

Athena SWAN Bronze and Silver Department award application

Name of institution: University of Oxford **Date of application:** April 2012

Department: Experimental Psychology

Contact for application: Professor Dorothy Bishop

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Departmental website address: <http://www.psy.ox.ac.uk/>

Date of university Bronze SWAN award: 2010

Level of award applied for: Silver



Athena SWAN **Bronze and 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 Charter Coordinator well in advance to check eligibility.

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

At the end of each section state the number of words used.

Click [here](#) for additional guidance on completing this template.

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 SET activities that have made a significant contribution to the achievement of the departmental mission.

DEPARTMENT OF EXPERIMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY
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Athena SWAN application – letter of endorsement

I am writing as Head of the Department of Experimental Psychology at Oxford University to indicate my strongest support for this application.

I am fully committed to promoting gender equality in all activities. This starts with our undergraduate recruitment strategy which places a strong emphasis on outreach activities aimed at attracting high achievers of both sexes to aspire to undertake our degree course. In recruiting researchers and academic staff, we encourage potential applicants to consider the supportive nature of the working environment that we offer and the generous and flexible family support that the University provides. I believe that flexible working should be a normal aspiration for staff on any grade, allowing them to plan and manage child-care or other caring responsibilities; examples of how we put this into practice are included in our application. Since coming in as the new Head, I have also implemented several changes to ensure wider representation of women and younger staff on our committees, and have set in place procedures for ongoing collection of the statistics required to ensure that our practices continue to deliver equal outcomes across the board – from pay and promotions through to the allocation of degree classes. We have changed the timing of meetings to make it easier for those with young children to attend and we have taken specific measures (including establishing a new named lecture series) to give female role models to younger staff. My aim is to build a community in which everyone feels they have an important role to play, knows what is going on, respects other individuals and feels a part of the future: an environment where people feel their talents and abilities are fully developed and utilised - one in which they look forward to coming to work.

During the self-assessment process required to prepare this application, we have learnt a good deal about ourselves and how we do our business. I am keen to incorporate what we have learnt in our future plans, and progress will be monitored by the newly established Athena SWAN Panel of which I am a member. The formal monitoring process will help us build on recent success in recruiting some world-class younger scientists, both as academic staff and researchers, over the past few years and help in developing a larger team of successful and influential female academics at all levels in the institution.

I have been impressed by the enthusiasm and commitment of the departmental Athena SWAN self-assessment Panel. Working around their already heavy research, teaching and family commitments, they have contributed to a serious re-evaluation of the activities and ethos of the Department, and have set us on a course that will benefit many staff in the future. I view our application as part of an ongoing process of tuning practice to the requirements of providing fair and equal opportunities for all, and will continue to review and amend operations as new issues and demands are raised. *[490 words]*

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Glyn Humphreys'.

Glyn Humphreys

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;
- 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;
- 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.

Professor Dorothy Bishop heads the self-assessment team. Since 1998 she has been a Wellcome Trust Principal Research Fellow in Experimental Psychology. She does not have children. She lives with her husband, who is a retired academic.

Professor Glyn Humphreys is Head of Department in Experimental Psychology. He joined the Department in October 2011. He is married to a fellow academic in the Department, and has three children and two grandchildren.

Dr Christopher Summerfield is a University Lecturer. He joined the University in 2008. He is married with two children, aged 4 and 5.

Dr Robin Murphy is a University Lecturer appointed in 2009. He is married to an academic, and has two children aged 16 and 11.

Dr Anna Mitchell is a MRC Career Development Fellow and University Lecturer. She joined the University as a postdoctoral research assistant in 2004. She is married, and has two daughters aged 5 and 2. Her husband also works in Experimental Psychology.

Professor Emily Holmes is Professor of Clinical Psychology in the Department of Psychiatry and a member of the Athena SWAN Panel for both Experimental Psychology and Psychiatry. She joined the University in 2005. Her partner is a clinician and they have a daughter, aged 3.

Dr Ananthi Al Ramiah was a postdoctoral research associate on the Leverhulme Project on Ethnoreligious

Diversity and Trust, and a Research Fellow at Wolfson College. She joined the Department as a DPhil student in 2005. She is married and has a 3-year-old daughter. She left Oxford to move to Malaysia early in 2012.

Dr Anneke Haddad is a Junior Research Fellow at Magdalen College. She joined the University in 2005 as a DPhil student in the Department of Psychiatry. Her partner is also an academic.

Ms Belinda Platt is a third year DPhil student in Experimental Psychology. She joined the University in 2008 as a Research Assistant then completed an MSc in the Department of Psychiatry.

Mr Peter Ward is the teaching laboratory supervisor. He joined the Department in 1968, and is married with three adult children. His wife has been severely disabled since 1990 and he is her principal carer.

Ms Anne Mackintosh works part-time (60% FTE) as the Administrative Secretary of the Oxford Centre for Developmental Science. She has another life as a self-employed teacher of T'ai Chi, and keen amateur musician. Her role in the self-assessment team is to help with assembling statistical and other data.

Mrs Pippa Hitchcock is the Departmental Administrator, with responsibility for financial, health and safety, facilities and human resources management in the Department. She is married and has worked in the University since March 2000.

Dorothy Bishop was appointed to a new departmental Executive Committee in 2010, with responsibility for academic career development. She became interested in Athena SWAN after being invited to talk at the Psychology Department at York University in April 2011, as part of their Athena SWAN initiative. She was impressed to see how the scheme had benefited men as well as women, in terms of leading to better and more transparent working arrangements. She was encouraged by the Executive Committee to find out more about Athena SWAN.

The new HOD Glyn Humphreys, who took up his post in October 2011, was enthusiastic about applying for a Silver award. The process started with a short survey sent to all staff and graduate students in October 2011, accompanied by an email explaining the purpose of Athena SWAN and encouraging men as well as women to respond (anonymously). The ten items were inspired by the Athena

SWAN factsheets and included questions about gender and post, responsibilities for dependants, flexible working, attitudes to child-care provision, mentoring, appraisal, workload allocation, and timing of meetings. Results from the survey were summarised by Dorothy and circulated to Panel members to provide a focus for our first meeting on 7/11/11.

Response rate to survey: N responses (% of all staff)

	Male	Female	Total
Graduate student	3 (13%)	23 (56%)	26 (41%)
Research Assistant	0 (0%)	4 (57%)	4 (29%)
Postdoc, own funding	1 (25%)	2 (100%)	3 (50%)
Postdoc, other funding	4 (31%)	10 (53%)	14 (44%)
Academic staff	9 (60%)	5 (63%)	14 (61%)
Senior Researcher	3 (100%)	6 (100%)	9 (100%)

It is noteworthy that the percentage of men responding increased with seniority, perhaps reflecting the fact that by a later stage of their career, child-care has become relevant for many men and women.

