



Athena SWAN Silver department award application

Name of university: Aston University

Department: School of Life and Health Science

Date of application: November 2012

Date of university Bronze Athena SWAN award: May 2010

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Athena SWAN **Silver Department** awards recognise that in addition to university-wide policies the department is working to promote gender equality and to address challenges particular to the discipline.

Not all institutions use the term 'department' and there are many equivalent academic groupings with different names, sizes and compositions. The definition of a 'department' for SWAN purposes can be found on the Athena SWAN website. If in doubt, contact the Athena SWAN Officer well in advance to check eligibility.

It is essential that the contact person for the application is based in the department.

Sections to be included

At the end of each section state the number of words used. Click [here](#) for additional guidance on completing the template.

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1. Letter of endorsement from the head of department: maximum 500 words

An accompanying letter of endorsement from the head of department should explain how the SWAN action plan and activities in the department contribute to the overall department strategy and academic mission.

The letter is an opportunity for the head of department to confirm their support for the application and to endorse and commend any women and STEMM¹ activities that have made a significant contribution to the achievement of the departmental mission.

See covering letter from Professor Helen G. Griffiths

(479 words)

2. The self-assessment process: maximum 1000 words

Describe the self-assessment process. This should include:

- a) A description of the self assessment team: members' roles (both within the department and as part of the team) and their experiences of work-life balance

Professor Helen R. Griffiths: Helen is the Executive Dean of the School of Life and Health Sciences (LHS) at Aston University, and was instrumental in Aston's decision to seek membership of Athena Swan. Helen's role within the School and her experiences of work-life balance are detailed in a case study for this application (section 7).

Ms Adèle MacKinlay: Adèle is Aston University's Chief Operating Officer (COO), holds the office of Secretary/Registrar and is responsible for most of the staff and student services in the University. Adèle is a member of the University's Executive Team and the University's Governing Council. She is passionate about creating an environment and culture at Aston in which all individuals can thrive and be successful, and focuses much of her time on Aston's HR Strategy – Aston People 2020 - with priorities including development of management capability and leadership at Aston, as well as enhancing further the inter-cultural community in which we work. Adèle is the proud mother of three young children. Aston's flexible working practices have allowed her to fulfil her demanding role as COO as well as being able to meet her family's needs.

Professor Stephen Anderson: Stephen is Professor of Optometry and Visual Neuroscience, and Associate Director of Research for Neurosciences. He is also a registered optometrist. Stephen has supervised post-graduate students (9 female, 1 male) and post-doctoral scientists (3 male, 3 female), and has assisted female colleagues to apply for Fulbright and Dorothy Hodgkin Fellowships. Stephen was a member of the team that applied for Aston's Athena Swan Bronze award, and is the

¹ As we do not have medicine related courses, we have used the acronym STEM for our submission

lead contact for the School's Silver Award application. He is in a dual career marriage, with three children.

Dr Ann Hartley: Ann is an Associate Director of Human Resources (HR) at Aston, with responsibility for staff and organisational development and HR operations. Ann leads on the University's HR Research Excellence Award and is currently spearheading a review of early career researcher development. Ann is a single parent with caring responsibilities for an adult son with learning disabilities

Professor Yvonne Perrie: Yvonne is Head of Pharmacy and Professor of Drug Delivery. Yvonne is also a registered Pharmacist. Pharmacy staff are employed on a full range of work-life balanced arrangements, from 0.2FTE through to full FTE posts, plus term-time-only posts and flexible start-time posts. Yvonne currently supervises 5 PhD students (1 female, 4 male students) and 1 post-doctoral scientist (female) and works flexibly to accommodate the demands of a young family.

Dr Leon Davies: Leon is a Senior lecturer in Optometry and Head of the Ophthalmic Research Group at Aston University which consists of 7 female and 9 male academics. He is also a UK registered optometrist. Leon has supervised both post-graduate (6 female, 5 male) and post-doctoral (1 female, 2 male) researchers, and actively encourages undergraduates to pursue a career in science. Leon was also part of the team that successfully applied for Aston's Athena Swan Bronze award in 2010. Leon is married with two children

Ms Jane Tyrrell: Jane is a science graduate, with a PGDipHR and an MBA. Her entire career has been in STEM organisations and Universities. At Aston, Jane provides the University's strategic lead on equality, diversity and wellbeing. Jane is also the link careers Governor at Aston University Engineering Academy – the first major university-sponsored University Technical College in the country, where the learning ethos is based on working in partnership with local and national industrial partners to deliver an exciting and relevant engineering and science-based curriculum.

- b) an account of the self assessment process: details of the self assessment team meetings, including any consultation with staff or individuals outside of the university, and how these have fed into the submission

The Pro-Vice Chancellor for Learning and Teaching Innovation, Professor Alison Halstead, was tasked with establishing and leading a Self-Assessment Team with the specific aim of developing a submission for an Athena Swan Bronze Award in May 2010. The application was successful and the work of the Self-assessment Team continued under the leadership of Adèle MacKinlay to: (i) ensure delivery of Bronze Award Action Plan; and (ii) undertake further work in preparation for a School-based Silver Award application. The Team has changed to reflect the new agenda.

During the academic year, a subset of the Athena Swan panel met on four occasions with the Seniority Profile Action Group to develop an action plan to achieve equitable representation of women and Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) staff across all grades within the university. These meetings were led by Shaama Saggarr-Malik, an independent executive development consultant and a former Director of Human Resources within the public sector.

Stephen Anderson, the lead contact for the current application, has given two presentations about Athena Swan at key school meetings, highlighting Aston's action plan in setting targets for women's advancement and better promotion of women's achievements, noting Aston's continued commitment to mentoring, flexible working and other supportive HR practices. Stephen made it clear that *'Aston is committed to improving the gender profile within the School of Life & Health Sciences'*, and signalled the School's intention of applying for an Athena Swan Silver Award.

The self-assessment exercise for Athena Swan has required analysis and action on several fronts. The Team analysed staff and student data and reviewed the School culture and ethos of female achievement by speaking to academic and research staff. This information was used to create the Action Plan that will further promote and encourage female scientists within the School and generally raise awareness of the Athena Swan ethos more widely. This has subsequently been agreed by the School Management Team of LHS.

- c) Plans for the future of the self assessment team, such as how often the team will continue to meet, any reporting mechanisms and in particular how the self assessment team intends to monitor implementation of the action plan.

The Self-Assessment Team will continue as the Athena Swan Committee (ASC), and will have representation on the School's Senior Management Committee. Existing team members that will continue on the ASC include Adèle MacKinlay, Stephen Anderson, Jane Tyrrell, Ann Hartley and Leon Davies. Going forward, the ASC will include two junior (female) academic staff, plus representatives to cover administrative and technical staff. It will meet bi-annually to monitor progress against the Action Plan and to determine additional actions/interventions as necessary. The University's Executive Team will support the ASC in working towards our goal of an Athena Swan Gold award.

