

# Athena SWAN Award renewal guidance



Athena SWAN awards recognise good employment practice by universities and departments for women in science, engineering and technology (SET). The Athena SWAN definition of SET can be found on the website [here](#). Awards are valid for 3 years, after which they should either be renewed or the department should move up to the next level of award.

The standards for the [Bronze](#), [Silver](#) and [Gold](#) awards are explained in separate guidance which should be read in conjunction with this guidance. In considering an application for renewal, we will want to see evidence of progress and results since the previous application, so the standard is inevitably slightly higher. We want you to keep up the momentum! That's why we ask whether any of your departments have received silver or gold awards since you first gained Bronze. It is also why renewals at Silver level require a longer period of data monitoring and analysis than for the original application.

Renewals should be made in the format set out in the template, which may not be the same as the original application. Also make sure that you stick to the word limits – applications which are in the wrong format or which exceed the word count will be returned and may not be considered that year.

## **Letter of Endorsement from the Vice-Chancellor (Bronze) or Head of Department (Silver/Gold departmental awards)**

The letter of endorsement is an opportunity for Senior Management to show that there is continued commitment at senior level to the Athena SWAN Charter principles and to explain how the original award and the work associated with it has contributed to the university or department's overall objectives.

## **A picture of the department or 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 of the SET departments as a proportion of the whole university. For silver renewals, you might like to summarise the size and history of the department if it is relevant.

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.

## **Data**

SWAN 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. You should provide the minimum amount of data required to illustrate the point. We expect you to be monitoring trends over a period of time (3 years for Bronze renewal and 5 years for silver/gold renewal), not giving a snapshot. We ask you to use graphical illustrations as they are effective in showing the positive and negative developments over time, but please bear in mind that your application will be printed on A4 paper in black and white for the judges so the illustrations should be easy to follow. Make sure you submit your data in a PDF document.

You should also provide concise analysis of noteworthy points alongside the data. When considering applications for renewal we look for evidence of progress made on recruiting, retaining and advancing women's careers since the university or department received its first award, so it is helpful to have an explanation of any anomalies or particularly significant developments.

## **Report back on previous action plan**

You must attach your previous action plan and explain what progress has been made on each of the points. Where there has been no progress or no action, it is helpful to know the reasons for this and what you are now doing to address the problems originally identified. Essentially, we want to know if your plans are achieving the desired results and, if not, why not. We look for progress in terms of both numbers (eg, an increase in the number of women at all levels) and innovative policies. Don't forget to include additional initiatives which may have arisen since the first award or changes in emphasis.

## **Action plan**

The action plan you attach here should cover the period of the renewal of the award (3 years), not just the current year. This is not just because of the lifetime of the award, but also a reflection that policies often need more than one year to be implemented and for the results to show. Activities should be spread over the entire period. The plan should be in the format of a table or spreadsheet, picking up the priorities and challenges identified by the data, with clear milestones for progress and an identified person responsible for each action. You should also ensure that it is a gender-specific action plan, not just a diversity plan, because the purpose of Athena SWAN is the promotion of women specifically into senior levels.

## **Promoting the Athena SWAN Charter**

Many SWAN award holders are rightly proud of their achievements and ensure that everyone in the department/university is aware of it. This section gives you an opportunity to outline how you have promoted the award within the institution, eg on the website, and also externally, eg through press coverage, recruitment advertising, and discussions with other universities or departments. You can also describe how the good practice identified and stimulated by the award has been shared across departments and how it has fed back into central processes. You might also want to show how staff have been engaged in the process both following the first award and in preparation for the renewal.

Universities renewing at Bronze level should set out what they are doing to encourage and support silver applications from their SET departments. Departments renewing at silver should explain what plans they have to move on to Gold level.

### **Further SET-specific initiatives**

This section is optional, but it gives you the chance to include anything which might not have been covered by the preceding sections.

### **The self-assessment process**

It is essential that any application, whether the first or a renewal, is prepared by a team of people. We look for 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. At renewal some of the team may be the same as for the original application. Some of the most successful SWAN Charter members have a group which coordinates applications and assists those SET departments at the earliest stages. Similarly, some SWAN departments support others preparing for their first award, either within the same university or in the same discipline.

### **General application guidance**

#### **Here are some general tips about your award application:**

- Be concise and stick to the word limits. Focus on what is innovative.
- We look for honesty, self-reflection and awareness of departmental 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 outside section 3. The recognition panel will be interested in the findings of surveys and other qualitative data.
- We want to see evidence of engagement and support for Athena SWAN at a senior level.
- If your institution is applying for multiple SWAN awards from different departments, make sure that each application is distinctive, addressing the particular issues and demographic of that discipline.
- 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.
- Any queries should be emailed to [athenaswan@ecu.ac.uk](mailto:athenaswan@ecu.ac.uk)

#### **Application checklist:**

- Letter of endorsement from a Vice-Chancellor (university application) or Head of Department (departmental application)
- Appropriate renewal template
- Previous action plan
- Action plan for the next 3 years

**Last date for submission to [athenaswan@ecu.ac.uk](mailto:athenaswan@ecu.ac.uk) is 31 May each year.**  
The deadline cannot be extended.