



Charter for women in science
Research institutes
April 2014



Equality Challenge Unit



**The Athena SWAN Charter recognises
commitment to advancing women's careers
in STEMM academia: science, technology,
engineering, mathematics and medicine.**



**Department
for Business
Innovation & Skills**



**Department
of Health**

The Charter is managed by ECU. It is funded by ECU, the Biochemical Society, the Department for Business Innovation and Skills, the Department of Health, the Royal Society and the Scottish Funding Council.

www.athenaswan.org.uk

Introduction

Research institutes are part of the academic community and share many of the structures, and barriers to career progression, experienced by women in universities. We know that the strong methodology and robust process of the Charter can create cultural and systemic change that has a real impact. We are delighted to be able to expand the Athena SWAN Charter and effect wider change for women in the academy.

I would like to congratulate the six successful pilot institutes on achieving their awards – their experiences during the pilot have allowed us to develop the Charter to reflect the unique challenges that research institutes face. We look forward to welcoming further research institutes as members in the future.

We would like to thank The Royal Society for their support of the pilot to extend Athena SWAN to research institutes, and for hosting this event today.

David Ruebain
Chief Executive
Equality Challenge Unit

April 2014

Programme

- 10.00** Registration, refreshments and networking
- 10.30** Workshop for new members
- 12.45** Lunch for workshop participants and launch event/
awards ceremony attendees
- 13.30** Dr Julie Maxton
Executive Director, The Royal Society
- 13.40** Professor Dame Julia Higgins, Athena SWAN patron
- 13.55** Peter Cotgreave
Director of Fellowship and Scientific Affairs, The Royal Society
- 14.10** David Ruebain
Chief Executive, Equality Challenge Unit
- 14.30** Awards presentation
- 15.00** Close

Quotes in this booklet have been taken from research institutes' submission letters.

Good practice examples are drawn from those highlighted by the judging panels.

Opening the ceremony: Dr Julie Maxton

Executive Director, The Royal Society

Dr Maxton is the first woman to hold the post of Executive Director in the history of the Society. Prior to taking up the post in March 2011, she was Professor of Law, Dean of the Law Faculty and Deputy Vice Chancellor of the University of Auckland and then Registrar of the University of Oxford.

Speaker:
Professor Dame Julia Higgins

Department of Chemical Engineering, Imperial College London

Professor Dame Julia Higgins is Emeritus Professor of Polymer Science in the Department of Chemical Engineering at Imperial College London. Her research career has focused on the application of scattering techniques, notably neutron scattering, to the understanding of polymer behaviour.

Dame Julia was chair of EPSRC from 2003 to 2007, and Vice-President and Foreign Secretary of the Royal Society 2001 to 2006. She recently stood down after three years as chair of the Advisory Committee on Mathematics Education, and completed a term as chair of the awards committee and council member of the Royal Academy of Engineering. Dame Julia was chair of the Athena project during its first five years, as well as chair of the academic opportunities committee at Imperial College London.

Speaker:
Peter Cotgreave

Director of Fellowship and Scientific Affairs, The Royal Society

Born in North Wales and educated in Shropshire, he graduated in biology from the University of York. He then took a doctorate from the University of Oxford, where he studied the population biology of birds. He was awarded the British Ecological Society's Charles Elton Award for an outstanding scientific paper on his bird research, written while working at the Université Claude Bernard in France. He then became lecturer in Ornithology and Human Sciences at the University of Oxford.

Following this, Peter worked as a Conservation Biologist and Development Officer at the Zoological Society of London, combining scientific research with a role liaising between the research arm of the organisation and the other sections of the Zoological Society, before taking up the post of Director of Campaign for Science and Engineering at the Royal Society, which he held for nine years.

Speaker: David Ruebain

Chief Executive, Equality Challenge Unit

Prior to taking up the post of chief executive of ECU in June 2010, as a practicing solicitor for 21 years, David was director of legal policy at the Equality and Human Rights Commission of Great Britain and, before that, a partner at and founder of the department of education and disability law at Levenes Solicitors.

David is the winner of RADAR's People of the Year Award for Achievement in the Furtherance of Human Rights of Disabled People in the UK, 2002. He was also shortlisted for the Law Society's Gazette Centenary Award for Lifetime Achievement – Human Rights, in November 2003. In August 2006, David was listed as one of 25 most influential disabled people in the UK by Disability Now magazine.

As well as speaking on the importance of the expansion of the Athena SWAN Charter to research institutes not affiliated to higher education institutions, David will be launching our response to the recently concluded evaluation of the effectiveness and impact of the Athena SWAN Charter.

