



ATHENA SWAN AWARDS

TOP TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL APPLICATION

1. Be concise! Less is more! Each judge will read between 8 and 15 applications so you should identify the highlights and innovations in your policies, showing clearly what makes your activities different from everyone else's. Do not spend time detailing policies which are required by law.
2. Make sure that your action plan has clear milestones leading to long-term goals which should address any significant problems thrown up by the data analysis. The action plan should not be a simple 'to do' list! It should also cover the three year lifetime of the award, not just the next 12 months. Policies often need more than one year to lead to definitive progress. Present the action plan as a spreadsheet or table: don't make the judges work hard to understand your plans, moving backwards and forwards in a lengthy and wordy document. Make sure that your targets are ambitious: the action plan should be challenging but realistic! Think about who should be responsible for each action: don't overload one group or individual or the judges will conclude that your plan is not achievable.
3. Present your data clearly and with concise analysis integrated with each section. Do not submit pages of closely typed data or graphs which will be unclear when printed on A4 paper in black and white. Put it into a PDF document. And don't make the judges do the work of drawing out the trends: demonstrate your analysis clearly and interpret the key trends. Whenever possible put data on men and women in the same table or illustration so that the comparison is easy to see.
4. Make your application gender-specific. The Athena SWAN awards are for policies and programmes for women, because in many areas of SET women are under-represented. So, while we recognise that good practice benefits both men and women, show clearly what you are doing to address any negative disparities between them and how you target particular policies to improve the representation of women.
5. Make sure that your application shows movement, particularly if you are renewing a previous award. The SWAN Charter is not just about getting an award and staying at that level, it's about moving on and making progress on the Athena Principles.
6. Think about the organisational culture which will emerge from the application as a whole, including the letter of endorsement. Does your application convey the impression that this is a supportive and friendly

working environment which values difference and develops the skills and talents of all staff?

7. Stick to the format and use the application forms! We know that the format has changed from the original one and that we no longer use the key assessment areas. But the new style has been developed by a Working Group, including SWAN Charter members and representatives of learned societies, to streamline the process and to produce the information we need in a consistent format to make decisions on awards. Do not exceed the word count.
8. The good practice examples in the annual report and in the fact sheet series are all drawn from successful award applications, so make sure that you include policies and programmes that are innovative and different. That way, we are more likely to use them and publicise your achievements.
9. Think through the process and make sure that the application flows: what does the data show, what have you already done to address the issues identified in the data, what more needs to be done to resolve the issue or sustain progress, what will success look like, how will you share good practice more widely.
10. The underlying aim which should come through in the application is to increase the numbers and seniority of women in the organisation and to improve their retention and work experience, not to gather lots of awards!