The Athena SWAN Charter recognises commitment to advancing women’s careers in STEMM academia: science, technology, engineering, mathematics and medicine.

The Charter is co-owned by ECU and the UKRC and run by ECU. It is funded by ECU, the Royal Society, the Biochemical Society and the Department of Health.

Visit our new website: www.athenaswan.org.uk
Introduction

2012 has been another exciting year for the Athena SWAN Charter which continues to grow. We now have 82 member institutions and the number of submissions more than doubled from this time last year.

In addition to biomedical research unit and biomedical research centre funding, NIHR funding for patient safety research centres is now also linked to Athena SWAN silver awards. We are currently conducting a pilot exercise to see whether the Charter can be extended to include research institutes that are not affiliated with higher education institutions. We have also launched a new website with a members area for sharing queries and good practice.

The successful growth of the Athena SWAN Charter is highlighted by the number of award holders from a wide range of disciplines, each identifying and implementing good practices to support and advance the careers of female academics in their universities and departments. We are pleased to present the second departmental Gold award in this round.

It is fantastic to see new institutions from the full range of science, technology, engineering, maths and medicine disciplines joining the Charter regularly, achieving Bronze university awards and committing to driving forward gender equality.

April 2012 awards in figures

- 25 awards
- 14 Bronze awards
- 11 Silver awards
- 1 Gold award

‘We look forward to another inspiring awards round in November 2012.’

Sarah Dickinson
Senior Policy Adviser
Equality Challenge Unit
Programme

11.00  Registration and refreshments
11.45  Professor Sir Peter Gregson, vice-chancellor
       Queen’s University Belfast
12.00  Professor Dame Julia Higgins, Athena SWAN patron
12.15  David Ruebain, chief executive of ECU
12.30  Lunch
13.30  Award ceremony
15.00  Close

Photographs of award winners will be taken throughout the day.
Speaker and award presenter:  
Professor Dame Julia Higgins  

Department of Chemical Engineering, Imperial College London  

Professor Dame Julia Higgins is Emeritus Professor of Polymer Science in the Department of Chemical Engineering at Imperial College London. Her research career has focused on the application of scattering techniques, notably neutron scattering, to the understanding of polymer behaviour.

Dame Julia was chair of EPSRC from 2003 to 2007, and vice-president and foreign secretary of the Royal Society 2001 to 2006. She recently stood down after three years as chair of the Advisory Committee on Mathematics Education, and completed a term as chair of the awards committee and council member of the Royal Academy of Engineering. Dame Julia was chair of the Athena project during its first five years, as well as chair of the academic opportunities committee at Imperial College London.
Opening the ceremony
Professor Sir Peter Gregson

Vice-chancellor, Queen’s University Belfast

Professor Gregson has been President and Vice-chancellor of Queen’s University Belfast since 2004. He led the university into the Russell Group of research intensive UK universities in 2006 and to Queen’s anniversary prizes for higher education in 2006 and 2012. The university’s external recognition includes Times Higher Education awards for innovation in culture and the arts (2008), entrepreneurial university of the year (2009), outstanding research team of the year (2010) and most innovative teacher of the year (2011). Recognition within the Times top 50 employers for women (2011) and an institutional Silver Athena SWAN award (2012) reflects Queen’s focus on enhancing the career development of women.

Professor Gregson has been elected to Fellowship of the Royal Academy of Engineering (2001), Irish Academy of Engineering (2007) and Member of the Royal Irish Academy (2007). He has been non-executive director of Rolls-Royce Group plc (2007–12) and served on the councils of CBI Northern Ireland (2006–12), the Royal Academy of Engineering (2005–08) and the council for the Central Laboratory of the Research Councils (2004–06). He is Deputy Lieutenant of Belfast and was awarded a knighthood for services to higher education in 2011.
University of Aberdeen

Bronze university award

The University of Aberdeen is at the forefront of teaching, learning and discovery, as it has been for 500 years. We have consistently sent pioneers and ideas outward to every part of the world. We are an ambitious, research-driven university with a global outlook, committed to excellence.