(996 words)

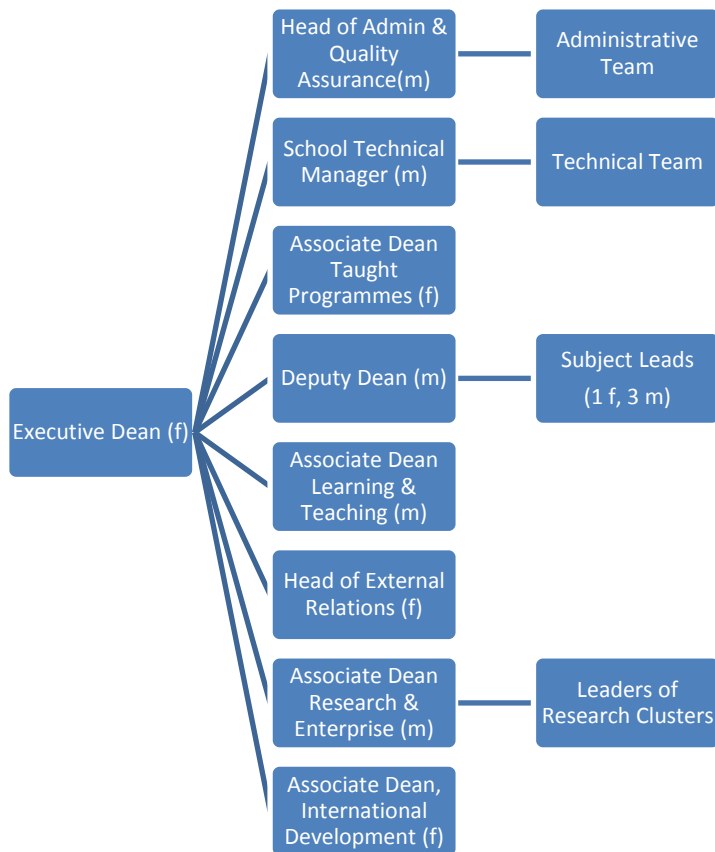
3. A picture of the department: maximum 2000 words

- a) Provide a pen-picture of the department to set the context for the application, outlining in particular any significant and relevant features.

Organisational Structure

The School is led by an appointed Executive Dean, Professor Helen Griffiths, and operates through four key committees: Senior Management Committee, Teaching Committee and Research and Enterprise Committee.

The Executive Dean is supported by a Deputy Dean and four Associate Deans. All undergraduate and postgraduate programmes have a designated leader and are delivered by the staff from the subject groupings. The diagram below summarises the current management structure:



Teaching and Learning

Undergraduate Taught: The School offers a range of HEFCE funded undergraduate programmes spanning the life and health sciences, all of which were rated as excellent in the last Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) teaching assessment. These include programmes in audiology, biology, biomedical science, optometry, pharmacy, and psychology.

Of note, the University's Disability and Additional Needs Unit (DANU) provides support for students with physical, sensory or hidden disabilities, mental health concerns, specific learning difficulties or long term health problems. The University also offers a wide range of services geared towards ensuring student success in academic, social and personal terms.

Post-graduate Taught: The School also offers a wide range of taught postgraduate programmes (Graduate Diploma, MSc, MRes, and Professional Doctorate) focused upon the developing career needs of health professionals.

Aston is a popular choice for international students – students from over 120 countries study at Aston University each year. The Aston 'English for Postgraduate Studies' programme allows international students to spend a year preparing for Postgraduate study.

Of note, the UKBA renewed Aston's Highly Trusted Sponsor status in April 2012 after a successful Tier 4 audit visit to the University in February 2012. This enables Aston to sponsor students applying to study on General Student Visas under Tier 4 of the Points Based System.

Research

The School of Life & Health Sciences pursues interdisciplinary research in Biomedical Sciences, Health Sciences and Neurosciences at the interface between laboratory and clinic. Our work ranges from the molecular and cellular levels, through neural systems and human behaviour, to the restoration of health and the study of individuals in health care and societal settings. Further national and international collaborations augment this research mission.

In the 2008 RAE, 85% of the research in the School of Life & Health Sciences was ranked as being of international quality, and the School was ranked 3rd out of 61 UK University submissions to Allied Health Professions and Studies for quality and volume of research. The School currently has a research income of £5.7m (2011/12), with a total of 136 research students, (part/full-time Masters, PhD and Professional Doctorate students).

Research within the School is funded by research councils, research foundations, charities, the European Union and industry. Over the past ten years, Aston has developed state-of-the-art infrastructure for health research from the molecular to behavioural/organisational level. A biomedical facility (circa £1.3m) was completed in 2003; the Aston University Day Hospital was completed in 2004 (> £12m with major funding from the Wellcome Trust, the Science Research Infrastructure fund and Advantage West Midlands). A further investment of around £3.5m in laboratory refurbishment and equipment has occurred in the last four years. In addition, the University has invested a further £3m towards the Aston Research Centre for

Healthy Ageing (ARCHA) encompassing researchers from all disciplines within the School, and a further £3.6m towards the Aston Brain Centre (ABC).

The ABC is an integrated research environment for the study of neurodevelopment in health and disease. Its mission is to develop translational applications of fundamental neurophysiological research to clinical service provision. Staff within ARCHA take a multidisciplinary approach to ageing by asking how technological, therapeutic and psychosocial strategies can be employed to understand and arrest age-related decline. ARCHA's mission is to facilitate research that helps understand, predict and prevent degeneration.

- b) Provide data for the past three years (where possible with clearly labelled graphical illustrations) on the following with commentary on their significance and how they have affected action planning.

Student data

- (i) **Numbers of males and females on access or foundation courses** – comment on the data and describe any initiatives taken to attract women to the courses.

Student numbers on LHS Foundation Degree (FD) Course

	2009/10			2010/11			2011/12		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
No: Students	9	33	42	8	13	21	9	16	25
% Students	21.43	78.57	100.00	38.10	61.90	100.00	36.00	64.00	100.00

Over the past three years, the School's foundation degree in Hearing Aid Audiology has proved to be a particularly attractive route into science for women from non-traditional academic backgrounds. With the intention of building on the success of this programme, the School will look at the feasibility of introducing Foundation Programmes in other disciplines.

- (ii) **Undergraduate male and female numbers** – full and part-time – comment on the female:male ratio compared with the national picture for the discipline. Describe any initiatives taken to address any imbalance and the impact to date. Comment upon any plans for the future.

Student numbers of LHS Undergraduate (UG) Courses

	2009/10			2010/11			2011/12		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
No: Students	670	1268	1938	633	1252	1885	597	1203	1800
% Students	34.57	65.43	100.00	33.58	66.42	100.00	33.17	66.83	100.00

Over 65% of our undergraduate population is female, a figure that has remained constant for several years. The data presented above reflect the School's particular blend of vocational courses (pharmacy, optometry,

audiology), all of which lead to professional careers which readily allow for flexible and part-time working, and career breaks. These proportions of female students are only slightly below the national average for the particular health-based courses we offer (see tables of national data presented below), but whereas the national figures appear to demonstrate a slight reduction year-on-year in the proportion of females at undergraduate level, the proportions at Aston are increasing slightly.

- (iii) **Postgraduate male and female numbers completing taught courses** – full and part-time – comment on the female:male ratio compared with the national picture for the discipline. Describe any initiatives taken to address any imbalance and the effect to date. Comment upon any plans for the future.

