

The Future of Athena SWAN

*The report of the Athena SWAN
Charter Review Independent
Steering Group for Advance HE
March 2020*

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Independent Steering Group for Advance HE

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Foreword

Reviewing the Athena SWAN Charter has been both an honour and a privilege for me and my fellow members of the independent Steering Group. The Charter is held in high esteem across the higher education sector and, as the recent impact study showed (www.ecu.ac.uk/publications/an-impact-evaluation-of-the-athena-swan-Charter-2019), there has been a step change in the sector's approach to gender equality since the Charter was first established in 2005, with many examples of positive change at institutional and departmental levels in our universities and research institutes.



However, while there is much to be proud of, this review is timely. Equality, diversity and inclusivity are rightly key priorities for the sector and it is critically important that the tools we have to help us address these important issues are fit for purpose.

The Steering Group has taken an objective, evidence-based approach to the review with the overarching goal of ensuring that the Athena SWAN Charter continues to be an effective driver of gender equality practice in higher education. We have therefore sought to build on good practice, address well founded concerns and capture the creative ideas that have emerged through the consultations.

I am immensely grateful to the many colleagues who contributed honest views, reflections and insights. Your input was invaluable in informing our discussions and detailed lines of investigation and in shaping our recommendations. I am also hugely grateful to all the members of the Steering Group for their unfailing commitment and enthusiasm and to the Group's secretary, Jo Masterson, who has been a tower of strength throughout, often going well beyond the call of duty.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Julia Buckingham". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a long, horizontal stroke.

Julia Buckingham

Introduction

The Athena SWAN Charter is a sector-led programme for the advancement of gender equality within universities and research institutes.

The Charter was established in 2005. Its aim was to encourage and recognise commitment to advancing the careers of women academics in science, technology, engineering, maths and medicine (STEMM) subjects in higher education and research, both at departmental and institutional levels. The name SWAN was an abbreviation of “Scientific Women’s Academic Network”.

In 2015 the Charter was expanded to include staff working in arts, humanities, social sciences, business and law (AHSSBL) departments, along with staff in professional, technical and operational (PTO) roles. It now also recognises work undertaken to address gender equality more broadly, not just barriers to progression that affect women.

Since Athena SWAN was established the sector has seen a welcome increase in the number of women in senior leadership roles. Nevertheless, despite progress, gender is still a mark of difference in the outcomes for both academic and PTO staff. In other words, more still needs to be done.

Moreover, since 2005, there have been changes in the regulatory frameworks in which UK universities operate, particularly the 2010 Equality Act and 2017 Higher Education and Research Act, and changes to the reporting requirements of university regulators across the UK and research funding bodies. Additionally, there has been increased cultural and political emphasis on gender equality matters within the workplace. These changes, alongside the experience gained by university staff from operating Athena SWAN for 15 years, present an important opportunity to review and refresh the Charter to ensure that it remains an effective driver of gender equality practice in higher education.

In 2018, the Advance HE Board commissioned an independent review of Athena SWAN. The Athena SWAN Charter Independent Review Steering Group, chaired by Professor Julia Buckingham, was established in July 2018 to review the Charter and to make recommendations to the Advance HE Board on how the Charter can be best placed to serve our universities and research institutes over the coming years.

Executive summary

Athena SWAN has been an effective means of addressing the gender inequality challenges that the sector faces. The Charter's effectiveness stems both from the accountability it generates at an institutional level and from the tools it provides to departments to implement the necessary structural and cultural changes which can support equality endeavours. Recognising its effectiveness, the Charter has been widely adopted across the sector both within the UK and abroad.

However, notwithstanding its success, the Charter needs to evolve and change, most notably in response to the legislative and cultural changes described above. It is also clear from discussions with staff in the sector that there is scope to modify the Charter. Most conspicuously it is evident that improvements are required in the application and assessment processes involved in Athena SWAN awards.