Our aim is to move forward with more path-breaking research; to ensure our students have an intellectual experience second to none; and to capitalise on our dual role as one of the north’s major institutions, and as a central plank of regional economic and cultural life. We will seek opportunities to work with like-minded universities and organisations, locally, nationally and globally.

Recently the university led a successful bid to host the UK’s leading public science festival. The prestigious British science festival 2012 will engage over 40,000 people with the latest thinking in science, technology and engineering, with events aimed at families, schools, and people of all ages and interests. Key to the decision of the British Science Association was the quality of close partnerships between the education and research sector and cultural providers across our region, together with the university’s track record and commitment to its growing programme of science engagement including the fast-growing community café series.

The university is delighted to achieve an institutional Athena SWAN Bronze award. Over the next three years we will build towards removing any barriers to recruitment, promotion, career progression and work-life balance that may exist for women in SET subjects. We will use our action plan to implement change and as a foundation for progression towards Silver awards at departmental level.

In doing so, we will work to develop events and systems to enhance feedback from women in SET subjects.
Birkbeck College, University of London

Bronze university award

Birkbeck is a world-class research institution and the UK’s leading provider of part-time, evening education for mature students. A member of the 1994 Group, Birkbeck combines a unique widening participation agenda with research excellence.

A launch event ‘Women, science and success’ took place in November 2011 to raise the profile of Athena SWAN at the college, share good practice and promote awareness around women’s participation in science. External and internal speakers were invited to participate in a panel discussion of key issues affecting women in SET careers. The feedback received helped to identify future events and activities that women wanted to see take place at the college.

Birkbeck’s success in achieving the Bronze award is both a recognition of past and current achievements, and an acknowledgment of future initiatives aimed at significantly improving women’s representation and career progression in SET. For example, the teaching and administrative workload of early career academics is kept below departmental average to foster development of their research at the critical early stage of their careers.

Plans are underway for networking and mentoring events aimed at sharing and developing best practice across the college in 2012/13. Internationally recognised female academics in SET departments will be encouraged to play an active part in order to drive the agenda forward.

Professor Nicholas Keep, chair of the Birkbeck Athena SWAN self-assessment group, said: ‘This is very much not the end of the process, indeed this was more a case of setting out what we are going to do, so I look forward to continued action and progress in this area’.
The School of Chemistry at the University of Bristol is one of the largest chemistry departments in the UK and its research is internationally recognised for its quality, breadth and impact. More than 160 undergraduates are recruited each year and there are extensive outreach activities. The school is committed to providing an environment with good practices for women.

In the last four years the school has had a positive policy to ensure that there is a good gender balance in the ‘home team’ during UCAS visits and it is encouraging to see the upward trend in the percentage of women registering for undergraduate degrees in chemistry. A recently appointed female teaching fellow has also made a positive impact on female students.

A key element of undergraduate teaching is associated with Bristol ChemLabS Centre for Excellence in Teaching. It provides state-of-the-art undergraduate laboratories and a visionary approach to a fully integrated learning experience via a web-based interface known as the dynamic laboratory manual. Home-working for staff and students has been facilitated by the development of the dynamic laboratory manual; students may upload work electronically and staff have remote access rights for marking.

Giving support to women at key career transition points (postgraduate to postdoctoral research assistant and postdoctoral research assistant to a full member of academic staff) is of vital importance and is fully recognised by the school.

We have established the women in science mentoring scheme particularly targeted at postgraduates, postdoctoral and early career researchers with the aim to provide a supportive environment for individuals and to encourage women to pursue future careers in science. This scheme will provide a focus for activities and events in the future including, for example, early career research symposia and advice on preparing fellowship applications.
The School of Physiology and Pharmacology is one of four schools within the faculty of medical and veterinary sciences at the University of Bristol and was formed in 2006 from a merger of two departments.

