of flexible working schemes operated by the University and return to work meetings that identify local arrangements available within the School are significant contributors to improved return rates.

**Words: 131**

- (xii) ***Paternity, adoption and parental leave uptake*** – comment on the uptake of paternity leave by grade and parental and adoption leave by gender and grade and whether this has improved or deteriorated and say how you plan to improve further.

The School operates a University-wide work-life balance policy, available at

<http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/humrs/staffinfo/policyprocedures/recources/Work%20Life%20Balance%20Arrangements.doc>.

Paternity leave uptake amongst staff in the School is lower than SET Schools and the University. There have been no applications for adoption leave over a three-year period. This aligns closely with the University average, which shows one application for adoption leave over the past three years. The School ensures that staff entitled to paternity or adoption leave are made aware of their options and line manager training to ensure that equitable access to such leave is available throughout the School is part of our action plan. School dependency leave rates are lower than the SET and University averages. As a proactive measure and to ensure that these policies are well communicated and understood by all staff, the Head of School has brought the University's work-life balance scheme document to the School's Equality and Diversity Committee to develop the action plan. Exact percentages are available in Table 5, Appendix B.

**Words: 161**

- (xiii) **Promotion application and success rates by gender and grade** – comment on whether these have improved and say what further action may be taken. Where the number of women is small you may comment on specific examples of where women have been through the promotion process. Explain how potential candidates are identified.

A staff member's readiness for promotion is assessed through a combination of annual appraisal and mentoring. A mentoring scheme for academic and research staff has been in place for two years, and acts as an enabler to identify those staff members that are best placed for promotion. There have been no successful promotion applications from females in the School during the last three years. Action taken to remedy this consists of encouraging staff to use the School's mentoring scheme, seeking external mentors for staff and encouraging women to access the Women's Universities Mentoring Scheme (WUMS). The School will also benefit from the re-launched Cardiff Women Professors Forum, which supports aspiring women professors with coaching and mentoring. Cardiff is piloting a Confidence-Building programme for academic Women in the School of Engineering. Plans are to implement this throughout Cardiff SET Schools. The School will also ensure that all female staff are familiar with the promotion guidelines and schemes of assessment. Please see section 2 of the Action Plan for specific actions associated with increasing successful promotion rates amongst female staff. Due to the small numbers of applications for promotion, data cannot be included because individuals may be easily identified.

**Words: 197**

- (xiv) **Male and female representation on committees** – provide a breakdown by committee and explain any differences between male and female representation. Explain how potential members are identified.

The female to male ratios in terms of committee membership is becoming more even. The numbers are available in table 6, appendix B. Members for committees are designated by the Director of each committee and agreed with the Head of School, after carefully considering overall workload and other administrative responsibilities. Whilst the male to female ratio is becoming more even, the membership of some School committees is fairly stereotypical, i.e. more women on Innovation and Engagement and more men on the Research committee. The School has 10 decision-making committees, 3 of which are chaired by female staff. These are Safety, Innovation and Engagement, and Ethics. The School Committee system is reviewed regularly to ensure that every staff member has a place on at least one School committee. Membership is rotated periodically to allow staff members to gain a breadth of experience. During the next rotation, there will be a particular emphasis on ensuring that all School Committees are gender-balanced, where possible (please see action 2.11 of the Action Plan). **Words: 169**

- (xv) **Numbers of applications and success rates for flexible working by gender and grade** – comment on any disparities. Where the number of women in the department is small you may wish to comment on specific examples.

There are a number of informal flexible working arrangements in place for many staff members throughout the School, e.g. adjusting start and finish times of work when staff need to be available for something outside of work. However, the number of formal flexible working applications is small. In 2008, the School received 2 formal flexible working requests from female staff and both applications were successful. As a proactive measure to communicate the work-life balance scheme, the policy has been brought to the attention of the School's Equality and Diversity Committee. The committee is working to implement the University policies at a School level. An aspect of this will be to ensure that all line managers within the School undergo training on how to deal with flexible working requests. Further detail is included in the action plan.

