UCL Athena SWAN Guidance

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Support for Athena SWAN

The following document will act as a guide for applying for Athena SWAN awards.

Harriet Jones is the Policy Adviser for Athena SWAN at UCL and can offer support for departments applying for Athena SWAN awards. Harriet can read through draft applications and give feedback, provide staff and student data and attend SAT meetings to discuss particular issues or concerns.

Further information can be viewed at the Athena SWAN website, including links to successful departmental bronze, silver and gold applications.

Please also see the UCL Equality and Diversity and Athena SWAN webpages.

About Athena SWAN

The Athena SWAN charter recognises and celebrates good practice in relation to gender equality in STEM/M departments (Science, Technology, Engineering, Maths and Medicine). Departments can apply for different level awards that illustrate their commitment, progress and successes.

Athena SWAN is run by the Equality Challenge Unit (ECU). We have been asked to identify a key contact for the ECU at UCL – if you have any queries for the ECU, please forward these to Harriet.

There are two submission deadlines every year – the last working day of April and the last working day of November.
Athena SWAN Awards:

**Bronze**

- Analyse staff and student data to identify key areas of attrition and leaks in the pipeline.
- In response to your data analysis, identified key **plans** to address issues. Create an action plan for the next three years.

**Silver**

- In addition to the above, the department will need to evidence that they have implemented actions and are able to illustrate **impact**.
- The department should illustrate a shift in culture that benefits staff at all levels.

**Gold**

- The department needs to show considerable action and impact.
- Gold departments should support other departments by sharing their ‘**beacon**’ activities.
Setting up a Self Assessment Team (SAT)

The SAT take responsibility for the analysis of the staff and student data, agreeing and implementing actions and initiatives in response to the analysis and for putting together the Athena SWAN application and action plan.

Key considerations when establishing your SAT:

- The membership of the SAT should be representative and diverse – there should be a good gender balance and a range of members at all stages of the academic pipeline. It is a good idea to have post doc and student representation on the group.

- It is important that there is commitment from the HoD and the senior members of staff in the department. Commitment and interest from senior staff can make it easier for changes to be put in place and resourced.

- Ensure the SAT fits within the management structure of the department and decide how the SAT will report to, and interact with, other key decision making committees and individuals.

- SAT members should take responsibility for aspects of the application and the action plan – don’t leave all the work to the SAT lead.
Data: information provided

- The E&D team can provide staff and student data for your submissions. We can provide:
  - Staff numbers (including grade, contract type, full/part time)
  - Maternity / Adoption
  - Promotion
  - Recruitment
  - HESA benchmark data
  - Student data (UG, PGT and PGR) is sent via student data services
  - Interview panel representation (this will depend on whether this has been entered into ROME by your department)

- Data we can’t provide:
  - Applications for promotion
  - Paternity/parental leave
  - Flexible working
  - Membership of influential committees

- The easiest way to analyse the raw data is by using pivot tables. Some files need formatting before you can create a pivot table. Please [click here](#) for further information
Data: Presenting your data

- Make sure your data are easy to interpret and discuss
- Remember panels will have to read about 7 applications – make it easy for them to understand your data
- Where possible use graphs to represent data (avoid large tables of data)
- Use percentages (except with very small numbers)
- Label graphs to include raw numbers, or give an indication of raw numbers in your discussion
- Clearly label your graphs
- Provide data for a minimum of three years
- Remember your application will be printed in black and white unless you send in 10 printed colour copies. Make sure the colours you use can be distinguished when printed, (also, don’t use pink and blue please!)
Data: Some good examples
Data: Some good examples

Progression over time

- Female
- Male
- % female
Data: Some good examples

Academic Pipeline 2011/12

- UG: 43% (Female), 57% (Male)
- PGT: 48% (Female), 52% (Male)
- PGR: 47% (Female), 53% (Male)
- Researcher: 40% (Female), 60% (Male)
- Lecturer: 33% (Female), 67% (Male)
- Senior Lecturer: 28% (Female), 72% (Male)
- Reader: 17% (Female), 83% (Male)
- Professor: 0% (Female), 100% (Male)
Data: Some good examples

Recruitment over time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Applicants</th>
<th>Interview</th>
<th>Appoint</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>71% 124</td>
<td>82% 15</td>
<td>100% 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>66% 54</td>
<td>78% 7</td>
<td>100% 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>56% 70</td>
<td>69% 9</td>
<td>100% 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Men**: Blue bars
- **Women**: Red bars

- **Applicants**: Percentage of applicants
- **Interview**: Percentage of applicants interviewed
- **Appoint**: Percentage of those appointed
Data: Some good examples

