

NHLI Athena SWAN Application

Action Plan – May 2009

A) Introduction

NHLI aligns itself to the aims of the Athena SWAN Charter by wishing to retain and attract the brightest women in cardiovascular and respiratory science, irrespective of grade. It wishes to recruit new female academics in basic and clinical sciences at lecturer level and beyond.

This Action Plan was developed with this goal in mind. NHLI wishes to increase retention where attrition is occurring, to increase entry where recruitment is deficient, and to improve the quality of work and training environments and career development for all women at all levels.

Beyond the actions to ensure continuity of fairness of process for those women who do apply for posts, the Division will explore the affirmative steps that could be taken to raise its profile as a female-friendly workplace and solicit more and better applications from women.

The Divisional plan also recognises the importance of communications and the difficulties of ensuring these are effective within such a large and geographically widespread division.

B) Action Plan Summary

Ref	Description	Responsibility	Timetable
1.1.	Women in Academic Medicine	Faculty Ambassador for Women (Maria Belvisi) Faculty Research Theme Leaders (Bill Cookson & Michael Schneider) Head of Division (Michael Schneider) Divisional Lead for Women (Clare Lloyd)	Research & information gathering – summer 2009 onwards Annual reports from January 2010 onwards
1.2.	Monitoring of Studentship Applications and Recruitment	Research Manager (Emma Watson) Postgraduate Administrator (Clodagh Li) Director of Postgraduate Studies (Jane Mitchell)	Trial summer 2009 Launch October 2009
2.1.	Increase Communication of the Promotion Process	Divisional Manager (Paul Hiron) Deputy Divisional Managers (Richard Mattin & Carol-Anne Shaw) Section Administrators (Various) Academic Mentors (Various tbc)	In line with Imperial's academic promotion timetable
2.2.	Increase Recruitment of Female Scientists	Faculty Research Theme Leaders (Bill Cookson & Michael Schneider)	To be co-ordinated with 1.1.
2.2.1.	Increase Outreach Activities to School Pupils	Cardiovascular and Respiratory Clinical Leads will be identified to work with Imperial's Outreach Office	Research & information gathering – summer 2009 Outreach activities from 2010
2.2.2.	Monitor and Increase Participation of BSc's	Director of Undergraduate Studies (Sue Smith) Cardiovascular and Respiratory Clinical Leads will be identified to work with the Director of Undergraduate Studies	Research & information gathering – summer 2009 Launch 2010
2.2.3.	Increase Recruitment of Clinical Research Fellows	Research Manager (Emma Watson) Director of Postgraduate Studies (Jane Mitchell) Cardiovascular Lead (tbc) Respiratory Lead (Omar Usmani)	Trialled February 2009 Launch June 2009

2.2.4.	'Women in Clinical Academia' Day	Faculty Research Theme Leaders (Bill Cookson & Michael Schneider) Cardiovascular Lead (tbc) Respiratory Lead (tbc)	Co-ordinated with 1.1. Launch 2010
3.1.	Academic Mentors	Head of Division (Michael Schneider) Associate Head of Division (Bill Cookson) Deputy Divisional Managers (Richard Mattin & Carol-Anne Shaw) Divisional Lead for Women (Clare Lloyd) Learning and Development Centre Centre for Educational Development Human Resources	Research & information gathering – winter 2009 Launch 2011
3.2.	Interim Professional Development Day	Head of Division (Michael Schneider) Associate Head of Division (Bill Cookson) Divisional Lead for Women (Clare Lloyd) Learning and Development Centre Centre for Educational Development Careers Advisory Service	Launch Autumn 2009
4.1.	Communications and Information		Ongoing
4.1.1.	NHLI Induction Information Pack	Deputy Divisional Managers (Richard Mattin & Carol-Anne Shaw) Research Managers (Alun Owen & Emma Watson) Human Resources Manager (Siobhain Griffin)	January 2010
4.1.2.	Improved Divisional Staff Communications	Head of Division (Michael Schneider) Associate Head of Division (Bill Cookson) Group, Section Administrators & PAs (Various)	Summer 2009
4.1.3.	NHLI Athena Annual Report	Athena Lead (Clare Lloyd) Athena Administrator (Emma Watson)	2010