The responses threw up several pertinent findings:

- While we could not rule out the possibility of respondent bias (i.e. men with responsibilities may have been more interested in completing the survey than those without), it is clear that **a significant number of males, as well as females, in the Department had responsibilities for dependants;**
- There was **widespread ignorance about opportunities for flexible working, maternity leave, assistance with child-care and mentoring;**
- Those with children found the **timing of departmental seminars (4:30 pm on a Tuesday) non-optimal.** However, researchers who did field-work in schools regarded lunchtime meetings as problematic;
- Many of those in the Department felt their **workload was fair, but a substantial proportion (50%) felt this was hard to judge because of lack of transparency.**

The Panel discussed ways of responding to these issues. We met again on 5/12/11 for a brain-storming session, where each member was asked to study either one of the Athena SWAN fact-sheets, or an application submitted by another university, and to come to the meeting with suggestions that could be incorporated in our Action

Plan. This generated prolonged and constructive discussion. It was suggested that there should be a departmental role of Athena Champion, which Dorothy Bishop would take on. The Panel met again in March 2012 to discuss the draft award application. The application was also circulated to the whole Department with an invitation to comment.

After April 2012, the self-assessment team will meet once a term. Each year, one meeting will focus on monitoring implementation of the plan, with responsibility for different aspects being delegated to different members of the Department. A second meeting will follow an annual survey based on the one already conducted, to evaluate progress. This meeting will also be informed by termly meetings between the HOD, Departmental Administrator, Athena Champion and postdoctoral scientists. The third meeting will be a brainstorming meeting to generate new ideas and reflect further on the success of actions already implemented, or difficulties in implementation.
[999 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.

The Department of Experimental Psychology engages in teaching for two Honour Schools and has a wide-ranging research programme. The Department is best known for its strength in work with a neuroscience orientation, but also does basic work in cognitive, social and developmental psychology. Oxford Psychology achieved outstanding results in the 2008 Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), with 35% of the Department's work rated in the highest category 4*. The Department is situated in a well-equipped building within the Medical Sciences Division. We have a young staff profile, with 11 new University Lecturers or equivalent being appointed in the past ten years.

A key part of the life and strength of the Department is that it attracts many people, at all levels from postdocs to senior professors, who hold externally funded fellowships. In addition to our 19 University lecturers/professors, 20 externally-funded researchers were entered in our successful RAE submission for 2008.

Experimental Psychology at Oxford is taught as a scientific discipline, involving substantial amounts of

practical work and experimentation at undergraduate level. Historically, the first degree course to be offered including psychology in Oxford was PPP - Psychology with Philosophy or Physiology. Experimental Psychology was established as a separate degree in 1970, and Psychology with Physiology has recently been superseded by Biomedical Sciences (including Neuroscience). A new PPL (Psychology, Philosophy and Linguistics) degree will come on stream in 2013.

In addition to lectures, seminars and practical projects, tutorials constitute a substantial component of a student's weekly activity and involve weekly meetings with 1-3 students in which dialogue, communication, exam/essay preparation and idea development are fostered. Staff engaged in tutorial support include part-time and temporary Lecturers as well as full-time University Lecturers, Research Fellows and Professors. Tutorials make a significant time demand on students and academics. College tutors are primary points of contact for students for academic and non-academic matters. This level of interaction is a valuable addition to the educational experience and places particular responsibilities on staff to maintain continuity across the years.

Post-graduate training is another major aspect of teaching activity in the Department, with two taught postgraduate courses, and a body of graduate students doing Masters degrees or (more usually) doctorates by research.

2010 was a difficult year for the Department. Our HOD, Oliver Braddick retired, but appointment of his replacement turned out to be a protracted process. Furthermore, we had anticipated that the holder of the other statutory chair in the Department would take over as HOD, but he was promoted to be a Pro Vice-Chancellor, and so not able to undertake this role. The Department was therefore put in a difficult position. Three senior women in the Department were approached and asked if they would serve as HOD; all declined, despite the enthusiasm of their colleagues. Fortunately, Professor Braddick was willing and able to defer his retirement and stay on as HOD for a further year. An Executive Committee was set up during this year to help devolve some of the HOD duties to other senior staff members.

2011 has been a year of major changes, with the arrival of two new statutory chairs: Professor David Clark and Professor Glyn Humphreys, with the latter taking on the role of Head of Department. We have also benefitted from

the relocation of Wellcome Trust Principal Research Fellow Professor Anke Ehlers to Oxford, and Professor Jane Riddoch from Birmingham.

Since arriving, Professor Humphreys has been strongly engaged with the Athena SWAN bid, and an active member of our Panel. The timing of this application has been fortunate, as Professor Humphreys plans to introduce a number of changes relevant to Department management and career development, and it has been possible to feed in ideas coming from the Athena Panel to this process. Since his arrival, a new senior administrative post has been created with responsibility for research.

- 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.

Not applicable: we do not have foundation courses.

- (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.

We do not have part-time students. The percentages of women in the new student intake for the three years in question are 66%, 71% and 71%.

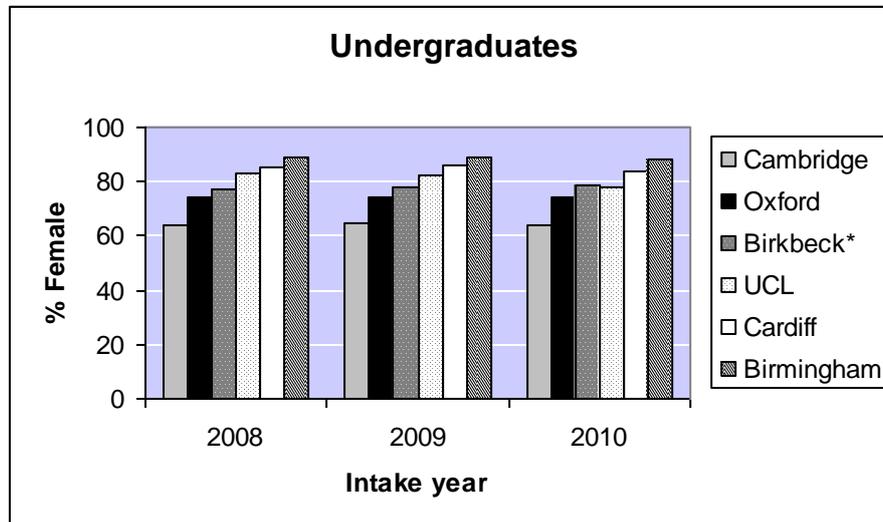
Table 3.b.ii.