Student numbers on LHS Postgraduate Taught (PGT) Courses

	2009/10			2010/11			2011/12		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
No: Students	170	310	480	121	249	370	91	179	270
% Students	35.42	64.58	100.00	32.70	67.30	100.00	33.70	66.30	100.00

As with the School's undergraduate courses, approximately 65% of our postgraduate taught population is female. This is in line with the national picture (see below), and reflects the nature of the programmes on offer within the School. Our diploma, masters and professional doctorate programmes all offer a flexible approach to learning, including distance learning and part-time study. With the professional doctorates (in optometry and pharmacy), the number of taught elements taken at any time is flexible and can be accumulated over a period of 4+ years, tailored to suit the needs of the student and employer.

- (iv) **Postgraduate male and female numbers on research degrees** – full and part-time – comment on the female:male ratio compared with the national picture for the discipline. Describe any initiatives taken to address any imbalance and the effect to date. Comment upon any plans for the future.

Student numbers on LHS Postgraduate Research (PGR) Courses

	2009/10			2010/11			2011/12		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
No: Students	73	86	159	62	72	134	75	78	153
% Students	45.91	54.09	100.00	46.27	53.73	100.00	49.02	50.98	100.00

The proportion of women enrolled on research degrees is significantly lower than those on taught degrees, and is below the national statistics.

We intend to increase the number of women in our graduate school through:

- offering bursaries for women returners after maternity leave and for part-time PhDs and distance learning programmes

- supporting access to post-doctoral fellowships targeting outstanding early career female researchers in STEM subjects who wish to establish an independent research career in the UK
- providing opportunities for staff to actively promote scientific careers to undergraduate and postgraduate students
- creating a section on the Aston University website which captures and displays the achievements and progress of female scientists

See Action Plan objectives 1, 2, 3, 4

National comparisons of student figures in LHS courses

2008/09

Programme Type	Female	Male
FD	72.35%	27.65%
UG	73.01%	26.99%
PGT	69.38%	30.62%
PGR	61.93%	38.07%
Totals	71.64%	28.36%

2009/10

Programme Type	Female	Male
FD	74.79%	25.21%
UG	72.61%	27.39%
PGT	69.63%	30.37%
PGR	62.35%	37.65%
Totals	71.47%	28.53%

2010/11

Programme Type	Female	Male
FD	71.88%	28.12%
UG	70.85%	29.15%
PGT	70.49%	29.51%
PGR	62.80%	37.20%
Totals	70.29%	29.71%

- (v) **Ratio of course applications to offers and acceptances by gender for undergraduate, postgraduate taught and postgraduate research degrees –** comment on the differences between male and female application and success rates and describe any initiatives taken to address any imbalance and their effect to date. Comment upon any plans for the future.

**Ratio of course applications, offers and acceptances
by gender and course**

2010/11	Applications				Offers				Acceptances			
	Male Students		Female Students		Male Students		Female Students		Male Students		Female Students	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
FD	12	37.50	20	62.50	5	35.71	9	64.29	5	100	9	100
UG	1500	34.83	2807	65.17	242	31.80	519	68.20	183	75.62	395	76.11
Other UG	51	31.68	109	67.70	27	31.40	59	68.60	27	100	59	100
PGT	683	50.82	658	48.96	111	36.88	190	63.12	103	92.79	183	96.32
PGR	64	57.14	48	42.86	24	52.17	22	47.83	24	100	22	100
Totals	2310	38.79	3642	61.14	409	33.86	799	66.14	342	83.62	668	83.60

2011/12	Applications				Offers				Acceptances			
	Male Students		Female Students		Male Students		Female Students		Male Students		Female Students	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
FD	6	31.58	13	68.42	6	35.29	11	64.71	6	100.0	11	100.0
UG	1649	37.67	2729	62.33	219	33.95	426	66.05	184	84.02	356	83.57
Other UG	38	29.01	93	70.99	25	30.49	57	69.51	23	92.00	57	100.0
PGT	499	48.07	537	51.73	109	37.33	183	62.67	101	92.66	176	96.17
PGR	131	55.51	104	44.07	28	51.85	26	48.15	28	100.0	26	100.0
Totals	2323	40.09	3476	59.86	387	35.50	703	64.50	342	88.37	626	89.05

2012/13	Applications				Offers				Acceptances			
	Male Students		Female Students		Male Students		Female Students		Male Students		Female Students	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
FD	12	30.00	28	70.00	10	32.26	21	67.74	10	100.0	21	100.0
UG	1221	35.39	2229	64.61	250	32.51	519	67.49	216	86.40	433	83.43
Other UG	19	28.36	48	71.64	9	33.33	18	66.67	8	88.89	13	72.22
PGT	410	48.07	443	51.93	46	33.58	91	66.42	44	95.65	80	87.91
PGR	69	51.88	64	48.12	4	30.77	9	69.23	4	100.0	9	100.0
Totals	1731	38.12	2812	61.88	319	32.65	658	67.35	282	88.40	556	84.50

The favourable percentage of applications to LHS courses from women has remained relatively stable over several years at all levels other than for Postgraduate Research. Significantly, the percentage of offers made to females (65-67% over 4 years) has consistently exceeded the percentage of applications by (61-62% over 4 years), and the conversion of offers to acceptances is similarly high, which is particularly gratifying as it suggests that the applications from women are of particularly high quality.

It is thought that the lower proportion of females applying to take Postgraduate research qualifications may be due to the relative ease with which professions in optometry, pharmacy and audiology can be undertaken on a part-time basis, making them attractive for women once they are professionally qualified.

We intend to carry out a number of activities designed to increase the number of female postgraduate research students. **See Action Plan objectives 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7.**

- (vi) **Degree classification by gender** – comment on any differences in degree attainment between males and females and describe what actions are being taken to address any imbalance.

Degree classification by gender

2008/9	Female					Male				
	1st	2.i	2.ii	3rd	Pass	1st	2.i	2.ii	3rd	Pass
Grade	1st	2.i	2.ii	3rd	Pass	1st	2.i	2.ii	3rd	Pass
Number	62	196	76	1	5	19	76	53	4	1
%	18.20%	57.60%	22.40%	0.30%	1.50%	12.40%	49.70%	34.60%	2.60%	0.70%

2009/10	Female					Male				
	1st	2.i	2.ii	3rd	Pass	1st	2.i	2.ii	3rd	Pass
Grade	1st	2.i	2.ii	3rd	Pass	1st	2.i	2.ii	3rd	Pass
Number	51	171	93	3	1	17	84	57	1	1
%	15.90%	53.60%	29.30%	0.90%	0.30%	10.60%	52.50%	35.60%	0.60%	0.60%

2010/11	Female					Male				
	1st	2.i	2.ii	3rd	Pass	1st	2.i	2.ii	3rd	Pass
Grade	1st	2.i	2.ii	3rd	Pass	1st	2.i	2.ii	3rd	Pass
Number	63	183	79	2	4	26	66	63	1	3
%	19.00%	55.30%	23.90%	0.60%	1.20%	16.40%	41.50%	39.60%	0.60%	1.90%

