Babraham Institute

- University Partner Institute of University of Cambridge
- Core funded by the BBSRC (50%), grant funded BBSRC, MRC, WT, NIH, ERC
- H2020 ITNs, consortium grant, LIBRA
- 27 research groups; 105 postdocs, 55 PhD students, 65 science support staff
- 4 research themes: Signalling, Immunology, Epigenetics, Nuclear Dynamics
Babraham Institute
Athena SWAN Silver Award

- July 2013  Athena SWAN project began
- Nov 2014  Submitted Athena SWAN application
- April 2015 Received silver Athena SWAN award.

http://www.babraham.ac.uk/about-us/athena-swan
Athena SWAN discoveries

Main findings
• Excellent gender balance of PhD student, postdoc and tenure-track group leaders (50%)
• Similar proportions of female and male scientists continue in academic or commercial science after PhD and first postdoc.
• The main ‘attrition’ point is between tenured group leader and senior group leader.

Excellent practice
• Enthusiastic engagement with Athena SWAN vision from the top down
• Postdoc committee, leadership training, postdoc travel fund,
• Excellent public engagement among PhD students and GLs.
• Work-life balance and flexible working generally very good
• Nursery is an important part of BI life. Excellent maternity return rates
• Mentoring of tenure track group leaders and fellows
Issues and achievements of Athena SWAN project

• Improved gender balance on senior committees
• Equality of maternity leave between contracts
• Extension of tenure clock to one year for GL on maternity leave
• New My Life in Science seminar series; role models
• Annual celebration of International Women’s Day
• Graduate Committee mentors for PhD students
• Annual consideration of all staff for promotion
• Postdoc job-share
• Huge culture change – what would Athena SWAN do?
Ongoing Action Plan

• Formal mentoring schemes for postdocs
• More Leadership and confidence training for postdocs
• A new career re-entry scheme
• Online and one to one consultations every two years
• Unconscious bias training for all staff
• More support for students with childcare needs
Tips for the application process

• Choose the SAT very carefully – balance is key

• Get the Director on board and visibly so

• Spend a lot of time on the staff consultations – as important as the data for the AP. Be prepared to become a focal point for wider issues and re-direct appropriately

• Be prepared to manage opposition sensitively
Issues-Activities-Impact

• Fewer women going for promotion – but more successfully.

• Annual promotion review of all postdocs, SSS and GLS. Now more women put forward and promoted.

• Difficult postdoc - TT transition: Career progression fellowships for postdocs, fewer women applied, but more successful
Writing the application

• Divide up the tasks logically in advance with deadlines
• Agree what data HR provide, assign appropriate individuals to the rest
• Draft best written with one ‘voice’
• Ask a wide variety within RI to read application
• Ask other RI and University AS reps to read it
• Give them enough time
• Ask lay people
Action Plan

• Do not leave the Action Plan until the end!
• Make sure every point is embedded in the text
• Make timelines realistic – don’t frontload
  - more achievement, less disappointment
Tell the story of the journey

- The data is important
- How you got there and what it reveals is more important
- The unique collection of individual stories is even more important
- Reflection and honest owning of the state of play is even more important
- This is a SLOW and UNFAMILIAR process for scientists
- GIVE IT TIME