UG Student Numbers				
Gender	09/10	10/11	11/12	Total
Female	56	59	55	170
Male	29	24	22	75
Total	85	83	77	245

The HEIDI database (<http://www.heidi.ac.uk/>) was used to obtain figures for male and female undergraduates at Oxford University and five other psychology departments with comparable results in the Research Assessment Exercise: namely, the University of Cambridge, Birkbeck College, University College London, University of

Birmingham, and University of Cardiff. Data on percentages of females in psychology for three years from 2008 are shown in Figure 3.b.ii.

Figure 3.b.ii.



* Birkbeck figures are for part-time students - all others full-time

There are consistent differences between institutions in the proportions of female undergraduates, but all have greater than 50% females, and Oxford is close to average in its proportion of women.

This confirms that, unlike many other SET subjects, persuading women to apply for psychology courses is not a problem. We will continue to work hard to attract academically able students to apply to us, regardless of gender, and will monitor gender ratios - see Action Plan (AP 1.2) - but the main focus of our Action Plan is with later career stages.

- (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.

Table 3.b.iii. shows numbers of men and women reading for the MSc in Psychological Methods and the MSc in Neuroscience.

Table 3.b.iii.

Year	Psychol methods			Neuroscience		
	female	male	% F	female	male	% F
2008-09	7	4	63	13	10	56
2009-10	8	4	66	9	9	50
2010-11	6	3	66	17	8	68

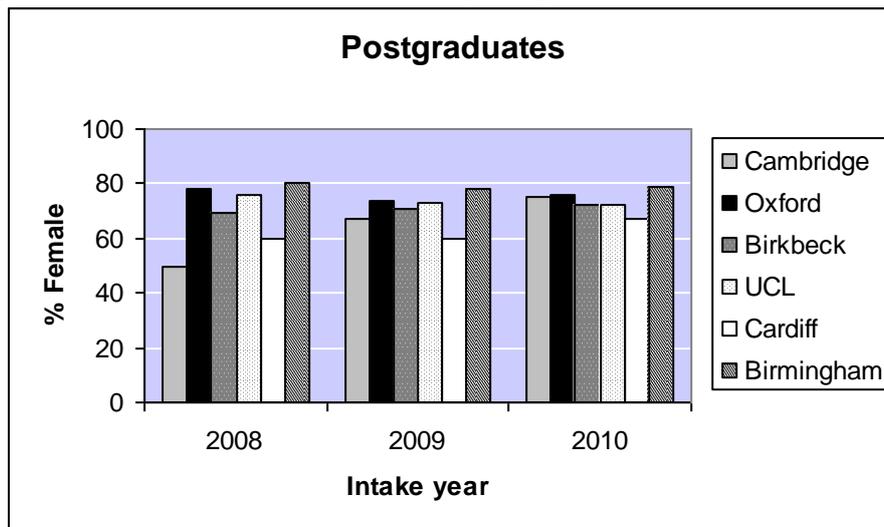
As there is already a preponderance of females, and we feel that a mix of males and females is good for the subject, we will continue to monitor gender ratios (AP 1.4) but do not plan any action to increase applications from women.

- (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.**

As at December 2011, there were 41 female and 23 male full-time graduate students in years 1-4. The percentage of women over the past three years has ranged from 65% to 70%. Oxford does not have part-time graduate students.

Comparative data for other University psychology departments are taken from the HEIDI database. These are based on smaller numbers than for undergraduates, and so have more variability. The impression is that, overall, Oxford does well in terms of retaining women from undergraduate to postgraduate level by comparison with similar institutions (see Figure 3.b.iv).

Figure 3.b.iv. % Male and female postgraduates in 4* institutions



See point (iii): we do not plan any action to increase applications from women.

- (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.

Data for undergraduates are taken from the website: [http://www.ox.ac.uk/about the university/facts and figure s/undergraduate admissions statistics/index.html](http://www.ox.ac.uk/about_the_university/facts_and_figures/undergraduate_admissions_statistics/index.html) Data are shown for 2008-2010, the latest year for which verified statistics are available. Female applicants outnumber males by approximately 3:1. The differences in success rates for males and females are not statistically significant (all chi-square tests $p > .05$).

Table 3.b.v.(a)

UG applications for EP/PPP				
Gender	2008	2009	2010	Total
Female	264	298	324	886
Male	94	93	122	309

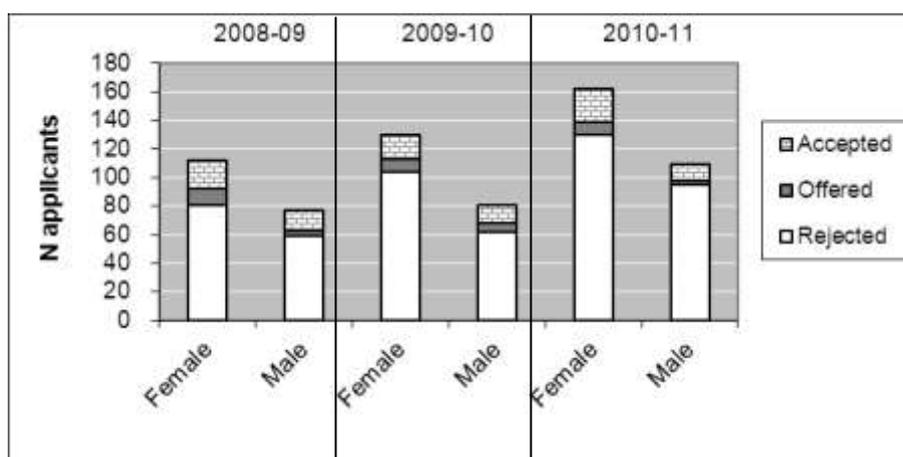
Table 3.b.v.(b)

% successful applicants				
Gender	2008	2009	2010	Total
Female	23	21	16	20
Male	23	30	18	23
chi sq	0.00	3.46	0.34	1.76
p-value	0.99	0.06	0.56	0.18

Oxford is acutely sensitive to criticisms of bias in its admissions, but this has focused more on issues of race and social background than gender. A great deal of outreach work is done to address this. There is no evidence of any systematic bias in the proportions of males and females accepted to read psychology.

Application and acceptance rates for males and females for our taught MSc courses are shown in Figure 3.b.v.(a). As with undergraduates, there is an excess of female applicants. Over all three years, 78% of females and 81% of males had their applications rejected, a non-significant difference on chi-square test.

