

Supporting Gender Equality at the University of Sussex

Dr Natalie James, Research Staff Officer
Member University of Sussex Athena SWAN Committee

N.A.James@sussex.ac.uk



University of Sussex

Research intensive university

15,000+ students –
undergraduate, masters, PhD

12 Schools – Arts and
Humanities, Social Sciences,
Sciences, Engineering and
Medicine

1200 faculty of which almost
400 research-only staff



Gender Equality in Academia

Issues for Staff

Low representation of females at professorial and senior management levels

Particularly in the sciences

Particularly for BME researchers

Gender pay gaps, exacerbated by impact of career breaks

The 'leaky pipeline' – Early career women leaving for alternative employment

Unconscious and conscious biases within the workplace

68% of senior academic managers are white men

**UK Professors
WOMEN 21.7%
MEN 78.3%**

2.8% of black and minority ethnic females are professors

Athena SWAN – Gender Equality Charter

Established 2005 to encourage and recognise commitment to advancing careers of women in science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and medicine (STEMM)

3 levels: Bronze, Silver, Gold

In 2015, scope broadened to include all non-STEMM disciplines



Athena SWAN at Sussex

Institutional Bronze Award

All STEMM Schools hold an award

Life Sciences first School to be awarded Silver Award

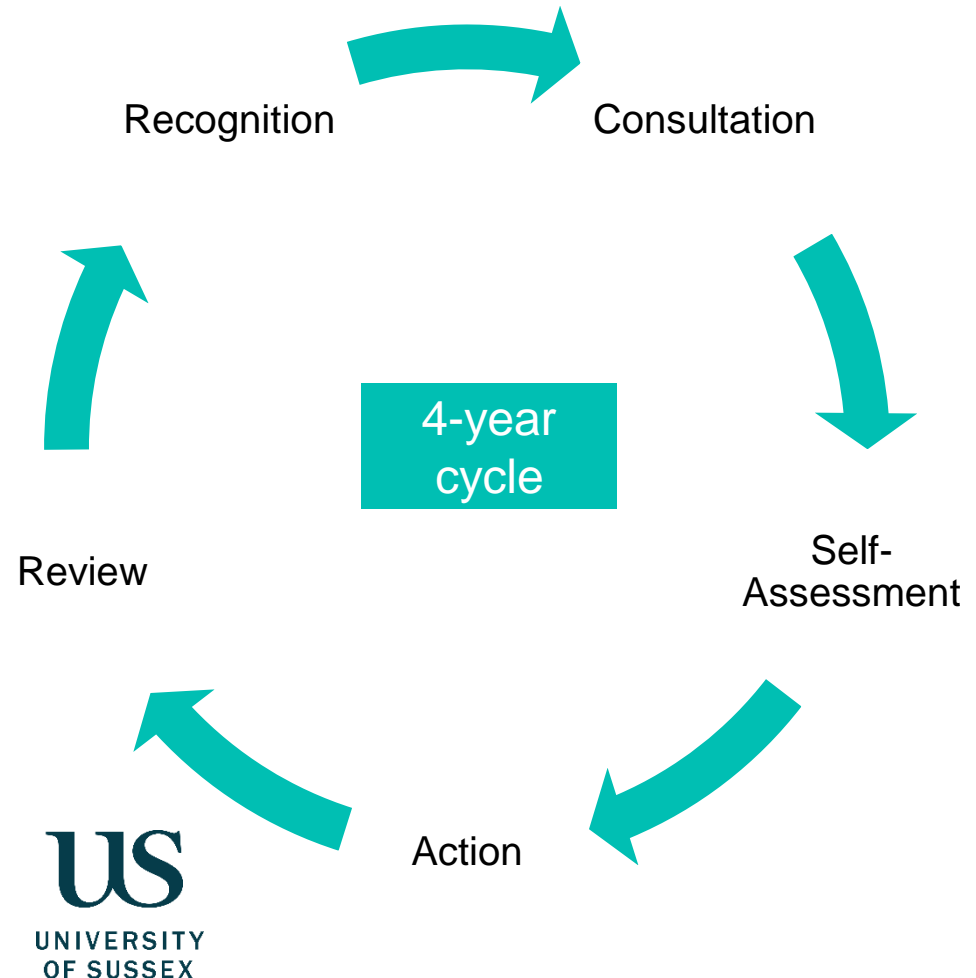
Law, Politics and Sociology School first non-STEMM school to receive an award – others to follow.



Award Process

DATA, DATA, DATA

- **Quantitative** – gender profiles by contract, discipline, roles, age etc, promotion success rates, training and development uptake
- **Qualitative** – input from staff surveys, focus groups etc



Key Actions: Recruitment

Issue - Fewer women than men applying for academic roles

Actions:

Analysis of language – Textio

Job descriptions - Standard text to encourage women and BME applicants

For senior roles – Head hunters with mandate for equality

Training for recruitment panels – equality and diversity, unconscious bias

Results:

- 8% increase in female academic staff across University.
- Number of female STEMM staff increased by over 20%.
- In 2015/16 women were appointed to over 40% advertised academic roles

Key Actions: Promotion

Issue: Fewer academic women applying for promotion than men

Actions:

Promotions workshops from Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Prof. Claire Mackie)

Awareness raising amongst research staff – appraisals, workshops, comms

Coaching, mentoring and Action Learning

Declaration of special circumstances

Results:

- Promotion applications from female academic increased by more than 4x
- Proportion of female professors has risen from 19 – 29% (in STEMM 11% - 26%)
- Promotion applicants declaring special circumstances have higher success rate (72%) compared non-declaring applicants (67%)

Key Actions: Role Models

Issue: It's difficult to aspire to a particular path if no-one 'like you' has walked it before.

Actions: - Increasing visibility of diversity of careers within academia

- Life and a career in science symposia
- 12 Women in Academia Exhibition
- Spotlight profiles and International Women's Day Profiles
- Soapbox Science

Results: Difficult to measure, cultural shift to recognising and valuing diversity




Key Actions: Coaching and Mentoring

Issue: Lack of objective support for career development decisions/discussions. Intrinsic to support the other key actions.

Actions:

- Mentoring circle scheme for early career researchers in STEMM
- 1:1 mentoring schemes in Schools
- 1:1 coaching for early career research staff
- Training in mentoring and coaching skills for researchers

Results: Mentees report improved productivity, motivation, new career opportunities, confidence, new ideas and perspectives.



"I think most of the benefits I have gained are personal and mental. I think differently about my work and career."(mentee)

Next Steps

- New Deputy Pro-Vice -
Chancellors for Equality and
Diversity – E&D Strategy
- Mentoring framework
- Supporting colleagues
returning from career breaks
- Equality beyond gender
issues



A scenic view of a pebble beach with a blue sky and sea. The foreground is filled with smooth, rounded pebbles in shades of brown, tan, and grey. The middle ground shows a calm, blue sea meeting a clear, light blue sky at the horizon. A single seagull is visible on the beach near the water's edge.

Thank you!

N.A.James@sussex.ac.uk

US

UNIVERSITY
OF SUSSEX