The degree classifications achieved by males and females in LHS are very equitable. Any minor differences are mainly in favour of women. This is good evidence of the quality and effectiveness of teaching in the School, however, we should not be complacent. To ensure this situation does not change we intend to analyse and report on degree attainment data in the School and will consider the report annually at a Senior Management Team meeting. **See Action Plan objective 8.**

Staff data

- (vii) **Female:male ratio of academic staff and research staff** – researcher, lecturer, senior lecturer, reader, professor (or equivalent). Comment on any differences in numbers between males and females and say what action is being taken to address any underrepresentation at particular grades/levels

Proportion of male to female academic and research staff

31/12/2009	Female	%	Male	%	Total
Grades 7, 8, 9 (Lecturers and equivalent)	50	52.63	45	47.37	95
Grade 10 (Senior Lecturers, Readers and equivalent)	13	40.63	19	59.38	32
Professors and equivalent	4	19.1	17	80.9	21
Total	67	45.27	81	54.73	148

31/12/2010	Female	%	Male	%	Total
Grades 7, 8, 9 (Lecturers and equivalent)	48	50.5	47	49.5	95
Grade 10 (Senior Lecturers, Readers and equivalent)	13	36.1	23	63.9	36
Professors and equivalent	4	19.1	17	80.1	21
Total	65	42.76	87	57.62	152

31/12/2011	Female	%	Male	%	Total
Grades 7, 8, 9 (Lecturers and equivalent)	44	46.8	50	53.2	94
Grade 10 (Senior Lecturers, Readers and equivalent)	14	36.8	24	63.16	38
Professors and equivalent	4	20	16	80	20
Total	62	40.8	90	59.2	152

While the proportion of male and female academic staff in more junior grades is reasonably well balanced, and improving with time, the picture is less balanced at more senior levels within the School.

Historically there has been a considerable seniority gap with fewer than 20% female professors in LHS. In response to this statistic, in conjunction with the University's seniority profile working party, and as part of the Athena Swan Bronze Award Action Plan, the University has put significant effort into encouraging female academics to apply for promotion. Given that the University is female led, and has a gender balance in its senior academic roles (the VC and Deputy VC are female and 50% of the PVCs and Deans are female), it is expected that this will start to have an impact shortly.

To attract more women into senior academic posts in LHS, we intend to:

- use targeted approaches to suitably qualified female candidates
- Include the Athena Swan logo in adverts
- Consider equality data annually at Senior Management Team meetings

- Investigate shortlisting and recruitment decisions on a post by post basis

See Action Plan objectives 9, 10, 11.

- (viii) **Turnover by grade and gender** – comment on any differences between men and women in turnover and say what is being done to address this. Where the number of staff leaving is small, comment on the reasons why particular individuals left.

Staff turnover by grade and gender

2008/09	Average Headcount	Leavers in Period	Female Turnover	Average Headcount	Leavers in Period	Male Turnover
Academic Group inc. Lecturers	47	7	15%	47	11	23%
Academic Group inc. Senior Lecturers	14	0	0%	19	2	11%
Academic Group inc. Professors	4	0	0%	18	3	17%
Total	64	7	11%	84	16	19%

2009/10	Average Headcount	Leavers in Period	Female Turnover	Average Headcount	Leavers in Period	Male Turnover
Academic Group inc. Lecturers	47	4	9%	43	4	9%
Academic Group inc. Senior Lecturers	13	0	0%	21	0	0%
Academic Group inc. Professors	4	1	25%	17	1	6%
Total	64	5	8%	81	5	6%

2010/11	Average Headcount	Leavers in Period	Female Turnover	Average Headcount	Leavers in Period	Male Turnover
Academic Group inc. Lecturers	46	9	19.56%	49	6	12%
Academic Group inc. Senior Lecturers	14	2	14%	21	1	5%
Academic Group inc. Professors	4	0	0%	17	4	24%
Total	64	11	17.19%	87	11	12.64%

The numbers of senior female academic leavers is extremely small, amounting to only 3 staff over the 3 year period, one of whom asked for voluntary redundancy. The vast majority of the junior academic leavers were contract researchers for whom there was no further grant funding available. Four women completed exit questionnaires and all said that the flexibility of working arrangements was particularly positive at Aston.

(1471 words)

4. Supporting and advancing women's careers: maximum 5000 words

Key career transition points

a) Provide data for the past three years (where possible with clearly labelled graphical illustrations) on the following with commentary on their significance and how they have affected action planning.

(i) **Job application and success rates by gender and grade** – comment on any differences in recruitment between men and women at any level and say what action is being taken to address this.

Job application and success rate by gender

2009	Applicant	%	Shortlisted	%	Appointed	%
Male	122	60.10	45	59.21	13	68.42
Female	75	36.95	31	40.79	6	31.56
Unspecified	6	2.96	0	0	0	0
Total	203	100	76	100	19	100

2010	Applicant	%	Shortlisted	%	Appointed	%
Male	76	43.43	21	38.89	8	40.00
Female	97	55.43	33	61.11	12	60.00
Unspecified	2	1.14	0	0	0	0
Total	175	100	54	100	20	100

2011	Applicant	%	Shortlisted	%	Appointed	%
Male	26	30.95	7	36.84	3	50.00
Female	50	59.52	12	63.16	3	50.00
Unspecified	8	9.52	0	0	0	0
Total	84	100	19	100	6	100

There is no clear picture to be drawn from the information on the gender of applicants to academic posts in LHS. The ratio of female to male applicants has improved significantly, but there are no obvious trends. We intend to undertake further analysis at a detailed level. **See Action Plan objective 11.**

(ii) **Applications for promotion and success rates by gender and grade** – comment on whether these differ for men and women and if they do explain what action may be taken. Where the number of women is small applicants may comment on specific examples of where women have been through the promotion process. Explain how potential candidates are identified.

Applications for promotion and success rate by gender

2010	Gender	No: of Eligible Staff	No: of Applicants	No: of Successful Staff
Lecturer Grade 9	Female	0	0	0
	Male	0	0	0
Senior Lecturer	Female	11	1	1
	Male	20	1	0
Reader	Female	17	0	0
	Male	34	0	0
Professor	Female	20	1	1
	Male	42	0	0

2011	Gender	No: of Eligible Staff	No: of Applicants	No: of Successful Staff
Lecturer Grade 9	Female	2	1	0
	Male	4	2	0
Senior Lecturer	Female	12	3	3
	Male	24	2	2
Reader	Female	17	0	0
	Male	37	2	2
Professor	Female	20	0	0
	Male	45	3	3

2012	Gender	No: of Eligible Staff	No: of Applicants	No: of Successful Staff
Lecturer Grade 9	Female	2	1	1
	Male	4	4	2
Senior Lecturer	Female	9	0	0
	Male	20	3	3
Reader	Female	17	1	0
	Male	32	1	1
Professor	Female	21	1	1
	Male	38	2	2

The figures above show that women are at least as successful as men in the outcomes of their promotion applications. Where they have not already indicated that they are considering applying for promotion, the School targets and counsels likely candidates for promotion through PDR reviewers. Gratifyingly, there does not appear to be any reluctance from women to put themselves forward for promotion.

