

# Advancing Beyond Bronze!

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LONDON MATHEMATICAL SOCIETY  
GOOD PRACTICE  
SCHEME

The logo for the London Mathematical Society Good Practice Scheme features a large, blue, stylized infinity symbol ( $\infty$ ) at the top. Below it, the text "LONDON MATHEMATICAL SOCIETY" is written in a small, blue, sans-serif font, followed by "GOOD PRACTICE" and "SCHEME" in a larger, blue, sans-serif font.

# My Background

- Chair of the School's Athena SWAN committee
- Member of the University's Athena SWAN working group
- Member of the London Mathematical Society's Women in Mathematics committee since 2007
- Member of the London Mathematical Society's Good Practice Scheme steering committee since 2009, chair since 2013
- Member of three Athena SWAN panels: March 2013, June 2013 and March 2014
- Vice-chair of HoDoMS

# Athena SWAN awards

## Bronze Department award

- Identified particular challenges
- Planned activities for the future

## Silver Department award

- Significant record of activity and achievement
- Identified particular challenges and implemented activities
- Demonstrating impact of implemented activities

## Gold Department award

- Significant sustained progression and achievement
- Beacons of achievement in gender equality
- Champions of Athena SWAN and good practice

# Athena SWAN Submissions in April 2013

- 39 (new) departmental submissions at **Silver** level
  - \* 12 awarded **Silver** (31%)
  - \* 21 awarded **Bronze** (54%)
  - \* 6 given no award (15%)
- Conversion from **Bronze** to **Silver** — 100%

## My experience of Athena SWAN panels

- Considered 7 departmental submissions at **Silver** level
  - \* 1 awarded **Silver**
  - \* 4 awarded **Bronze**
  - \* 1 given no award
  - \* 1 upgrade from **Bronze** to **Silver**

# General Points

- Athena SWAN is about the **recruitment**, **retention** and **progression** of women and you need to bring this out in your submission.
- Bear in mind that although successful submissions are on the internet (e.g. LMS website), you don't know which parts a panel thought were good and which were not so good.

<http://lms.ac.uk/women/content/support-departments>

## Athena SWAN Departmental award submission

- (a) Demonstrates what an individual department is **planning** (**Bronze**) or **doing** (**Silver**) to work towards equality in the career progression of women and men in SET, in addition to university-wide policies.
- (b) Demonstrates initiatives are **planned** (**Bronze**) or are **underway** (**Silver**) to increase numbers of female students where they are underrepresented.
- (c) For applications for **Silver** awards, demonstrates the **impact** of these activities so far.
  - An Athena SWAN award does **not** depend on the numbers of women.
  - Having an above average number of women does **not** guarantee a successful application and conversely, having a below number of women does **not** prevent an award being made.
  - For **Silver** awards, the panels interpreted these as activities that had been happening over a period of time (years), with **evidenced, measurable** effect.

Guidance given to Athena SWAN panel members includes the following questions:

## 1. Letter of endorsement from Head of Department

- Does the letter highlight the role Athena SWAN plays in relation to the overall university and department strategies and demonstrate the personal commitment of the Head of Department?
- For applications for **Silver** awards, if the department already holds a **Bronze** award, have additional initiatives or actions been **implemented** since the award was made and is there **recognition** of the benefits of Athena SWAN work?
- Should show the Head is involved and engaged in the Athena SWAN work and aware of the issues
- Should include one or two examples of good practice
- Highlight that the Head will ensure resources are in place to deliver the action plan
- The panels felt that ideally the Head of Department letter should talk about a **strategic vision**.
- **First impressions matter**. Get this right and you will make a strong impression!

## 2. The self-assessment process

- For application for **Silver** awards, is there evidence of real **culture change** in the department which affects staff at all levels?
- The panels felt it was very important that the senior management team of the department were seen to be **fully engaged** with the process (and be represented on the team).

## 4. Supporting and advancing womens careers

- Does the department have initiatives **planned** (**Bronze**) or **in place** (**Silver**) to support women at key career transition points, advance and support womens career progression, enable flexible working, support and manage career breaks and improve the culture through increasing visibility of women for example, that are above and beyond legal requirements and any university-wide initiatives?
- For a **Silver** award is there a record of current activities and future actions under each of the headings?
- For an application for a **Silver** award, how **successful** are the activities? What **impact** have these had?

# Key career transition points

## ● Recruitment:

- \* What is done to encourage women to apply?
- \* Are you pro-active in the recruitment of women?
- \* How do you know if representative number of men and women apply for posts?
- \* Has the interview panel undertaken Equality & Diversity training?