Supporting research institutes: Department for Business, Innovation and Skills

Chris Shipley, Briefing Co-ordinator

We are delighted to have funded this extension of the Athena SWAN awards scheme to include research institutes. The awards scheme has proved very popular with higher education institutions – around 70% of all those eligible have now signed up – so it's great to see that around 65 research institutes will now be able to apply and that many have already done so.

While there is still much to do to promote the attraction, retention and progression of women in STEMM fields, progress is being made and research shows that schemes like the Athena SWAN awards make a difference. With this in mind, we hope that the organisations at today's workshop and reading this booklet will apply to join the Charter and continue to work towards a diverse and motivated STEMM workforce.

The research institutes pilot

Until this April, research institutes that weren't part of a higher education institution (HEI), or didn't have HEI status were not eligible to participate in Athena SWAN, despite many having close links with one or more HEI.

In 2011, ECU was contacted by several research institutes funded by research councils who wished to be involved in Athena SWAN. The office of the Chief Scientific Adviser in the Scottish government and the Medical Research Council also approached ECU to register their interest in their affiliated research institutes joining the Charter.

Research institutes recruit from, and are a key supplier of, talent to the higher education sector, and they have similar work patterns and cultures. As part of the academic community, research institutes have similar structures and women face similar barriers to career progression. The research institutes who approached us felt that the Athena SWAN process and network would enable them to better share good practice and identify actions through collaboration with HEIs.

As part of its diversity strategy, the Royal Society agreed to assign part of their per annum contribution to Athena SWAN for ECU to carry out a pilot to investigate opening the Charter to previously excluded research institutes.

The pilot ran over the course of 2013, and involved a variety of research institutes with a range of management structures, including those structured around the industrial model. ECU recruited a third member to the Athena SWAN team in April 2013, with a specific responsibility to support research institutes with their applications and be a key point of contact, including carrying out visits to participating institutes.

We held three workshops and gathered feedback from the pilot institutes throughout the self-assessment and application processes, which enabled us to make the forms and procedures more applicable.

There were two submission deadlines (July and October 2013). Submissions were assessed by panels made up of academics and equality and diversity staff with relevant experience. Over the two submission dates, all the participating research institutes achieved Athena SWAN awards.

The feedback and experiences of the institutes during the pilot have allowed us to develop the Charter to reflect the unique challenges that research institutes face. The pilot has shown that there are sufficient differences between HEIs and research institutes to warrant specifically targeted workshops, support and application processes in the future.

Application assessment panels

The Athena SWAN awards are judged by a panel of four individuals and a Chair, with a moderator and note taker present to ensure that the correct process is being followed.

In convening assessment panels, Athena SWAN seeks to ensure a breadth of experience and geographical location. Panellists include:

- academics
- equality and diversity practitioners
- human resources practitioners
- representatives of learned societies and professional bodies
- industry representation
- members of the Athena SWAN steering committee
- ECU staff

The panellists are drawn from a list held by Athena SWAN of interested new and experienced panellists. Panellists are required to declare any conflict of interest prior to attending the panel.

We are always happy to hear from volunteers who want to participate on the panels. We ask that they have some prior knowledge and experience of the Athena SWAN process, but this need not be exhaustive. If you are interested, please contact the Athena SWAN Officer: athenaswan@ecu.ac.uk

Award levels

Bronze research institute award

Athena SWAN bronze institute awards recognise that in addition to its own formal policies the institute is working to promote gender equality and to address challenges particular to the discipline.

Silver research institute award

In addition to the future planning required for bronze institute recognition, a silver institute award recognises that the institute has taken action in response to previously identified challenges (within or without the Athena SWAN process) and can demonstrate the impact of implemented actions.

Awards

British Geological Survey Bronze institute award

'BGS has been actively addressing gender issues for some time because to achieve our aims it is important to attract and retain excellent scientists. Recent changes in the workforce profile have resulted in significant sharpening of the employment pyramid within BGS. To an extent, this has reduced the numbers of opportunities for promotion at the highest levels in BGS, but it has resulted in an influx of new talent.'

'I am confident that BGS has the appropriate processes in place to address the major issues in gender balance across the organisation. The assessment team has undertaken an excellent job evaluating the current state of the workforce and the processes that need to become routine to ensure success, and we have made considerable progress since 2007, as indicated in this document. We must ensure that we support staff recruited, especially the female staff, in moving through the promotion process, thus ensuring a better ratio in the senior staff posts and better success in the merit promotion schemes.'

Professor John Ludden, Executive Director

Good practice example:

A strong career break scheme. The formal option to take four years' leave after maternity leave.

