The objective of your Champion Action Plan is to put in place any further issues that you have identified and to work towards your Champion renewal in three years’ time, or Athena SWAN Gold. As with the Practitioner Action Plan, it should be ambitious, but achievable with a mix of short-, medium- and long-term actions.

The key to becoming a Champion is demonstrating that the whole department is involved and engaged in this work, and to demonstrate real embeddedness across the department. It is important that a range of people are identified and that all of the work for delivering does not simply fall on the Juno Committee or on the Juno lead within your department.

There are two essential elements for an effective action plan – people who are enthusiastic and committed and a realistic action plan. The best action plans contain S.M.A.R.T. goals:

- **Specific**
- **Measurable**
- **Attainable**
- **Realistic**
- **Timely**

**Specific**

There is a much greater chance of delivering a specific goal than a general one. When setting specific goals, bear in mind:

- **Who**: Who is involved?
  
  It is better to assign the responsibility for overseeing and driving action forward to a single named individual, rather than a group or a broad function, such as the Juno Committee. The named individual doesn’t have to do all the work and the responsibilities should be spread around. No one individual, or small group of individuals, should be overwhelmed.

- **What**: What is to be achieved?
  
  Be specific. A broad aim might be “increased awareness of promotion criteria”. A more specific target would be, “an increase to 80% of male and female staff reporting that they understand or understand well the promotion criteria”. Note, the assumption here is that data already exist on staff’s current understanding of the promotion criteria.

  Actions might be broken down into separate steps with specific targets. In the example above, if baseline data were not available, then a first step would be to survey staff and then to use the results to set or revise the target. A second step would be a work programme to raise staff awareness of the promotion criteria (perhaps running workshops, improving the materials available on the website). The third step would be to survey staff again.

**Measurable**

The use of numbers, percentages, dates and time to be taken are ways to clarify objectives. The above target is based on achieving a set percentage. In some circumstances setting a target date is useful, for example, “investigate the career destinations of PhD students (focusing on the difference between men and women), produce a report on the findings and recommend actions by July 2014.”

**Attainable**

If targets are not attained, there is a risk that momentum will be lost. The achievement of a target (by its planned date) will depend on the resources that are available. Time is often the
most important factor, therefore the staff who are responsible for the action should be given time to do it.

**Realistic**
A way to establish if a goal is realistic, is to find out if something similar has been achieved elsewhere; alternatively to think through the “conditions” that are necessary to achieve the goal. A realistic goal is one that people are both “willing” and “able” to work towards. A goal can be both high and realistic. In the example above, a target of 100% of staff reporting that they “understand or understand well the promotion criteria”, although desirable, is probably not realistic, whereas 80% is ambitious but achievable under the right conditions. It may be sensible to amend targets as time passes, especially if targets are date related. It is usually better to do this than to carry on with an unrealistic target. Priorities will change and actions may have to be rescheduled to fit a new focus.

**Timely**
Goals should have a time frame because without this there is no sense of urgency. The time frame for individual goals needs to take account of what else will be going on. Actions may need to be prioritised. Some actions may be dependent on others being completed before they can begin. The need to manage the workload may mean that some goals have to be rescheduled.

You need to ensure that you have a mix of short-medium- and long-term actions. Set yourself some easy “quick wins” to keep momentum going, as well as some more visionary longer-term goals.

Review the plan regularly – say once a year.

The purpose of the review is to assess progress on individual actions. Then, if necessary, revise timescales and targets. The review should re-confirm that the original priorities still hold. If not, timescales may need to be amended to reflect new priorities. New actions may have to be added where new issues have emerged to maintain momentum in other areas and to take forward recommendations from reports.

There are many formats/templates in use for action plans. At the minimum, a template should contain column headings for the description: of the actions; responsibilities; timescales; and success measures. A “progress column” will also be useful as time goes on.

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