UG students over time

- 2010/11:
  - Male: 49% (842)
  - Female: 51% (889)
- 2011/12:
  - Male: 50% (865)
  - Female: 50% (849)
- 2012/13:
  - Male: 51% (871)
  - Female: 49% (848)
- National Average 10/11:
  - Male: 43%
  - Female: 57%
Data: Some good examples

Committee Representation

- Senior management group: 11 males, 1 female
- SAT: 2 males, 7 females
- Education committee: 1 male, 5 females
- Research strategy group: 10 males, 2 females
Data: Some good examples

Gender balance on interview panels

- 2010: 54% data not recorded, 26% panels without 25% female representation, 20% panels with 25% female representation
- 2011: 41% data not recorded, 33% panels without 25% female representation, 26% panels with 25% female representation
- 2012: 16% data not recorded, 12% panels without 25% female representation, 72% panels with 25% female representation
Data: Some good examples

Question 12: my Department is inclusive and supportive

- Total:
  - Strongly Dissagree: 25%
  - Dissagree: 25%
  - Agree: 19%
  - Strongly Agree: 30%

- Women:
  - Strongly Dissagree: 48%
  - Dissagree: 33%
  - Agree: 15%
  - Strongly Agree: 4%

- Men:
  - Strongly Dissagree: 8%
  - Dissagree: 19%
  - Agree: 23%
  - Strongly Agree: 50%
Data: Discussing your data

• The purpose of analysing your data is to understand the key areas of attrition in your department and to inform your action plan. Identify key areas where you have a leak in the pipeline and develop actions that tackle these key transition points.

• Discuss the data, don’t just report it – hypothesise why certain trends might be happening in your department and situation. Make reference to processes such as recruitment and promotion in your department and how these processes may relate to trends in the data. SWAN panels will be looking for a reflective narrative of the data.

• Highlight issues and areas for action through the discussion of your data, describe what you have already done and the impact it has had and describe the actions you intend to take. Reference this to the specific action in your action plan.

• Assume that the panel won’t know anything about your department, how it is structured or what the UCL policies on recruitment or promotion are. Make sure you describe processes and practices.

Some good examples: UCL MRC application, Oxford Plant Sciences silver application, Imperial Earth Science and Engineering silver application
Data: Discussing your data

Things to avoid:

• “our data is better than the national average, therefore we have no action planned.” – the national average is not the aim as the under-representation of women in STEMM is a national problem – aim higher than the national average.

• “the data is not statistically significant so no conclusions can be drawn and no action is planned” – having small numbers of staff is probably going to lead to stats not being significant – this doesn’t mean there isn’t a trend or a leaky pipeline. Qualitative data can also help to identify issues that should be addressed.

• “whilst our survey identified areas where staff were unhappy or felt unsupported, there was no gender differences in the results. Therefore we have no actions planned to address these issues.” – these issues should still be addressed. In your application you can show that all staff have benefited, but highlight the impact for women in the Department.

• “our recruitment data illustrate no clear gender bias at the point of invitation to interview or appointment, therefore no action is planned” – it may be that women are just as likely to be appointed once they apply, but are enough women applying? Consider what you could do to encourage women to apply for positions within your department. Look into the proportion of staff involved in recruitment who have completed relevant training – for example, recruitment and selection, equality and diversity (since the introduction of the 2010 Equality Act) and unconscious bias training.
Data: Surveys and qualitative data

- Qualitative and survey data can be key to showing impact. For example, if you run a survey on an annual basis you can compare results to show improvements.

- Present and discuss your data throughout the application – not just in the ‘any other comments’ section of the application.

Surveys:

- Always include an introduction to your survey outlining how the data will be used, why, by who and that the data will remain anonymous.

- Consider what you want to know - think about the staff and student data and what you want to understand in more detail.

- What will you do with the data? Think about the wording of questions – how will you use the data to support your application or help to develop your action plan?

- Include an ‘about you’ section to identify the gender of respondents, along with an indication of SWAN grade, contract type (fixed term/permanent) and whether they work full time, part time and/or flexibly. Don’t ask for information you aren’t going to use.
Data: Surveys and qualitative data

Surveys (Cont.):

- Avoid having too many multiple choice options, for example strongly agree, slightly agree, agree ... Think about how you will use the data. Strongly agree and agree is enough, or just yes and no.

- Also avoid ‘neither agree of disagree’. Not applicable may be relevant in some cases. Try to engage respondents – make the questions interesting, or even provocative – create questions that staff will have an opinion on.

- Some open ended questions can provide interesting and useful data (preferably more specific than ‘any other comments’).

