



Athena SWAN

Charter for Women in Science

BEING A MEMBER OF THE SWAN CHARTER

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ATHENA SWAN CHARTER - MEMBERS GUIDE

INTRODUCTION TO THE CHARTER

1. The Athena SWAN Charter is a scheme which recognises and celebrates good employment practice for women working in science, engineering and technology (SET) in higher education. Membership of the Charter is open to all UK higher education institutions committed to working towards: 'the advancement and promotion of the careers of women in science, engineering and technology in higher education and research, and to achieve a significant increase in the number of women recruited to top posts.'

The Six Athena SWAN Charter Principles

2. The six principles which Charter members are asked to accept and to incorporate into their action plans are:
 - i. To address gender inequalities requires commitment and action from everyone, at all levels of the organisation
 - ii. To tackle the unequal representation of women in science requires changing cultures and attitudes across the organisation
 - iii. The absence of diversity at management and policy-making levels has broad implications which the organisation will examine
 - iv. The high loss rate of women in science is an urgent concern which the organisation will address
 - v. The system of short-term contracts has particularly negative consequences for the retention and progression of women in science, which the organisation recognises
 - vi. There are both personal and structural obstacles to women making the transition from PhD into a sustainable academic career in science, which require the active consideration of the organisation

SWAN Recognition Awards

3. Institutions must apply for a Bronze award within 3 awards rounds from the time of joining the charter i.e. if they join the charter in April 2009, the latest they could apply for a Bronze award would be the awards round in May 2011.
4. The awards forms and guidance can be downloaded from the website www.athenaswan.org.uk

SECTION 1

CHARTER MEMBERSHIP

Joining the Charter

5. The first step for a university to become a charter member is for the institution to make a formal commitment at senior management level to the principles which underpin the charter. A letter from the Vice Chancellor, or a senior university officer, acknowledging the university's acceptance of the charter principles will bring the university into charter membership (Guidance on the content of the letter of application to join the Charter is at Appendix A).
6. Universities who become charter members pledge themselves to action at organisational and departmental levels; to monitor their progress towards an organisational culture where all can thrive, are equally valued and experience equality of opportunity for career progression; to identify the obstacles and constraints to successful action; and to provide an annual account of their work and their future plans for improvement.
7. There is no charge for charter membership. However, to remain in membership, universities are expected to invest resources, to produce plans, and to report their action to improve women's participation and progression in SET.
8. Information on charter members and the Bronze, Silver and Gold awards can be found on the SWAN website www.athenaswan.org.uk.
9. When universities and departments receive a recognition award, a short case study based on their submission will be put on the website. They are also expected to put the relevant documents on the university/departmental website.

Designated university SWAN contact

10. At a practical level, the first requirement is for a single designated SWAN contact within the university. All communications will normally be via this contact. This contact will be responsible for ensuring that the university meets the requirements in order to retain their membership. The university should inform the charter when its contact leaves or changes post. The charter reserves the right to ask the university for a change of contact.
11. It is for the university to decide whether their contact will also act as the contact for all award applications that they make. However the university's charter contact should be aware of all applications being planned or made.
12. It is preferable that the contact for departmental awards is based in the department, but that the SWAN contact person is copied in to all communications regarding the application.

Use of Charter member status

13. The SWAN contact will be sent the SWAN logo which they are encouraged to

use in publicity and marketing. Information on the use of the Bronze, Silver and Gold SWAN logos is sent to universities and departments who receive awards.

14. Charter member status and the university-wide Bronze award attaches to the university as an employer and care should be taken in any references to this status by departments in, for example, their own promotional material. A university's charter membership and awards should not be referred to in a way that might lead to the assumption that a department or faculty in question had received them in its own right.

Retaining Charter membership

15. Charter members are expected to demonstrate their commitment to the charter principles by developing a programme of action. Members' commitment to the charter and its principles should be demonstrated and communicated internally to university and SET department senior management and to women in SET at all levels, for example by:

- making information on its action plan available on the university website
- circulating the action plan to women in SET
- supplying women in SET with information on the development opportunities available
- using university newsletters and intranet sites to publicise the plan to all staff (men and women)

Appendix A: Outline content of letter to be sent by universities to the Athena SWAN Charter to apply for membership

The letter (hard copy on University Letterhead) should be signed by a member of staff who has authority to enter into agreements on behalf of the University.

Letters should be addressed to:

Athena SWAN Coordinator
Equality Challenge Unit
7th Floor, Queen's House
55/56 Lincoln's Inn Fields
London
WC2A 3LJ

Email acknowledgements will be sent to the University's nominated SWAN contact, to be followed by hard copy with confirmation of the date from which the university's membership runs.

Any queries on the content of letters should be emailed to athenaswan@ecu.ac.uk

Suggested content of letter

Note

Universities may wish to include in their letter or enclose separately a short statement of University action to date which could be used on the website www.athenaswan.org.uk

On behalf of the (*university name*) I wish to apply for membership of the Athena SWAN Charter.

