

## **IOP and Athena Partnership STEM Academic Departments Visits**

The purpose of the visits is to explore a department's good practice policies and processes and to get a feel for the impact they have made on individuals' enjoyment of their careers in academic science.

An essential precursor to a visit is the completion, and return of the Athena Partnership Checklist. The visiting team will want to explore how well the examples of good practice identified by the check list are implemented at different career stages and, in particular, with post doctoral researchers.

The IOP will analyse the completed check list and follow it up in a pre-arranged phone call with the head/deputy head of department (duration around 40 minutes) . The phone call should be at least ten days before the visit date. The call allows any specific issues to be discussed in advance, and will help the IOP to identify specific topics on which to focus during the visit.

During the visit the team will hold a series of discussion sessions, starting and finishing with the head of department. Unless numbers are small, staff are seen in grade groups (Professors, Readers with Senior Lecturers, and Lecturers) except to post docs where males and females are seen separately. The discussion sessions usually range around the theme of whether the department is a good place to work, in particular:

- ☞ Appointment, promotion, appraisal, training and development;
- ☞ How staff contributions are supported, encouraged, valued and recognised;
- ☞ The allocation and rotation of responsibilities and resources;
- ☞ Departmental communications, committees and decision making.

For post docs there is a particular emphasis on:

- ☞ Departmental induction, mentoring and networking;
- ☞ Appraisal, frequency and usefulness;
- ☞ Their involvement in the academic life of department;
- ☞ How they view themselves/are viewed – staff, students, lab rats;
- ☞ What career advice/ development opportunities are there/do they take up;
- ☞ The support /encouragement to raise their profiles internally /externally;
- ☞ Their interest in continuing in an academic /research career.

It is useful if staff selected to meet the team have been in the department/university for varying lengths of time, and have varying experience of working elsewhere in the UK. Where possible, heads of sections/research groups, individuals with significant administrative responsibilities, should be included in their appropriate grade group. The ideal group size is around eight. No views or comments will be attributed to individuals.

The department to be visited is asked to nominate a staff member, with whom the IOP can sort out the detail (programme, timetable, information to be given to staff taking part in the discussion groups and the other practicalities) well ahead of the visit. It is useful if the same person is around on the day of the visit to make sure things run smoothly.

Shortly after the visit the department will receive a report structured around the Athena Action Framework (as also used in the Good Practice Checklist) identifying area of good practice and suggestions for further development. Contact the Diversity Team at the Institute of Physics ([diversity@iop.org](mailto:diversity@iop.org)) for further information or to arrange a visit.