Focus groups:

- Focus groups can be a really useful way to further understand a particular issue that have been identified by the SAT – either through data analysis or survey results.

- Make sure that you choose a topic that will engage staff/students, encouraging them to attend.

- Focus groups will generate qualitative data – don’t reduce the discussions to statistics. Semi structured, open ended approaches will compliment your surveys.

- I am happy to help Departments to run focus groups and analyse qualitative data.
**Evidencing Impact**

- Illustrating the impact of your actions is what distinguishes a silver from a bronze award.

- While the eventual aim is to increase the number of women at all stages of the academic career pipeline, it will take time to improve your staff statistics, particularly at senior level. However, there are some ways to show statistical change, for example:
  
  - Committee membership (increase in female membership, but bear in mind over-burdening)
  - Interview panels (increase in female representation, considering workload)
  - Increase in numbers of applications for promotion could show that you are supporting/informing staff in relation to progression
  - Increase in number of female speakers at seminars

- Use qualitative methods to establish whether actions have had an impact - these methods could include
  
  - If you re-run your Athena SWAN survey you will be able to compare results over time.
  - Focus groups – ask staff/students about their experiences and if they have seen improvements, for example if you recently implemented early career researcher network you could discuss whether these sessions have been helpful and whether they have seen any changes or impact from the sessions.
  - You could ask people to fill in feedback forms after Athena SWAN events (e.g. careers events)
1. Letter of endorsement from HoD

- This is an opportunity for the HoD to show personal committed to and engaged in Athena SWAN. Give examples of the HoD’s involvement in the process.
- Show how SWAN is linked to, and part of, the Departmental strategy.
- Give examples of successful SAT actions and the impact they have had on the department.
- Illustrate how Athena SWAN has become an embedded part of the department, for example:
  - explain how the SAT fits into the formal structure of the department (showing it isn’t a stand alone group)
  - illustrate how equality and gender considerations are embedded within the culture and vision of the department
  - how will Athena SWAN actions and the SAT be resourced in the future?

See UCL Biochemical Engineering silver award, Oxford Experimental Psychology silver application and Edinburgh Biomedical Sciences silver award for good examples of a HoD letter.
Application form:

2. The self assessment process

- Give a brief outline – how many men and women are on the SAT, and a breakdown by seniority
- When giving an description of each SAT member. Give examples of how each member has contributed to the SAT, whether they have any experience of working flexibly, maternity/paternity, why they are interested in SWAN.
- List SAT members alphabetically – not hierarchically
- Give a clear picture of how the SAT worked, for example when the SAT start meeting, how regularly the team met and the processes the SAT undertook to develop and implement actions.
- Include any information on how the SAT consulted with staff here (this acts as an introduction to discussions of surveys and qualitative data during the application)
- Outline reporting mechanisms – show how the SAT has become an embedded structure of the department and how the SAT fits within the management of the department
- Describe how Athena SWAN was communicated to the department – would most staff/students know what Athena SWAN is and have they seen your action plan?
- Give examples of senior involvement and support
- Consultation with individuals or departments, both within and outside of UCL, is seen as good practice – give details of these consultations.
- Make sure you have a clear plan for the SAT in the future – including how often the SAT will meet, how actions will be implemented and monitored and how and when the action plan will be reviewed and revised.

See UCL Division of Psychology and Language Sciences, 2013 silver renewal application
Application form:

3. A picture of the department

- Include brief details of staff and student numbers, but don’t go into too much detail here – just give an indication of the size of your department
- Give a description of location – e.g. if the department is split over two or more sites and how this affects staff
- How does management work in your department and how are line managers chosen?
- Briefly describe research groups and how they are organised

Student and staff data

- Generally, the purpose of this section is to discuss the data, in later sections you can describe in more detail the work you have done to support women at career transition points or to improve working culture. To help panels, make it clear if you address issues in later sections (e.g. see discussion in section 4.b)(ii))
- Illustrate trends over time – try to make your data as clear and simple as possible.
- Use graphs rather than tables wherever possible, and use percentages (unless numbers are very small)
- Remember to include information from any qualitative data throughout the application – don’t just leave it until the ‘any other comments’ section at the end.
- Include a graph that shows the full pipeline from Undergraduate to Professor.
- **Discuss the data – don’t just report it**
Application form:

4. Supporting and advancing women’s careers

Key career transition points

- **Recruitment:** Consider whether you are currently actively doing anything to encourage women to apply, gender balance of interview panels, does the data suggest any bias in the process?