Work prior to and after our initial Silver SWAN application has enabled the school to harmonise and streamline our processes since the merger and encourage staff to work towards a common goal, which in turn has sustained and improved the collegiality and supportive culture within the school.

In August 2010 further restructuring in the faculty of medical and veterinary sciences lead to eight HEFCE funded staff from the former department of anatomy joining the School of Physiology and Pharmacology.

A number of initiatives introduced since our initial Silver award in 2008 have further strengthened the support for women in the school.

Key initiatives include:

• a maternity support package that provides information and support for women before, during, and after maternity leave, including a lab babysitting service and protected research time on return to work

• one-to-two interviews with staff and the heads of school and research to support career development

• mentoring for women at relatively early stages in their careers who are considered to have the potential to take on influential management roles

We have also commenced a programme of career development seminars with external speakers and sharing of experience of female members of staff on combining a family with career in science.

We plan to continue our efforts and to look to further explore and address the issues faced by junior staff in the transition to independent researcher.
Our support workshops for female academics who are seeking promotion are a community-led initiative, driven by observations that female academic staff appeared to lack confidence when describing their successes. The workshops provide an opportunity for female academic staff to have their applications reviewed, seek advice, share experiences of the promotion process, gain confidence and encourage them to celebrate their achievements.

Much focus is currently being given to how, as a community, we support female academic staff returning to work following maternity leave. Our future plans include ensuring staff experience a smooth reintegration into the Brunel community and that the development of their research activity and profile is fully supported. We’ll be implementing a funding scheme designed to help kick-start research plans, accelerate the achievement of research output and facilitate their return to their research communities.
University of East Anglia

Bronze university award

The University of East Anglia (UEA) is committed to its work in progressing equality for both staff and students. Work on gender equality has been at the forefront in recent months and we are excited by the opportunity afforded by the Athena SWAN framework to accelerate the pace and breadth of progress to achieve equality for women in STEM subjects.

Participation in the award programme underlines our determination to move the gender equality agenda forward with a focus on tangible outcomes. In 2011 the university undertook a major project entitled Talent, leadership and contribution, surveying the experiences of women and men working at the university. This began a process of identifying specific aspects of policy or practice that had particularly supported their progress.

Achieving the Bronze award this year took this work further and the action plan provides a structured approach through which to achieve our aims.

Our female researchers staff network has organised a talk from the successful and inspirational scientist, Professor Dame Athene Donald (who was also made an honorary graduate of the university this summer). It will help us to raise awareness of the strategies adopted by successful women as well as ensuring we have wide engagement with our Athena SWAN work.

As the new academic year begins we are launching a number of self-assessment groups in STEM schools to involve a wide range of staff in preparing departmental submissions for Bronze and Silver awards.

It feels exciting and hugely motivational to be moving specific actions forward at this level; we believe real and sustained change will come from much of the work going on in the background as policy and practices are changed to enable all of our talented staff to succeed in achieving their career goals.
We also have women in other senior management roles within the school: head of research and head of the graduate school. It is however important that we do not overburden the relatively few senior women scientists and one of our major achievements has been to implement a workload model to ensure that the administrative load is distributed as equally as possible.

One of our future priorities is to improve the conditions for women prior to, during and following maternity leave, and to improve childcare facilities for staff.

Childcare is a crucial issue for many members of staff (female and male) and it is important that we work together within college to ensure that there is sufficient provision for both pre-school and school-age children. This cannot be achieved at a single-school level but chemistry will take the lead in lobbying for prioritisation and investment in such facilities.
The Department of Earth Science and Engineering at Imperial College London is engaged with teaching and research in a uniquely broad mix of basic science and applied engineering related to the Earth and other planets (encompassing geology, geophysics, mining engineering, petroleum engineering and environmental engineering).

We are both multinational and multicultural: 13 nationalities are represented among just the academic staff. Much of our research is cross-disciplinary and internationally leading. In the 2008 RAE all of our research was evaluated as excellent and of international significance.