Key messages

- Athena SWAN should continue to be a major driver of gender equality practice in the UK higher education sector.
- It is timely for the Charter to change to address concerns raised by colleagues across the sector.
- The application process must be streamlined and the administrative burden on staff, particularly female staff, reduced.
- The assessment process must ensure consistency and transparency of award outcomes to have the confidence of the sector.
- The important role of positive and supportive cultures in driving gender equality must be a key part of the assessment.
- The Charter must embrace the wider definition of gender.
- Advance HE must provide more training and support for Athena SWAN applications.
- The governance structure must ensure that the Charter is owned and led by the sector.

The Steering Group

The Steering Group was made-up of individuals drawn from institutions across the UK, each of whom has substantive experience of the Athena SWAN Charter and equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) matters more broadly (see page 19 for list of members). The Group's remit was to consider and make recommendations on:

- The purpose and remit of the Athena SWAN Charter.
- The requirements for each level of recognition.
- The application process and the administrative burden it places on institutions.
- The assessment of applications.
- The training and workload of assessors.
- Perceived inconsistencies in the review process.

At its heart, the Steering Group strongly believes in and affirms the positive and significant impact that the Athena SWAN Charter has had. In developing its recommendations, the Group has sought to safeguard this positive impact.

The Steering Group has been mindful of the challenges that the operational aspects of the Athena SWAN Charter present to people working within universities and research institutes. Its overall objective has been to recommend improvements and changes which ensure that Athena SWAN remains a robust yet realistic method for driving gender equality in universities and research institutes.

From the outset, the Group recognised the importance and value of seeking views from colleagues across the sector. It thus undertook two substantive consultation exercises, which are described below, in addition to carrying out focused lines of investigation through task and finish groups. The views of the sector informed the work of three task and finish groups, particularly the pragmatic aspects of Athena SWAN applications and the assessments of submissions.

In line with its remit, the Steering Group focused on the application of Athena SWAN within the UK. However, the Group recognises that the Charter has been adopted by a number of other countries and hopes that its recommendations enhance the application of the Charter elsewhere.

Methodology and approach of the Steering Group

The Steering Group's work comprised four phases, outlined below. The Steering Group aimed to be as inclusive as possible in its approach and consulted widely across the sector.

Phase 1, June 2018 – September 2018:

The Group was established and met twice to agree the scope of the review and the approach it would take.

Phase 2, October 2018 – February 2019:

The Steering Group undertook a "soft consultation" with the view to understanding what colleagues liked about the Charter and where they thought there was need for change or improvement. The consultation included 41 focus groups held at institutions across the UK, enabling views to be obtained from a wide range of academic, research and professional, technical and operational (PTO) staff from different institutions, including some that had not engaged with Athena SWAN previously. There were also webinars and an online consultation. In total, some 1500 individuals engaged with this consultation. The findings (see Appendix 2), which were broadly consistent, confirmed the high regard in which the Charter is held but also identified areas of concern. These included the data burden, clarity of the assessment criteria, the consistency with which panels operate and the extent to which the process meets the needs of teaching-focused institutions.

The Steering Group also considered the findings of the Impact Study recently commissioned by Advance HE (www.ecu.ac.uk/publications/an-impact-evaluation-of-the-athena-swan-Charter-2019).

Phase 3, March 2019 – November 2019:

Three task and finish groups, each led by a member of the Steering Group, undertook focused work on specific issues raised in the soft consultation. The groups focused on data requirements, assessment criteria and costing of the evaluation process. Each group produced a final report for the Steering Group which was informed by data from the formal consultation described below (see appendix 4).

A team of consultants from the University of Huddersfield was appointed to undertake a formal consultation with the sector, analyse the results and write a full report for the Steering Group. The content of the questionnaire was designed to test potential solutions to the issues raised by soft consultation. Over 1,500 individuals responded to the questions in the consultation and provided 7792 comments in the free text boxes, which provided valuable insights to the Steering Group. A copy of the report is shown in Appendix 3.

Phase 4, December 2019 – February 2020

Draft recommendations were developed and shared with the Advance HE Board in December 2019.

The final report together with a proposed implementation plan was agreed by the Steering Group at its January meeting. The report was presented to the Advance HE Board and EDI Committee at its meeting on January 24th 2020.

Central themes emerging from the consultation

Throughout its work the Steering Group sought to engage widely with the sector to ensure that its recommendations are informed by the insights, opinions and experiences of the community the Charter serves.