- **Promotion:** how does the current promotion process work in your department – for example do staff self nominate or do you have a pro-active system to identify staff for promotion? Do people understand the promotion process, how are people supported through promotion and how are people given advice on how to progress?

- **Key career transition points:** Discuss the key issues that have been identified through your qualitative and quantitative data analysis and what you are going to do/have done in response to this analysis. Tell the panel how and why you chose a particular action, and the impact it has had and/or the impact you hope to see. Include information here on any training or mentoring schemes you have put in place – for example do you have formal and/or informal systems of mentoring? Consider whether women are receiving informal support or ‘sponsorship’ from senior members of staff.
Application form:

Career Development

- **Appraisal:** do you have annual or biannual appraisals? Who carries our appraisals, what is expected to be covered and how is this monitored? Do post docs have an appraisal? Is career progression and support covered in appraisal?

- **Induction:** are new staff and students made aware of key information such as social activities, flexible working policies, maternity/paternity policies, and are they told how to access this information if they need it in the future?

- **Support for female students:** do you have anything aimed specifically at female students or any actions that you can show a particular impact for female students? what do you do to promote an academic career to your female students?

Organisation and culture

- **Committees:** Describe how committee membership is decided and what your different committees are responsible for, reflect on how the gender balance could be improved. Is membership regularly rotated, and how are views of all staff – men and women – represented at these meetings?
Application form:

Organisation and culture (cont.)

- **Fixed term contracts:** it is likely that this will reflect the gender balance of post docs in your department. You could explain here how you support staff on fixed term contracts to apply for permanent or new posts and how you provide the resources for staff to successfully apply for grants that would lead to continued employment.

- **Workload:** do you have a robust mechanism to ensure that women aren’t overburdened with teaching or administrative roles? If you don’t have a formal workload model, give a good explanation why. What is the gender balance between Research/Teaching/Admin responsibilities – are women dedicating more or less time to research? Is teaching valued in your department?

- **Timing of meetings:** UCL recommends that all key business takes place between 10 – 12 and 2 2 – 4. How do you ensure that meetings and social activities are open to all staff, especially those with caring commitments? If it is not possible for some meetings to be held in core hours, what do you do to ensure women are not unable to attend key meetings?

- **Culture:** use this section as an opportunity to present the personality of your department to the panel. Are staff happy and feel supported and included? Do people socialise with one another?

- **Outreach:** Include who outreach activities are run by as well as who they are aimed at. Is outreach considered in appraisal and promotion?
**Application form:**

**Flexibility and managing career breaks**

- **Maternity:** What support is in place for women on before, during and after maternity leave? How does the process work? Consider if the same support is open to staff on fixed term contracts or students. If some staff/students did not return after their maternity, do you know why?

- **Paternity, adoption and parental leave:** make use of the new laws relating to shared leave. Numbers are likely to be small, but you could proactively encourage dads to take time off.

- **Flexible working:** what formal and informal options for flexible working do you offer? Is flexible working seen as a positive thing in the department and is it an option offered to all staff (i.e. not just parents/ women returning from maternity)?

**5. Any other comments**

- Don’t leave this section blank
- Include here anything you think is relevant to the submission that you have not yet outlined.
6. Action Plan

- Your action plan should be SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and timely).
- Describe all future actions. Actions already completed should be described in the application, not in the action plan.
- Be specific with dates and actions, for example, if the department planned to implement a mentoring scheme.
- Reference actions from your action plan in the application.
- Action plans that have HR or Administrative staff responsible for the majority of actions won’t be viewed positively – make sure actions are distributed across the SAT team and to other members of the department.
- Make sure your actions span the next three years – this shows a maintained and consistent focus on SWAN. Panels will be suspicious of action plans where the majority of actions are planned for the 4 months after submission.
- Don’t have too many data monitoring actions – panels will want to see innovative and tailored actions developed in response to data and consultation. I would suggest these actions should make up the majority of your action plan – especially for silver and gold awards.
- Don’t let success measures become vague – make them achievable and measurable. For example, a success measure could be a % increase in the number of people reporting x in the annual staff survey.
- Avoid success measures like ‘data analysed annually’. Consider the impact you are hoping to see for the women in your department.
- Please see the SWAN template action plan on the UCL SWAN website.
7. Case studies

- There should be 2 case studies for a silver award – one case study should be a member of the SAT team, while the other should be a member of the department who hasn’t been a member of the SAT.
- It is useful to have case studies that represent different stages of the academic pipeline, for example, a female professor and a post doc.
- While showing the support provided by the department during maternity is important, make sure that your case studies illustrate a wide variety of supportive policies and practices offered by the department.
- Case studies written in first person feel more genuine.
- Case studies should highlight the good practice in the department and the impact of actions described in the application.
- Some departments have included pictures in their case studies (see Imperial’s Earth Sciences and Engineering 2012 silver award).
Pitfalls and things to avoid

• **HoD letter:** “I have worked with some women before”. The panel want to see the HoD is engaged and committed, and that the SAT is embedded within the department – they won’t be impressed with the HoD using examples of when they worked with female scientists and discovered it wasn’t that bad.

