

Athena SWAN Bronze institute award pilot scheme: The James Hutton Institute

The James Hutton Institute saw its engagement with the Athena Swan pilot project as an opportunity to help the Institute understand the issues faced by women in its organisation, in order that these issues could be addressed through development and mentoring programmes.

Challenges

The initial challenge for the Institute was to ensure the working group tasked with making the Athena Swan award application was representative of the whole Institute. To achieve this, the working group was drawn from both science and support staff of the Institute and represented a mix of genders, different career stages and domestic situations.

Challenges encountered with the completion of the application related to accessing data and benchmarking. The relatively recent formation of the James Hutton Institute meant there were limitations in the retrieval of data from the legacy Institutes due to variations in operational procedures and data storage. Difficulties were also encountered when benchmarking the Institute's data and the working group had to carefully consider the most appropriate and suitable comparators to use.

Benefits of participation

Participation in the pilot scheme has enabled the Institute to identify where it needs to work harder to attain equity in the promotion and career development of female science staff. The Institute will work through our Human Resources Department to develop processes that encourage and facilitate the progression of female scientists to senior positions and pay grade advancement.

The Athena Swan working group are engaging with the Institute's Senior Management Group to support cultural change within the Institute, to increase representation of women at senior levels and promote gender equality at the James Hutton Institute.

Shaping our approach to diversity

The James Hutton Institute has a positive attitude towards gender balance, equality and diversity and this is reflected in the balance between men and women employed in both science and support. The Institute already offers excellent maternity pay, flexible working hours, provides support to individuals who have carer commitments and works with these members of staff to find working conditions which meet their needs. The Institute will seek to make information about flexible working and support more accessible to its staff.

The James Hutton Institute will be looking into the development of an internship programme that promotes inclusion and the acquisition of skills and experience to help ensure a better gender balance and greater diversity of individuals involved in decision making.

The James Hutton Institute will continue to re-evaluate its activities to ensure positive attitudes to diversity and gender balances are observed by all staff.