MACS Athena SWAN Newsletter

Issue 17 June 2024

The Athena SWAN (Scientific Women's Academic Network) Charter was established in 2005 with the aim of *"Encouraging and recognising commitment to advancing gender equality"* within STEM subjects, i.e., science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. The Athena SWAN agenda has grown overtime to promote equality in general. Scan the QR code opposite for more background about Athena SWAN at Heriot-Watt, including guidance and resources.

1. Global Technovation Challenge

Six Dubai Year 4 female students volunteered in this year's **Global Technovation Challenge** (https://www.technovation.org/). This involved mentoring 4 groups of students from local Dubai school from January to April. The six mentors were **Faith Muraino**, **Farheen Badubhai**, **Nura Tamton**, **Kanaga Chinnaiah**, **Cheyrl Mattam** and **Lisa Fernandes**. **Cristina Turcanu** and **Hind Zantout** were the **Technovation Ambassadors.**

Farheen Badubhai

'My time mentoring junior students, alongside my co-mentor Faith, was a journey filled with discovery and mutual growth. We introduced the team to essential software development concepts, guiding them from the differences between frontend and backend to the hands-on building of their app using the MIT application platform. We started with prototype designs, enhancing their understanding and preparing them for practical development, and conducted detailed sessions on frontend creation and app design, providing continuous feedback. Our guidance extended beyond technical skills, helping them prepare submission documents and refining their presentations. This collaborative process was not only educational but immensely rewarding, deepening our insights and enjoyment through their innovative ideas.'

Faith Muraino

'Working as a Technovation mentor, I had the opportunity to work with two teams, ADHS Junior and ADHS Beginner (E-Free Diyafah), involving children aged 10-15. This experience not only enhanced my leadership and management skills but also taught me how to manage my time better, especially while simultaneously writing my dissertation. Through this journey, I learned to use new software tools such as MIT App Inventor and Thunkable, which broadened my technical skill set. Collaborating with other teachers and professors expanded my professional network, and witnessing my mentees' hard work, growth, and success brought me immense satisfaction and happiness. This experience has significantly contributed to my personal and professional development, improving my skill set in numerous ways.'

A challenge to Edinburgh based students and staff – what about replicating this Dubai success in the academic year 2024-25?
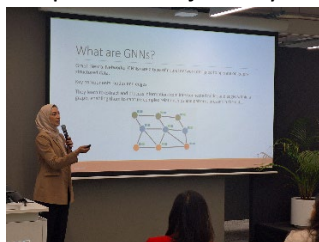
2. Women in Data Science 2024 in Dubai

The Dubai campus recently hosted the Women in Data Science (WiDS UAE 2024) conference for the fifth consecutive year. It is a global event, and the Edinburgh campus has now also held their second conference this year. Professor Dame Heather McGregor welcomed the speakers and attendees sharing her insight and highlighting the impact that Data Science and AI on both academia and industry.

The morning sessions discussed case studies and presented best practice in real world projects with speakers from AI Directions and RTA and a local start-up. The next two sessions presented perspectives from the actuary industry and how Data Science and AI may introduce different models to consider.

The afternoon session kicked off with an introduction to graph neural networks and how these are being deployed in research on Alzheimer's disease. It was followed by a panel discussion on opportunities and challenges in both teaching and research, and a presentation to the important topic of Ethics in AI.

The day concluded with a panel exploring emerging career trends in Data Science and AI with advice on how to navigate those rapidly evolving fields. During the breaks and lunch, attendees used the time to network and engage with the speaker, the rooms were busy with lively interactions and discussions. Throughout the day, Heriot-Watt students, academics and alumni mingled and interacted with professionals from industry, government departments and Academics from the Khalifa University, the University of Sharjah, Sorbonne University Abu Dhabi, the British University in Dubai and Middlesex University. Non-academic contributors included AI Directions, RTA, Aloma Fit, MK Risk Management Consulting, Majid Al Futtaim Holding, Core 42, Surreal DB, Air Liquide, Open Innovation AI and GroupM.

The key takeaway of the day is that Data Science and AI are thriving in the UAE, and that amazing women are part of this journey with demonstrable expertise and skills.

3. Edinburgh Mini-staff Survey in Support of 2024 Athena SWAN Renewal Application

For Edinburgh based staff (i.e., academic, research and professional services) we would be very grateful if you would complete the anonymous mini-staff survey that has be developed to assist the SAT Team in completing our Athena SWAN renewal application.

The survey complements the university staff survey and will help us shape MACS going forward. On average, it is taking people less than seven minutes to complete.

Edinburgh based staff will find the link to the survey in their inbox, i.e., embedded within a message from the **HoS** on **Wed 29 May** – subject heading:

"MACS Mini-staff Survey for our Athena SWAN: please complete it!"