The key themes were as follows:

The Scope of the Charter

The consultations reaffirmed the very positive impact Athena SWAN has had in bringing gender issues to the fore, enabling conversations to happen at institutional and departmental levels, policies to change, good practice to be developed and shared and real progress to be made in terms of culture and the progression of women into senior roles. A number of colleagues questioned whether a gender-specific Charter was still necessary or whether it was time to develop an all-embracing inclusivity Charter, noting the particular concerns relating to the underrepresentation and poor progression rates of BAME staff.

Reducing the burden

The administrative burden which Athena SWAN places on institutions, departments and individuals is a serious concern across the sector.

The Steering Group recognises that the Charter's processes must be consistent and based on a robust consideration of evidence. However, it is clear that the Charter process has become increasingly burdensome in terms of the amount of time and internal capacity required to comply with the needs of the application process.

Given the multiple pressures on staff time, the Athena SWAN Charter must reflect a more proportionate use of time and resources so that universities and research institutes are able to make the commitments needed to improve outcomes around gender inequality for staff and students and meet wider inclusivity aims.

Furthermore, there is an advantage for Advance HE and the panels in addressing this burden in terms of the volume of information which will need to be considered and interpreted.

Impact

A key issue raised was the difficulty applicants have had in demonstrating impact. This had a number of dimensions. First, some applicants have had difficulty in understanding what impact means: are they expected to be able to demonstrate impact only via hard metrics? How much change is needed to demonstrate impact satisfactorily for a panel? Second, some applicants do not have the opportunity to demonstrate impact in the time scale of an application. For example, small departments may have had no appointments and almost no promotions in the time an award has been held. Third, key aspects of working experience such as departmental culture need more than just metrics to describe and express. Fourth, the emphasis on impact has not provided applicants with the opportunity to discuss actions which failed or only partially succeeded, yet valuable lessons can and should be learned from each.

Culture

Both the soft consultation and the formal consultation survey raised the issue of culture. Respondents suggested that culture should be better represented in applications and there was support for including a culture survey.

Consistency and confidence in the assessment process

A major area of concern was the overall consistency of the assessment process with only 14% of respondents to the formal consultation expressing confidence in the panel decisions. The Steering Group reviewed evidence which suggested that the criteria and processes of assessment are not applied consistently and that consequently the confidence which institutions and their staff place in the assessment process has been compromised.

A process of support rather than criticism

A view was expressed that the work of the assessment panels appears to be judgemental. The Steering Group believes that future panels should aim to be supportive of the progress of applicants, rather than critical.

Arts, Humanities, Social Sciences and Business

Colleagues working in these disciplines expressed concern that the assessment criteria are heavily weighted towards STEMM subjects. They also emphasised very strongly the importance of valuing workplace culture and the important contribution it makes to enable a positive step change to equality and inclusion.

Research Institutes

The Steering Group endorsed concerns raised by colleagues that the questions posed in the current application form do not fit well with the work of research institutes.

Teaching-focused Institutions

The Group also endorsed concerns that the questions posed on the application form do not fit well with teaching-focused institutions.

Professional Technical and Operational Staff

The Steering Group noted concerns that the Charter focuses mainly on academic staff. It agreed in principle that the Charter should be expanded to include all professional, technical and operational (PTO) staff and noted that a new framework for assessment should be developed to reflect the criteria for promotion and progression for this group.

Governance

The Steering Group believes strongly that the future of the Athena SWAN Charter will be guaranteed by ensuring that the sector has a strong voice and a sense of ownership over how the Charter evolves to meet the needs of institutions, academics, researchers, support staff and students.

Implementation

The Steering Group is mindful of the substantive body of work needed to implement its recommendations. However, it hopes it can be done with sufficient pace to enable a smooth transition for applicants. To assist with this, the Steering Group has created an implementation plan based on the final recommendations to reflect the actions to be undertaken and the benefit to universities and research institutes (see Appendix 6).

Recommendations

The Athena SWAN Charter Independent Review Steering Group considered the evidence it gathered through the soft and formal consultations together with the findings and conclusions of its task and finish groups. It developed the following recommendations for UK awards together with an implementation plan, but recognises that further work will be needed for countries outside the UK to adopt the new scheme.

