



Equality Challenge Unit

Advancing equality and diversity  
in universities and colleges

## Media release

**Date: 28 July 2015**

### **Trinity College Dublin and University of Limerick become first Irish institutions to achieve prestigious Athena SWAN award.**

Trinity College Dublin and the University of Limerick are today celebrating becoming the first Irish institutions to receive the prestigious Athena SWAN award.

Athena SWAN, the initiative run by Equality Challenge Unit to address issues in gender inequality, recently celebrated its tenth anniversary, but this is the first year in which Irish institutions were invited to participate.

Both Trinity College Dublin and the University of Limerick received Bronze Athena SWAN awards for their institutions as a whole, with Trinity College Dublin also attaining Bronze awards at departmental level for the School of Chemistry, the School of Physics and the School of Natural Sciences.

The Athena SWAN team received ten applications from Irish HEIs and their departments overall, including the submissions from Trinity College Dublin and the University of Limerick.

Responding to the announcement, Ruth Gilligan, Manager of the Athena SWAN programme, said 'We'd like to congratulate Trinity College Dublin and the University of Limerick on their success. They worked extremely hard on their submissions and we are delighted that their efforts have resulted in a successful outcome. We'd also like to congratulate and say a big thank you to all of the institutions who submitted applications. The submission process is in itself, rigorous and time-consuming, and these institutions have ably demonstrated their unwavering commitment to gender equality by participating in it'.

The submission deadline for the next cohort of applicants is 5<sup>th</sup> September 2015 at 5pm.

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## Notes to editors

- = In 2014, ECU reached an agreement with the Higher Education Authority (HEA) in Ireland to pilot an expansion of the Athena SWAN Charter to the Republic of Ireland.
- = Ruth Gilligan joined the Athena SWAN team in June 2014 to support the development of the Charter expansion, which involves all Irish universities and Institutes of Technology (IoTs), as well as the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI).
- = The expansion was officially launched on 5 February 2015 by Ireland's Minister for Education Jan O'Sullivan, at the Department of Education and Skills in Dublin. This event marked the beginning of a three year pilot, and also provided an opportunity to highlight and celebrate the commitment made by Irish institutions to address gender inequalities and imbalance.
- = Starting in 2014, workshops have been held throughout Ireland, through which ECU staff have introduced the Athena SWAN Charter process to representatives from all the institutions taking part.
- = To support the development and tailoring of the process to the higher education sector in Ireland, a committee has been established to advise ECU. The committee includes representatives of universities, IoTs and the RCSI, as well as the HEA, Irish Universities Association, Science Foundation Ireland and the Irish Research Council. Additionally, the committee is open to representatives from Queen's University Belfast and Ulster University. Both of the Northern Irish institutions already take part in Athena SWAN, and ECU are grateful for their support in the development of the expansion.
- = Equality Challenge Unit works to further and support equality and diversity for staff and students in higher education across all four nations of the UK, and in colleges in Scotland.
- = ECU works closely with colleges and universities to seek to ensure that staff and students are not unfairly excluded, marginalised or disadvantaged because of age, disability, gender identity, marital or civil partnership status, pregnancy or maternity status, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, or through any combination of these characteristics or other unfair treatment.
- = Equality Challenge Unit is funded by Universities UK, GuildHE, the Higher Education Funding Council for England, the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales, the Scottish Funding Council and the Department for Employment and Learning in Northern Ireland.
- = For more information visit [www.ecu.ac.uk](http://www.ecu.ac.uk) or follow us on Twitter @EqualityInHE