**Words: 136**

- (xvi) **Female:male ratio of academic staff on fixed-term contracts and open-ended (permanent) contracts** – comment on any differences between male and female staff representation on fixed-term contracts and say what you are doing to address them.

Between 2007-2009, the School had a higher percentage of researchers on fixed-term contracts than SET Schools and the University, and 0 researchers on open-ended contracts. Funding for research posts is often awarded for a limited period of time to complete a specific project. The University conducted a bench-marking exercise against the Concordat and identified areas of good practice and further development needs. An action plan was developed to address these areas, available at <http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/humrs/research/concordat/index.html>. A School bench-marking template has been developed, to be utilised from the end of May 2010.

The University offers a Career Development Skills programme for researchers, details available at <http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/humrs/research/training/training/researchers/index.html>.

The number of School Lecturers on open-ended contracts was higher than SET Schools and the University. In 2007, there was a 50:50 ratio of females to males for Lecturers on open-ended contracts, but in 2008 the percentage of female Lecturers on regular contracts increased to 60%. This percentage remained for 2009. At Senior Lecturer level, the School had a higher percentage of Senior Lecturers on open-ended contracts, but a lower percentage of those staff were female. However, at professorial level there was a higher percentage of staff on open-ended contracts, and a higher

percentage of female professors on open-ended contracts than SET Schools and the University.

**Words: 210**

### **3. Initiatives to advance and support women in the department**

- (i) **Promotion and career development** – comment on the appraisal and career development process and the evidence of gender balance in the process of identifying people for promotion.

We were one of the first Schools at Cardiff University to implement a dual appraisal and mentoring system. All staff are appraised annually in line with University policy. Appraisal and mentoring can inform individuals about readiness for promotion. The professoriate of the School are encouraged to obtain mentoring from senior staff outside of the School. This has worked successfully and has benefits in terms of learning management and leadership styles.

The School has taken proactive steps to encourage the career progression of female staff by developing mentoring links with female staff from other Schools within the University. The University is also re-launching the Women Professor's Forum which will help in identifying and meeting the career needs of senior female staff. In addition, the Confidence Building programme being piloted by Engineering will help to support the career development of all female academic staff. The School's Staff Development Committee enables training and development needs of all staff to be identified, e.g. a bespoke course was delivered on appraisal and probation for academic staff in 2008.

A session was organised by the School in 2008 during which each Professor, including a female Professor (the deputy Head of School), gave a presentation about their career pathway. This provided insight for staff members aspiring to such positions in the future. All staff were invited to attend. We also encourage staff to access the Women's Universities Mentoring Scheme and direct them to the University's staff development program. As part of its Positive Working Environment initiative, the University offers leadership and management courses for Heads of Schools, academic, research and support staff. 7 staff members (academic, research and support staff) from the School have attended these courses. There is also a suite of training courses dedicated to research staff, careers advice and an annual forum. The University is also committed to the Concordat on research careers.

**Words: 309**

- (ii) **Support for staff at key career transition points** – comment on any initiatives, drawing out different approaches at different levels.

The School aims to support people through career transition points at all levels. As a School, we encourage postgraduate students to attend conferences and contribute a proportion to the travelling costs. Postgraduates are fully integrated in School life, and are invited to staff meetings.

The transition from postdoctoral researcher to academic staff member is particularly challenging due in part to the scarcity of job opportunities. To this end, researchers are actively encouraged to attend staff meetings to become embedded in the School. There are committee positions for researchers, including safety, I.T., innovation and engagement, equality and diversity and resources and operations. Researchers also have their own forum and a mentor who meets with them regularly.

The School's mentoring system has been critical to career transition. Staff are encouraged to work with their mentors to assist in their career development. Staff have access to the Women's Universities Mentoring Scheme, and courses offered by the University's staff development programme. The need for this is identified through annual appraisal. The Head of School has undertaken training for Heads with the Leadership Foundation.