The Steering Group is clear that the following recommendations should be seen as part of the shifting/ changing landscape and the spirit of Athena SWAN. There is a need to simplify the processes and data around the Charter to create a means for sustaining positive outcomes with a shift from judging impact to supporting progress. Doing so will ensure that the Charter maintains its position across higher education institutions and research institutes as a hall-mark of excellence.

Scope of the Award

The Steering Group recognises the importance of addressing the full range of protected characteristics, particularly ethnicity, but also sees the merit in a Charter that concentrates inclusivity efforts principally on one characteristic. This is clearly a balance, but given that much more still needs to be achieved in promoting gender equality in universities, the group recommends that:

- 1 The Athena SWAN Charter continues to focus on gender equality but that it broadens its scope to reflect gender as a spectrum, rather than focusing on the binary definition of men and women.
- 2 The application process allows applicants to address issues relating to the intersectionality of gender with other protected characteristics in their action plans as appropriate.
- 3 The Charter continues to cover the full spectrum of academic disciplines. PTO staff should be included in that narrative but the data presented should relate only to the academic staff.
- 4 The Charter is expanded to enable staff in the PTO directorates to apply for their own departmental awards, thus creating an inclusive Charter that supports the development and career progression of all staff, irrespective of their roles in the institution.
- 5 Advance HE, in consultation with the new Governance Committee (see recommendation 39), develops a new set of award criteria that reflects the career paths of those in the professional and support services.
- 6 The Charter rebrands as Athena Swan (as opposed to 'Athena SWAN') to reflect the expansion beyond STEMM subjects.

Awards

- 7 The current system of institutional and departmental awards is maintained. However, the scope of departmental awards broadens to enable cognate departments to make joint applications, and other groups (e.g. schools, faculties or colleges where there is a degree of cultural homogeneity) to apply as a single unit. Similarly, PTO directorates will be permitted to make joint applications.
- 8 Institutional awards focus on institutional policy and practice; the action plan should be designed to bring about institution-wide benefits and to spread good practice.
- 9 Departmental awards focus on i) the implementation of institutional policy at departmental level, ii) departmental policies/practices and iii) culture and leadership.

Award Structure

- 10 The current system of Bronze, Silver and Gold awards is maintained for institutional and departmental awards.
- 11 Applicants seeking a Silver award for the first time must currently hold a Bronze award to enable progress against the action plan to be evaluated; similarly, applicants seeking Gold awards must hold a Silver award.
- 12 Awards are held for a maximum of five years, commencing from the date of the award letter, not the date of the application. Existing awards are extended to five years from the date of the award letter with immediate effect.
- 13 Institutions and departments wishing to progress to the next level of award are permitted to apply at any stage during the tenure of their award.
- 14 The requirement for institutions to hold departmental silver or gold awards before applying for an institutional silver or gold award is abolished.

Application Process

A number of changes are recommended to support applicants, simplify the application process, reduce the burden of work for both applicants and assessors and recognise the differences in working practices between universities and research institutes.

Support for applicants

- 15 The level of support provided by Advance HE to applicants is increased, in particular for first-time applicants. Such support could include webinars providing advice on how to apply for an Athena SWAN award, on-line question and answer sessions, and access to exemplar applications (successful and unsuccessful) for each award level via the web. The effectiveness of the support provided will be monitored by anonymised feedback and reviewed annually by the Governance Committee.

Introduction of an on online system with a standardised application form

- 16 Advance HE (a) develops an on-line application process with access via a dedicated portal and (b) introduces the new application forms designed by the Steering Group to ensure a standardised approach to the inclusion of data, and a reduction of issues related to formatting and to reflect the different requirements for new awards and renewals (see recommendations 20-23). A separate set of forms will be developed for research institutes.