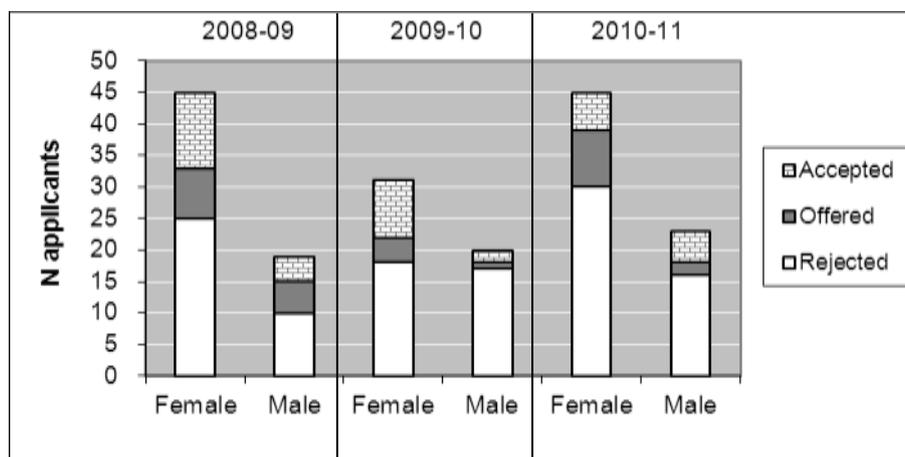
Figure 3.b.v.(a) Fate of applications for postgraduate taught courses



As shown in Figure 3.b.v.(b), women are more likely to apply to read for a doctorate than men; acceptance rates fluctuate year by year but there are no gross differences between genders. For data summed across all three years, offers were made to 40% of female applicants and 31% of

male applicants. This difference is not statistically significant on chi-square test.

Figure 3.b.v.(b) Fate of applicants for postgraduate research places



We will continue to monitor completion rates for postgraduates (AP 1.5), but do not see this as a current source of concern.

- (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.

All written work is anonymised to minimise the possibility of gender bias. Owing to low student numbers, particularly of males, a three-year moving average was taken. In these averages, the proportions of Firsts awarded varied between 25% and 28% for women, and 21% and 33% for men. The wider variation for men is probably explained by the lower numbers of individuals. The differences in the proportions of Firsts awarded to men and women did not attain statistical significance in any case. We will continue to monitor gender ratios (AP 1.3) but do not regard this as a current source of concern.

Table 3.b.vi.

3-year bin	Percentages first class degrees		
	Female	Male	Sig?
2006-08	25%	33%	NS
2007-09	27%	29%	NS
2008-10	25%	21%	NS
2009-11	28%	22%	NS

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.

Oxford does not have the grades of Reader or Senior Lecturer. Figures are presented for the grades of Professor, Lecturer, Senior Researcher (grade 8 and above) and postdoctoral Research Associates (grade 7).

Table 3.b.vii.(a)

Staff categories	Year	Female	Male	Total N	% Female
Professor	2009	4	8	12	33
	2010	4	8	12	33
	2011	4	7	11	36
Lecturer	2009	5	4	9	56
	2010	5	5	10	50
	2011	6	5	11	55
Sen. Researcher	2009	6	6	12	50
	2010	5	8	13	38
	2011	6	7	13	46
Postdoctoral	2009	21	14	35	60
	2010	14	9	23	61
	2011	16	11	27	59

The ratio of males:females does not differ significantly from 50:50 for any staff category. The ratios are fairly constant from year to year. We do, however, note a trend for the proportion of females to decline, going from the most junior (postdoctoral) category up to the most senior (Professor). Given the sample size, this is not statistically reliable, but is in the same direction as stronger trends seen in larger surveys in other SET disciplines. It is also worth noting that the ratio of females:males in these academic staff categories is lower than that seen for students, where females predominate. Thus, while our Department has a good gender balance among staff, we do show the same tendency as other disciplines to lose disproportionate numbers of women between the student stage and academic careers.

Table 3.b.vii.(b)

	Professor				Other			
	N male	N fem	% fem	95% CI	N male	N fem	% fem	95% CI
Oxford	7	3	30	.11-.61	7	8	53	.30-.75
Cambridge	7	3	30	.11-.61	10	3	23	.08-.51
Birmingham	8	2	20	.05-.51	27	22	45	.31-.59
UCL*	21	17	45	.30-.60	51	52	50	.41-.60
Birkbeck	15	3	17	.05-.39	8	10	56	.34-.75
Cardiff	22	6	21	.10-.39	14	4	22	.09-.45

*holder of Athena SWAN silver award

Table 3.b.vii.(b) shows comparative data for Academic staff from Oxford relative to five other institutions that were top-scoring departments in the RAE. Information is taken from departmental websites in March 2012 and does not include Research Fellows, since these are not consistently reported on the web. A broad distinction is drawn between Professors and Others. The percentage of females in post, together with the 95% confidence interval of the estimate, is given.

The confidence intervals for Oxford span 50% for both categories, and are therefore compatible with lack of bias. This is also true for Cambridge, Birmingham, and UCL. Birkbeck and Cardiff have a male bias for Professors; Cardiff also has a male bias in the 'Other' category.

Overall, these figures emphasise the need to focus on the transition between graduate student and postdoctoral researcher, as a key period when many women leave the field. We plan to monitor postgraduate destinations to throw light on the reasons for this (AP 2.1). Research suggests that child-rearing is a major factor in this trend, which affects all of academia. Our Action Plan therefore focuses heavily on this issue, by looking at ways of reducing the pressures on women who would like to stay in academia while raising a family. We also think it important to create an environment where male staff regard it as natural for men to take parental leave.

(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.

Since 2008 the only departures of tenured academic staff have been through retirement (three male staff members)

or promotion (one male staff member moving to become Pro-Vice Chancellor). There have been two cases (one male and one female) where postdoctoral researchers have faced redundancy because of termination of funding; in both cases, the Department has provided three months of bridge-funding, then offered a part-time appointment to help avoid the loss of pension rights. One female postdoc left her post early to accompany her husband, who had a good job offer in their native country. She has young children and there was concern that she might leave science at this point, but we recently heard she will take up a lecturing post in a few months' time.

We have been pleased to be able to accommodate a postdoctoral married couple, where the woman obtained a Wellcome Trust Fellowship here, and her husband obtained support from Wellcome to join her on a spousal scheme. They subsequently had a child, and have recently moved to joint faculty appointments in a high-ranking Canadian university.

