



Athena Forum: Terms of Reference

Constitution

Following the successful completion of the [Athena Project](#), the scientific learned societies and professional bodies agreed to continue meeting as the Athena Forum to collaborate on maintaining progress on addressing the underrepresentation of women in STEMM in academia and research. The remit was expanded in 2018 to include the underrepresentation of BME and LGBT+ staff. Its remit does not include disability which is the remit of the [STEMM Disability Advisory Committee](#), except when there are issues of intersectionality. The Forum is not a legal entity.

Membership

The membership of the Athena Forum shall comprise:

- An independent Chair
- An independent Deputy Chair
- Representatives of the Academy of Medical Sciences, British Computer Society the Chartered Institute for IT, Royal Society of Chemistry, Institute of Physics, London Mathematical Society, Royal Academy of Engineering, the Royal Society and the Royal Society of Biology
- A representative of the UK government
- An observer from UKRI
- An observer from Equality Challenge Unit.

Deputies for the representative members should be identified and will be expected to attend meetings when representative members are unavailable. Forum members are expected to participate fully in discussions and bring knowledge and expertise on diversity in STEMM to Forum meetings.

Rotation

The Chair and Deputy Chair shall serve terms of two years. Upon rotation the Deputy Chair will become Chair and the Athena Forum members will nominate a new independent Deputy Chair. Should the Deputy Chair be drawn from any member organisation, upon taking the role the Deputy Chair will cease to represent their member organisation, thereby becoming independent, and another representative shall be nominated from the member organisation for the Athena Forum.

The representative members shall rotate at the discretion of the bodies they represent.

Quorum

Meetings shall be deemed quorate at the discretion of the chair.

Reporting

The Forum's activities shall be reported to the member organisations through such channels as are deemed appropriate by the representative members.

Secretariat



The Royal Society's Diversity Strategic Plan for 2015-2018 sets out how the Society will use its convening power, leadership and willingness to partner with others to increase diversity in STEMM and build an inclusive scientific community. A key objective of the strategy is to continue to work in partnership with other academies, learned societies and organisations on diversity initiatives. This includes a continued commitment to provide the secretariat to and (as a member) support the work of the Athena Forum.

For the purposes of auditing the Royal Society's continued support, the Athena Forum's activities will be reported to the Royal Society's Diversity Committee.

Meetings are hosted by core members on a rota basis.

Functions

The function of the Athena Forum shall be to inform the wider debate on diversity in STEMM through the following:

- Discussion and dissemination of examples of good practice in addressing the underrepresentation of women, BME and LGBT+ staff in academic STEMM;
- Facilitation of exchanges between organisations and stakeholders with an interest in academic STEMM for the development, dissemination and implementation of good practice in STEMM employment in higher education and research;
- Provision of an expert voice on issues of career progression and representation in STEMM in higher education and research including the intersection of gender and other factors wherever possible;
- Events, reports and other activities that advance the understanding of whether and how gender, BME heritage and LGBT+ status affects participation in academic STEMM.

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