It is important for their promotion prospects that female scientists maintain their research output. The equality analysis which needs to be undertaken before final REF submission decisions are taken will be reviewed for this purpose. **See Action Plan objective 12.**

- b) For each of the areas below, explain what the key issues are in the department, what steps have been taken to address any imbalances, what success/impact has been achieved so far and what additional steps may be needed.

- (i) **Recruitment of staff** – comment on how the department’s recruitment processes ensure that female candidates are attracted to apply, and how the department ensures its short listing, selection processes and criteria comply with the university’s equal opportunities policies.

All posts are advertised in jobs.ac.uk, which is an open-access website. We also advertise many academic positions in publications such as the Times Higher Education (THE). Some subject-specific adverts are placed in targeted professional publications such as Optometry Today and the Pharmaceutical Journal. Care is taken to ensure that the adverts are written in a way that is not gender specific. Where appropriate, we state in the advert that applications for part-time working will be considered.

In March 2011, the University introduced web-based recruitment. This ensures that shortlisting is transparent, it facilitates statistical monitoring at all levels and it permits analysis of media expenditure to ascertain whether money spent on gender specific media (for example) is effective.

The Vice-Chancellor, Professor Dame Julia King, chairs all professorial appointment panels. The Dean of LHS, Professor Helen Griffiths, chairs academic appointment panels below professorial level. We always attempt to ensure that we have a mix of genders on appointment panels, and where possible attempt to ensure diverse shortlists as well.

A number of actions have been identified to increase applications from suitably qualified women, especially at senior level. **See Action Plan objectives 9, 11.**

- (ii) **Support for staff at key career transition points** – having identified key areas of attrition of female staff in the department, comment on any interventions, programmes and activities that support women at the crucial stages, such as personal development training, opportunities for networking, mentoring programmes and leadership training. Identify which have been found to work best at the different career stages.

School mentoring procedures: LHS encourages every academic member of staff to have a mentor. Since 2008, all new members of staff have formally been assigned a mentor (by the Associate Dean for Research), usually from within the appropriate research discipline to offer support and advice in all aspects of university life. Mentoring is also available through a cross-institutional programme for any staff embarking on a period of change or development (e.g. staff returning from maternity leave; staff applying for promotion). We intend to ensure that PDR reviewers, mentors and female staff and students are made aware of opportunities for awards, prizes, travel opportunities and conferences. **See Action Plan objective 14.**

Peer observation of teaching: The School recognises that peer observation and the sharing of experience and good practice is an excellent

way for staff to develop/enhance their learning and teaching skills. All LHS teaching staff are observed teaching at least once a year. The aim is to have an opportunity to observe good practice amongst colleagues and to reflect on one's own teaching and on student learning. Evidence of engagement in such reflection is sought in the annual PDR. In addition, it is the University's policy that new staff complete a *Postgraduate Certificate in Professional Practice* to support their development as teachers. As part of this they join an action learning set to help them develop their teaching skills.

Personal development training: This is discussed and agreed at annual PDR meetings. There are a wide range of development opportunities available, and decisions of timing of attendance and appropriateness are agreed and tailored to the needs of the individual. This gives real flexibility in accommodating the needs of women at key career transition points. Access to management and leadership training is provided in anticipation of entering management roles. A middle-management programme, ExCL, has been available for the last three years, and academic staff attend at a time appropriate for their career point and anticipated roles. A wide-range of topic-based management courses are available for selection, with flexibility to take these as needed. Personal coaching is provided if this is thought to be necessary. Taking advantage of awards, travel opportunities and conferences are also important for personal development training. **See Action Plan objective 14.**

Use of Career workshops: To support research, the School organises writing retreats to give focussed support in writing journal papers, books and research grants. Places on these workshops are to be guaranteed to women returning from maternity leave if they require support to get their research activity back on track. **See Action Plan objective 15.**

Research sabbaticals: Research sabbaticals are available in order to meet grant deadlines or complete the submission of strategically important papers. Sabbaticals are usually of 12 weeks duration and are organised in consultation with Associate Dean for Research and Subject Group Leader.

Career development

- a) For each of the areas below, explain what the key issues are in the department, what steps have been taken to address any imbalances, what success/impact has been achieved so far and what additional steps may be needed.
- (i) **Promotion and career development** – comment on the appraisal and career development process, and promotion criteria and whether these take into consideration responsibilities for teaching, research, administration, pastoral work and outreach work; is quality of work emphasised over quantity of work?

Managers hold Performance Development and Review meetings with each individual member of staff annually.

At Aston, the basis of academic promotion is assessment by one's peers. The purpose of this procedure is to ensure that all applications for promotion are treated in a fair and impartial way, and in line with the strategic aims and objectives of the University. Specified in the promotions procedure is a commitment by the university to act in a manner which does not discriminate, either directly or indirectly, in its promotion decisions. The promotions procedure also recognises the need to take into account individual circumstances that may have resulted in a restricted opportunity for a staff member to perform her/his potential, particularly in terms of the volume of research outputs.

Promotions panels assess an individual's overall contributions to the strategic objectives of the University and their School under the following areas:

- (i) Research – contribution to the advancement of a subject/profession by research and scholarship;
- (ii) Learning and teaching – contribution to the advancement of a particular subject area/profession through learning and teaching via scholarship and impact on student achievement; and
- (iii) Contribution to the wider mission of the University, including leadership and management, community engagement and external professional activities.

In all areas, emphasis is placed on the quality of work.

The University runs workshops each year for academic staff to ensure they understand the criteria and processes, and to answer any questions staff may have. All academic staff are invited to these workshops, which are led by Pro-Vice-Chancellors.

Staff are encouraged to talk about their career aspirations to their Deans and line managers/PDR reviewers and the latter are encouraged to ensure that staff undertake some duties which are characteristic of the grade above in order to prepare them for more senior roles.

It is made clear that learning and teaching is viewed equally with research and that, exceptionally, promotions can be awarded primarily on the basis of an individual's contribution to the wider mission.

- (ii) **Induction and training** – describe the support provided to new staff at all levels, as well as details of any gender equality training. To what extent are good employment practices in the institution, such as opportunities for networking, the flexible working policy, and professional and personal development opportunities promoted to staff from the outset?

The School has a common Induction process for all staff. A checklist, available to managers and staff through the website, sets out common induction activities and steps for each new member of staff, complete with timescales and responsibilities. In addition, HR explain the range of employment benefits on offer and the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Dame Julia King, gives a formal welcome speech to all new staff.

- (iii) **Support for female students** – describe the support (formal and informal) provided for female students to enable them to make the transition to a sustainable academic career, particularly from postgraduate to researcher, such as mentoring, seminars and pastoral support and the right to request a female personal tutor. Comment on whether these activities are run by female staff and how this work is formally recognised by the department.

An improved onsite nursery was launched in 2011 in order to accommodate more children, allowing more staff and students to continue their careers safe in the knowledge that their children are well looked after. The nursery is available to all staff and students at Aston. It is located 100m away from the main University building, providing day nursery care for children aged 5 months to 5 years of age. There is also a Holiday Club, which is designed to care for children aged 4 to 11 years whilst they are on school holidays, to allow staff and students to continue with their work or studies. The nursery has been recognised by several bodies, including Ofsted, which awarded 'outstanding' in two of the four areas and 'good' in the other two areas, at their latest inspection.