The School has a peer review system in place for both teaching and research activities. This allows for constructive feedback to be given to staff to aid further development. The School has a Research Grant Mentor whose role is to share experience, skills and strategy with School mentors and directly with staff to help maximise the chances of success. All grant applications are reviewed by a peer review panel.

All Lecturing staff undertake the Postgraduate Certificate in University Teaching and Learning (PCUTL). The basic ethos of the scheme is to enable participants to become more confident and reflective university teachers, capable of critically evaluating and developing their own teaching and learning approach in order to facilitate high quality learning.

**Words: 298**

- (iii) **Flexible working** – comment on the numbers of staff working flexibly and at what grade and gender, whether there is a formal or informal system, the support and training provided for managers in promoting and managing flexible working arrangements and how you raise awareness of the options available.

Cardiff University has a Work-Life Balance scheme, including flexible working, available at:

<http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/humrs/staffinfo/policyprocedures/recources/Work%20Life%20Balance%20Arrangements.doc>

Flexible working or contract variations are available to be applied for by all staff. Each manager has support from a HR Manager when considering requests. The scheme is available for all staff and is communicated to new starters during central induction. There is also centrally-based training that

covers gender equality and the work-life balance scheme. The work-life balance scheme was communicated to staff support networks throughout the University and to staff in the School through the School's Equality and Diversity committee.

The Positive Working Environment initiative at Cardiff University aims to mainstream equality and diversity throughout the University. Most of the general policy has therefore been targeted at staff overall, rather than at specific under-represented groups, such as women in SET. It was recognised that in this way most of the policies developed to promote a more equitable working environment (e.g. access to greater flexibility in the workplace) would not only benefit women in SET, but also have a positive impact on staff in general and women in particular across the University.

Flexible working is available to staff members in the School when this is commensurate with the requirements of the job and in line with University guidelines. Examples include:

Renegotiation from full time to part time work;  
Part time phased return to work after maternity leave;  
Work only in school term times.

Working from home is also allowed for staff to work on a specific task.

Many informal flexible working arrangements exist within the School. Further investigation needs to be undertaken in terms of how many staff this affects. A future action for the School is to speak to line managers in the School to obtain approximate numbers for informal requests. This is to ensure parity of opportunity for all staff within the School.

**Words: 308**

- (iv) **Culture** – comment on how you demonstrate that the department is female-friendly and inclusive.

The culture of the School is such that the focus is heavily on people. The views of staff regarding policies and practices are actively sought and equality and diversity issues are mainstreamed through the school.

A staff meeting is called by the Head of School at least 3 times a year and sometimes called at other times when required to focus on a particular topic such as strategic planning. During these meetings, staff are asked for their views on the strategic direction of the School. Policy informed through staff consultation are an essential part of our mission.

The Head of School operates an open door policy and meets frequently with groups of staff. In future, each staff member will meet with the Head of School at least once a year to discuss their needs. This will be in addition to the dual appraisal and mentoring system already operating fully within the School.

The culture within the School is to recognise the needs of the individual in order to maximise their potential to contribute. The School has embraced the Positive Working Environment ethos of the University and scored well above average in the recent staff satisfaction survey.

The gender profile of the School indicates that the School is already attractive to female staff in both support and academic job families. Action does need to be taken to help ensure that women can reach senior levels.

**Words: 234**

- (v) **Recruitment of staff** – comment on how your recruitment processes ensure that female candidates are attracted to vacancies and how you ensure that recruitment processes comply with the university's equal opportunities policies.

Our staff numbers and recruitment statistics show that, in terms of recruitment, we are successful in ensuring that females respond to adverts and ultimately are successful in joining the School. All job applications are approved by the University's human resources directorate. Timing of interviews is in the core working day. Interview panel membership is representative of the School gender profile. The web page is an important first port of call in the recruitment process. Our full staff complement evidences that we have a strong female component of staff. Our webpage news story updates highlights that we are a vibrant, outreaching department that holds gender equality as a mainstream activity. The University's news web pages also include information about the Positive Working Environment initiative which has equality and diversity as a core element.

