

University of Leeds

Research Culture Awards 2021-22

Application Form

Please email nominations/self-nominations using this form to Holly Ingram
H.L.Ingram@leeds.ac.uk by Wednesday June 1st, 5pm

Information section

This section covers information about the lead applicant and the team as well as the chosen category of award. Expand the sections as necessary. The maximum number of people in a team is set to 10 for event planning and personal prize budgeting purposes.

1. Select the nomination type
 - Self-nomination
2. Lead applicant and team

Provide details about the applicant and the team (including external partners if applicable), and their contribution to the initiative. The lead applicant will be the contact person for the management of the award application.

Lead applicant name: Prof. Clare Woulds
 Lead applicant contributor role: Co-lead of the Water Woman award scheme
 Lead applicant Service or School / Faculty: School of Geography / Faculty of Environment
 Lead applicant role/post: Professor of Marine Biogeochemistry
 Lead applicant career stage: Professor

Team member name (include lead applicant)	Contributor role	School/Service/external organisation + role/post	If member deserves special mention, state reason (optional)
Prof. Julia Martin-Ortega	Co-lead of the Water Woman award scheme	School of Earth and Environment, Faculty of Environment	
Gabriela Lopez Gonzalez	Co-lead of the Water Woman award scheme	School of Geography and water@leeds, Faculty of Environment	
Ann Marie Boyle	Support for the Water Woman award scheme	School of Geography and water@leeds, Faculty of Environment	
Susannah Hopson	Support for the Water Woman award scheme	School of Geography and water@leeds, Faculty of Environment	

3. Select the award category that best fits the research culture activity:
 - Personal development, reward and recognition

Case for Award

1. Title

Instigation of the water@leeds funded Water Woman award, and associated career development initiatives.

2. Summary

The applicant team created and have so far administered two rounds of the Water Woman Award, funded by water@leeds. Open to any person identifying as a woman involved in water research at the University of Leeds, it includes recognition for early career researchers and research support colleagues. The award is based on two equally weighted criteria: the nature of their achievements and their potential for empowering and inspiring other women, allowing for arguments that often fall outside of conventional academic criteria (e.g. experiences of nurture and care, and overcoming challenges). The award raises the profile successful women and, importantly, shares the story of how success was achieved. Winners, as well as receiving prize money to develop their professional development, contribute to and benefit from inspirational career development initiatives for other women, to facilitate peer support.

3. Why?

Research success indicators reviewed for the Faculty of Environment 2019 Athena Swan submission revealed that female researchers were awarded proportionally less research funding, and were under-represented in REF 2014 submissions compared to their male colleagues, revealing a need to support female researchers in applying for funding and publishing impactful research. This under-representation was linked to a lack of confidence in processes which require robust self-belief, and the challenges of balancing family life, leadership roles and career breaks with a research portfolio. The award also recognizes the work of research support staff, who as a group are female dominated, are often overlooked, but who are critical for the success of research projects.

4. What?

The applicant team conceived of creating the Water Woman award, and secured funding via water@leeds. They designed the award categories (Research Funding, Research Excellence, Societal Impact and Knowledge Transfer, and Research support) and assessment criteria, wrote and circulated publicity content inviting applications / nominations, and convened an assessment panel. They took part in assessment of applications through two rounds of awards (awarded in spring 2020 and 2021). Following each set of awards they prepared publicity material on the winners and had these posted in prominent University level news sites.

Most importantly, following each round the panel organised a set of 'inspirational events' and peer support initiatives. These have included action learning sets for female researchers (summer 2020), a panel discussion (autumn 2021), and a support programme for early career researchers (including fellowship workshops spring and summer 2022 and sustained support from a dedicated water@leeds staff member). These events prominently featured Water Woman winners, who shared their stories and advice, and as appropriate provided individual level coaching for attendees.

5. How?

The Water Woman award aims to recognize the achievements of women in science, and their power to inspire others. The award achieves this by recognising and raising the profile of successful female

researchers and research support staff, and importantly by providing a means for them to share their story and experience more widely, while providing peer support.

6. So what?

Two rounds of the Water Woman award have been concluded. Thirty nominations / applications have been received, with 12 winners and 4 highly commended individuals celebrated. Three inspirational events have been run, with a total of 60 participants. Feedback shows that the majority of attendees found the events 'inspiring' and 'powerful', with also a strong sense of validation from realising that women at all career stages share similar experiences. One (anonymous) participant said 'I found the talks from our Water Women extremely inspiring, and also very comforting, in that much of what everyone said chimed with my own experiences.' Another (anonymous) participant said '... It's been a great event to be able to discuss things informally, have a support network and it has made me more confident for next steps!'. Events are now likely to lead to submission of fellowship applications. Data on research funding and REF2021 will be reviewed during the next Faculty of Environment Athena Swan submission.

7. What next?

The water Woman award will be run biannually. Each time it will be launched at a water@leeds 'confluence' event, and the announcement of awards will be followed by an inspirational event. The Award has become biannual so that in the years in between, effort and dedication can be put into the inspirational events and peer support initiatives.

8. What challenges did you have in planning/organising/running/evaluating your initiative and how did you overcome these?

The main challenge was making time in busy schedules to dedicate to this activity. This was overcome through team working, and efficient chairing of planning meetings by Prof. Martin-Ortega. The award also had to be differentiated from the University level Women of Achievement award. This was achieved by focusing on water research (appropriate to water@leeds), and through the focus on inspirational events. Finally, we utilised the communications network of the water@leeds team to help publicise the award and secure sufficient applications.

9. Was there something particularly innovative/creative about your initiative?

The Water Woman Award contains two main innovations. Firstly, it uses different criteria than other awards, placing particular emphasis on aspects which are often marginalized in male dominated scientific spheres. These concern being honest about the challenges that you faced, highlighting the role you have played in nurture and care, and the value of conflict resolution. Secondly, the award offers non-conventional female tailored support to both winners and the wider community, creating safe spaces for women to discuss challenges and offer peer support. Finally, In order to help drive cultural change, the panel discussion event was open to all staff, not only those identifying as women. The intention was to have discussion by women heard by all colleagues to foster understanding and allyship.

10. What makes your activity a notable example of culture change?

The most important feature of the Water Woman award is that it allows women to share not only success, but also the stories behind that success, with powerful events that provide both inspiration and comfort to the wider community. This is a fully female led initiative that has produced a self-enhanced empowering effect, contributing to a culture of 'let's celebrate each other' and 'let's speak honestly about how we got here'.