

Submission Title: Gender equality initiatives for the recruitment of female staff.

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If we are successful in getting runner-up status, we would be pleased to accept this, and that it be included as an exemplar of best practice in future Informatics Europe publications.

Abstract (100 words)

Within CSIS-Lero, we have formed an Athena SWAN committee responsible for the development of a Gender Action Plan which is currently being implemented. In this submission, we present 3 initiatives from the plan which specifically support the recruitment of female staff. These are: *Gender Balance on recruitment and promotion boards*, *Unconscious Bias training for all recruitment and promotion board members* and *Actively encouraging women to apply for positions*. They resulted in increases in the number of applications for positions within our department, and provided us with reflections on how to further improve our actions.

Description of the initiative: Gender equality initiatives for the recruitment of female staff

Within the Department of Computer Science and Information Systems and Lero – the Irish Software Research Centre, we formed in February 2017 an Athena SWAN (AS) committee tasked to develop a Gender Action Plan containing initiatives for Gender Equality in the department and centre. We are the only combined department/Research centre currently working towards the achievement of an Athena SWAN Award. For further information on Athena SWAN in Ireland, please see <https://www.ecu.ac.uk/equality-charters/athena-swan/athena-swan-ireland/>.

The CSIS-Lero AS Committee (CLASC) currently comprises 14 members (7F/7M) including the Head of Department Prof Tiziana Margaria, who is also a Lero Principal Investigator, and Lero Director Prof Brian Fitzgerald. Prof Ita Richardson is the current chair of the committee. The committee represents a cross-section of academic experience, career stages, professional staff and students. Nine members are in long-term relationships, five have or have had child-caring responsibilities during their career, and two care for an elderly/disabled relative. Four members have applied for promotion and seven moved to Ireland from abroad. Seven members are involved in equality of opportunity for women, nationally and internationally.

Among the initiatives developed and implemented by the CLASC, we focus in this submission on three initiatives relating specifically to the recruitment and promotion for the development of careers for female faculty:

1. Gender Balance on recruitment and promotion boards;
2. Unconscious Bias training for all recruitment and promotion board members;
3. Actively encouraging women to apply for positions.

1. Gender Balance on recruitment and promotion boards.

University of Limerick has held the Athena SWAN Bronze award since November 2015, successfully renewed in April 2019. An Athena SWAN requirement for UL is that recruitment and promotion boards must have at least 30% of each gender. The number of board members depends on the position being recruited. For example, Lecturer (Assistant Professor) positions boards would normally have at least 5 members, therefore they must include 2-3 women at the level of Lecturer or higher.

2. Unconscious Bias training.

UL's Athena SWAN Bronze award also introduced the requirement that all the members on a recruitment or promotion board must have undertaken an Unconscious Bias training. The training is provided on-line, can be therefore done in a work and family friendly time slot. This specific training is used nationally across Ireland's University sector, guaranteeing uniformity of awareness also when participating to boards at other universities, as external member. The CLASC have specifically encouraged all CSIS and Lero staff eligible to participate in any recruiting, mentoring or promotion activity to take the training, thus increasing the staff preparedness as a whole.

3. Actively encouraging women to apply for positions

While implementing the two initiatives above, we also recognised that the number of women applying for positions remained very low. Therefore, for any recruitment we have undertaken a strategy of contacting potential female applicants, identified through our individual or referral networks, giving them an opportunity to discuss their interest in the advertised job.

Lessons learned

The lessons learned so far, as evident from the detailed description in the next Section, are transformational of the approach CLASC is now enforcing in the Department and Centre for recruitment and career mentoring for women. We have experienced how a number of interlocking initiatives and changes of approach need to come together in order to have effects, and how this transformation is beneficial not only for the women involved, but for the entire atmosphere, discourse and decision making in the Department and Centre.

Evidence of Impact: Gender equality initiatives for the recruitment of female staff

Academic positions

CSIS-Lero have currently 29% of female academic staff. Between 2015-2017, there were 10 academic appointments within CSIS-Lero (see Table 4.1). 28% of the total number of applicants were females, of whom 55% were deemed appointable and 38% took positions. This is higher than our departmental average. Disappointingly, no women applied for a full professorship advertised in 2018, although approached during the search. We are currently reflecting on what to do differently in the future if a similar position arises.

Early-career female academics now getting the opportunity to sit on interview boards has been a positive change: they call it “*a valuable addition*” to their curriculum vitae and career development and “*a huge help to understand the process and the way of thinking from ‘the other side’*”, as one of the junior faculty members said after having participated in two interview committees outside the CSIS scope. She described the main advantage to be “*for my own future interviews and CV preparation*”.

Another Lecturer who got tenure after mentoring in CV writing and non-textual output description (e.g. for Digital Media exhibitions and curations) has meanwhile been appointed as Artistic Director of the Transmediale in Berlin – an influential role with top international visibility and reputation. We are currently co-designing for her with UL’s HR the first EU secondment UL ever for faculty.