Overall, our administration takes pride in being sensitive to the difficulties facing researchers on 'soft' money, and to the impact of commitments such as parenthood. Staff feel able to obtain support and advice on these issues and attempts will always be made to find creative solutions to individual cases. Our Action Plan includes an item on monitoring staff destinations and reasons for leaving (AP 1.7 and AP 3.2). [1975 words]

Supporting and advancing women's careers – maximum 5000 words

4. 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.

We are a small department so data have been amalgamated across the three years, as there would otherwise be numerous empty cells. The following tables show the numbers applying, shortlisted, and appointed to posts at grades 4-5 (secretarial/technical), 6 (graduate research assistant) and 7 (postdoctoral):

Table 4.a.i.

Female	Sec/Tech	Grad RA	Postdoc
Applied	57	269	95
Shortlisted	12	72	21
Accept	3	11	7
%shortlisted	17	20	17

Male	Sec/Tech	Grad RA	Postdoc
Applied	19	76	102
Shortlisted	2	21	21
Accept	0	1	8
%shortlisted	10	21	16

There is no gender bias in rates of shortlisting. In terms of appointments, the numbers are too small for meaningful statistics, but it is noteworthy that in the postdoc category, where there are roughly equal numbers of male and female applicants, the percentages of men and women shortlisted and appointed are closely similar. These statistics were, however, difficult to assemble, and there is a need for high-quality, easily-accessed data on this topic. We aim to improve access to relevant data and shall continue to monitor these statistics (see AP 1.6).

The table does, however, confirm a drop in the proportion of female applicants from the graduate RA level (where 78% of applicants are female) to the postdoctoral level (where 48% of applicants are female). Nevertheless, caution is needed because gender ratios can fluctuate

considerably from one post to another, depending on the sub-speciality concerned. A high proportion of Research Assistant posts have been in developmental psychology, which is known to attract more women than men. Many students take a short-term Research Assistant post to gain work experience before going into vocational training in clinical or educational psychology, and these professions attract a high proportion of women.

Of our eight most recent appointments to University lectureships, four were men and four were women. Overall, there were 84 female applicants, of whom 19% were shortlisted, and 134 male applicants, of whom 15% were shortlisted. The gender ratio tends to vary according to whether the post is in a particular area. As noted below (see Other), there are large differences in gender ratios across sub-disciplines. Thus when a post was advertised in the area of Perception, which is traditionally a male-dominated area, there were 29 male applicants and nine female applicants. A female was appointed to this post.

Overall, there is no statistical evidence of any gender bias in shortlisting or appointments.

- (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.

Promotion operates differently in Oxford compared with similar psychology departments in the UK. There have been three main categories of academic post at Oxford: professorships, readerships, and lectureships, but readerships are now phased out and nobody in Experimental Psychology is at this grade. Oxford does not distinguish between different ranks of lecturer (e.g. senior and principal). All those appointed to the lecturer scale may proceed automatically to the top of the scale (currently £57,431), which compares favourably with professorial salaries in some institutions. Arrangements have been approved for a new system of merit pay for lecturers but these have not yet been implemented because of financial constraints (http://www.ox.ac.uk/gazette/2009-10/supps/1_4915.pdf)

The vast majority of initial academic appointments are to lectureships, and there is a biennial 'Recognition of Distinction' exercise, in which all eligible staff can apply directly for the title of Professor. Those who wish to do so are encouraged to discuss their application with their HOD,

but this is not required. In future, those awarded the title of Professor and awarded merit pay will be able to apply for Professorial Distinction Awards.

During 2010-2011, two lecturers (one male, one female) were considered for promotion to professorial grade but were not ultimately put forward. The title of Professor was awarded to the only Wellcome Trust Senior Research fellow in the Department (male). In the previous exercise (2008-2009), the title of Professor was awarded to a male Royal Society Research Fellow.

Because the system for promotions at Oxford is under review, it is not possible to make plans on a clear time-scale, but when the next promotions exercise takes place, we shall monitor promotion rates by gender (AP 1.8).

Lack of clear criteria for identifying candidates for promotion has been a weakness in the current system, and is potentially disadvantageous for women. Women are often reluctant to put themselves forward, when similarly-qualified men will do so. In addition, decisions are sometimes influenced by concern about retaining a research star in the Department. This is understandable, but it would be preferable if there were a transparent system which specified the criteria used to make promotion decisions, and took into account administrative and teaching responsibilities as well as research productivity. In addition, there should be regular appraisal of all staff in relation to such criteria so that they can, on the one hand, identify what they need to do to be recommended by the HOD for promotion and, on the other, feel comfortable with promotion decisions affecting their colleagues. Both these items are in our Action Plan (AP 4.3, 4.4, 5.2).

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 departmental selection committees include at least one member of each sex and the Chair of every selection panel has been trained in fair selection procedures.

A key future step in attracting the best female candidates is to increase awareness and transparency of

the female and family-friendly aspects of the Department (see AP 4.1, 5.6, 5.7, 5.8, 6.1, 6.3, 6.4).

- (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.

The University's Code of Practice for the Employment and Career Development of Research Staff is circulated to all staff. However, our survey indicated that a more proactive approach may be needed to ensure that people read and act on this. Our Action Plan involves publicising such information through our termly newsletter, which is widely read (AP 6.1).

The Departmental Administrator ensures that relevant groups are circulated when courses on career development and related topics are run by the Careers Service or the MPLS Division. There has been reasonable take-up, but we feel more could be done and are planning to include sessions on these courses in gatherings of graduate students and postdocs (AP 2.2, 4.6). The postdoc community shifts rapidly and we recognise the need to maintain updated mailing lists to ensure that all are reached and none feels excluded (AP 5.5).

Although a mentoring scheme existed in theory, discussions with probationary staff in 2010 indicated that this was not functioning in practice. Accordingly the former HOD and Executive Committee agreed that a more formal system should be established. Guidelines were drawn up and circulated after discussion with relevant parties, and checks were made to ensure all staff had a mentor and that mentors understood what was required of them. It is appreciated that this needs active surveillance and an item on this is included in our Action Plan (AP 4.2).

Maternity is a key transition point, and the Department has already introduced improvements to ensure that staff are kept aware of parental leave arrangements and are supported through parenthood. Our Action Plan includes an explicit commitment to take parental leave into account in a workload model, so that staff with young children are not expected to undertake onerous administrative tasks, such as Director of Graduate Studies, for one year after the birth of a child (AP 6.3).

5. 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?

Appraisal was noted as an area of concern for several staff who responded to the survey in November 2011. At the time when a start was made on the Athena submission, there was no systematic approach to appraisal, and some staff expressed a wish for more structure. On his arrival in October 2011, our new HOD immediately started a process of Personal Development Review for tenured staff and those on research contracts, which was broadly welcomed. In our Action Plan this is an important process that will be extended and carefully monitored (AP 4.3).