**Words: 132**

- (vi) **Representation on decision-making committees** – comment on evidence of gender balance in the mechanism for selecting representatives.

Every member of academic staff is involved in at least one School committee. The configuration of committee membership is made by the Head and deputy Head of School, aided by the director of each committee. All directors are asked to consider the gender balance and the School's Safety, Ethics and Innovation and Engagement have female chairs. Figures show that over the past three years, the ratio of females to males on School committees is becoming more balanced. Postdoctoral researchers, postgraduate students and support staff are also asked to sit on School committees where appropriate.

Table 6 shows that there is under-representation of females in 2007 and 2008 on the following committees; Teaching and Learning, Board of Studies, Research, Postgraduate Research and I.T. However, in 2009 the representation of females has improved on Teaching and Learning (40%),

Board of Studies (43%), Postgraduate Research (40%). The committees that still show under-representation of women are Research (38%) and I.T. (20%).

Committee membership is rotated periodically to ensure that staff can gain a breadth of experience. It also ensures that no member of staff is overlooked in terms of committee membership. The School is committed to ensuring that every member of academic staff sits on at least one School committee. In terms of gender impact, we are sensitive to the fact that the senior female staff should not be overburdened by excessive committee work. Positive action measures will take place to ensure, wherever possible, gender balance on decision making committees.

**Words: 246**

(vii) **Workload model** – comment on evidence of transparency and fairness. A workload model has been in practice for teaching over the last 10 years, this is transparent and co-ordinated by the director of teaching.

We recognise the need to develop further a model that takes into account a rolling review of research, University citizenship and external engagement. We have now completed the audit for this work and our future action plan is to implement an equitable workload model that will also allow scope for promotion through the routes of teaching and learning, research and wider mission as set out in the University's promotion guidelines and schemes of assessment.

**Words: 74**

(viii) **Cover for maternity and adoption leave and support on return** – comment on the mechanisms for covering workload absence and specific support on return.

The University operates a maternity leave scheme, which forms part of the University's work-life balance scheme. When a member of staff is about to embark upon a prolonged period of absence, a meeting is arranged with the staff member and the Director of Learning and Teaching to determine the way workload will be dealt with during the absence. The staff member also meets with the Head of School to ensure that their concerns are being addressed. The teaching workload of the member of staff is distributed appropriately amongst other members of current teaching staff.

On their return to work, a meeting between the member of staff and the Head of School is arranged. This provides an opportunity for a discussion to take place around return to work or otherwise and if there are any support mechanisms that need to be put in place. Above and beyond the University policy, the School also allows discretionary use of accumulated leave to facilitate a phased return to work.

The School is committed to transparent processes that are informed by staff members who have experienced maternity and adoption leave. The Head of

School has met with 2 members of staff who have experienced return to work after maternity, in order to understand more fully the potential issues, and to ensure that maximum support is in place for staff returning from maternity leave in the future. This helps to inform School practices in relation to maternity leave.

**Words: 242**

(ix) **Timing of departmental meetings and social gatherings** – evidence of consideration for those with family responsibilities.

The School recognises that the core working day is from 10.30 to 3.30 PM. Every effort is made to ensure that meetings and social gatherings are start and finish within these hours. If staff are unable to attend a meeting, minutes are available as a means of feedback from the meeting. The School is also sensitive to scheduling meetings during school term times. This approach maximises attendance at meetings.

In our action plan, we will ensure that the dates for meetings and especially social gatherings are give more than one month in advance.

**Words: 93**

(x) **Outreach activities** – comment on the level of participation by female and male staff and whether they get recognition for being involved and the time and work put in.

The School currently has two STEM ambassadors, one of which is the Head of School and the other is a female Lecturer within the School. They regularly attend local schools to give talks to pupils as a means of engaging them with STEM subjects and careers.