I confirm that the (*university name*) is committed to working towards the achievement of Athena's aims - *the advancement and promotion of the careers of women in science, engineering and technology in higher education and research and the achievement of a significant increase in the number of women recruited to top posts.*

I confirm the University's acceptance of the six Charter Principles:

- i. To address gender inequalities requires commitment and action from everyone, at all levels of the organisation
- ii. To tackle the unequal representation of women in science requires changing cultures and attitudes across the organisation
- iii. The absence of diversity at management and policy-making levels has broad implications which the organisation will examine
- iv. The high loss rate of women in science is an urgent concern which the

organisation will address

- v. The system of short-term contracts has particularly negative consequences for the retention and progression of women in science, which the organisation recognises
- vi. There are both personal and structural obstacles to women making the transition from PhD into a sustainable academic career in science, which require the active consideration of the organisation

I pledge the university to action at university and departmental levels and to:

monitor its progress towards an organisational culture where all can thrive, are equally valued and experience equality of opportunity for career progression
provide an annual account of its work and its future plans for improvement

I understand that:

Information on Charter signatories, the university's Charter contact person and university, departmental and faculty holders of bronze, silver and gold SWAN recognition awards will be posted on the Charter website.

When the university is accepted into Charter membership it will be given information on the use the university and its science, engineering and technology departments and faculties can make of the university's status as a Charter signatory.

When the university and its departments receive SWAN recognition they will be given information on the use the university and its science, engineering and technology departments and faculties can make of the SWAN logos.

The university has nominated (give name designation and contact details*) as its designated Athena SWAN Charter contact who will field/channel internal questions on the Charter and be the conduit for communication with the Athena SWAN Charter. I confirm that the university understands and accepts the guidance on the Athena SWAN Charter for women in science recently sent to the university. I understand that the guidance may change as the scheme evolves and that our Charter contact will be informed of any such changes.

*Local contact details required:

Designation, first name, last name, email address, telephone, fax, postal address

Appendix B: SWAN membership and award conditions

Communication with SWAN staff

- Institutions intending to make award applications are asked to inform Athena SWAN staff athenaswan@ecu.ac.uk at Equality Challenge Unit before the end of April each year, and to confirm the name and contact details of the person coordinating each application.

Bronze awards

- Institutions can only apply for a Bronze award if they are already charter members.
- Institutions must apply for a Bronze award within 3 awards rounds from the time of joining the charter i.e. if they join the charter in April 2009, the latest they could apply for a Bronze award would be the awards round in May 2011.
- Only institutions as a whole can apply for Bronze awards.
- Universities must achieve a Bronze award before individual departments can apply for Silver and Gold awards. The logic behind this is that it would be difficult, if not impossible, for a department to sustain the level of a Silver or Gold award without university support and underpinning university policies and procedures.
- Bronze awards are valid for 3 years, after which they must be renewed every 3 years by completing a Bronze renewal form.

Silver and Gold awards

- Only departments (or equivalent) can apply for Silver and Gold awards in the first instance.
- Institutions can apply for university-wide Silver/Gold awards by completing a Silver or Gold institutional award form demonstrating, among other things, that a substantial proportion of their SET departments have achieved Silver/Gold awards.
- Physics departments with Project Juno Champion status are automatically fast tracked for an Athena SWAN Silver award if their institution holds a valid Bronze award. The department should send a copy of the letter confirming the Juno Champion status to the Athena SWAN office. The Silver award will be made in the following SWAN awards round.
- Departments can apply for Silver/Gold awards at the same time as their university applies for Bronze renewal. If a department achieves the standard

for a Gold or Silver award, but the university fails to renew Bronze, the departmental award can be held over until the Bronze award is successfully renewed.

- If a university withdraws from membership, or has their membership withdrawn, any awards will also be withdrawn.
- If a university loses its Bronze award, but remains a charter member, any departments which already hold awards will retain them, but will not be able to apply for renewal unless by that time the university has regained its Bronze awards, or successfully renews its Bronze award that year.
- Departments must achieve a Silver award before applying for a Gold award
- It is not necessary for a department to renew its Silver award if it attains a Gold award.
- Silver and Gold awards are valid for 3 years. Silver and Gold awards can be renewed by completing a Silver/Gold renewal form.

The recognition panel

- If the panel decides that an application does not meet the standard for the award applied for, but does meet the standard for the level below, then the university will be informed of this and can decide whether to accept the award or reapply the following year.
- The panel's decision is final; there is no appeals process. We will encourage any universities or departments that do not meet the standard to apply for an award the following year. Additional support may be offered, depending on resources, to institutions and departments keen to reapply.

Transparency

- Successful award applications must be made public. They should be displayed on the institution's or department's website. If this is not possible they can be uploaded to the SWAN website.