

Athena SWAN: Preparing a (successful) application

Tamara Szucs
Athena SWAN Programme Adviser
tamara.szucs@advance-he.ac.uk

Outline

- = Athena SWAN framework & criteria
- = Getting your self-assessment right
- = Progress, impact, becoming a beacon
- = Features of un/successful applications
- = Q&A

The Athena SWAN framework and criteria

Athena SWAN framework

Applicants asked to:

1. **Collect** data (quantitative *and* qualitative)
2. Critically **analyse** and **reflect** on data
3. **Identify** issues (e.g. reasons for under-representation)
4. Develop 4-year **action plan** to address issues
5. Show **progress** / **impact** / **sustained impact** over time

N.B. Individualised (not prescriptive / box-ticking) approach

Data → Analysis → Action → Impact? → Data...

Awards criteria

	Bronze	Silver	Gold
Thorough self-assessment using qualitative and quantitative analysis	●	●	●
Identifies key issues arising from data	●	●	●
Develops actions to address key issues	●	●	●
Demonstrates impact of previous actions and activity		●	●
Serves as a beacon in the discipline, sector, and beyond			●

Anatomy of an application

1. Letter of endorsement
2. Description of the department
3. The self-assessment process
4. **A picture of the department**
 - 4.1 Student data
 - 4.2 Academic and research staff data
5. **Supporting and advancing careers**
 - 5.1 Key career transition points
 - 5.2 Key career transition points: professional and support staff (*Silver and Gold only*)
 - 5.3 Career development
 - 5.4 Career development: professional and support staff (*Silver and Gold only*)
 - 5.5 Flexible working & managing career breaks
 - 5.6 Organisation & culture
6. Case studies (*Silver and Gold only*)
7. Further information
8. **Action plan**



SMART action planning

- Use data throughout application as evidence-base for actions – **data → analysis → action**
- If there is an issue, develop an action in response
- No further self-assessment and monitoring – **sufficiently thorough** self-assessment needed
- Actions need to be developed to be SMART:

Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound

SMART action planning

Action (What?)	Rationale (Why?)	Timescale (When?)	Responsible (Who?)	Success Measure (How?)
<p>Include a specific description of the action that you will implement.</p> <p>Consider who the action is aimed at and how it will be implemented.</p>	<p>The rationale should be relevant and clearly linked to issues in the qualitative and quantitative data.</p> <p>What did you uncover through the self-assessment that has led you to considering this action?</p>	<p>The action must be time-bound.</p> <p>Include clear start and end dates. Avoid “ongoing” actions, and consider using milestones to track progress.</p>	<p>A range of specific roles and people. Ensure action is within the department’s power, making it achievable.</p>	<p>Is it clear how the achievement of actions is measurable?</p> <p>Completing action is not a success measure; what the action is aiming to affect is where specific measurable targets should come from.</p>

Going for Silver: Evidencing Impact

Silver criteria

“In addition to the Bronze criteria, Silver awards recognise that the department has taken action in response to previously identified challenges and **can demonstrate the impact of these actions.**”

Measures of success

“Promotion processes work well”

- = Feedback (focus groups, survey)
- = Understanding of and confidence in process
- = Application rates
- = Success rates

- = Membership
- = Meetings/contact
- = Feedback (consultation with members)
- = Awareness of policies
- = Uptake of policies i.e. parental leave
- = Return rate/retention

“The parents network has been successful”

Progress ≠ impact

Impact is not just having taken action

Need to demonstrate **impact** the action has had on gender equality:

- = The department now runs an annual promotions workshop, which after a year has reached 100% staff → **Progress**
- = As a result, promotion success rate for women has increased from 35% to 51% in the next round → **Impact**
- = 5 years after action implemented, annual workshop consistently reaches over 90% of staff and female success rate increased year-on-year for first 3 years, now constant at ~75% → **Sustained impact**

Demonstrating impact

- = Evidence how the situation has improved for women (or men, where underrepresented) using quantitative and/or qualitative data
- = Present a narrative that clearly shows how your actions have directly led to the impact
- = Clear links between:
data → analysis → actions → progress → impact
- = Case studies: demonstrate inclusive culture and working practices leading to career development and progression

Going for Gold: Being a Beacon

Gold criteria

“In addition to the Bronze and Silver criteria, Gold awards recognise **significant and sustained impact**, and departments being **beacons of achievement** in gender equality within the discipline, sector, and beyond.”

Progress ≠ impact ≠ beacon

Beacons don't just promote and network on Athena SWAN

Need to demonstrate **sustained impact** that the **well-established activities** have had on gender equality:

- = 5 years after action implemented, annual workshop consistently reaches over 90% of staff and female success rate increased year-on-year for first 3 years, now constant at ~75% → **Sustained impact**
- = How do you **lead others** in your institution and discipline to embed Athena SWAN principles?
- = How do you develop and sustain **innovative best practices** that have had a clear positive impact on gender equality and working practices?

Being a leading light – beacons

- = Demonstrate convincingly throughout that you have been recognised as a ‘leading light’ on gender equality – champion and ambassador
- = Evidence throughout the application (quantitative and/or qualitative data) how your sustained impactful activities have proven to be innovative and sector-leading
- = Present a narrative that clearly shows how your sustained activities over time have made you into a beacon of achievement others look to for learning and experience

Features of successful and unsuccessful Athena SWAN applications

Common features of successful applications

Actions and initiatives specific to professional and support staff

Impact clearly linked to previous issues and actions

Considered male under-representation, where appropriate

Focus on gender throughout

Evidence of staff and student consultations, including focus groups and surveys

Honest self-assessment

Consulted with critical friends

SMART action plan with measurable targets and baselines

Common features of unsuccessful applications

Action plan not SMART

The action plan does not address the issues

Short timescales between the SAT formation and submission

Not answering all of the questions

Missing information about professional and support staff or other Post-May 2015 criteria

Lack of analysis, or descriptive analysis, rather than analytical

Lack of qualitative data

Not using staff consultation to inform analysis and actions

Questions?

Support from the Charters team

- = Email: Athena.SWAN@advance-he.ac.uk
- = Read our FAQs: <https://www.ecu.ac.uk/equality-charters/athena-swan/athena-swan-faqs>
- = Become a panellist or an observer:
<https://www.ecu.ac.uk/equality-charters/athena-swan/panellists>
- = Join the Athena SWAN network on Advance HE Connect:
<https://connect.advance-he.ac.uk>
- = Follow us on Twitter: [@Athena_SWAN](https://twitter.com/Athena_SWAN)

The logo for AdvanceHE, featuring a small teal circle with a white dot inside, followed by the text "AdvanceHE" in a bold, black, sans-serif font.

AdvanceHE

For more information
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