



Athena SWAN Bronze award guidance

An Athena SWAN Bronze award demonstrates that an institution as a whole has a solid foundation of policies and practices to eliminate gender bias and an inclusive culture that values female staff. This foundation is crucial as we believe it is very difficult, if not impossible, for science, engineering and technology (SET) departments to support female staff and students without a female-friendly infrastructure. We look for evidence of commitment to the [6 Athena SWAN principles](#) at a senior level.

The Bronze award evidences that the university is committed to the journey towards advancing women in SET, has identified the starting point and the resources needed, has identified who is leading and supporting the process and is monitoring progress on the action plan.

Institutions can only apply for a SWAN Bronze award if they are already members of the Athena SWAN Charter. The Bronze award criteria are focussed on institutional commitment to gender equality and policy development. Departments cannot apply for a Silver award until the whole institution has achieved a Bronze award.

We recognise that not all institutions will use the term 'department' to describe their composite units and that terms such as school, centre, faculty or unit, are often used instead. For the purposes of the SWAN forms and guidance the term 'department' will be used.

Remember that Athena SWAN is a Charter for women in science so, while recognising that good practice benefits both men and women, the awards are about what you do to increase the numbers of women at all levels. Make sure that your form and action plan are gender-specific.

Some of the examples given in this guidance and on the template are intended to stimulate thought rather than act as a prescriptive list. We are particularly interested to hear about new and innovative initiatives.

Our [definition of SET](#) can be found on the Athena SWAN website.

Description of the institution

The purpose of this section is to **contextualise the application**, so that we can see whether the institution is, for example, teaching or research focussed, how large the institution is, if it is an urban or campus university and so on. It would be useful here to know the relative size and number of SET departments as a proportion of the whole university.

We are aware that different types of institution have different characteristics and it is useful to know this at the beginning of the application. Please include only factual information and avoid unnecessary promotional language.

Institutional policies and procedures

Policies and procedures that benefit women are listed on the form and we expect to find them in an organisation that is committed to gender equality. Some are legal requirements whereas others are good practice. Ideally a Bronze award holder would have all of these policies but we understand that some may be in the process of being drafted or reviewed.

We look for the policies and procedures to be on your website as this demonstrates transparency, accountability and is also accessible to potential female staff and students. If they are not on your website and can only be found on the intranet, note the form accordingly. We may request copies. We are also interested in knowing how policies are communicated to staff and what training is given to ensure that they are effectively and consistently put into practice. Please do not send us hard copies or attachments of policies unless and until we ask for them.

‘Other relevant policies and procedures’ would be those that have a beneficial impact on women’s career progression, e.g. positive working environment policies, academic promotions policy. Staff surveys could also be included here.

We recognise that Welsh institutions are not required by law to have a Gender Equality Scheme and Action Plan at the time of writing; however, we would still expect Bronze award applicants in Wales to have an equivalent plan to address gender inequalities.

Baseline gender data

Bronze award holders are expected to have a **robust evidence base**, so that interventions are targeted where the greatest attrition lies or where women are underrepresented. We want to know the statistical basis on which your institution has identified the priority areas to address.

The purpose of including the data in the application – other than to demonstrate that you understand the demographic of your institution – is to show the main trends and headlines emerging from the data. We recognise that some disparities in data between men and women may not be statistically significant, which is why we expect you to focus your activities in areas where there is a more striking difference.

If data are unavailable please explain why. For example, you have recently changed your human resources data collecting systems or jobs have been

repositioned on the new pay and grading spine. We would like you to identify how you are going to address any current gaps in data in your three-year action plan.

We ask you to use graphical illustrations as they are effective in showing the positive and negative developments over time. Make sure that these are well set out and clearly labelled. You should also **provide reflective narrative on what the data indicates**, drawing out particularly noteworthy points. This should be integrated with the data. The questions provided in the template are intended to guide your analysis. We will look for self-awareness and honesty about any underrepresentation of women as well as observations of, and explanations for, positive trends.

Please bear in mind that applications are printed in black and white on A4 paper for the judges, so your data should be easy to read in that format. We recommend that you put the data into a PDF document. Don't submit too many pages of data: focus on what is relevant to your analysis.

Supporting and advancing women's careers

The good practice listed in this section represents a range of **activities for supporting and advancing women's careers** that we would expect to see at Bronze level.

