



Athena SWAN Charter: what it is and how it helps promote gender equality



What is the Athena SWAN Charter?

A scheme to recognise excellence in science, engineering and technology employment for women in higher education and research institutes

Charter Principles



1. To address gender inequalities requires commitment and action from everyone, at all levels of the organisation
2. To tackle the unequal representation of women in science requires changing cultures and attitudes across the organisation
3. The absence of diversity at management and policy-making levels has broad implications which the organisation will examine
4. The high loss rate of women in science is an urgent concern which the organisation will address
5. The system of short-term contracts has particularly negative consequences for the retention and progression of women in science, which the organisation recognises
6. 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

How does it work?



1. Letter of commitment from senior member of university
2. Enter for an institutional Bronze award within 2 years
3. Enter for Silver and Gold awards
4. Thematic events and opportunities for sharing good practice and networking



Awards

- Bronze (universities)
- Silver (departments and universities)
- Gold (departments and universities)

Preparing an Award Application



- Previous examples
- Self assessment team
- Collect information
- Consult widely

Judging process



- Written submissions read by a panel of 6 - 8 experts
- Judges meet in June and July to discuss merits of award submissions and make decisions about awards
- Constructive feedback given to all members who have submitted for an award, including those who have failed to meet the level required

What do the awards look for?



- ✓ Collection and analysis of gender data (including gender in SET)
- ✓ Positive action to recruit and retain women in SET
- ✓ Supportive organisational culture
- ✓ Systematic consideration of gender issues in policy and procedure
- ✓ Representation of women on influential committees
- ✓ Initiatives to support work-life balance

Why universities want to join



- Employer of choice
- Demonstrates commitment to gender equality
- Enhances organisation's reputation
- Publicises and shares good practice
- Brings together existing initiatives and stimulates change
- Individual, expert feedback on progress
- Networks of contacts
- Benchmarking against other universities
- Achievements profiled on Athena SWAN website

University of York – Gold award for Chemistry Department



Achievements

- Higher percentage of female academics than national average for chemistry
- Significant increase in number of female senior lecturers and professors
- Appointment of Graduate and Postdoctoral Training Officer
- Job adverts always emphasise a family friendly policy

University of York – Gold award for Chemistry Department



Changing the culture

- Female membership on all key committees
- Department eschews traditional 'competitive culture' and values quality of research over quantity
- Seminars to promote non-standard academic career pathways in seminars
- Celebrate prominent women scientists from the department
- Invite female chemists as external speakers
- Encourage female staff to contribute to departmental and university publications



Next steps

Publications



- Annual Reports
- Good practice factsheets
- Awards case studies



www.athenaswan.org.uk



Thank you