

Equality, Inclusion, and Diversity Newsletter

School of Psychology TCD

Lessons learned from the Athena Swan Process: Insights from Prof. Teresa McCormack, Queen's University Belfast, UK

During the summer the School invited Prof. Teresa McCormack to speak on the Athena Swan Process in the School of Psychology, Queen's University Belfast. Athena Swan Self-Assessment Team member Ms. Ciara Mahon attended the talk and shared her thoughts on the process.

Teresa has spearheaded Queen's University Belfast's successful gender promotion efforts and their achievement of the prestigious Gold Athena SWAN medal (making them the first School of Psychology in the UK to be granted this award). Teresa shared her experience of the process and provided valuable information and advice on how to promote gender equality and compile a successful application for the Bronze medal. This article summarises the key insights that she provided.

Teresa acknowledged that the Athena SWAN process is an arduous, time consuming and effortful process and that success rates are not encouraging, with only 57% of applications successfully attaining a Bronze medal. Despite these deterrents, she emphasised the importance of engaging in this process, not just because it may improve bids for research funding, but because gender inequality is a big issue in Psychology and that addressing this issue can significantly improve the quality of work life for staff/students and enhance a sense of community within the School.



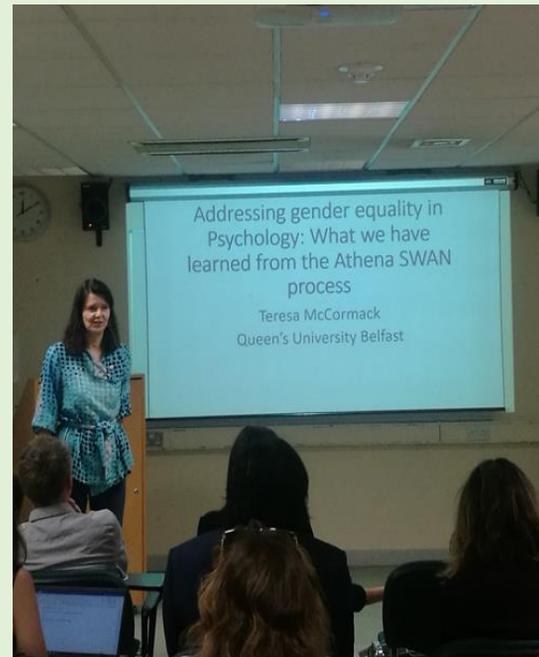
Trinity College Dublin
Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath
The University of Dublin

Contact us:

Email: eqid-psych@tcd.ie

Twitter: @PsychologyTCD

Website: <https://psychology.tcd.ie>



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Some findings

Bachelor's degrees and PhDs in Psychology are predominantly awarded to female candidates (at a ratio of approximately 70-75% female, 30-25% male), but when it comes to securing assistant professor positions or tenureship, the percentage attainment of these positions among females drops to under half.

Furthermore, 79% of males in Psychology earn more than females 5 years post-degree.

This indicates that despite being a female dominated field at the student level, career progression in Psychology appears to favour male applicants.



Recommendations for the Athena Swan process.

- The establishment of an organised, well-structured and focused working group that would steer the school towards the goal of gender equality.
- She suggested that this group scope out the gender related issues across all levels of the department using a variety of methods including surveys, focus groups and analysis of data trends in terms of admission/recruitment/progression in the department.
- Advised the Development of specific and reasonable action points to target the gender issues raised from these consultations and to put structures in place to facilitate these changes to be implemented.
- She recommended involving the whole school in this scoping process and keeping school members apprised of the school's progress with the equality process.

She also reminded us that this is a longstanding, continuous process and that it does not just stop with the attainment of a Bronze medal - the school is required to work to maintain their Bronze status and strive to advance to silver and gold medals. Though arduous the process is a positive and worthwhile experience