Reducing the data burden

- 17 Advance HE and JISC create an on-line data resource accessed via the portal described above, enabling institutions to download, cut and analyse EDI data collected centrally by HESA, OfS, UCAS and SFC. With the exception of data on applications for jobs and promotion which should be limited to application numbers and final outcomes, all data which are mandatory for the application are downloaded from this source, thus reducing the burden on applicants and enabling benchmarking where appropriate. Table 1 (page 15) details the mandatory data requirements.
- 18 Applicants include relevant additional internal data to support their action plans and to demonstrate progress against previous plans.

Evaluation Institutional/Departmental Culture

Colleagues across the sector emphasised the importance of workplace culture in creating an environment in which gender-related issues are respected and individuals can thrive.

- 19 Departmental applicants are required to consider departmental culture in their application and to include the data from a standardised sector-wide culture survey conducted amongst their constituents.

Applications for New Awards

- 20 Applicants applying for their first Bronze award, or seeking to upgrade a current award from Bronze to Silver or Silver to Gold, are required to complete a full application which includes both background information and an action plan.
- 21 The background information describes the current situation and is supported by mandatory data. For departmental applications this also includes the results of the culture survey. For institutional awards the background describes and evidences institutional policies and practice, while for departmental awards it demonstrates how institutional policies are implemented locally and also describes any local policies/practices.
- 22 There is no blueprint for action plans. Rather, action plans focus on the issues the institution/department wishes to address in the coming five years. The text, supported as appropriate by additional internal data, describes how the plan will be implemented and SMART targets met once an award is confirmed.

Simplifying the renewal process

- 23 Renewal applications at both institutional and departmental level focus on evidence of progress made against the action plan, describe any new developments, and include an updated action plan taking into account any changes in circumstances.

Provision of Support

- 24 Institutions/departments are required to demonstrate how they recognise (e.g. through promotion criteria) and support the work of individuals who invest time in (a) preparing Athena SWAN applications, (b) implementing and monitoring progress against action plans, and (c) contributing to the assessment process by acting, as members of Athena SWAN review panels as appropriate, and explain how this work is factored into departmental/institutional workload models or equivalent.
- 25 Institutions are required to demonstrate that they (a) take a holistic approach to EDI activity, with a named institutional lead and clear governance structures that report to the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and (b) have an effective process for institutional monitoring and reporting.
- 26 Institutions/departments are required to have a self-assessment team that has a gender make-up which is approximately representative of the institution/ department.

Submission of Applications

- 27 There are six deadlines for applications per year.
- 28 Applicants normally hear the outcome of their applications within two months of submission.

Assessment Criteria

The Steering Group considered at length the assessment criteria for Bronze, Silver and Gold awards. It recommends a number of changes to ensure greater transparency and consistency, with new criteria and clear thresholds for each level of award, along with a clearer definition of what constitutes progress and how this is assessed and scored. These are detailed in Table 2 (pages 16-17).

The key elements are:

- 29 Bronze awards are 'entry level' awards. Applicants are required to describe and analyse their current position and to provide a SMART action plan focused on the key issues the institution/ department wishes to concentrate on in the next five years. Holders of Bronze awards are exhorted to be pro-active in progressing to applications for Silver awards within the five years of their award.
- 30 Silver awards are a hallmark of good practice at institutional or departmental level. Applicants seeking to upgrade from Bronze to Silver are expected to show significant progress against their Bronze level action plan, with a clear reflection on what has been achieved, what has been learnt and what has not worked.

- 31 Gold awards demonstrate excellence at institutional/departmental level and also provide evidence of good practice developed in-house being translated to other institutions/departments and of the institution/department proactively supporting development in the sector.
- 32 Progress is measured against the stated action plan rather than against the data and also recognises (a) critical evaluation and learning from actions that did not achieve the desired outcome and (b) developments beyond those described in the plan that arose through local innovation, recognised and built on good practice in the sector or were initiated locally due to changing circumstances (for example, restructuring).