## ● Promotion:

- \* How are promotion candidates identified and supported?
- \* Is there a pro-active system whereby staff are encouraged to apply?
- \* What are the schemes to support candidates for promotion such as workshops and mentoring?
- \* Are there any specific actions aimed at women, and if there are what are they?
- \* Having the department's promotion committee look at all CVs annually was seen to be a good thing to do

# Important issues

- \* **Induction:** What is in place for new staff?
- \* **Probation:** What are the mentoring arrangements for new staff?
- \* **Appraisal:** How often does it happen? Who does it? What does it cover?
- \* **Committees:** Careful placing of women on strategic committees is important, particularly important for departments with very few women.
- \* **Workload model:** Is this clear and transparent?
- \* **Timing of meetings:** Are these in ‘core hours’, e.g. 10am-4pm?
- \* **Outreach:** Who does it? Included in the workload model?
- \* **Flexibility:** Can staff request flexible working (“family friendly lecture times”)?
- \* **Maternity leave:** How is the teaching covered? Procedures when returning?
- \* **Paternity leave:** What is the take-up?

## 6. Action plan

- For departments holding a **Bronze** award who are applying for a **Silver** award, is there evidence from the previous Action Plan of progress against targets listed?
- Additionally, has the original plan been updated and modified?
  
- Actions should go beyond **monitoring** and have **measurable outcomes**.
- Action plans should have **concrete, realistic targets**.
- Actions should **not** be front-loaded, rather spread throughout the 3 years.
- Include a **Timeline diagram**.

## 7. Case studies: impacting on individuals

For **Silver** department recognition, 2 case studies are required. These provide an opportunity to focus on the career progression of individuals working in the department, and to show how the inclusive culture and working practices of the department have benefited staff and enabled them to pursue a career in a STEMM subject area.

- One case study should be about a member of the self-assessment team and another about another individual within the department.
- Are there any particularly innovative or interesting initiatives?
- The Case Studies should illustrate the individuals experiences in the department.
- How have the department's policies affected the individual concerned?
- Make sure the Case Studies are honest and talk about the good, the bad and the ugly — especially if you have actions in place to tackle the bad.

## Word Limits for Submissions

- Applicants are advised that submissions for the April 2014 round may not be assessed if they are more than 10% over the word limit in any section.
- The word count for each section must be indicated in the submission document.
- If we cannot determine the number of words easily, the application may not be assessed.
- If the presentation of this information in the application is not clear (for example, large blocks of prose incorporated into a table that would make sense without the context of the table and not counted in the published word counts) and it is subsequently found to be more than 10% over the word limit in any section, the application may not be assessed.
- Graph and table titles, legends and action plan links/points are exempt from the word count.
- Additional words (up to 1,000) can be requested, see FAQs on Athena SWAN website  
<http://www.athenaswan.org.uk/content/faqs>

# Athena SWAN — Best Practice Factsheets

Factsheet 1



## Best Practice

### Organisational Culture

#### What is organisational culture?

**"A pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved problems ... that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems"**

(Schein, 1992, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, Jossey-Bass)

#### There are three layers of culture:

- Artifacts: visible structure and practices, such as policies and procedures, which can be monitored and changed if necessary.
- Espoused values: what people say they believe – these are not generally a problem, for example, most people believe that appointments and promotion should be fair and based on merit.
- Underlying assumptions: unconscious, taken-for-granted beliefs, thoughts, and feelings – ultimate source of values and actions – these are much harder to change, though their effects can be mitigated.

#### Which aspects of organisational culture are relevant to advancing women in SET?

- Department openness and inclusivity – how are part-timers and those on maternity leave, career breaks or sabbaticals included in the ongoing life of the department? How do departmental processes, procedures and practices impact on staff with caring responsibilities or part-time workers? Are senior staff accessible to more junior staff? Are social activities inclusive?
- Departmental roles and responsibilities – are committees reviewed for gender balance? How often is membership reviewed and renewed? How is overload avoided on small numbers of women available? How are committee decisions, including on budget allocation, communicated more widely? Is participation on committees and panels recognised as part of the appraisal process and as a contributory factor towards promotion?
- Visibility of women – are women at all levels encouraged to raise their profile externally, e.g. at conferences, and professional society activities, and internally by contributing to departmental seminars and presenting to research sponsors?

Factsheet 2



## Best Practice

### Work-life balance

#### What is work-life balance?

**'Work-life balance is about people having a measure of control over when, where and how they work. It is achieved when an individual's right to a fulfilled life inside and outside paid work is accepted and respected as the norm, to the mutual benefit of the individual, business and society.'**  
(The Work Foundation)

#### Why is it an issue for women in SET?

- It is widely recognised that employees who achieve a work-life balance that suits them work more efficiently, are more committed to their employers and are less likely to become ill as a result of stress.
- In academic science, engineering and technology (SET), one of the most common points at which women abandon their careers is around the level of post-doc/researcher. This career stage correlates with the time at which many female researchers are raising young children. As women still do the majority of childcare and domestic work, a lack of flexible working provision and a long-hours culture will

disadvantage more women than men, as they will be unable to put in the hours required to advance their careers.

- If universities are serious about retaining these highly skilled women in their workforce, they need to provide a supportive working environment so that both women and men can forge a more sustainable balance in their careers and their personal lives. If women cannot effectively balance their responsibilities, it is likely that in the long term they will change their employer, or change their career altogether.