The University also recently undertook an inquiry into the need of pregnant staff and students to rest and for returners to have access to facilities for expressing and storing milk, and breastfeeding within the University. The Equality and Diversity Forum, in collaboration with the Schools and the Students' Union, were involved. The University initially provided facilities on an interim basis, and have subsequently provided permanent facilities.

Personal Tutoring is offered to all Aston students, and mentoring to staff; this includes pastoral care, as well as educational support. Tutors /mentors are agreed by both parties. The University has male and female Counsellors, and a Multi-faith Chaplaincy that caters for all religions and has both male and female Chaplains.

Organisation and culture

- a) Provide data for the past three years (where possible with clearly labelled graphical illustrations) on the following with commentary on their significance and how they have affected action planning.
- (i) **Male and female representation on committees** – provide a breakdown by committee and explain any differences between male and female representation. Explain how potential members are identified.

Gender breakdown of membership of senior LHS committees

School Board (this committee no longer exists)

Year	Total Membership	Number of Male (and %)	Number of Female (and %)
2009/10	18	9 (50%)	9 (50%)
2010/11	26	13 (50%)	13 (50%)
2011/12	17	10 (59%)	7 (41%)

School Management Team

Year	Total Membership	Number of Male (and %)	Number of Female (and %)
2009/10	15	10 (67%)	5 (33%)
2010/11	15	10 (67%)	5 (33%)
2011/12	14	9 (64%)	5 (36%)

School Research and Enterprise Committee

Year	Total Membership	Number of Male (and %)	Number of Female (and %)
2009/10	24	13 (54%)	11 (46%)
2010/11	15	8 (53%)	7 (47%)
2011/12	15	6 (40%)	9 (60%)

School Learning & Teaching Committee

Year	Total Membership	Number of Male (and %)	Number of Female (and %)
2009/10	14	7 (50%)	7 (50%)
2010/11	14	7 (50%)	7 (50%)
2011/12	17	10 (59%)	7 (41%)

School Quality Sub-Committee

Year	Total Membership	Number of Male (and %)	Number of Female (and %)
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2009/10	7	2 (29%)	5 (71%)
2010/11	7	2 (29%)	5 (71%)
2011/12	9	5 (56%)	4 (44%)

School Business & Community Engagement

Year	Total Membership	Number of Male (and %)	Number of Female (and %)
2009/10	21	8 (38%)	13 (62%)
2010/11	18	5 (28%)	13 (72%)
2011/12	21	5 (24%)	16 (76%)

All members of staff serve on relevant exam boards and subject committees. The Chairs of Committees approach potential members to serve on committees other than these. The proportion of women on the School's senior committees seems appropriate in view of staff distribution and interests, and does not place an undue burden on a few senior women. However, committee membership will be reviewed annually at a Senior Management Team meeting. **See Action Plan objective 16.**

- (ii) **Female:male ratio of academic and research staff on fixed-term contracts and open-ended (permanent) contracts** – comment on any differences between male and female staff representation on fixed-term contracts and say what is being done to address them.

Female: male ratio of LHS staff on fixed and permanent contracts

2008/09	Fixed Term	%	Permanent	%
Female	27	40.3	40	59.7
Male	22	27.16	59	72.84
Total	49	33.11	99	66.89

2009/10	Fixed Term	%	Permanent	%
Female	20	31.25	44	68.75
Male	30	34.48	57	65.52
Total	50	33.11	101	66.89

2010/11	Fixed Term	%	Permanent	%
Female	23	37.01	39	62.9
Male	34	38.2	55	61.8
Total	57	37.75	94	62.25

The junior grades include the majority of contract research staff, more of whom are employed on fixed term contracts. The more senior grades of staff are mainly permanent. In 2008/9, proportionally more women than men were on fixed term contracts. This has changed in the last two years as the University has moved research staff with more than 4 years' service onto to permanent appointments. The proportions of men and women on fixed term contracts are now equivalent.

b) For each of the areas below, explain what the key issues are in the department, what steps have been taken to address any imbalances, what success/impact has been achieved so far and what additional steps may be needed.

(i) **Representation on decision-making committees** – comment on evidence of gender equality in the mechanism for selecting representatives. What evidence is there that women are encouraged to sit on a range of influential committees inside and outside the department? How is the issue of 'committee overload' addressed where there are small numbers of female staff?

Committee representation is based on roles and potential contribution rather than gender. Professor Helen Griffiths periodically makes open requests for volunteers to represent the School on specific committees. In addition, Professor Griffiths works with line managers to identify paths to support the career progression of staff through appropriate and timely committee membership.

We exercise constant vigilance to ensure that we do not have too many committees. This, coupled with their size and the number of female staff at senior management level means that 'committee overload' for female staff has not been an issue. However, this will be reviewed annually at a Senior Management Team meeting. **See Action Plan objective 16.**

(ii) **Workload model** – describe the systems in place to ensure that workload allocations, including pastoral and administrative responsibilities (including the responsibility for work on women and science) are taken into account at appraisal and in promotion criteria. Comment on the rotation of responsibilities e.g. responsibilities with a heavy workload and those that are seen as good for an individual's career.

The School uses a contribution load model. Data is collected in December of each year. Academic staff are asked to complete their contribution model based on the following issues: teaching load, new programmes load, administration load, number and quality of research publications, postgraduate student supervision, grants awarded, projects supervised, and community engagement activities. Different responsibilities carry different weightings. Completed contribution models are reviewed by the relevant Subject Lead and Associate Dean for Research and help inform performance development reviews. Staff are given the opportunity to identify and discuss pastoral and administrative responsibilities, which are also taken into account. Staff activities are reviewed annually to ensure they have opportunities to enhance their career, and to ensure their workload is appropriate for their career progression and aspirations.

To support workload planning further, we intend to:

- Publish School equality data and consider it annually at a Senior Management Team meeting
- Further promote the use of flexible working opportunities
- Promote the Athena Swan Action plan within the School
- Introduce a School Policy to reduce the teaching load of academic staff returning from maternity leave.

See Action Plan objectives 10, 17, 18, 19

- (iii) **Timing of departmental meetings and social gatherings** – provide evidence of consideration for those with family responsibilities, for example what the department considers to be core hours and whether there is a more flexible system in place.

Academic staff do not have contractually set hours of work. This means that they can manage their time flexibly around their teaching, scheduled meetings and provision of support for students. Everyone has office accommodation provided for them within the School, but many choose to work from home at times which suit any external commitments they have. This level of flexibility is valued by staff and is often cited in surveys as being of significant support to those with caring responsibilities. Core working hours for the School are 08:45 – 17:00 Monday to Friday. All formal meetings are held within these hours, with few starting before 9:30am to allow staff with caring responsibilities to fully engage in meetings. Where staff work part-time, wherever possible, meetings are scheduled during their normal working hours. Where it is not possible, meeting times are varied to cover absence. In particular, School meetings are scheduled at the start of each academic year so that advance planning is possible.

The teaching timetable is also planned with the flexible working requirements of staff in mind. Staff who have caring responsibilities are encouraged to inform the School Timetabling Officer in order that their needs can be accommodated within the timetable.