4.2.	Committees and Management Roles	Head of Division (Michael Schneider) Associate Head of Division (Bill Cookson) Divisional Lead for Women (Clare Lloyd) Committee Chairpersons (Various) Senior Academic Staff (Various)	Autumn 2009 with regular reviews
4.3.	Visibility of Academic Women	Audio Visual Technician (Tony Rocha) BHF Centre of Research Excellence Manager (Katie Payne) Research Manager (Emma Watson) Centre for Respiratory Infection Manager (Lindsey-Anne Cumming) Course Administrators (Various)	Ongoing
5.1.	Elsie Widdowson Fellowships	Divisional Lead for Women (Clare Lloyd) Deputy Divisional Managers (Richard Mattin & Carol-Anne Shaw) Section Administrators (Various)	May 2009
5.2.	Flexible Working	Divisional Lead for Women (Clare Lloyd) Heads of Sections (Various) Deputy Divisional Managers (Richard Mattin & Carol-Anne Shaw) Section Administrators (Various)	October 2009 with yearly review
5.3.	Postdoctoral Travel Awards including Caring Responsibilities	Research Manager (Emma Watson) PostDoc Committee (Various)	September 2009

C) Action Plan

1. The Fundamentals for Success

- The Base line for Action, Evidence and Data
- Taking Action, Leadership, Resources and Accountability

1.1. Women in Clinical Academic Medicine

There is such a problem worldwide in recruiting and retaining female clinical academics that a 'Women in Clinical Academia' working group, which includes Imperial, was established. This group will examine barriers, real or perceived, to the career progression of women working in clinical academic medicine and dentistry (*Reference: Medical Schools Council, <http://www.medschools.ac.uk/women.htm>*).

Similarly, the Faculty Ambassador for Women and Divisional Leads aim to research existing roadblocks for women in clinical academia. This research will include organising an informal networking meeting for female clinical academics who will be invited to share their experiences (summer 2009).

NHLI, in conjunction with the College, wants to increase the representation of female clinical academic within the Division. The Division will be represented by Professor Clare Lloyd (Divisional Lead for Women and Athena Lead) and Professor Maria Belvisi (Faculty Ambassador for Women) who will encourage female clinical academics to take part in the research. NHLI also hosts two Faculty Research Theme Leaders, namely Professor Michael Schneider (Cardiovascular Research Theme Leader and Head of Division) and Professor Bill Cookson (Respiratory Research Theme Leader and Associate Head of Division), who will advise on their particular scientific theme.

NHLI's specific goal is to increase the proportion of women in cardiology and respiratory academia. It has already established several specific action plans linked to this goal ([2.2.](#)) and will aim to address clinical women's roadblocks when these are identified.

1.2. Monitoring of Studentship Applications and Recruitment

Student recruitment to NHLI's divisional programmes of study is currently monitored centrally by the Division and includes monitoring for gender equality. Applications to these programmes show gender balance and monitoring has not identified a problem. NHLI expects that this will continue to be the case.

However, the Division aims to roll out this monitoring to all studentships throughout the Division to ensure equality of all applications and identify any areas of inequality.

This will be led through NHLI's Postgraduate Office (Emma Watson, Research Manager and Clodagh Li, Postgraduate Administrator) and will require NHLI staff to complete a questionnaire following each recruitment. It will be supported by the Director of Postgraduate Studies (Professor Jane Mitchell).

This initiative will be trialled over summer of 2009 and launched in October 2009 for any future recruitments.

2. Key Career Transition Points

- Appointment and Promotion Processes
- Action to level the Appointment and Promotion Playing Fields

2.1. Increase Communication of the Promotion Process

NHLI's data suggests that female academics are both being put forward and promoted and promoted at a similar rate as male academics within the Division. However, workshops and discussion with staff acknowledged that the promotion process has been perceived by some members of staff as poorly communicated by the College.

NHLI must abide by Imperial's promotion process but it will continue to ensure that all members of staff, both Imperial employees and those holding honorary contracts, are aware of the promotion process and its timetable.