The School recognises the need to develop further a model that takes into account a rolling review of research, University citizenship and external engagement. As a result of the investment in a new state-of-the-art building for the School, we are able to host exhibitions of art, sculpture and photography which are always open to members of the public to view. The School has been host to members of Women Connect First who are BME members of the local community seeking job experience. The School works closely with groups in the third sector. Our recent work with the Jubilee Sailing Trust has allowed staff and students to sail with disabled “buddies” in order to give a new experience.

The School was also the first to establish a School Innovation and Engagement Committee at Cardiff University.

**Words: 180**

(xi) **Induction and training** – comment on the support provided to new staff at all levels, noting what new arrangements you may be planning, as well as details of gender training.

All new staff attend a University-level induction, in addition line managers are tasked with ensuring that new staff members are acquainted with their work areas and that of their immediate colleagues. In consultation with staff, the School has developed a Staff Handbook, which provides new staff with basic information about the School and has a “what to do when” approach. The Head of School has also contributed to guidance for new Heads of Schools across the University. As part of induction, all staff undertake diversity awareness training. Academic staff also receive Equality and Diversity training during the Postgraduate Certificate in University Teaching and Learning. The University offers a comprehensive suite of training courses on Equality and Diversity in its Staff Development programme, available at <http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/humrs/training/programme/index.html>. A large proportion of School staff have attended Diversity Awareness training, but a future action is to ensure that all staff have attended such training.

The staff development programme is brought to the attention of all new staff that attend centrally-held induction. The School is committed to ensuring that all staff have received at least the baseline level of training on Equality and Diversity and specific equality and diversity training has been brought to groups within the School when requested. This is progressed by the School’s Staff Development and Equality and Diversity Committee.

**Words: 218**

(xii) **Support for female students** – comment on the support provided for female students to enable them to make the transition to a sustainable academic career, particularly from postgraduate to researcher.

Postgraduate students are included in social events, staff meetings and research seminars, so are aware of what is going on in the School. The School also provides some financial support for postgraduate students to attend overseas conferences. Presentations also take place within research groups, giving postgraduate students the opportunity to inform the group of developments within their research. The Deputy Head of the School is a female professor, who acts as a role model to other females in the School, both staff and students. One of the School’s female Lecturers is a STEM ambassador and acts as a role model for females in science. The need for a senior tutor role for both genders has been recognised, and an equality impact assessment is due to take place on the personal tutor allocation system. This will allow students to access a female member of staff whenever they require it and will also ensure that the workload implications of such a role on staff members will be considered carefully. This is now well embedded in the action plan (Action 1.3).

The development of the Postgraduate training centre WOPEC will provide more flexible learning environments for many potential students and from

2011 will offer an alternative route to research careers. The development of postgraduate certificate, diploma and masters courses are currently underway. These courses will be modular and will have distance learning components, making them flexible learning options for those that require it.

**Words: 240**

#### **4. Case study: impacting on individuals**

*Describe how your department's SWAN activities have benefitted an individual woman working in the department (maximum 200 words).*

Dr Marcela Votruba is a clinician scientist with a strong belief in translational research in vision science and the role that women can play in academic life. She is a Senior Lecturer in the School and Honorary Consultant Ophthalmologist at the University Hospital, Wales, Cardiff. Apart from leading her research group and running clinics, she is involved in the teaching of undergraduates, postgraduates, medical students and trainee ophthalmologists. She sits on the School's Research Committee.

She is married with one child aged 2 years. Since her 6 months maternity leave she has been working at 0.6 FTE and is experiencing the conflicts and challenges that this raises in academic research. This has made her very aware of the importance of initiatives such as the Athena SWAN project in supporting women in academia and highlighting the complexities of the work-life balance. She has found SWAN activities beneficial in raising awareness of the tiny proportion of women in positions of academic leadership, together with offering opportunities for education and mentoring. She has benefited from the support of her Head of School and colleagues. She has herself taken part in national mentoring initiatives, such as the Mentoring and the Clinician Scientist Experience meeting, run by the Academy of Medical Sciences.