- (iv) **Culture** – demonstrate how the department is female-friendly and inclusive. 'Culture' refers to the language, behaviours and other informal interactions that characterise the atmosphere of the department, and includes all staff and students.

A cross University programme of harmonising terms and conditions of employment resulted in an increased maternity leave entitlement for teaching and research staff. This was particularly well received by staff and their union representatives.

Focus groups were held in 2011 to identify key work/life balance issues for female academics. This highlighted the general view that there was sufficient flexibility in the normal working arrangements for most caring purposes.

The University achieved a Research Excellence Award in 2010 and an application and action plan to renew it has been submitted. A major review of the needs of early career researchers is to be undertaken in 2013. The review panel will be chaired by a female early career researcher from a STEM area.

The First ExCL management training programme started in 2010. Four cohorts (80 staff members) have now completed it. It is aimed at all managers and has included 14 academic managers of STEM females as well as 15 STEM females who are themselves managers. It is a general middle management training course based around a concept of emotional intelligence which is essentially about understanding yourself, understanding others and respecting differences. The ExCL programme initiated a major culture change programme across the University, which has resulted in identifying the 6 core values of Trust, Empowerment, Innovation, Learning & Scholarship, Engagement and Ambition and has defined leadership and staff expectations. A number of high profile events and workshops have been run across the University to help staff and managers understand what the values and expectations mean for them. These workshops have been held with Executive members, Subject Group Heads and local groups who have discussed ways to promote and encourage the values. Plans are in place for a high profile programme to take place in 2013 to further address values and actions of the culture change programme.

The Executive Dean of LHS, Professor Helen Griffiths, holds regular whole-School meetings throughout the year. Despite the large number of staff attending, the atmosphere in these meetings is always friendly and informal. Helen uses these meetings to motivate staff, highlighting key achievements and successes for the School and staff members. The remainder of the meeting is very much an open session, where anyone can make suggestions for progress or raise any concerns they may have. Staff also recognise that Helen operates an open-door policy, should anyone wish to raise concerns with her privately. Aston's Athena Swan Bronze Award, and the commitments we have made to improving the gender profile within the School, have been discussed in each of the last three School meetings. The smaller departmental meetings are run in a similar fashion. They are friendly and they are inclusive. Emphasis is generally on the positive achievements the department has made, and achievements that individual staff or students have made.

Many staff have children and conversations about them are commonplace in the corridors and staff room. Many staff socialise together and announcements of a pregnancy or the birth of a child are greeted with genuine joy. Significantly, staff are aware that the University funds cover for maternity leave within each School to ensure workload is covered (see also comments below). Larger social gatherings of staff and students take place during graduation celebrations and Christmas. They are well attended.

Finally, the annual School Away Day not only provides an opportunity for informal staff discussions but also allows staff across all disciplines within the School to mix and socialise. Lunch, drinks and an afternoon games session form an important part of these Away Days, and are enjoyed by all.

- (v) **Outreach activities** – comment on the level of participation by female and male staff in outreach activities with schools and colleges and other centres. Describe who the programmes are aimed at, and how this activity is formally recognised as part of the workload model and in appraisal and promotion processes.

Most outreach visits and are undertaken by the School's Business Development Manager – a female scientist with a doctorate. Other staff undertake some visits and open days, largely on the basis of special interest. Commitment to such activities is taken into account in the School's load model.

Flexibility and managing career breaks

- a) Provide data for the past three years (where possible with clearly labelled graphical illustrations) on the following with commentary on their significance and how they have affected action planning.

- (i) **Maternity return rate** – comment on whether maternity return rate in the department has improved or deteriorated and any plans for further improvement. If the department is unable to provide a maternity return rate, please explain why.

Within the School, 14 members of academic staff have taken maternity leave since August 1st 2009. Of these, ten have returned to work, one (a contract researcher) left when her contract expired and three are due to return next year.

- (ii) **Paternity, adoption and parental leave uptake** – comment on the uptake of paternity leave by grade and parental and adoption leave by gender and grade. Has this improved or deteriorated and what plans are there to improve further.

There have been no applications for paternity leave (other than the two weeks' paid leave), adoption or parental leave by members of academic staff in LHS.

- (iii) **Numbers of applications and success rates for flexible working by gender and grade** – comment on any disparities. Where the number of women in the department is small applicants may wish to comment on specific examples

Flexible working requests are normally made by support staff rather than academic staff as the latter do not have contractually set hours of work. Because academic staff can manage their time flexibly around their teaching, scheduled meetings and provision of support for students, they rarely make formal flexible working requests. They also have the flexibility to work from home when they can to accommodate caring responsibilities. Informal arrangements for flexible working are generally agreed with the Subject Group Head and tend not to be recorded, although most receive positive responses. Three academic staff (two women and one man) have made formal flexible teaching and working requests. They were all for reduced hours, and all were agreed.

- b) For each of the areas below, explain what the key issues are in the department, what steps have been taken to address any imbalances, what success/impact has been achieved so far and what additional steps may be needed.

- (i) **Flexible working** – comment on the numbers of staff working flexibly and their grades and gender, whether there is a formal or informal system, the support and training provided for managers in promoting and managing flexible working arrangements, and how the department raises awareness of the options available.

Part-time Academic Staff in LHS

Grade	Female	Male	Grand Total
Professor		5	5
Grade 10	6	2	8
Grade 09	1	3	4
Grade 08	9	3	12
Grade 07	7		7
Grand Total	23	13	36

The University has a formal flexible working policy which HR staff will help managers implement where necessary. The policy offers the right to request part time and flexible working to all staff regardless of their caring responsibilities.

Very few formal applications for flexible working are received in LHS, as working hours for academic staff are operated on a flexible basis informally (see comments above). Requests are occasionally received from staff who wish to work on a part time basis. No requests have been turned down, however, we intend to promote the use of flexible working opportunities further. **See Action Plan objective 17.**

There are 36 academic staff in LHS who work on a part-time basis; 13 men and 23 women. Five of them (4 men and 1 woman) also work on a part-year (term time) basis. These include Teaching Fellows and Clinical Teaching staff.

The School operates a timetabling system for teaching duties that works around requests and restrictions. Restrictions are approved by Heads of group based on staff requests to avoid certain teaching times to enable them to fulfill family, caring or other responsibilities.

In 2010, the University recognized that the Combined Honours Programme was seriously curtailing the flexibility of the University timetable. It has since ceased to offer such wide-ranging combinations. It is now considerably easier to accommodate the needs of staff with caring responsibilities within the teaching timetable.

- (ii) **Cover for maternity and adoption leave and support on return** – explain what the department does, beyond the university maternity policy package, to support female staff before they go on maternity leave, arrangements for covering work during absence, and to help them achieve a suitable work-life balance on their return.

The University funds cover for maternity leave within each School. The School provides managers with local guidance on maternity leave and long-term absence to ensure that workload is covered.

The University offers a Flexible Benefits Scheme which provides access to a range of benefits through salary sacrifice, resulting in a net saving through reduced income tax and National Insurance contributions. The benefit

options available include childcare vouchers, a bicycle to work scheme and a method of reducing the cost of participating in the University's pension schemes. There is also a Nursery scheme in which staff can benefit from tax and NI savings on the full amount of Aston university Nursery fees.