#### What does it mean in practice?

- It usually means more choice about the time and location of work. The most common examples are flexitime and part-time working for the timing of work, and homeworking for the location of work. The move towards flexible working is not only a practical change, but is also a significant cultural shift. It involves trusting staff and measuring outputs and achievements, rather than process.

Factsheet 3



## Best Practice

### Supporting researchers

The Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers was launched in June 2008 and sets out the duties of universities, research managers and funders to support researchers' careers. The full text can be found at [www.researchconcordata.ac.uk](http://www.researchconcordata.ac.uk). A Strategy Group will now oversee implementation.

This factsheet includes a selection of examples from Athena SWAN award-winners, which address many of the key points in the Research Concordat. To find out more about these initiatives and other SWAN-related work, contact the universities directly. Contact details for SWAN members can be found at [www.athenaswan.org.uk/html/athena-swan/membership](http://www.athenaswan.org.uk/html/athena-swan/membership).

#### Data

- Collect data on the career progression of contract research staff (*Lancaster University*).
- Ensure that data-gathering considers different aspects, e.g. gender plus ability to combine an academic career with having a family (*Manchester University*).
- Examine gender data in relation to transfer from fixed-term to open-ended contracts (*Leicester University*).

- Conduct exit interviews with contract research staff (*School of Physical and Geographical Sciences, Keele University*).

- Conduct a destination survey of PhD students and postdocs who have left the department (*Psychology Department, York University*).

#### Induction and mentoring

- Provide a tailored induction seminar from an experienced colleague in the school, covering all aspects of the position, both formal and informal (*School of Psychology, Nottingham University*).
- Use existing forums to provide induction for new early-career research staff (*Psychology Department, York University*).
- Supplement the Staff Handbook with 'Things I Wish I'd been Told', drawing on comments from previous new arrivals (*Psychology Department, York University*).
- Inform research staff individually, and on the website, about mentoring schemes and the support to be expected from mentors (*Department of Mechanical, Materials and Manufacturing Engineering, Nottingham University*).

Available from Athena SWAN website <http://www.athenaswan.org.uk>

# Leadership

- Set up a high level committee to review and address barriers and challenges to women academics.
- Appoint Female Faculty Ambassadors to support fellow female academics in their professional development and to work with senior staff on events and activities for women.
- Set out a clear pledge from Senior Management to address the challenges facing academic women and the action to be taken.
- Senior staff should regularly remind department members of the importance of gender issues.
- Monitor male attendance at management training on gender and equality issues and target males to increase attendance if necessary.
- Operate an open door policy by Head of Department which encourages staff to discuss matters informally.
- Head of Department to host bi-monthly informal lunches with small groups of invited staff, such as junior academics, to share concerns and ideas.

# The Leaky Pipeline

- The LMS Benchmarking Survey identified the step from undergraduate to post-graduate as a point in the pipeline where the proportion of women drops dramatically, in particular for UK students.
- The data suggests that addressing this should be a high priority.
- Is this the case in your department?
- Will the EPSRC CDTs which have recently been funded exacerbate?

# What can we do about the Leaky Pipeline?

- LMS Good Practice Scheme steering committee would like to work together with departments and CDTs on this.
- We're organising a workshop for CDTs (19th May at De Morgan House) and are looking at other initiatives.
- There is evidence that several departments are planning to survey their undergraduates to try and find out reasons for this drop.
- Would it help if we tried to co-ordinate this?
- Do any departments have a survey they would be happy to share etc.?
- Any ideas?
  - \* Target second year women undergraduates to encourage them to think about applying for PhD places?
  - \* Organise a summer school for such students?

# Question

- What would you like HoDoMS and the LMS Good Practice Scheme steering committee do for you?

## Further information

- Athena SWAN website  
<http://www.athenaswan.org.uk>
- LMS Good Practice Scheme website  
<http://www.lms.ac.uk/women/good-practice-scheme>
- Follow Women in Mathematics on Twitter (@womeninmaths)

Paul Brennan, a Reader in the Institute of Cancer and Genetics at Cardiff University, wrote an interesting article “Women in STEM: four steps to a stronger Athena Swan application” which appeared the Guardian

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/higher-education-network/blog/2013/apr/18/athena-swan-application-women-academia>

- “Does winning an Athena Swan award mean you are running a better department or university? To be honest, I’m not sure. To win a **Bronze** award, in the first instance, you need to analyse your data and make good plans for the future. But to renew this requires continued commitment”.
- “The key difference between silver and bronze seems to be a department that has shown demonstration of **impact**. ‘Impact’ is a very fashionable word at the moment. In this case it means that change is being put in place, reviewed and making a difference. Examples include increased staff satisfaction, increased uptake of flexible working or training and increased knowledge of Athena Swan principles. In many cases, these are not tremendously difficult things to achieve”.
- “My concern is that Athena SWAN applications, like REF and other assessments, encourages us to focus on ‘looking’ good. A colleague suggested that if universities spent more time focusing on ‘being’ good, we wouldn’t have to spend so much time on appearances”.