

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. Google Research Award – Edinburgh News

D-AI in the life: Understanding AI Use Among Teenagers in Unequal Contexts (Nov 2025—Dec 2026)



Project team: **Marta Romeo Co-PI** (MACS), **Ilaria Torre Co-PI** (Chalmers University in Sweden), **Camilla Irine-Fortescue RA** (Research Engagement), and **Amira Chaudhry BSc Dissertation Student** (MACS).

In this project, funded by the [Google Research Awards scheme](#), we will study how teenagers from different backgrounds use AI tools in their everyday lives. These tools include chatbots such as ChatGPT that can answer questions, help with schoolwork, or provide advice. Many teenagers already use AI regularly, but we still know little about how much they trust these systems, when they rely on them too much, or when they avoid them because they do not trust them.

The main aim of the project is to understand how teenagers develop trust, over-trust, or distrust in AI, and how this is influenced by their background. We are especially interested in whether teenagers from different socio-economic backgrounds experience and use AI in different ways. To do this, we will use a "digital diary" method. Participating teenagers will be invited to continue their existing conversations with AI chatbots on an app provided by us, where the conversations are logged anonymously. Teenagers will also be asked to briefly explain what they used the AI for and how helpful or trustworthy they found the response.

By analysing these everyday AI interactions, we hope to gain a better understanding of how young people experience AI in real life. This knowledge can help schools, parents, policymakers, and technology developers create safer, fairer, and more age-appropriate AI systems for young people. The results of the project will be used to develop practical guidelines for the responsible design and use of AI tools for teenagers from diverse backgrounds.

<https://research.google/programs-and-events/google-academic-research-awards/>



Dr Marta Romeo (3rd from left)
MACS - Computer Science



Camilla Irine-Fortescue
Responsible Impact Specialist
Research Engagement

2. App-a-Thon for Health – Dubai News



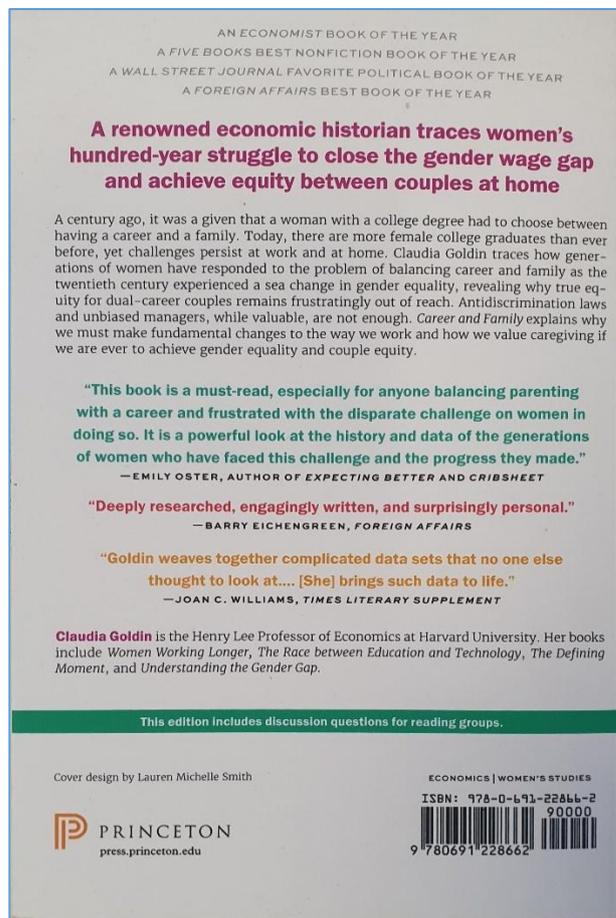
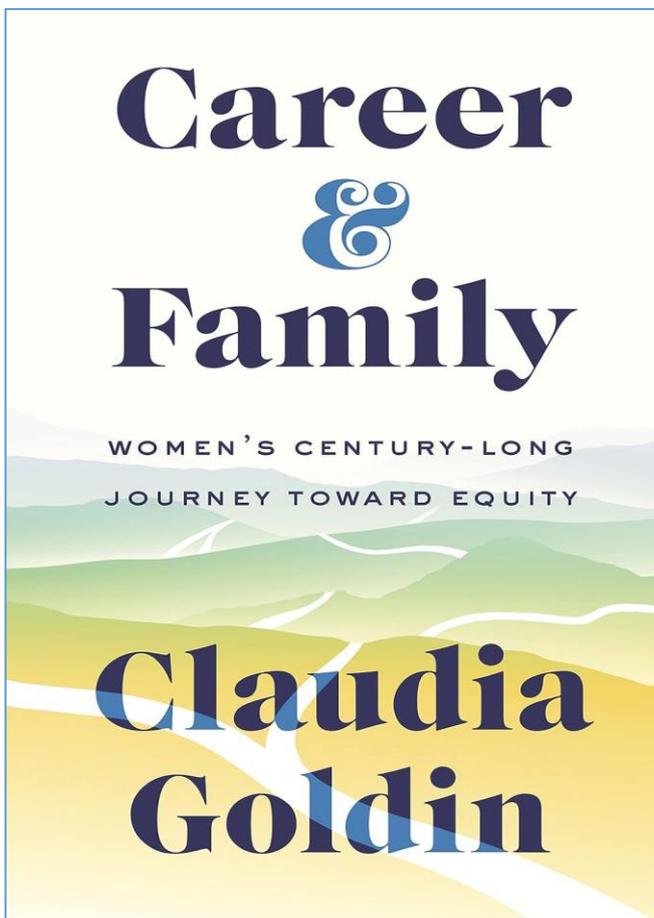
Fathima Ismath (Computer Science – AI specialism) was invited to Casablanca, Morocco, to pitch her app at the ICESCO “App-a-Thon for Health” e-Health Innovation Hackathon as part of the International eHealth Forum.

Launched in April 2025, the initiative sought to support young innovators from ICESCO Member States in creating practical digital solutions to advance patient care, reinforce health systems, and build youth expertise in health technology. An international panel of experts selected five projects in recognition of their innovation and impact.

At this prestigious event, bringing together over 200 young innovators from across the Islamic world, Fathima’s app, CardioRisk AI from Heriot-Watt University Dubai, achieved a third-place finish for their innovative solution: [ICESCO Honors Winners of 200-Participant e-Health Innovation Hackathon - ICESCO](#). This app is based on Fathima's dissertation, supervised by **Dr. Cristina Turcanu** and co-supervised by **Dr. Drishty Sobnath**.



3. A Good Read



4. Nominations for Honorary Degrees: Have your say

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 opposite.



Professor Maria J. Esteban
Honorary Doctorate of Science
Graduation Ceremony: June 2019



Dr Chehrzad Shakiban
Honorary Doctorate of Science
Graduation Ceremony: June 2024



Look out for news of the 2026 MACS Athena Swan Summer Bursary Scheme in the March issue

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



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)*

