

# Applying for an Athena SWAN Award

Jane Hillston  
School of Informatics



THE UNIVERSITY  
*of* EDINBURGH

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## Athena SWAN at the University of Edinburgh

- The Athena SWAN Charter was launched in 2005 and the first awards were granted in 2006.
- Edinburgh won its first University Athena SWAN institutional Bronze in 2006 (successfully renewed in 2009 and 2012) — now working towards an Institutional Silver application.
- The School of Chemistry at Edinburgh attained a Silver Award in 2006, and achieved Gold in April 2012 (first Gold in Scotland and second in UK).
- Now all eligible Schools within the University (CSE and CMVM) have Athena SWAN awards.
- The University has been one of the pilot Universities for the GEM awards for Humanities and other disciplines.

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- Culture of celebrating Athena SWAN successes, so that Schools that attain an award act as ambassadors to other disciplines.
- Influential report from the Royal Society of Edinburgh [Tapping all our Talents](#) in 2012, recommended that all public funding should be linked to achieving Athena SWAN awards, not just medical grants.

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  - Sits on all self-assessment teams and monitors progress.
  - Identifies overlaps or complementarity between the activities of different Schools, to avoid wasted effort whilst maximising impact.
- The VP for E&D chairs an **Athena SWAN network** which meets every 6-8 weeks, for all AS Coordinators to get together and share experiences and practice.

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I volunteered because I had been involved in much of the activity that was going on and I felt strongly that it was a good thing for us to do.



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We consulted them during our data gathering and have partnered with them in delivering some of our actions.

## What did we do?

- Identified a self-assessment team.
- Collected and analysed data about recruitment and retention of female students at all levels.
- Collected and analysed data about recruitment, retention and promotion of female staff at all levels.
- Reported on current good practice in the School, and presented evidence of its impact.
- Identified current weaknesses.
- Wrote a three year action plan of how to build on the good practice and eliminate the bad practice.
- Presented two case studies of how good practice in the School has enhanced the experience of women in the School.

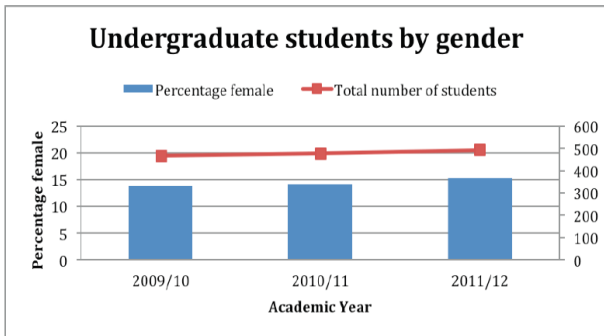
## Also...

- We collated data on female representation throughout the activities of the School.
- We circulated a detailed survey to all members of the School (staff and students) — EQUATE helped us develop this survey.
- This provided very useful data that played a major part in forming our action plan.
- The self-assessment team met regularly to review both the quantitative and the survey data.
- We found out lots of good things which had been going on without widespread awareness.

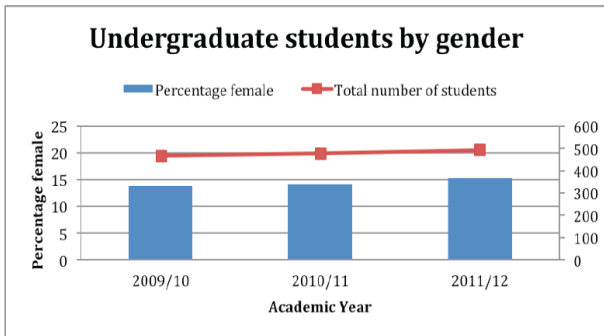
## Examples of existing good practice

- **Student Hoppers**: a self-organised student group which organises weekly events, including speakers from industry, careers talks, girls-only Lab nights and social events.
- **Student Ambassadors** programme: students offered a place are put in touch with a current student with a similar background.
- Annual **Women in Computing** event bringing together female staff and students.
- Women in **senior and visible roles** within the School infrastructure (Director and Deputy Director of Graduate School, Director of the largest research institute, etc.).
- **Mentoring** for research staff and junior academic staff.
- Support for **flexible and part-time** working.