Introduction of the Interim Professional Development Day ([3.2.](#)) and Academic Mentors ([3.1.](#)) scheme will further highlight the promotion process to all members of staff.

2.2. Increase Recruitment of Female Scientists

NHLI will encourage the recruitment of new female academics, both clinical and non-clinical. Beyond ensuring the fairness of process for those women who do apply, it will develop affirmative action that could be taken to solicit more and better applications from women. For clinical academic appointments this will be coordinated with [1.1.](#) above.

It is an accepted fact that female cardiovascular clinical academics are less represented within clinical academia and thus specific attention will be taken to increasing female cardiovascular clinical academics (<http://www.theheart.org/article/513191.do>).

2.2.1. Increase Outreach Activities to School Pupils

Increasing female clinical academic staff representation does not rely solely on ensuring opportunities for female clinical academics are available. It also requires ensuring that female pupils choose clinical academia as a life career.

NHLI therefore aims to increase its outreach activities to school pupils, informing them of the opportunities that are available to them and sharing with them NHLI's excitement for medical research, both as basic and clinical scientists. NHLI will ensure that both respiratory and cardiovascular sciences are represented.

2.2.2. Monitor and Increase Participation of BSc's

The data has shown that female participation in the respiratory BSc year of the College's MBBS programme is equal to male participation. However, it is clear that at this level, female students are already starting to avoid cardiovascular science as a topic.

NHLI aims to increase the representation of female students on the cardiovascular BSc by engaging with students during their three preceding years and therefore prior to choosing their BSc topic.

NHLI will research the most appropriate way of engaging with these students, which could be through a series of lectures or through an open day.

NHLI will continue to monitor female participation on the respiratory BSc and ensure continuity of gender parity.

This will be led by NHLI's Director of Undergraduate Studies (Sue Smith) and could be launched as soon as the new academic year (October 2009) depending on the results of the research and availability of timetabling.

2.2.3. Increase Recruitment of Clinical Research Fellows

NHLI's data show that clinical research fellows (CRF) follow the trend of parity within respiratory science and are under-represented within cardiovascular sciences.

NHLI's Clinical Research Fellow initiative aims to attract more cardiovascular and respiratory CRFs to NHLI to undertake research degrees. The initiative includes raising the profile of the Division within the nation's training fellow community through attendance and presentations at conferences and training days and optimising the research entry process (project and supervisor choices, funding applications, etc).

In particular, the initiative will target female cardiovascular trainees to actively recruit them to NHLI and provide them with the training that will form the basis of their clinical academic career.

The initiative was trialled in February 2009 with a presentation to North West Thames Respiratory Trainees, which was very successful. It will be launched more formally through NHLI's attendance at the British Cardiovascular Society conference and annual meeting on 1, 2, 3rd June 2009. NHLI has also already applied to the British Thoracic Society to attend its meeting and conference in December 2009.

The initiative is led by NHLI's Research Manager and Director of Postgraduate Studies in conjunction with a respiratory and a cardiovascular lead.

2.2.4. 'Women in Clinical Academia' Day

NHLI will set up a 'Women in Clinical Academia' day and ensure participation of its clinical female academics. These days will be tailored for both respiratory and cardiovascular clinical academics as both specialties will present different roadblocks which must be broken down.

This will be organised following the results of the research from [1.1.](#) and will be led by the Cardiovascular and Respiratory Faculty Research Theme Leaders.

3. Career Development – Provision, Support and Encouragement

- The Provision of Career Development
- Career Development Activities

3.1. Academic Mentors

NHLI has worked extensively towards the development of research trainees at degree and postdoctoral levels, having identified these career stages as being critical in retaining and developing the best staff. It has worked in line with the Graduate Schools and the Learning and Development Centre to provide a structure of mentoring and career development for each research student (including clinical research fellows) and postdoctoral scientist (See section 2(ii) of the NHLI Application).

NHLI has recognised that structured, constructive mentoring should not be limited to trainees and should also be available to academic staff. It was clear from discussions with staff throughout NHLI (Open Forums and Athena Workshops) that there was a need and a wish to have similar structures for academic staff.