The James Hutton Institute
Bronze institute award

'The James Hutton Institute has a positive attitude towards gender balance, equality and diversity amongst its staff and this is reflected in the balance between men and women employed in both our science and support sectors.'

Participation in the pilot scheme has enabled us to identify where the institute needs to work harder to attain equity in the promotion and career development of female science staff. This is reflected in our action plan and, moving forward, the institute will work with our human resources department to develop processes that encourage and facilitate the progression of female scientists to senior positions and pay grade advancement.'

Professor Iain Gordon, Chief Executive

Good practice example:

The open house sessions hosted by members of the executive and senior managers.

John Innes Centre
Silver institute award

'Preparing the Athena SWAN application has been very valuable in triggering a comprehensive review of current JIC good practice and in identifying areas for improvement in the way we treat gender issues. This preparation has served as a focal point to accelerate our commitment to gender equality and has resulted in the implementation of new initiatives, aimed ostensibly at women, but which will benefit all staff.'

Through the experience of raising three daughters as a single parent I recognise the importance and value of flexible working. JIC culture embraces the principles of flexibility that provide for a family-friendly working practices while at the same time demonstrating a commitment to career advancement for all employees.'

Professor Dale Sanders FRS, Director

Good practice example:

The director considers all female research leaders for promotion annually.

MRC National Institute for Medical Research

Bronze institute award

'As director of NIMR I am committed to creating a culture that supports and encourages women, carers and families to fulfil their potential. The importance of such an aim is clear: not only is it the right thing to do with respect to equality of opportunity and diversity, it also benefits science. For example, with women occupying only 10% of the country's senior scientific positions, we have effectively lost 40% of our most talented researchers. This is to the great detriment of British science.

A fair working environment is key to productive research and to NIMR's strategy. I am grateful to my colleagues for their hard work in creating this application to which I add my strong personal commitment to promoting gender equality and ensuring delivery of the Athena SWAN action plan across NIMR and into the Crick.'

Jim Smith, Director

Good practice example:

The provision of a child-friendly and safe place for storing toys, and milk expressing facilities.

The Pirbright Institute

Bronze institute award

'As director of the Pirbright Institute, I am extremely proud of our diverse community of staff, students and visitors, and I am committed to maintaining our excellent record of equality and opportunity for all.

I have been impressed by the enthusiasm and commitment of our Athena SWAN self-assessment team who have contributed to this task in addition to their existing commitments. During this assessment we have all learnt a good deal more about the Institute and how we do our business, including our successes and areas where we can do better. The latter is a positive outcome and we will embed what we have learnt into our Institute vision and strategy which is regularly monitored and updated.'

Professor John Fazakerley, Director

Good practice example:

Mandatory diversity training and the buddy system, including a commitment to increase the uptake of this.

Wellcome Trust Sanger Institute
Bronze institute award

'Gender balance and equality of opportunity are at the heart of our strategic vision. We have made a formal commitment to improve gender balance in our quinquennial strategy documents. Since becoming director of the institute I have implemented and supported a number of initiatives, such as the launch of the faculty-driven Sex in Science programme, which provides a forum for awareness raising, discussions and events.

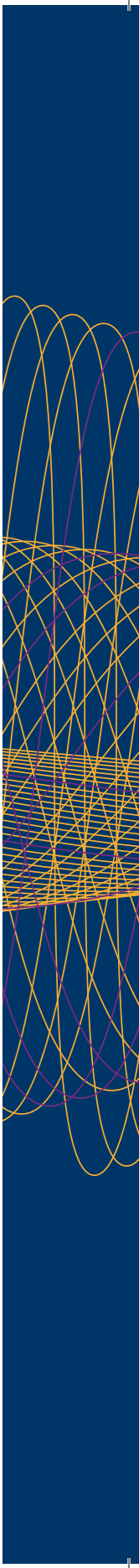
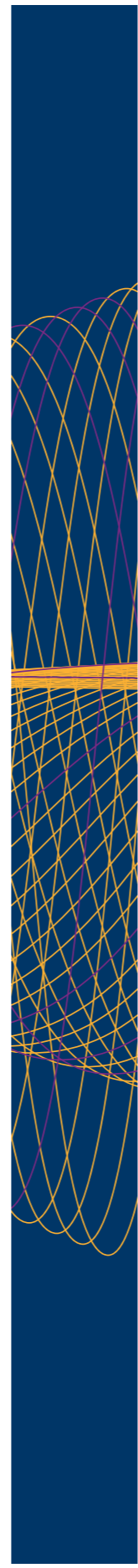
Our Athena SWAN submission has been an excellent opportunity to take stock of where we are, identify areas in need of action, and formulate a strong aspirational plan forward. This work has been led by faculty with heavy involvement by members of the board of management, and benefits from commitment at the highest level. I am delighted to be part of this work and will continue to support it as required.