Table 4.1 Applications for academic positions 2015–2017.

Year	Positions		Applicants		Shortlisted		Appointable		Accepted	
			F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M
2015	Head of department	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0
	Lecturer	1	4	6	2	2	1	0	1	0
	Teaching assistant	1	6	7	2	1	1	0	0	0
	Total/Percentage	3	46%	54%	63%	37%	100%	0%	100%	0%
2016	Lecturer	1	3	20	1	1	1	0	0	0
	Teaching assistant	2	9	17	3	7	1	2	0	2
	Total/Percentage	3	24%	76%	33%	67%	50%	50%	0%	100%
2017	Lecturer	2	3	22	0	6	0	2	0	2
	Teaching assistant	2	7	14	2	3	1	1	1	1
	Total/Percentage	4	22%	78%	18%	82%	25%	75%	25%	75%
Overall Total / Percentage		10	28%	72%	35%	65%	55%	45%	38%	62%

Researcher positions

Twenty-nine percent of CSIS-Lero researchers are female. For the 23 research positions to be filled 2015-2018, 23%F and 77%M applied, with 26%F and 74%M shortlisted, 27%F and 73%M appointable, and 27% and 73% accepted. (Table 4.2). These statistics indicate that the initiatives which we are undertaking have been successful for researchers.

Table 4.2 Applications for research positions 2015–June 2018.

Year	Positions		Applicants		Shortlisted		Appointable		Accepted	
			F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M
2015	Postdoctoral researcher	12	28	71	8	29	5	13	3	9
	Research fellow	2	7	21	7	8	2	3	1	0
	Senior fellow	1	2	2	1	1	1	0	1	0
	Total/Percentage	15	28%	72%	30%	70%	33%	67%	36%	64%

2016	Postdoctoral researcher	1	1	4	0	0	0	0	0	1
	Research fellow	1	6	24	0	7	0	2	0	1
	Research assistant	1	2	1	2	0	1	0	1	0
	Total/Percentage	3	24%	76%	22%	78%	33%	67%	33%	67%
2017	Postdoctoral researcher	4	1	21	1	6	0	3	0	2
	Research fellow	1	2	9	1	3	0	1	0	1
	Total/Percentage	5	9%	91%	18%	82%	0%	100%	0%	100%
2018	Postdoctoral researcher	6	1	19	0	2	0	1	0	1
	Senior research fellow	1	1	3	0	2	0	1	0	1
	Total/Percentage	7	8%	92%	0%	100%	0%	100%	0%	100%
Overall Total / Percentage		23	23%	77%	26%	74%	27%	73%	27%	73%

David Parnas Fellowships

Since 2016 Lero awards every year 1-2 Parnas fellowships to international researchers. The response from female candidates during the first 2 rounds was disappointing. In 2016, 2 women and 12 men applied (for the 2017 fellowship) and two men were appointed. A review of the advertisement for gender language found no problems, so we acted on the selection panel composition. The selection panel, which had been publicly advertised, was changed from 10% to 33% female. In the next round, still only 2 women applied out of 23 applicants. In 2017, we enforced the third proactive initiative and contacted individual women internationally. Following feedback, we wrote a frequently asked questions clarifying potential issues. This action resulted in higher numbers of female applicants (40% in 2017), and we have appointed 2 women and 3 men (40% women) in 2017 and 2018. This significant increase is clearly due to our targeted initiative.

ALECS Marie Skłodowska-Curie COFUND Fellowship Programme

The Principal Investigator, Prof Mike Hinchey and the Project Manager, Mariana Clohessy implemented a similar information, search and appointment strategy for the ALECS Marie Skłodowska-Curie COFUND Fellowship Programme. After a disappointing first recruitment round in March 2018 with only 14% women applicants and no women appointed, they moved to actively target female candidates resulting in 28% of female applicants for the second round. They also ensured a balanced reviewer pool (50% of each gender) and that each 3-person interview committee consisted of at least one woman and one man. In this round women were offered 4 of 14 research positions (29%, close to the 28% applicant rate).

As a further outcome from this initiative, professional and support staff - who are mainly women - have been given for the first time the opportunity to participate as members of interview boards. This allows them to develop personally and to gain extra experience for their personal curriculum vitae.

Table 4.3 Applications for ALECS Research positions

Year	Positions		Applicants		Shortlisted		Appointable		Accepted	
			F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M
Mar 2018	Research Fellow	14	2	12	1	10	0	7	0	7
	Percentage		14%	86%	9%	91%	0%	100%	0%	100%
Nov 2018	Research Fellow	25	7	18	4	12	4	10	-	-
	Percentage		28%	76%	25%	78%	29%	71%	-	-

Summary

Within CSIS-Lero, the three strategic initiatives described above have been implemented and demonstrably they do support women in their careers. Furthermore, the Gender Action Plan we developed now supports academics, researchers, but also post-graduate students and undergraduate students. The scope of the actions thus now extends to those younger cohorts who could consider computer science or software engineering as a career.