Another issue that was raised independently by several respondents to the survey was a lack of transparency regarding pay rises, secretarial and other personal or research support, and teaching buyouts. It was clear that some women felt that men were able to achieve better deals for themselves than women. This too is an area where there is room for improvement, and where we plan to do more to clarify the criteria required for promotion or other forms of advancement (AP 5.2).

- (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 Oxford Learning Institute offers an online induction for new staff including a module on equality and diversity issues. All teaching staff involved in student admissions are required to undergo such training. New staff are provided with information about professional and personal development opportunities when they start in post.

At the University level, there are termly 'Welcome to Oxford' events for new researchers run jointly by the Careers Service and the Oxford Learning Institute. Springboard is a women's development programme open to all women members of staff (academic, research and support). It aims to encourage women to set and achieve career goals, and to develop networking skills. In addition, the Careers Service offers a range of services (including targeted events and networking opportunities) to support doctoral students and researchers in career development. In the past three years, three women have been on Springboard courses, and a further three attended a 'taster' course. Others have applied for the course, but have not obtained a place; it is clear that demand outstrips supply.

Our survey results suggest that despite attempts at disseminating relevant information to all who might benefit, a more pro-active approach is required to ensure this information is well understood. We plan to create a single page on our website with links to relevant resources, and will also use our termly newsletter to ensure staff are aware of this information (see AP 4.6).

A major factor determining continuation in an academic career is the ability to win grants and fellowships. We plan to monitor grant application success rates by gender (AP 3.1) and to help postgraduates and postdocs succeed by introducing a less haphazard system for scrutinising grant proposals, and holding mock interviews (AP 4.7). We feel it is important that this support be regarded as a normal part of the culture, as junior researchers may be unwilling to ask for it.

Many of our postgraduates wish to move into teaching posts, and it is crucial that they have adequate teaching experience. Uncertainty about teaching opportunities in the Department was a factor raised in our Panel meetings. Accordingly, we have initiated a process of clarifying and publicising relevant information (AP 4.5).

- (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.

Because women students are in the majority in our Department we do not have any specific support targeted

at females at either undergraduate or graduate level. At University level there is good support for student parents, with help available on child-care, accommodation and funding, as well as social meetings for student parents and their children. There is also a Springboard course for students.

Pastoral care is a particular strength of Oxford University, but is generally a responsibility undertaken at the college level, rather than by departments. Supervisors of graduate students take on the role of mentor in relation to all aspects of the doctorate. Students also have allocated an independent College advisor and a departmental advisor, both of whom can be called upon to help if there are any difficulties with the supervisor relationship.

6. 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.

Committee structure is currently being reviewed after the arrival of a new HOD in October 2011. Our Executive Committee was formed in October 2010 at a time when the Department was in a state of transition. In addition to the HOD (male) and the (female) Departmental Administrator, the committee originally had five members, one of whom (Dorothy Bishop) is female. Our new Chair, David Clark, joined the Committee in October 2011. This committee will be expanded in October 2012 to include two female heads of research groupings. We also have a committee for REF planning (four male professors and one female), and have just set up a Research Committee that will meet once a term to review research grants and training. This will have four male and two female professorial members, plus representatives of postdoctoral and graduate student communities (to be appointed).

Our Departmental Board meets once or twice a term. This is primarily for information transmission and discussion, and involves all staff with longer-term positions: 16

male and 11 female academics, plus the Departmental Administrator and HOD Secretary (both female).

More specific functions are served by an IT committee (five men and two women), a Teaching Policy Committee (six men, seven women), a Safety Committee (six men, five women), a Resources Committee (five men, three women), and a Social Committee (two men, four women).

As our committee structure is in a process of change, we regard it as especially important to monitor the gender constitution of committee membership (AP 5.1).

- (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.

- 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?

Strenuous efforts were made by our previous HOD to achieve gender balance on the Executive Committee, but two senior women who were invited to join it declined. Both agreed to comment on this issue and stated that the reason is that they already have undertaken other major administrative roles in college or the wider University. They emphasised that they did not want to take on a role unless they could do it well, and they felt other commitments precluded this. They emphatically did *not* feel that they were being excluded by men in the Department. However, both women also commented independently that, on the basis of past experience, they could expect no special recognition for doing extra service for the Department.

This experience emphasises the difficulties of achieving gender balance in a small department. In 2012, with new arrivals and promotions, the number of senior women has increased and we will have a better gender balance on our Executive Committee. However, we recognise the importance of striking a balance between ensuring women are

represented on committees and not overburdening them, especially those who have additional administrative roles at the college or divisional level, or caring responsibilities.

- (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.

Academic staff have joint appointments between a college and the Department. They are normally required to do six hours' tutoring per week during term. The standard administrative load in College is also high, and there is an expectation that a College Fellow will serve periods doing additional college duties, which can be onerous (e.g. Senior Tutor, Tutor for Admissions).

In addition, staff are responsible for delivering lectures in the Department, and for supervising graduate students, applying for funding and running research projects, and undertaking administrative tasks such as Director of Graduate Studies, Chairman of Examiners, or serving on the Executive Committee.

Currently, there is a system in place to protect probationary staff from excessive administrative and teaching tasks during their first five years. There is also the possibility of buy-out from teaching for staff who take on additional duties, or who hold grants that allow for this option. However, the scope for this is limited because teaching is seen as an important part of the duties of a College Fellow, and the post would not be compatible with a complete buy-out. In recent years, a new full-time post of Director of Undergraduate Studies was created, as this was proving exceptionally burdensome for academic staff to undertake; the new arrangement (with a male post-holder) has been working well.

Developing an improved workload model is a priority for our new HOD, Glyn Humphreys (see AP 5.2). Our survey indicated some concern about lack of transparency regarding certain issues, such as examining duties, frequency and timing of sabbaticals, and teaching load. There is also scope for better communication regarding workloads between colleges and the Department.

- (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.

Core hours in the Department are considered to be between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., but there is considerable flexibility for those who wish to adopt different working practices. Because of multiple competing demands on people's time, particularly related to college teaching and committees, it is not possible always to hold meetings within these hours, and for some weekly events in term-time, such as departmental seminars, we have a 4 p.m. start. Although this is only a small shift from our previous time of 4:30 p.m., feedback about this change from those with parental responsibilities has been positive.

- (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.