**Words: 207**

### **Further SET-specific initiatives**

*Comment on any particularly innovative programmes not covered above which have been undertaken, noting their effectiveness to date and any plans to introduce new initiatives and/or review present practice (maximum 200 words).*

Once every week, a research seminar delivered by a distinguished speaker is hosted in the School as part of the “Cornea to Cortex” programme. The seminars take place every Wednesday between 1pm – 2pm and all staff and postgraduate students are invited to attend. This provides an excellent opportunity for female role models from other institutes to present their research to the entire school. Details of the presenters and talks can be found at <http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/optom/research/researchseminars/index.html>.

The School’s eye clinic offers pre-registration positions to Optometry graduates which fosters career progression. Although this initiative is open to all Optometry graduates, it is a positive step to support female students in their future career progression.

Students have an active student Optometry Society (OPSOC) that organises social events and arranges visits from employers. In 2010 the School hosted “Opfest” which was an opportunity for other Optometry Schools in the UK to visit Cardiff. The current President of OPSOC is a female. This helps to provide a role model to other female students and also enables females to gain experience of acting in a leadership role in the early stages of their careers.

**Words: 187**

### **The self-assessment process**

*Describe the Self-Assessment Team members and the action planning process, as well as any consultation processes that were undertaken (maximum 750 words).*

When putting together the self-assessment team, broad representation from the School was a key consideration. Consequently, the team was comprised of representatives from each staffing group in the School.

The Self –Assessment Team consisted of:

**Professor Tim Wess** is Head of the School of Optometry and Vision Sciences and Deputy Pro Vice-Chancellor, a member of STFC Science Board and chairman of the Photon Science governing body. He is active in public engagement in science, healthcare and cultural heritage through public speaking and broadcasting.

**Miss Anna Courage** is Manager of the School of Optometry and Vision Sciences. She plays a pivotal role in administration and strategic planning and

assists the Head of School in the daily operation of the School, including administrative and personnel systems.

**Mrs Emma Daniel-Davies** is the Deputy Eye Clinic Manager and assists in overseeing the daily operation of the eye clinic.

**Dr Lee Gonzalez** is a postdoctoral researcher within the Structural Biophysics research group in the School. He is also a member of the School's Innovation and Engagement Committee.

**Dr Kirsten Hamilton-Maxwell** is a Lecturer in the School and has also practiced as an Optometrist before embarking upon an academic career.

**Ms Isabella Santamaria** is Equality and Diversity Manager in Human Resources and brings to her role wide experience in Higher Education and with South Wales Police. Her work at Cardiff includes the training of staff, and dealing with equality issues, both institutional and individual.

Action plan was to:-

1. Form a self-assessment team within the School and establish a schedule of meetings;
2. audit current gender balance across the staff and student cohort of the School and benchmark with the University;
3. formulate initial draft of School application whilst data gathering in progress;
4. circulate initial draft to recognise where initial information gathering and policy consultation was needed.

Consultation with:

1. Isabella Santamaria as Equality and Diversity Manager at Cardiff University's HR department;
2. University Athena SWAN steering group;
3. Other Schools at Cardiff submitting for Athena SWAN;
4. Schools/departments in other institutions with silver award – Bristol Biochemistry department;

**Words: 343**

### **Action plan**

Please attach your action plan for the next three years which summarises actions identified from the data and commentary above, naming the person responsible and time scale.

### **Any other comments**

We anticipate that the scheme and action plan outlined here will evolve and change over time and welcome, at any time, feedback from the sector and/or stakeholders, not just on the scheme and plan themselves but also on how we involve the views of equality and gender issues amongst staff.

Please comment here on any other elements which you think relevant to the application, e.g. recent mergers between departments (maximum 250 words).

Athena SWAN Silver award form v2 [www.athenaswan.org.uk](http://www.athenaswan.org.uk)