Assessment Process

The Steering Group was concerned by the lack of confidence across the sector in the current system of reviewing and assessing applications. Therefore, it recommends that:

- 33 The current panels are replaced by panels of experts with significant experience of EDI as an academic or an EDI professional drawn from a collected pool of approved members (see appendix 8).
- Panels will be gender-balanced and include five members, three of whom should be academic for institutional and departmental awards, and an appointed chair who is or has been at pro-vice-chancellor (PVC) level or holds a lead EDI role in their institution.
 - Panels reviewing STEMM-based applications include at least one STEMM expert, while those reviewing AHSSB-based applications will have one expert from these disciplines and those reviewing PTO applications will similarly have appropriate expertise.
 - All panels include at least one member who is experienced in the use of statistics.
 - A transparent mechanism is introduced to appoint panel members and chairs, akin to that used by research funders. This includes a formal process following a call for applications, selection against defined criteria and a job description which defines the expectations of the role (see Appendix 7). New panel members and chairs will be required to attend an initial training session which may include observing panels.
 - Chairs and panel members are appointed to a pool for a fixed term of three years, renewable for a further term. Some flexibility is allowed initially to ensure that panel members rotate off in an orderly manner.
 - Panel members and chairs receive an honorarium, equivalent to that paid by UKRI for research panels.
 - Panel members and chairs are appointed by the newly established Athena SWAN Governance Committee.
 - Panel members are drawn from a wide range of institutions spanning all parts of the UK and may also include overseas representatives. Panel meetings should be held at different locations across UK.

- 34 The panels operate in a manner akin to grant awarding panels. Thus:
- Applications are pre-circulated to the panels. All members are required to read and score each application and return their scores to the panel chair in advance of the panel meeting.
 - The panel chair nominates two members to speak to each application at the meeting before inviting other members to contribute to the discussion and moving to agree a final score for the application.
 - The panel decision is final and panel members will take cabinet responsibility for decisions; the role of the moderator is removed.
 - Applicants are informed of the outcome within five working days of the panel meeting and provided with detailed feedback within 15 working days.
 - There will be three possible outcomes:
 - Award.
 - Minor revisions required with the revised version to be re-submitted within an agreed timescale and reviewed by the same panel with the expectation of the award being made.
 - Unsuccessful – major revision and resubmission required. Unsuccessful applicants have the right of appeal; appeals will be considered by a different panel.
- 35 Awards will only be removed or downgraded unless there is little or no evidence of progress against the action plan since the last application and no reports of other developments.
- 36 Unsuccessful applicants receive constructive feedback from the panel chair via panel secretary to ensure they understand the revisions that are required to be successful upon re-submission.
- 37 Advance HE develops an optional service to provide advice for mid-award guidance for award holders via an on-line system, a teleconference or a site-visit. This is developed as a paid-for service with charges on a sliding scale to ensure smaller institutions are able to afford additional support.
- 38 Panel chairs meet annually to review progress, identify any issues that have emerged and agree a report for submission to the Governance Committee.

Governance

The Steering Group was sympathetic to concerns raised that the current governance system did not provide sufficient sector oversight of the Charter. Therefore it recommends:

- 39 The establishment of an Athena SWAN Governance Committee to provide expert advice and guidance to the Advance HE Board on matters relating to the Athena SWAN Charter, including the modifications and data sets needed to ensure that the new scheme can be adopted by countries outside the UK. Appendix 5 details the proposed terms of reference for this Committee.
- 40 That this Committee is responsible for conducting a full review of the Charter every five years.
- 41 The next review includes full consideration of the possibility of expanding the Charter to include additional protected characteristics with the goal of moving to an all-embracing equality Charter.

Table 1: Mandatory data requirements

Ref	Description
1	Numbers of students by gender at foundation, UG, PGT and PGR level.
2	Degree attainment and completion rates by gender.
3	Numbers of academic staff by grade, contract function (teaching and research, teaching only, research only) and gender. At institution level, for PTO posts too (excepting contract function).
4	Numbers of academic staff by grade, contract type (fixed-term, open-ended, zero-hours) and gender. At institution level, for PTO posts too.
5	Applications and appointments made in recruitment to academic and research posts, by grade and gender.
6	Applications and success rates for academic and research staff promotion, by grade and gender.