NHLI will therefore introduce a structure of academic mentors throughout the Division. This mentoring system will be separate from any probationary scheme and will be structured in order that support and training is available for both mentors and mentees with recommendations such as time commitments and proposed outcomes.

NHLI will monitor participation to ensure a balanced workload for mentors, ensuring quality of the mentorship and preventing the detriment of their own career development.

Importantly, NHLI will gather feedback and monitor the programme as a whole ensuring that it is effective and fulfils its aims.

This scheme to be led by the Head and Associate Head of Division, supported by the Divisional Lead for Women and Divisional Administration Staff. It will require input from other departments throughout Imperial such as the Learning and Development Centre, the Centre for Professional Development and Human Resources.

The Division aims for the scheme to be implemented by summer 2011, following the research into and establishment of the scheme starting summer 2009.

3.2. Interim Professional Development Day

The introduction of NHLI's academic mentoring scheme will take research, planning and structuring prior to its launch.

However, NHLI also wishes to address the need for academic staff professional development in the short term, while the mentoring scheme is established.

The Division will therefore set up a series of interim professional development days, available to all NHLI academic staff and providing a confidential and voluntary service, facilitating career planning and professional development.

This scheme will be led by the Head of Division and Associate Head of Division, supported by the Divisional Lead for Women and Divisional Administration Staff. It will also require input from other departments throughout Imperial such as the Learning and Development Centre, the Centre for Professional Development and Human Resources.

NHLI aims to set up the first such day at the beginning of the new academic year, from October 2009.

4. Organisation and Culture

- Management Ethos, Structures and Decision Making
- Organisational Values, Communications and Culture

4.1. **Communications and Information**

With its geographical spread and size, NHLI has suffered from communication difficulties; an issue it has worked on addressing for several years.

Thus, communications and information provision within NHLI has increased significantly over the last few years. NHLI launched its monthly newsletter in 2007 following workshops with academic staff who had voiced concern over the provision disparity of some information. The newsletter is sent to all staff and students within NHLI, including those staff holding honorary contracts, staff on parenting leave, etc.

Further initiatives will be put in place to continue to increase communications and information provision within the Division.

Documents will be reviewed by the Divisional Lead for Women prior to their launch.

4.1.1. *NHLI Induction Information Pack*

Following discussion workshops, it was revealed that new members of staff can sometimes feel isolated within their research group. Whilst information on what NHLI support structures exist can be found on NHLI and Imperial's websites, it can be difficult to find if you don't know where to look or don't know that it is available.

NHLI has therefore decided to customise its induction process by providing all members of staff with an NHLI specific induction information pack which will be added to the College's starter pack for new staff.

This information pack will include information regarding the structure of the Division, both scientifically and administratively and a guide on who's who within the Division. The *who's who* guide will include key roles such as the Divisional Lead for Women, the Director of Postgraduate Studies and leads for the Athena Action Plan. It will also include key administration roles such as NHLI's Research Managers, Divisional Manager and Deputy Divisional Managers.

Upon completion, the information will be sent electronically to all current staff, ensuring that they are also kept up-to-date.

The information pack will be put together by the Research Managers and Deputy Divisional Managers with support from human resources and is expected to be ready by January 2010. It will then be distributed by human resources within new staff packs.

4.1.2. Improved Divisional Staff Communications

Opportunities such as flexible working, professional development events and postdoctoral travel awards are listed in NHLI's Newsletter and Funding Bulletin. How this information is then cascaded out can vary, for example some group or section administrators discuss relevant items during group or section meetings.

NHLI will re-enforce its policies, particularly in respect of items highlighted in workshops and the Athena Application, through the NHLI Newsletter, its Deputy Divisional Managers and group and section administrators. NHLI will also interact with academics' personal assistants.

4.1.3. NHLI Athena Annual Report

NHLI will put together an Athena Annual Report which will describe its activities towards the recruitment, training and retention of female academics. It will showcase the progress of its Action Plan, staff achievements and will be used as a tool for the recruitment of new female investigators, additional to generic and scientific literature and recruitment tools.

This report will be led by the Athena Lead and Administrator and will be annual with the first planned for summer 2010.

