

Head of School's Letter of Support

Dear Panel,

I wish to express my strongest support for the application to Athena SWAN Silver award by the School of Optometry and Vision Sciences. The submission is a culmination of the deep investment already made by the School above and beyond the statutory activities and University wide directives that embed gender equality as a mainstream activity. The School always works to improve its equality on all fronts in both action and evidence and the Athena SWAN framework has been an essential keystone in the further development of equality.

As Head of School and as an individual I am passionate about social justice and equality. This is evidenced by activities that promote equality and diversity. At University level, I am an active member of the Equality and Diversity committee, the Human Resources Committee and the Athena Swan Steering Committee. Within the School, I am Director of the Equality and Diversity Committee, one of 10 committees within the School and the only one that I chair in addition to School Board. I have also led the Athena Swan Steering Group within the School.

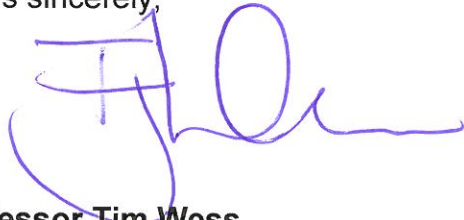
Planning for the application presented here has allowed us to gather information from a wide range of School activities and examine them with respect to gender equality. The School Steering Group has met on 4 occasions (minutes available at www.Cardiff.ac.uk/optom). The application has also been supported by the School's Equality and Diversity committee. We were pleased to see that the effect of policies acted upon over the last few years have already had positive effects and factors such as our flexible return to work policy and our one-to-one meetings in preparation for and post maternity/paternity leave have been rewarding to both the individual and the School.

The application process has also indicated where there is room for improvement and we have responded proactively and developed actions that we have already started to carry out. Such examples are equality training for admissions officers and the introduction of equality impact assessments as a mainstream activity within the School.

As part of the preparation phase for the application we also visited Schools of a similar size at other institutions that have already gained the Silver award in order to share experience and gain advice. This also led to improvement of our action plan and also the introduction of a 'critical friend' system to add further rigour to our process.

The journey toward this application has been of great use to the School. I trust that the application is seen as capturing the foregoing and looking positively to the future.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Tim Wess', with a large, stylized initial 'T' and 'W'.

Professor Tim Wess
Head of School