• **Description of your SAT team:** “Jane – happily married with 7 children. Katy – single and no children”. The panel are looking to see if there is a variety of experiences on the SAT team – this might include childcare, maternity/paternity or flexible working – but they don’t want to know everyone’s personal circumstances.

• **Policies and practices:** don’t advocate behaviour that goes against UCL policy, or illustrates bad practice. For example “we supported Emily to return to work after 2 months of maternity leave”.

• **‘We don’t have a gender problem here’:** avoid making bold statements, especially if you can’t show evidence. For example “we have eradicated all unconscious bias from the department” - it isn't possible to eradicate unconscious bias - however you can make people aware of their own unconscious biases, and ask them to actively challenge their own biases and try to avoid them. Generally, these comments show the department has missed the point.
**Pitfalls and things to avoid**

- **Culture and social events:** avoid activities or events that reinforce unhelpful gender norms. For example, the monthly ladies cake club.

- **Maternity:** people often fall into the trap of blaming all gender imbalances on childcare and maternity. Unless you have evidence to support such claims, avoid statements like “PhD students take longer to complete their studies because of maternity and childcare issues”. While maternity and child care are likely to be important, try not to use this as the explanation for every issue identified. SWAN panels will be looking for a detailed analysis of the structures, practices and culture of the department.

- **Language:** be careful of the language you use when describing your data and your department – some words that are common place in scientific articles can sound strange or even biased when referring to gender and staff. For example “the senior grades are greatly enriched with men”. Remember that the application isn’t an article or a grant application and doesn’t need to be as formal – it is important to get the personality of the department across to the panel.

- **Blame:** be honest about your data and what might have caused gender imbalances, and identify actions to address the problems – don’t try to place blame for this one anywhere. For example, panels will not appreciate statements like “women make it difficult for themselves to get promoted as they have a lack of confidence”
Other things to consider:

There are some things you could consider that are not necessarily asked about in the application form. These could include:

- Gender balance of invited speakers and internal seminar speakers
- Applications and success rate for funding by gender – consider the encouragement and support offered to early career researchers in applying for grants
- Gender balance of honorary staff (e.g. how are honorary staff identified and appointed?)
- Gender balance of staff attending conferences and what support is available (e.g. child care, financial support to attend)
- Promote the consideration of gender dimension in Research – a 2012 LERU paper (League of European Research Universities) identified a lack of consideration of gender within research can lead to problems e.g. there have been examples medical drug trails that have not included women.
- The gender split for clinical and non-clinical staff
Training and development

Resources and development for SAT team members:

- Join the Athena SWAN JISK mailing list - you will receive updates from Athena SWAN, information on events as well as information from other institutions working towards Athena SWAN awards. To join the mailing list, email Athena SWAN
- Volunteer to become a member of an Athena SWAN assessment panel – this can provide valuable information on the application process, what is expected from a silver application and how the submissions are assessed.
- Please contact Harriet if SAT members would like to join the SWAN email list, or the women in SET mailing list.

Training for staff in your department:

There are several training courses offered at UCL that you might want to promote to your staff, or organise within your Department. These include:

- Springboard – Development programme for women
- Taking control of your career – for UCL researchers
- Leading on Diversity – for managers in grade 7 - 10
- You may want to ask all staff (especially those who have not done any equality training since the 2010 Equality Act) to complete our new online Equality and Diversity training
- Some SATs have run unconscious bias training, if you are interested in running training within your department please contact Fiona McClement or Sarah Guise
Suggested Reading

• Please see other successful bronze, silver and gold applications on the Athena SWAN website - however, please be mindful that we don’t always know what the panels did or didn’t like about these submissions, and panels will also notice if departments start to submit identikit submissions. Use these documents as a guide and as inspiration – but don’t just copy them.

• The UCL Athena SWAN website – this includes links to workshop presentations and successful UCL SWAN applications.

• Athena SWAN handbook and submission documents

• Jan Atkinson - UCL women in leadership and management

• Curt Rice – 6 steps to gender equality

• European Commission – Structural change in research institutions: enhancing excellence, gender equality and efficiency in research and innovation.

• Nature - Women in science special