

Applying for an Athena SWAN award: good practice examples and hints for submissions

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Athena SWAN Manager

- Recognition scheme of excellence in women's employment in STEMM in UK higher education
- 2005 = 10 founder members
- 2013 = 94 members, 259 award holders
- 2 rounds of awards per year – April and November

Athena SWAN



Managed by ECU

Funded by: ECU, Royal Society, Biochemical Society,
Dept. of Health, Scottish Funding Council

Annual membership fee of £1000 per institution
from April 2012 until 2014

Charter for women in science

The Athena SWAN awards

Bronze university

solid foundation for eliminating gender bias and developing inclusive culture

Silver university

significant record of activity and achievement in promoting gender equality and in addressing challenges across the full range of STEMM

The Athena SWAN awards

Bronze department

identified particular challenges
planned activities for the future

Silver department

significant record of activity and achievement
demonstrating impact of implemented activities

Gold department

significant sustained progression and achievement
beacons of achievement in gender equality
champions of Athena SWAN and good practice

Bronze or Silver?

Success rate first time Silver

April 2013

- ▶ 39 (new) submissions at departmental silver level
 - ▶ 12 awarded silver
 - ▶ 21 awarded bronze
 - ▶ 6 no award

- ▶ Success rate: 31% (at Silver), 53% (at Bronze), 16% no award.

Success rate first time Bronze

April 2013

- 48 submissions at departmental silver level
 - 40 awarded bronze
 - 8 no award

- Success rate: 84% awarded bronze, 16% no award.

Starting to see the conversion from Bronze to Silver

April 2013 100%

What do you need to make a successful submission?



Letter of endorsement from the Head of Department

- Should show involvement and engagement in the Athena SWAN work
- Awareness of the issues
- Should demonstrate real personal commitment
- Include one or two key examples of good practice
- Might like to highlight the head will ensure the resources are in place to deliver the action plan

The Self Assessment Process

- 🗨️ **Who** the SAT, gender balance, grade
- 🗨️ **What** experience the team has, self assessment has been carried out, consultation has happened, has already been implemented
- 🗨️ **Why** are you doing this, why is it important, this team

The Self Assessment Process

- 📌 **When** did the process start, how often the SAT has met, will they meet in the future
- 📌 **How** is it communicated, will the action plan be implemented, the process will be resourced, will you keep momentum going.

A Picture of the Department

- Give an outline of the department:
- Brief details of numbers of staff and students
- Location details, especially if the department split over buildings or sites. Describe how this affects staff
- Describe how the department is organised - how line management works
- Describe how research groups are organised (this may be related to the line management issue)
- Any other important and relevant details

Data

- Provide at least three years' data (five for Gold and renewals) or explain why you can't
- Write a commentary on each section identifying the key issues for action. **Do not just describe** the data. Reflect and analyse. Focus on any gender differences and what action(s) you can put in place to tackle these
- Plot the full pipeline from UGs to professors to help you identify problematic transition points.

Data

- Use numbers and percentage and CLEAR and well labelled graphs or tables
- Benchmark where possible

Data and evidence around Supporting & advancing women's careers:



Key career transition points

Appointment and promotion processes

Career development

Provisions for career development and career development activities

Organisation and culture

Management structures and organisational values and ethos

Flexibility and managing career breaks

Flexibility and sustainable careers and managing career breaks

Supporting and advancing women's careers

- Describe processes e.g. for appraisal, how often does it happen? Who does it? What does it cover?
- Present relevant data around processes e.g. for appraisal, completion rates, satisfaction level
- Tell the panel what staff consultation has happened and what staff think about the process from surveys, focus groups, interviews
- Consider postdocs – how the departments processes apply
- Define what actions you will be taking to address any issues.

Good practice - Key career transition points

- Advertise well – reference any family friendly policies, Athena SWAN etc
- Check the wordings of job adverts
- Diverse and trained interview panel
- Actively seek candidates
- Support for staff at key transition points – consult them
- **Specific Example-** An informal contact listed in job posts allowing potential applicants to visit prior to application/interview.

Good practice – Career Development



- Annual appraisal
- Promotion – make sure the process is known and understood with clear, easily available, criteria
- Induction and training (specific to the department)
- Reduced teaching load for academics on probation.
- **Specific example** – ineligible for promotion until conducted appraisal.

Good practice – Organisation and culture

- 👉 Committee rotation, shadowing, deputising
- 👉 Clear and transparent workload models that include administration (incl Athena SWAN work)
- 👉 Family friendly social gatherings
- 👉 Meetings in core hours
- 👉 Outreach – who does it and is it recognised
- 👉 **Specific Example** - Early Researcher Committee that bridges Fellowship holders and new lecture staff. The ERC provides a network across research groups.

Good practice – Flexibility and managing career breaks

- Support before and after a break
- Clear policies for covering teaching
- KIT days
- Nursery provisions
- Childcare vouchers
- Protected research time on return
- **Specific example** - quiet room with blind, lock and a fridge.

Good practice – Action Plans

- ▶ SMART and linked directly to body of application
- ▶ Referred to throughout application
- ▶ Clearly defined responsibilities
- ▶ Not front-loaded – milestones
- ▶ Specific to issues faced by department
- ▶ Aiming to move beyond monitoring (which remains important)
- ▶ Targets significant improvement whilst remaining realistic
- ▶ Measurable outcomes and successes

Hints and Tips

- 📌 It takes 2-3 hours to read a submission thoroughly
- 📌 Make things easy for panels to find and assimilate the information they want – use page numbers, think about acronyms, font size, orientation of graphs, split graphs
- 📌 Do not assume that all institutions' submissions will be seen by the same panel
- 📌 Athena SWAN is about the recruitment, retention and progression of women and you need to bring this out in your submission

Hints and Tips

- Cross reference action points to the action plan so that panels can easily find the relevant actions while they read the submission
- Although successful submissions are on the internet, remember you don't know which parts a panel thought were good and which weren't.

Hints and tips

- Impact doesn't have to be in staff numbers
- Truth – the panel is looking for an honest assessment
- It's ok to use diagrams
- Talk to each other – share!
- Join a panel
- Join JISCmail
- Use the Athena SWAN resources e.g. awards booklets, website

Further information available:

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