## Key findings: student data



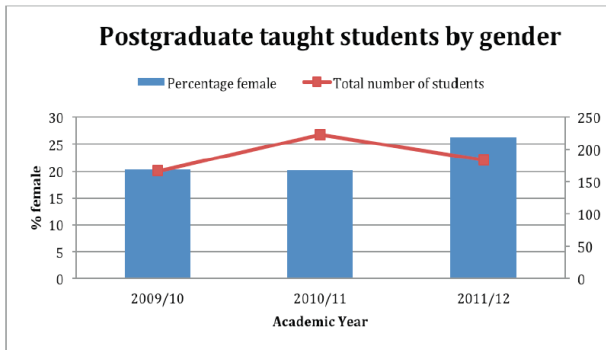
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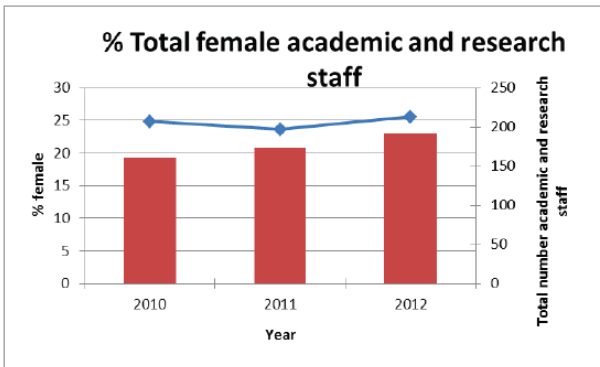
We attribute the recent rises at least in part to the [Student Ambassador](#) programme and our action plan maintains this for UG students and extend it to PGR students.



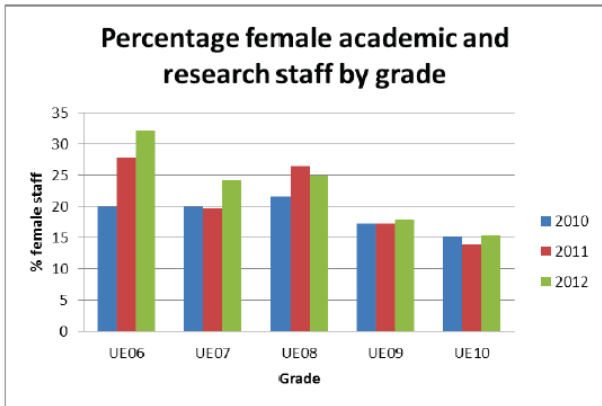
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Our "pipeline" is much less leaky than other STEM subjects. Percentage of female professors is almost the same as our percentage of female undergraduates!

## Key findings of the survey: staff

- There was a very high level of satisfaction amongst both men and women that the School is a good place to work (> 95%)..
- However several questions highlighted communication problems:
  - people were unsure about promotion criteria and process,
  - people did not know about flexible working,
  - there were mixed experiences with respect to P&DR (appraisals),
  - whilst generally there is a culture of respect within the School, people were uncertain if this was accidental or down to policy.

## Key findings of the survey: students

- Again there was a very high level of satisfaction amongst both men and women that the School is a good place to study (> 95%).
- Students were aware of both male and female role models within the School, but did not necessarily feel they knew how to get direct access to, or advice from, those role models.
- Students were unsure who they should go to if they did experience bullying or harassment, and not confident that it would be dealt with if they did report it.
- Current support for female students, such as the Student Hoppers group, is appreciated.

## The Action Plan: changes at policy level

- **Equality and Diversity Coordinator** is now an academic duty, with a seat on the major decision making committees.
- The Coordinator is supported by an **Equality and Diversity committee** with oversight of the implementation of our Athena SWAN action plan.
- We put in place mechanisms to **monitor data** with respect to gender and E&D more broadly.
- **E&D training** has become a standard part of induction for academic staff. It is available to research staff.
- Across the university now we have a network of **Dignity and Respect Advisors** so both staff and student know who to talk to if they experience harassment or bullying.
- **Clearer articulation** of our family-friendly policies in job adverts and further particulars.

## The Action Plan: changes at procedural level

- **Information lunches** for staff on promotion, P&DR, flexible working etc.
- Improved **staff induction**, coordinating with the University's improved offering in this area.
- Examination of **P&DR**: courses for appraiser and appraisees, and increased take up rate.
- Effective **mentoring** available to those staff who require it.
- **Career coaching** for selected staff close to career transitions.
- Increased school-wide **social activities** to promote networking opportunities.

## Action Plan: change at procedural level

We seek to embed a progressive culture of gender awareness amongst taught student community, and support female taught students:

- Amend [student induction](#) to include explicit explanation of expected standards of behaviour and highlight relevant policies.
- Include [material on E&D](#) in the compulsory third year Professional Issues course.
- Continue to run the annual [Women in Computing](#) event and support for [Student Hoppers](#) group.
- Extend the [Student Ambassadors](#) programme and introduce [Peer-supported learning](#).



# Conclusions

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The fairly flat trajectory of our pipeline suggests that there are not systemic barriers to women's progression within the discipline, but there are obviously difficulties of attracting female students at the start of the pipeline...

Addressing that problem is a whole other problem/talk!