Table 2: Assessment Criteria for Institutional and Departmental Awards

New Applications for Institutional Awards

Level	Requirements	Key Criteria	Other details [†]
Institutional Bronze	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who we are • Overview of institutional policies • What our issues are (including what are our key priorities) • What we plan to do about issues • Action plan • Gender focus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognition of the key issues facing the institution • Action plan to address identified issues, including plans to improve policies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 years • Can be renewed as long as some progress (and continued momentum) is demonstrated
Institutional Silver	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who we are • Update detailing progress/ impact made since Bronze award • What we are doing at institutional level to drive change via policies • Gender focused • What our issues are (including what are our key priorities) • What we plan to do about issues • Action plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstration of progress and evidence of achievement against the applicant's priorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 years • Must hold Bronze award first • Can be renewed as long as some progress (and continued momentum) is demonstrated
Institutional Gold	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who we are • Update detailing progress/ impact made since Silver award • Outcomes/impact from what we have done at institutional level via policies • Gender focused • How we have supported others • What our issues are (including what are our key priorities) • What we plan to do about issues • Action plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued progress and outcomes against key priorities • Lead/support others to improve • Clear evidence of sustained success in addressing gender inequality • Evidence of progressive new policies/practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 years • Must hold Silver award first • Can be renewed as long as some progress (and continued momentum) is demonstrated

[†]Maximum word count to be determined upon finalisation of recommendations relating to application format

New Applications for Departmental Awards

Level	Requirements	Criteria	Other details [†]
Departmental Bronze	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who we are • What our issues are (including what are our key priorities) • What are we good at • What we plan to do about issues • How we deliver and ensure adherence to institutional policies • Culture survey completed and analysed • Action plan • Gender focus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognition of the key issues facing the department • Action plan to address identified issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 years • Can be renewed as long as some progress (and continued momentum) is demonstrated
Departmental Silver	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who we are • Update detailing progress/impact made • Update on completed action plan showing outcomes for each action • Gender focus • Update on changes in culture survey • What our issues are (including what are our key priorities) • What we plan to do about issues • How we deliver and ensure adherence to institutional policies • Culture survey completed and analysed • Action plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstration of progress and evidence of achievement against the applicant's priorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 years • Must hold Bronze award first • Can be renewed as long as some progress (and continued momentum) is demonstrated

[†]Maximum word count to be determined upon finalisation of recommendations relating to application format

Level	Requirements	Criteria	Other details [†]
Departmental Gold	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who we are • Update detailing progress/impact made • Update on completed action plan showing outcomes for each action • Gender focus • Update on changes in culture survey • Demonstrate activities of supporting others • What our issues are (including what are our key priorities) • What we plan to do about issues • How we deliver and ensure adherence to institutional policies • Culture survey completed and analysed • Action plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued progress and outcomes against key priorities • Lead/support others to improve • Clear evidence of sustained success in addressing gender inequality • Evidence of progressive new policies/practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 Years • Must hold Silver award first • Can be renewed as long as some progress (and continued momentum) is demonstrated
[†] Maximum word count to be determined upon finalisation of recommendations relating to application format			

Applications for Renewing Awards at Institutional or Departmental Level

Level	Requirements	Criteria	Other details
Renewal (all levels, institutional and departmental)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who we are and any significant changes since the previous application • What our issues are (including what are our key issues) • Update detailing progress made since previous award (linked to action plan outputs and culture survey) • How we will build on this progress through an updated action plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstration of some progress against the action plan and continued momentum. • An updated action plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include culture survey in appendix for departmental and directorates applications only • Any additional actions undertaken plus rationale • Any change in circumstances

Athena SWAN Charter Independent Review

Steering Group Members

Professor Julia Buckingham CBE Vice-Chancellor and President, Brunel University London (Chair)

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Professor Paul Carmichael, Associate Dean (Global Development), Ulster University

Professor Dame Athene Donald DBE, Professor of Experimental Physics and Master of Churchill College, University of Cambridge

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Professor Jenny Higham, Principal, St George's, University of London

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Task and Finish Group Members

Assessment Criteria

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Professor Dame Athene Donald DBE, Professor of Experimental Physics and Master of Churchill College, University of Cambridge

Professor Dorothy Griffiths, Emeritus Professor and formerly Provost's Envoy for Gender Equality, Imperial College London

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Professor Paul Walton, Department of Chemistry, University of York

Costing models

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