Deadline for completing the survey:
5pm on Friday 14 June.
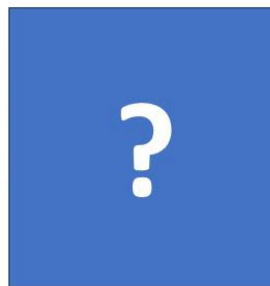
4. The Stephanie Brown Scholarship

The Stephanie Brown Scholarship is designed to support a female student with a UK Fee status studying a Science, Technology, Engineering or Mathematics discipline at one of Heriot-Watt's three UK Campuses in a full-time capacity. The scholarship is worth £3750 and will be deducted from the successful applicant's tuition fees.

https://www.hw.ac.uk/uk/scholarships/the-stephanie-brown-scholarship.htm

5. Nominations for Honorary Degrees

The award recognizes academic as well as wider societal contributions. Part of our MACS Athena SWAN Action Plan is to increase the number of MACS female honorary graduates. Anyone can propose an individual for an honorary degree; simply complete the nomination form on the University web page – see QR Code below.

MRS ALISON WATSON
Founder and Chief Executive of social business Class Of Your Own

PROFESSOR MARIA J. ESTEBAN
President of the International Council for Industrial and Applied Mathematics

DR SHONAIG MACPHERSON
Chair of the Robertson Trust

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6. Preparing for Ada Lovelace Day 2024 in Dubai

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in Dubai

MACS Dubai are planning an Ada Lovelace Day 2024 event will take place in **October.** Ada Lovelace Day is celebrated every year on the second Tuesday of October month to celebrate the contribution of women in Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) in the memory of the world's first computer programmer.

Calling on all **MACS Dubai Computer Science students who will be going into Year 4 in September** to step into the spotlight and share your passion, projects, and career goals in a dynamic format using the **PechaKucha presentation** style. Each presenter shows 20 slides, each for 20 seconds of their achievements as a computing student at Heriot-Watt.

Join us for the electrifying **PechaKucha presentations** where creativity knows no bounds! Participate in our event, develop your soft skills and you will receive a presenter certificate that can impress your next employer.

Presenter slots are limited, please get in touch via the email address below to secure a place to showcase your work:

d.sobnath@hw.ac.uk

Organizers: **Drishty Sobnath** and **Hind Zantout**

7. Preparing for Ada Lovelace Day 2024 in Edinburgh

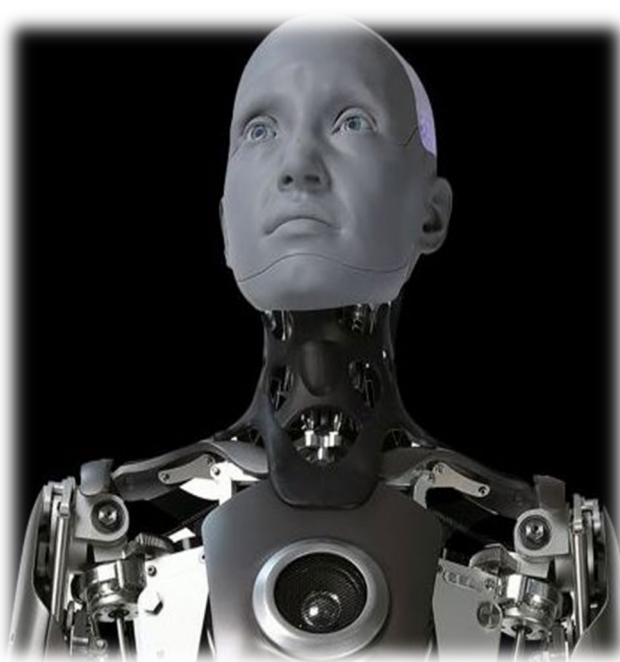# Preparing for Ada Lovelace Day 2024 in Edinburgh

MACS Edinburgh are planning an Ada Lovelace Day event in October that aims to strengthen community across all our **Year 1 undergraduate students within MACS.** Initial planning is focusing on a robot demo in the **National Robotarium** followed by a pizza lunch (within the School).

If you would like to get involved in the organization of this event, then please get in touch via the email address below. *We are particularly interested in hearing from Mathematicians and Statisticians that have an interest in AI and Robotics!*

a.ireland@hw.ac.uk

Please put '**Ada Lovelace 2024**' in the subject header.

Organizers: **Andrew Ireland**, **Tessa Berg** and **Alistair McConnell**

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If you have suggestions or questions related to Athena SWAN, or an event that you would like to advertise, then please send them to us via athena-macs@hw.ac.uk. In addition, if you would like to be part of the MACS Athena SWAN Team (a.k.a. the Self-Assessment Team (SAT)) then please do get in touch.

Audrey Repetti and Andrew Ireland
(MACS Athena Swan Coordinators)

And finally ....

This is the last issue of the Athena SWAN Newsletter for academic year 2023-24. If you have an event or an initiative starting in the next academic year (2024-25) that relates to *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion* (EDI), then please feel free to send an advert to be included in our September **– Welcome Week –** Issue of the Athena SWAN Newsletter!

Have a Restful Summer!