4.2. Committees and Management Roles

Women represent 33% of overall academic staff, however, NHLI's data showed that some of NHLI's committees had a lower representation from female staff in comparison to overall female staff, whilst other showed over-representations and thus potential committee overload. The lower representation is noticeable for committees which include clinical or cardiovascular scientists, but is similar to staff distribution in those fields.

The Division will ensure the appropriate representation of women on committees and in key divisional management roles (e.g. Director of Postgraduate Studies, Tutors, IT, Health & Safety, Divisional Advisory Group, Heads of Sections). It will also include any appropriate rotation of key positions and committee memberships.

This will be led by the Head of Division, Associate Head of Division in conjunction with committee chairpersons, senior academic staff and will be ongoing.

4.3. Visibility of Academic Women

The Division will increase the visibility of its women scientists in all NHLI communications. This will include pictorial visibility as well as textual and will include its website, the BHF Centre of Research Excellence literature and website, literature associated with the Clinical Research Fellow initiative ([2.2.3.](#)).

NHLI will continue to encourage female staff to update their Personal WebPages and provide technical and writing support for those who require it. The Division will invite female staff to sign up to the College's Expert Directory for media appearances and to join

the GetSET database run by the UK Resource Centre for Women in SET (media appearances, public appointments, etc).

Staff responsible for this will vary across the Division and will include the Course Organisers, Research Managers, BHF Centre of Research Excellence Manager, Centre for Respiratory Infection Manager and AV Technician (who has responsibility over NHLI's website).

5. Flexibility across the Working Day, Working Year and Working Life

- Career Breaks and Returning
- Flexible working

5.1. *Elsie Widdowson Fellowships*

The Elsie Widdowson Fellowship Scheme enables female academics to return from maternity or adoption leave and concentrate solely on research for a year in a way that fits in most easily with family obligations.

Whilst these fellowships are a College led initiative, NHLI has listed the scheme as an item in its Action Plan as it was learnt that most staff, academic and administrative, were unaware of its existence.

NHLI supports this scheme and will ensure that it is discussed with any female academic taking maternity or adoption leave.

This action plan item has already been launched. In May, NHLI approached one of its academic female staff who was about to take adoption leave. An application for an Elsie Widdowson fellowship is currently being drafted in conjunction with NHLI to be sent within the next couple of weeks.

This action will be led by the Divisional Lead for Women, supported by the Deputy Divisional Managers and group and section administrators.

5.2. *Flexible Working*

Discussion with staff during and following NHLI's workshops revealed that uptake of flexible working within the Division is currently dependent on individual line managers, sections or groups.

The Division aims to ensure that this is communicated thoroughly. The Head of Division has already strongly expressed his support during the recent Athena HoD open staff meeting and further information will be included within NHLI's newsletter and website and via NHLI's Divisional Lead for Women.

Section and group administrators, Heads of Sections and Groups and line managers will be briefed to ensure understanding of the policy and its divisional support.

Co-ordinated action will be taken to ensure that across NHLI there is a wide knowledge of the College's flexible working policy and to emphasise the NHLI's support of flexible working.

5.3. *Travel Awards including Caring Responsibilities*

Following workshops with postdoctoral staff which revealed their need for support in attending conferences and workshops, NHLI applied to the NHLI Foundation (registered charity 1048073) for a grant to support its postdoctoral staff in this area. This grant was

successfully awarded and the NHLI Foundation Postdoctoral Training Awards launched in January 2009 (See section 2(ii) of the NHLI Application).

Concurrently, the Athena application brought to the attention of the self assessment team, the difficulty for postdoctoral staff with caring responsibility of attending workshops or conferences. While travel grants cover attendance and travel arrangements, postdoctoral scientists encounter difficulties in arranging costs for any out-of-the-ordinary caring responsibilities.

The Division therefore secured further funding to cover extra-ordinary costs relating to caring responsibilities for any postdoctoral staff awarded an NHLI Foundation Postdoctoral Training Award.

The second round of application will be announced in autumn 2009 and will include this extra funding.

This scheme is administered by NHLI's Research Manager, publicised in the NHLI Newsletter and Funding Bulletin and supported by the NHLI PostDoc Committee.