

UWAASA NEWSLETTER FEBRUARY 2019

Dear Members and Colleagues,

A rather belated Happy New Year (and an on time Happy Lunar New Year) to you all and best wishes to those of you preparing for upcoming Semester 1 teaching.

You might remember at the end of last year, UWA ASA sent a message providing some details of UWA's unsuccessful application for Sage Athena SWAN Gender Equity Accreditation. We were pleased to hear from the SDVC, Professor Simon Biggs, that over the two week shut down he had taken the time to read the UWA ASA website, on which we had posted a copy of the message. The SDVC has requested that UWA ASA provide our members with some corrections to factual errors, and some details that he feels were missing from the UWA ASA account, and which he feels could have led members to form a misinterpretation of the events. It is important to note that, prior to sending out our original message, the UWA ASA Committee requested and received approval of the details of our message from Professor Carolyn Oldham, the Chair of the Self-Assessment Team (SAT).

So, for the purposes of clarity, I include below the original message, followed by the additional information and corrections provided by the SDVC.

From the UWA ASA Newsletter dated 15 Dec 2018:

"ATHENA SWAN ACCREDITATION

You may have been notified, or noticed in Campus Morning Mail, that the UWA's application for SAGE Athena SWAN Gender Equity Accreditation was not successful (unlike those from Curtin and ECU). This is enormously disappointing for all of those who were members of the Self-Assessment Team (SAT), who worked so hard over the previous two years, and for those of you who so enthusiastically engaged with Athena SWAN consultations.

What you may not know is that UWA's Athena SWAN submission, prepared under the leadership of Prof Carolyn Oldham, was, after being endorsed by Academic Board, substantially revised by SPP and HR before being submitted to SAGE. The final submission contained an Action Plan that differed significantly from the version produced and endorsed by the SAT and Academic Board, the SAT's proposed Gender Equity Index was not included in the submission despite being endorsed by Academic Board, and the outcomes of the consultation processes were also missing. Tellingly, the original submission is being used as a positive exemplar by Athena SWAN trainers, while the revised submission failed to meet the requirements for Bronze status.

I will leave you to draw your own conclusions about this."

Addendum from the SDVC, Professor Simon Biggs (combining the content of two emails sent to the President of UWA ASA):

"It has been brought to my attention that there is a statement on the ASA website about the SAGE Athena Swan accreditation process. On reading this, I feel it is important to point out some details that seem to be missing from the ASA interpretation of events.

As you are no doubt aware, the Athena Swan accreditation is an invited voluntary submission to a National pilot scheme. Submission to the Athena Swan Science and Gender Equity (SAGE) scheme was at the discretion of the Vice-Chancellor or equivalent CEO of any of the invited Institutions. When UWA agreed to make a submission and commit to the development of an action plan, including

providing for the required resources to support the implementation of the action plan for female academic careers in STEMM, the Inclusion and Diversity Committee (IDC) were asked to take carriage of the process. The IDC is a management committee acting under delegation from the Vice Chancellor and is constituted to provide advice to the leadership on relevant matters.

Under the guidance of the IDC, a Self-Assessment Team (SAT) Action Plan was completed in February 2018. This document was discussed at Academic Board to gain further thinking and insights. As understood throughout the process, it was then passed to SPP as the basis for an institutional submission accreditation. Subsequently, expert advice to the Strategy & Planning team, who had ultimate responsibility for the submission as agreed at IDC, suggested that the institutional document needed to place the STEMM focused gender information from the SAT report into a broader whole of university context.

This was the focus of work during February and March 2018, immediately prior to the submission. Professor Oldham (Chair of the SAT) was regularly provided opportunities to comment on the institutional submission as it was being prepared. Revisions were made as a result of this feedback.

Feedback from the SAGE assessment indicated that there was insufficient data in some parts of our submission for them to be able to verify the effectiveness of our action plan. This directly speaks to issues with the data submitted, and gaps in our institutional information. The IDC will be responsible for tackling these data gaps and delivering a revised action plan for a July 2019 re-submission, following guidance from the SAGE team."

"In reading the paper on the ASA website again, it states that "...UWA's Athena Swan submission, prepared under the leadership of Prof Carolyn Oldham, was, after being endorsed by the Academic Board, substantially revised by SPP and HR before being submitted to SAGE." This is factually incorrect as the document discussed at Academic Board was the SAT Action Plan resulting from the SAT working group's activities. As I noted before, this was one component of the information used to produce the institutional submission. It was an important component but it was not in itself the submission.

The ASA paper also gives the impression this was not according to the agreed and understood mechanism for preparing our final submission, as overseen by the Inclusion and Diversity Committee.

The ASA paper also subsequently states that "Tellingly, the original submission ..." (and) "...while the revised submission ..." in a later paragraph. Again this is factually incorrect and misleading. There was only one submission. The SAT document was a key component that fed into the submission."

So, to be quite clear, the document submitted to SPP, that had been discussed and endorsed by Academic Board, and included the Self-Assessment Team's Action Plan is now being used as a positive exemplar by Athena Swan trainers. UWA's final submission, informed by the expert advice sought by Strategy and Planning (SPP), was the document that failed to achieve SAGE Athena SWAM Bronze Accreditation.

I trust any misunderstandings have now been cleared up.

Please feel free to forward this message on to academics in your School. If you are not a member, I encourage you to join us. UWA ASA is the "Voice of Academics at UWA", and all our voices need to be heard.

Best regards,

Nin Kirkham

President | UWA Academic Staff Association