Following return from maternity leave, and in consultation with the Subject Group Lead, arrangements are made for overlap and a reduced teaching load in the initial period. The School ensures that women returning from maternity leave are also able to return to the roles that they undertook prior to going on leave. We will further promote flexible working and the Athena Swan Action Plan and introduce a policy of reducing teaching loads for women returning from maternity leave. **See Action Plan objectives 17, 18, 19.**

(3314 words)

5. Any other comments: maximum 500 words

Please comment here on any other elements which are relevant to the application, e.g. other STEM-specific initiatives of special interest that have not been covered in the previous sections. Include any other relevant data (e.g. results from staff surveys), provide a commentary on it and indicate how it is planned to address any gender disparities identified.

The School recognises that the ability to work part time is one of the principal needs of female academics. This is now formally acknowledged in the School's Strategy, which states that *'we will continue to support requests for part-time work, recognising this as a good and valuable practice'* (section D.3 of LHS Strategy). Moreover, in implementing this policy the School advocates:

- (i) that part-time contracts are determined on a pro-rata basis for teaching and research to ensure parity and enable future progression within science.
- (ii) that flexible arrangements for part-time work are necessary, tailored to suit the needs of each individual (e.g. a shorter working week versus a shorter working day, or some combination of the two).
- (iii) that 'work-free' time is known and respected by full-time colleagues and the Subject Group Leader (e.g. full-time staff should avoid the intrusive use of emails on their colleague's work-free days).
- (iv) clear assurances be given that, if desired, part-time work is a 'temporary position', even if part-time employment is required for several years.

The School also recognises that, where possible, avoiding the use of short-term contracts will help minimise the loss-rate for women in STEM subjects.

Finally, following our Athena Swan Bronze Award, the University decided to proceed with internally-funded fellowships targeting outstanding early career female researchers in STEM who wish to establish an independent research career in the UK. This idea is now formally incorporated into the LHS School Strategy (section A.4).

(241 words)

6. Action plan

Provide an action plan as an appendix. An action plan template is available on the Athena SWAN website.

The Action Plan should be a table or a spreadsheet comprising actions to address the priorities identified by the analysis of relevant data presented in this application, success/outcome measures, the post holder responsible for each action and a timeline for completion. The plan should cover current initiatives and your aspirations **for the next three years**.

Please see Action Plan appended

7. Case study: impacting on individuals: maximum 1000 words

Describe how the department's SWAN activities have benefitted **two** individuals working in the department. One of these case studies should be a member of the self assessment team, the other someone else in the department. More information on case studies is available in the guidance.

Case Study: Dr Hannah Bartlett

Following a successful post-doctoral research fellowship at Aston University, Dr Hannah Bartlett was encouraged by senior staff in the School of Life & Health Sciences to apply for an academic post in the School. Her application was successful and Hannah was appointed as a Lecturer in Optometry in September 2007. She quickly proved to be a popular teacher with both students and staff, and received the Aston Award for Teaching (Highly Commended) in 2008. To help Hannah gain experience and demonstrate leadership, she was encouraged by her line manager to develop the department's much needed roles of Careers Tutor and International Tutor. Hannah's ideas were met with enthusiasm by her line manager, fellow academics and technical staff, and she went on to develop other teaching innovations, including mock interviews for second year students. Soon after her appointment, Hannah was given the opportunity to attend the annual Grant Writing Retreat at Aston to develop further her research and grant writing skills. Hannah reports that *"the retreat helped paved the way for my career progression by providing me with the confidence and necessary skills to secure grant funding"*. Hannah took a period of maternity leave from August 2010 for twelve months. She reports that *"the regular performance development reviews offered by the School were invaluable in preparing me for a year-long maternity leave. The guidance and sensitive support I received helped me to maximise my research output during the periods before and after my leave. Most importantly, it was clear to me that my maternity leave would not create any obstacle to career progression. Indeed, I was encouraged to apply for and was promoted to Senior Lecturer in Optometry whilst on maternity leave"*. The School's Athena Swan activities also benefited Hannah on her return from maternity leave. The School recognises that the opportunity to work part-time may be a valuable practice for some individuals, and moreover that flexible arrangements for part-time work are necessary to enable, for example, flexible child-care arrangements. Hannah reports that *"my request for part time work (0.5 FTE) was met positively by my line manager and the Executive Dean, and I was given sufficient flexibility in this to fulfil my teaching and research commitments with minimal impact on family life"*. While working part-time, Hannah's representation on administrative committees was limited by her line manager to

ensure adequate time would be available to concentrate on her research and teaching duties, thus allowing continued career progression within science and the University. Nonetheless, following Athena Swan principles, Hannah continued to maintain an active role in all departmental decisions through her position as a senior member of staff on the Subject Group (Optometry) Committee.

Case Study: Professor Helen R. Griffiths

Professor Helen Griffiths is the Executive Dean of LHS and is a member of the Athena Swan self-assessment team. Helen joined the School of Life and Health Sciences at Aston University in 1998 as a Reader in Molecular Biosciences, and was one of the first academics at Aston to benefit from a change in the University Statutes that allowed academics to work part-time. Helen worked part-time for forty continuous months. During this time a flexible work arrangement was maintained, tailored to suit Helen's family and work commitments. Helen reports that *"this generally involved attending four or five days a week, with an early finish to allow for school pick-up on three days. This arrangement was by mutual agreement and gave me the time and flexibility I needed to build my research laboratory and pursue grant funding"*. Helen's international research profile grew rapidly. In 2004, she was awarded the first Catherine Pasquier Prize from the European Society for Free Radical Research in recognition of her 'extraordinary scientific achievements in the field of free radical research'. And in 2009, Helen received the 'Aston Excellence Award for Outstanding Researcher of the Year'. Helen progressed rapidly within the University with invitations from the Head of School and Vice-Chancellor to take on the role of Deputy Director of Research for Pharmacy & Biology (2001), Associate Dean of Research for Life & Health Sciences (2004), and finally Executive Dean of the School (2009). Having a family herself, Helen's high profile within the University has greatly helped to raise awareness of the benefits of part-time work and Athena Swan activities in general. In recognition of her research, teaching and leadership skills, Helen was appointed Professor in Biomedical Sciences in 2005.

Case Study: Dr Anna V Hine

Dr Anna Hine is a Senior Lecturer in Molecular Biology. Anna writes *"Since my return from maternity leave after birth of our first child in 2003, my husband and I have both worked part time at Aston University. I work 0.7 FTE with three fixed days a half day on fully-flexible time throughout the year, and my husband works 0.8 FTE with four fixed days. Our second child was born in 2006 and the arrangement is on-going. Aston were very willing to engage with this plan and it has made for a very successful work-life balance for our whole family. My husband and I have both been able to progress our scientific careers well (including promotion, successful grant income and publications), whilst our children have a good relationship with their parents, rather than seeing us just in the evenings and at weekends! Meanwhile our children gained the benefit of attending Aston's excellent nursery – meeting lots of other children and not being afraid to be away from parents – without lengthy separation from us. In short, Aston's flexible attitude has led to a 'win-win' situation for employer and employee alike. We are both very happy working here"*.

(930 words)