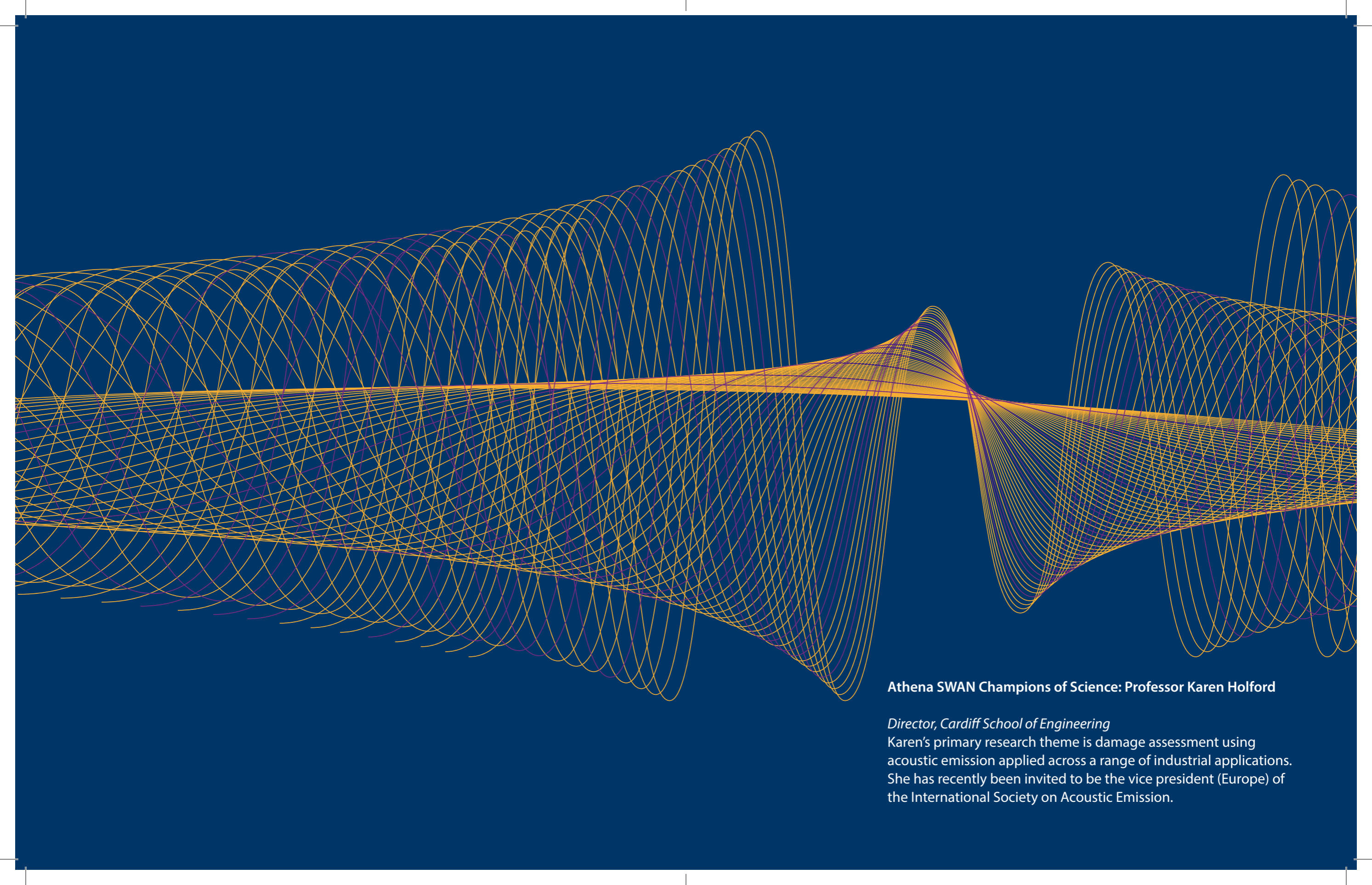
We are committed to putting the resources needed in to achieving the targets outlined in our action plan, all of which have my upmost personal support and the support of the board of management.'

Professor Sir Mike Stratton, Director

Good practice example:

The Sex in Science scheme.





Athena SWAN Champions of Science: Professor Karen Holford

Director, Cardiff School of Engineering

Karen's primary research theme is damage assessment using acoustic emission applied across a range of industrial applications. She has recently been invited to be the vice president (Europe) of the International Society on Acoustic Emission.



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