The high proportion of females in the Department means that it is a comfortable place for women. The main cultural issues cut across gender boundaries. A Social Committee was formed six years ago, with a mix of male and female members. This was in response to evidence that some individuals, especially contract researchers in small groups, could feel isolated despite the large number of people in the Department. Some people would pass others daily in the corridor without knowing who they were. Although the Committee organises occasional one-off events (e.g. the Christmas party and a summer sports contest), the simplest initiative was probably the most successful. This was to specify one morning a week as a time when people would be encouraged by provision of free tea and coffee to emerge from their offices and mingle. We plan also to start up a 'buddy' system for new postdocs, to ensure they have a point of social contact other than their supervisor (see AP 5.3).

At the Panel meetings it was noted that, although we have a high proportion of senior female staff, they are not always as visible as the men, and that simple steps could be taken to improve matters (AP 4.8). We will hold an annual lecture named after a distinguished ex-member of the Department, Anne Treisman, the first of which will be delivered by Professor Treisman herself. We will take steps to replace the photographs in the Seminar Room, which include a high proportion of older men. We will also encourage women to be more engaged with the media by

running a short training session for them (AP 4.8). We will also do more to encourage psychologists of both sexes by celebrating their achievements in our newsletter (AP 5.4, 6.2).

One point to emerge from the Panel's discussions was that more could be done to foster interactions between members of the Department with young children. One way of achieving this will be to aim to match newcomers with a 'buddy' who is similar in family composition. This may help to ensure that people are aware of relevant information about issues such as nursery provision. At present, this information is provided but not necessarily accessed (see AP 5.8).

- (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.

There is a strong commitment to outreach work at all levels in the Department; staff are also heavily involved in such activities through their college affiliation. Participation reflects the gender make-up of the Department; women and men are equally represented. We have a Graduate Admissions Coordinator supported by an administrator, who have outreach as a core component of their workload, and are involved in schools' conferences and an annual two-day Open Day.

Members of the Department participate in the UNIQ Summer School - a week-long residential 'taster' of first-year academic and social life for lower Sixth-formers from non-traditional backgrounds. In addition, academic staff and researchers make numerous visits to secondary schools, with the aims of disseminating information about research carried out by the Department, and widening participation in further and higher education generally.

Work with younger children includes visits to primary schools, and activity days that take place in the Department. We recently held an open day for primary school children as part of Brain Awareness Week; children were asked to draw a picture of a scientist at the end of the session, and we were pleased to see that their drawings were overwhelmingly of female characters. The Oxford Open Doors event, held in 2010 and 2011, was a very popular occasion that engaged both adults and children from the general public, and was aimed at popularising science, as well as raising awareness of the

Department's work; this promises to become an annual event.

Another set of activities is intended to foster relationships with professionals - such as teachers, education policy-makers, speech and language therapists, and mental health professionals - who often facilitate research conducted by the Department. This includes the annual Making Links event - a day-long programme of presentations and discussions - as well as talks/presentations to professional groups, for example, at teachers' conferences.

Many staff, both male and female, engage in media work - to communicate research findings, and in response to requests from the media when psychology-related news stories arise. For example, the increased interest in speech disorders generated by the film 'The King's Speech' led to a number of radio and television interviews with Dr Kate Watkins, who researches stuttering. More recently, the Department featured prominently in an item on Transcranial Direct Current Stimulation for BBC Radio 4's 'Today' programme, and in a BBC Horizon programme.

Several members of the Department use social media and maintain weblogs to share ideas with fellow researchers and interested members of the public. This is also achieved through participation in popular and/or informal science events outside the Department, such as the Brighton Science Festival and (locally) Oxford SciBar, which takes place in a local pub.

In discussing outreach activities with members of staff, it became clear that recognition of outreach work is a somewhat vexed question. There is general acceptance at senior levels in the Department that outreach comprises a significant part of people's workload. However, appraisal processes have not been conducted consistently and many staff felt that outreach was not valued as highly as other activities. This has highlighted the need to have a change of culture within the Department to ensure outreach activities are recognised appropriately.

7. 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.

In the past three years there have been 11 instances of maternity leave for eight staff members (one University Lecturer, five Research Fellows, one Research Assistant and one administrative staff member). The maternity return rate is currently 100%.

- (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.

Two members of staff have taken paternity leave over the past three years: one a University Lecturer, the other a senior researcher. However, the Department's general culture of flexible working means there is little uptake of official schemes. It is important to ensure that men are aware of parental leave schemes; this will be included in our centralised web-based information source (see AP 6.1).

- (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.

Again, the University has a flexible working policy and the culture of the Department supports flexible working, provided the job is done. Only one formal request has been received, from a female member of staff, during the past three years. However, informal requests amount to perhaps four or five per year, with no indication of gender bias. No requests have been refused.

Here are some examples: two female research fellows changed their working times and percentage of FTE after maternity leave, to accommodate their family requirements. Another female senior researcher was permitted to work abroad for a few months to care for a relative. One female Research Assistant changed to working part-time to allow her to do a clinical placement alongside her RA position (she changed back to working full-time afterwards), and a male RA reduced his hours to four days a week in order to do voluntary work. A male technician asked to reduce his hours to two days a week after the birth of his child; once his child started

school, he asked to return to three days a week, which was 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.

Academics in the Department have considerable flexibility in their working hours and location of work. The ethos of the Department is to assume that research staff and tenured academic staff will work best if they arrange their own time around other commitments, including child-care, health matters, etc.

Obviously there are situations, such as lectures or committee meetings, when it is necessary for a group to assemble at a specific time. These are, however, relatively rare in the Department and, with adequate notice, do not pose problems. We have already moved our departmental seminar start time from 4:30 p.m. to 4 p.m., to make it easier for those with child-care responsibilities to participate.

A formalised flexible working system would be perceived by staff as unnecessarily bureaucratic - and actually less flexible than the current system. The law requires employers to allow "flexible working" unless it is completely operationally impossible, but this is legally defined as a request for one, permanent change to working hours, which is much less flexible than our current practices. Nevertheless, we plan to ensure that staff are made more aware of their rights in this regard, to ensure greater transparency.

- (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.

During maternity or adoption leave, teaching responsibilities at both the Department and College level should be covered by an employed temporary replacement and by colleagues. Although this has been the goal, it

has not always worked smoothly in the past. However, this issue is now a high priority to get right, and there has been a major improvement since 2011 (see case study of Gaia Scerif).

Oxford University has more nursery places than most other institutions in the Higher Education sector, but child-care remains a major issue. The Department has purchased two priority places in one of the University nurseries (AP 6.4), and is sometimes allocated more than this. However, these places are generally insufficient for departmental needs; the allocation does not pay for a nursery place, nor does it guarantee a place in a University nursery - it only puts the applicant further ahead in the queue. We plan also to take more proactive steps to ensure that employees are aware of child-care vouchers, and to encourage networking among those with young children, so that there can be more sharing of child-care arrangements such as school pickups.

