



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. Appointment of the first MACS Associate Executive Deans for EDI



**Dr Tom Methven**  
*Computer Science*



**Dr Mateja Presern**  
*Mathematics*

Congratulations to **Dr Mateja Presern** and **Dr Thomas Methven** who have been appointed to the joint role of **Associate Executive Deans for Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)** in MACS.

Following our **Silver Athena SWAN Action Plan**, we will now establish the **MACS EDI Team (EDIT)**, with representatives from all our locations, including staff and students. Going forward, Athena Swan will form part of EDIT.

**Equality**  
**Diversity**  
**Inclusion**





## 2. International Women's Day 2026 – News from Dubai



### WOMEN IN AI AND DATA SCIENCE: WHO IS BUILDING THE ALGORITHMS THAT SHAPE OUR FUTURE?

On International Day of Women and Girls in Science, **Dr Maheen Hasib** states that greater representation of women in AI and data science is essential to building fair, ethical, and trustworthy technologies.

*Dr Maheen Hasib is the Global Programme Director for BSc Data Sciences, School of Mathematical and Computer Sciences, Heriot-Watt University in Dubai*

**Dr Maheen Hasib's** article appeared in the 12 February 2026 issue of *The Integrator*:

<https://integratormedia.com/2026/02/12/women-in-ai-and-data-science-who-is-building-the-algorithms-that-shape-our-future/>



### HOW WOMEN SCIENTISTS CAN ACCELERATE NATIONAL INNOVATION GOALS

**Dr Heba El-Shimy** shares that women scientists are a strategic national asset, and higher female participation drives greater innovation, research novelty, and collective intelligence.

*Dr Heba El-Shimy, Assistant Professor (Data and AI), Mathematical and Computer Sciences, Heriot-Watt University in Dubai*

**Dr Heba El-Shimy's** article appeared in the 12 February 2026 issue of *The Integrator*:

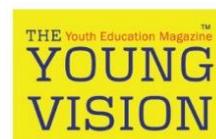
<https://integratormedia.com/2026/02/12/how-women-scientists-can-accelerate-national-innovation-goals/>





# Women in AI: Designing a Fairer Future for All

An opinion piece by **Professor Hind Zantout** that appeared in **The Young Vision** magazine on the occasion of International Day of Women and Girls in Science (UNESCO) on February 11



<https://theyoungvision.com/women-in-ai-designing-a-fairer-future-for-all/>

**Professor Hind Zantout**  
**Deputy Academic Head of the School of**  
**Mathematical and Computer Sciences,**  
**Heriot-Watt University in Dubai**

Women today are taking on many roles in technology around AI, from building robots to developing machine learning models in healthcare, to actively contributing to AI research. We are lucky to live in a region where there are no barriers for women

to work and progress in careers where what matters most is your knowledge and skills. The impact of AI on several aspects of our daily lives is far reaching, and existing bias in AI models impacting women and minority groups has been widely reported and is a real concern.

Bias is often the result of training the models using inadequate datasets where women and minority groups were underrepresented. In healthcare, this could lead to AI tools being less effective when diagnosing disease for women patients. In robotics, not having women on design team may well result in the production of robots that women may find more difficult to engage with physically and communication may also be impacted. In banking, this could lead to an AI based decision declining a woman's application for a loan while in careers, it could mean eliminating a woman as a candidate applying for a job. A September 2025 UNESCO publication "Tackling Gender Bias and Harms in Artificial Intelligence (AI)" states that 58% of young women and girls have been victims of online harassment. That same publication mentions that only 30% of AI professionals are women. However, data from the Gulf region and the wider MENA region suggests that in Higher Education women are performing very well in STEM subjects and from my own personal experience, women are pursuing studies in AI, even when they come from a background such as medicine or engineering.

Looking to the past, Dr. June McCarroll who, after a near collision in her Model T Ford in 1917 had the idea of painting a white line in the middle of the road to create separate lanes. The National Hall of Fame lists Mary Anderson as the inventor of windscreen wipers, making driving in the rain safer. And Whitten Brothers Automotive list Margaret Wilcox as the inventor of an automotive heating system making it more comfortable to drive in the cold. The impact of AI on society is not comparable to that of the automobile, but those examples from history show that women can and will bring valuable contributions in technology. In AI, women can bring a much needed perspective that highlights equity, safety and security in that technology producing systems that are safe, reliable and fair for all.



## 3. International Woman's Day – An Edinburgh Campus Event

### INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2026

Rights. Justice. Action.  
For ALL Women and Girls



Join us for an inspiring and interactive celebration of International Women's Day as we come together to reflect and learn.

**11th March**  
10:30 AM - 12.30 PM

 Guest Talks

 Open mic

 Interactive Poetry Activity

 **Zeros**  
**Student Union**

**Lunch to follow**



Scan for more info



**Register for the event via the following links:**

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/international-womens-day-2026-tickets-1982345892929?aff=oddtcreator>

**This event is organized by**  
**Heriot-Watt's STEM Inclusivity Network**

<https://tinyurl.com/HWU-STEM-IN>



#### 4. Edinburgh – Game Launch & Networking!



**Lloyds Bank on Campus – Game Launch & Networking**

Join us on **9th February, 9am–3pm** on **The Bridge Link** for a special visit from **Lloyds Bank**.

Be among the first to experience their brand-new interactive game and learn more about the innovation behind it.

Throughout the day, representatives will also be speaking with students about their graduate roles and career pathways, as well as offering the chance to network and ask questions about working in the industry.

If you're interested in banking, technology, business, or simply want to expand your professional network, drop by The Bridge Link and get involved.

#### 5. Ada Lovelace Day 2026 – Event Ideas and Volunteers Needed!

Ada Lovelace Day takes place on the second Tuesday of October – although generally events are organized around this date. Last year **Dubai** held a **PechaKucha** focused event while in **Edinburgh** we hosted an Open Lunchtime lecture by **Verena Rieser (Google DeepMind)**.

We are now looking for ideas and volunteers – **from all MACS staff and students across all our Departments and Campuses** – to be part of an organizing team for the **MACS 2026 Ada Lovelace Day (ALD'26)**.

If you are interested in getting involved and/or have a great idea for an event, then **please do get in touch by the end of March**, i.e., contact us via:

[athena-macs@hw.ac.uk](mailto:athena-macs@hw.ac.uk)



## 6. Call for Applications!

### **2026 MACS Athena Swan Summer Bursary Scheme**

The aim of the MACS Athena SWAN Summer Bursary Scheme is to improve gender equality across our disciplines, and more broadly address Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) issues:

- *Any project that funds a student from an under-represented group meets the aims of the scheme.*
- *Likewise, a student project that directly addresses EDI issues also meets the aims of the scheme.*



**Summer 2026**

Due to financial pressures, the bursary scheme will only run in **Dubai** and **Edinburgh** this year – each will be funding two bursaries. The **application form** and instructions can be found via:

<https://tinyurl.com/AS-Bursary-Application-26>

The **deadline** for applications is **NOON (BST) on Friday 3 April 2026**.



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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](mailto: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)*