As well as describing each area of good practice it would be useful to reflect on how successful it has been. You should highlight what you think your institution is doing well and practices that go beyond the minimum legal requirements (with the exception of the Gender Duty, which is more challenging to comply with).

While female academics are the primary beneficiaries of Athena SWAN, we would be interested in knowing how these activities also support female administrative and technical staff.

Initiatives from past applications have included:

- women in SET networking and mentoring
- Teaching Fellowships
- effective appraisals and personal development programmes
- thematic seminars and training events
- action learning sets
- transparent workload systems
- promotion reviews and support
- additional support or funding for women returners after taking maternity or parental leave
- gender training for staff on recruitment and promotion panels
- raising staff awareness of gender issues.

For more detail about good practice in past award applications visit the [case studies](#) section of the Athena SWAN website.

Raising the profile of women

This section is for you to show what actions your institution has taken or planned to **make women in SET more visible**. This comprises making individual women scientists, engineers and technologists working and studying at your institution more visible and also raising the profile of women in SET generally. We want to see evidence of a range of activities – such as photos, seminars, web content and committee representation – including internal communications as well as external activities.

Further SET-specific initiatives

This section is for you to describe any other SET-specific activities not covered in previous sections. You might like to outline any work you are doing to address multiple discrimination, e.g. ethnic minority women, lesbians, disabled women working in SET. You could also include details of inclusive social or team building activities.

We are also interested in hearing about any outreach and public engagement activities your institution is involved in, but will also want to know how this is valued by the institution, whether it is done predominantly by female staff and, if so, how it impacts positively on their careers.

The self-assessment process

The recognition panel will be looking to see a **diverse membership** in the Self-Assessment Team – a balance of men and women, at different career stages and with some personal experience of work-life balance issues. It is also useful to have a mixture of individuals from SET, equality and diversity, management and staff development. We will be interested to see when the team was formed, how often it meets and how it operates. The recognition panel also takes account of any wider consultation that has taken place in the preparation of the application. We expect all applications to be available on the institution's website.

Action plan

We are looking for an action plan with **targeted actions, clear responsibilities and timelines**. Avoid giving responsibility to the Self-Assessment Team as a whole or allocating most actions to one individual, and only describe an activity as ongoing when this really is the case.

Note that progress on the actions stated in the action plan will need to be provided when the Bronze award is renewed after three years and a new three-year action plan supplied.

Any other comments

This section gives you a final opportunity to add any contextual information or mitigating circumstances that you consider relevant to your application. It may be that your institution is coming from a particularly low base and you consider that your progress needs to be viewed in this light, or that there are external factors beyond the control of the university that have an impact on the scope or pace of your activities. You might like to make reference to any other external gender equality initiatives with which you are affiliated, e.g. work with the UK Resource Centre for Women in SET or the ASSET survey.

General application guidance

Here are some general tips about your award application:

- Be concise and stick to the word limits. Focus on what is genuinely innovative.
- We look for honesty, self-reflection and awareness of institutional shortcomings with specific actions to address these.
- Make sure your action plan covers 3 years (the validity of the award, not just the next 12 months).
- Avoid focussing on the achievements of individual women scientists in isolation – although these may be indicative of a female-friendly working environment, we are more interested in policies, procedures and evidence of good working practices than anecdotal evidence. We are, however, interested in the findings of surveys and other qualitative data.
- We want to see evidence of engagement and support for the SWAN Charter at a senior level.
- Look at the [previous submissions](#) section of the website for examples of successful submissions. Please note that the SWAN criteria and process have changed over the years, but the good practice and analysis are still relevant.
- Contact other [SWAN members](#) to discuss how they applied for an award and their experience of the process.
- Read some of the other [good practice guidance](#) for women in SET, as many of the initiatives will be applicable to SWAN.
- Come to the SWAN awards workshops held every year to assist applicants.
- Don't be afraid to pilot something unusual and/or risky, as originality and creativity are valued by the recognition panel.
- We look for effective communication of the SWAN Charter and positive action initiatives throughout the application. Would a woman working in the institution recognise the descriptions in the application?

- Any queries should be emailed to athenaswan@ecu.ac.uk

Application checklist

Last date for submission to athenaswan@ecu.ac.uk is **31st May** each year. The deadline cannot be extended.

In addition to the template we need:

- Letter of endorsement from a Vice-Chancellor or equivalent
- Action plan