Overall, we provide a 'child-friendly' department. This is helped by the fact that a fair amount of developmental research is conducted in the Department, so staff are used to seeing children of all ages in the building. Children are welcomed in the Snack Bar and there are three baby-changing cubicles available for everyone's use. It is accepted that staff may bring children to work with them, or (more commonly) work from home. Parking is a major issue in the Department, with far fewer spaces available than there is demand for, but priority parking spaces can be reserved for those that have to make the school/nursery run. As noted above, we have moved key meetings and seminars to fall during school/nursery hours. *[4360 words]*

8. Any other comments – maximum 500 words

Please comment here on any other elements which are relevant to the application, e.g. other SET-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.

Compared with other SET subjects, there is a higher proportion of women at all levels, from undergraduate to professor. However, this does vary from one sub-discipline to another, with higher representation of women in developmental and clinical psychology, compared with perception and neurocognitive areas. This makes the subject potentially interesting as a source of

information about factors influencing gender differences, since one can see quite different gender profiles *within* a department.

For instance, in this Department, of eight tenured or senior research staff working on developmental psychology, seven are women, whereas, of 21 working on neuroscience topics, 14 are men. The sample size is too small to allow firm conclusions to be drawn - but, if extended across a large enough number of institutions, it suggests a possible method for dissociating mechanisms due to institutional factors (which should affect all psychologists, regardless of sub-discipline) and those relating to gender differences in subject choice.

In our Panel discussions, it was felt that pay would be an appropriate topic to include in our Action Plan; we therefore plan to gather statistics on pay by gender and grade (see AP 1.9). *[188 words]*

9. 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.

The action plan does not need to cover all areas at Bronze; however the expectation is that the department will have the organisational structure to move forward, including collecting the necessary data.

For Silver Department awards only

10. 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 #1

Dr Gaia Scerif is a University Lecturer and Fellow of St Catherine's College. Her husband is also an Oxford academic. Unusually, she was appointed to a Faculty

position at Nottingham University before completing her PhD in 2003, and was recruited to Oxford in 2007. She has managed to remain active in research despite a high teaching load. Between 2007 and 2010 she was PI on two project grants, and continued to collaborate on a Wellcome-funded grant in Nottingham. She is currently a collaborator on a Wellcome Trust Programme Grant based in the Psychiatry Department, and on a two-year project grant awarded by the Nuffield Foundation. Her contributions were recognised internationally in 2011 by the Association of Psychological Science (USA) through her nomination as a "Rising Star", awarded to psychologists within seven years of obtaining their PhD.

Gaia has taken two periods of full-time maternity leave: from November 2008 to June 2009, and from September 2011 to April 2012. Her husband will take 13 weeks of paternity leave from April 2012, when her younger child starts at nursery. During her first period of maternity leave, Gaia encountered several problems. As a result of the Athena SWAN process getting underway in 2011, there have since been improvements in the way maternity leave is handled in the Department.

The main difficulty encountered by Gaia during her first maternity leave was lack of clarity about her rights and duties. The Departmental Administrator was able to give her information about start and end dates, health and safety issues, "keep in touch" days, and form-filling - all of which were useful. However, it was unclear how Gaia's teaching would be covered, and whose responsibility this was. In practice, she tried to squeeze some of her teaching load into the first half of term before going on maternity leave, then returned to a 150% teaching load. Other staff changed their teaching where possible, but arrangements were ad hoc. Her college offered cover for four of her six weekly hours of teaching, but there was no communication between College and Department.

Before her second maternity leave, Gaia was more proactive in checking the regulations and in seeking advice from the member of the Executive Committee responsible for academic career development. Together they met with the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Equality and Diversity to highlight the problems. The HOD was much more involved in planning for this maternity leave, which led to a temporary lecturer being appointed to cover Gaia's teaching for the year. Consequently, this period of maternity leave has been much less stressful than the first.

Nevertheless, discussions with Gaia about the Athena SWAN application have highlighted areas where departmental practice could improve further. She noted that information about maternity leave was available all along, but she had to search on websites to find it. It is clear that we need better organisation of and improved access to the available information - ideally, a specific person with expertise in this area who could advise others in the same situation (AP 6.1). Gaia has offered to take on this role.

On the positive side, Gaia noted that Oxford University was more generous than some other universities in topping up her statutory pay while on maternity leave. She has benefitted from a University-subsidised place in a local nursery, and appreciates being able to work flexible hours. She has not been overburdened with administrative tasks, and does not feel discriminated against on grounds of gender.

Case study #2

Ms Belinda Platt is a third-year doctoral student in Experimental Psychology who plans to submit her thesis by December 2012. Like most of our female graduate students, she is single and does not have children, though she anticipates that raising a family could be important to her in the future. Belinda has been an enthusiastic member of the Athena SWAN Panel and has made numerous contributions to our Action Plan.

She thoroughly enjoys research and is attracted to the idea of an academic career, but concerned that this could mean giving up a life outside work. The principal benefits she has gained from membership of the Athena SWAN Panel have been a sense of greater involvement in the Department, and a realisation of the important factors to take into account when considering her future career. She has drawn the attention of Panel members to the fact that graduate students can feel superfluous to the main activities of the Department, and to the ways in which relatively small measures can be taken to make them feel more supported.

It is clear that senior staff underestimate the extent to which their graduate students lack confidence about pursuing an academic career, and their uncertainty about what this involves. Belinda noted that the process of engagement with the Athena SWAN application has clarified the importance of planning ahead, taking advice, and anticipating issues such as parenthood.

Many of the issues raised by Belinda would be addressed by attending a Springboard Course. She has applied for a place on these courses, but has not yet been successful, as they are heavily over-subscribed. This is not an issue that the Department can resolve, but we will make representation at the wider University level to increase the provision of such activities.

Gender discrimination was not an issue raised by Belinda. When specifically asked about this, she said she did not feel disadvantaged by being a woman in the Department.

Belinda has gained from the Athena SWAN process through her membership of the self-assessment Panel. To ensure this percolates through to other graduate students, we have incorporated many of her suggestions in our Action Plan. One step to be discussed is the inclusion of graduate students on our Departmental Board. In addition, we plan to make more opportunities for graduate students to come together as a group, to discuss issues such as work-life balance and career options. We hope these steps will benefit men as well as women, though we suspect that women in particular would benefit from more proactive guidance on developing an academic career.

[1000 words]