We have had outstanding female scientists in the department throughout our history. Rachel Workman MacRobert (1884–1954) was among the first women to be elected to be a fellow of the Geological Society (1919). Professor Janet Watson FRS (1923–1985) was Imperial’s third female professor and the first female president of the Geological Society. Every year the department awards the Janet Watson memorial prize of £1000 to the best PhD student in the department.

We have recently focused on ensuring a clear and transparent process for selecting candidates for promotion and providing them with appropriate support throughout the promotions process. We now have three female professors and three readers in the department and for the last two years all applicants (male and female) for promotion have been successful. We have also seen more promotions of postdocs through grades A to C and of our technical and support staff.

Our current focus is to increase the numbers of women applying to the department at all levels by making our literature and adverts more attractive to women. We also plan to have an annual seminar as part of our departmental seminar series in which the speaker discusses equality and diversity issues.
The Blackett Laboratory is one of the largest physics departments in the country hosting around 850 undergraduates, 430 postgraduates, 180 research assistants, 25 advanced fellowship-holders, 120 academic staff, 31 administrative staff and 40 technicians. It is part of Imperial College: a science, engineering, medicine and business institution set in the heart of London.

The department has taken great pride in holding a Silver award from 2009 to 2012. Key areas that we have worked on include: new guidelines for promotion and for the selection of fellowship candidates; setting up departmental-wide training for staff in PhD supervision; uniting the PhD student body and invigorating its committee; supporting the research assistant community and strengthening links to the college postdoctoral development centre; conducting a detailed survey of undergraduate student motivation; providing support for a regular forum for technical staff to discuss departmental issues; and setting up departmental champions, available to coach staff in all areas of academic endeavour. These activities have had impact across the department. We have been invited to speak to a number of departments and institutions and part of our 2008 departmental survey was used to formulate the national asset survey in 2010.

The key issues to tackle in the future include unravelling some undergraduate performance statistics, encouraging more female postdoctoral staff to apply for fellowships, modifying academic recruitment practices to help broaden our candidate pool, developing more staff training workshops in key areas such as recruitment and appraisal and extending the work of the committee to include ethnic minority groups. Setting up the early career researcher network for fellowship holders and lecturers within three years of appointment will be the final linking of all staff groups across the department, meaning that the department can look forward to gathering almost 360 degree feedback.
The Faculty of Health and Medicine brings together expertise in teaching, research and work-based learning from biomedical and life sciences; CETAD; health research; and Lancaster medical school.

As a transformational project within the university’s strategic development, substantial investment has been made in research, teaching and office space as well as in staff recruitment. The faculty now has over 110 academic and research staff with further expansion planned.

Our research concerns fundamental health and biomedical issues, with major topics including the study of end-of-life care, disability, mental health, epidemiology, cancer biology, neurodegenerative disease, immunology and microbiology and parasitology. The faculty offers undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in biology, biomedicine, medicine and the social aspects of health; and also works with industry and healthcare organisations to provide customised CPD.

The culture of the faculty is one of friendliness and inclusivity that staff and students alike comment on, and subscribe to maintaining. This feeds into our Athena SWAN agenda including support and development of early career researchers, embedded flexible working practices, especially after periods of parental leave, and targeted outreach activities. We are particularly proud of the work of our self-managing researcher career development group: a forum where researchers can discuss issues, such as career progression, work-life balance, and applying for research funding. The group has hosted events where internal and external senior academics provide advice on such issues.

We intend to continue to critically review our policies and practices, particularly around workloads and to continue to develop awareness of the Athena SWAN agenda particularly among our student cohorts to engage them in discussion about successful career development for women at a much earlier stage in their career.
Over the past four years several initiatives have been introduced with the aim of improving school culture, helping promote a healthy work-life balance and helping staff manage their workload alongside caring responsibilities, while improving the teaching and research quality:

- scheduling all meetings and seminars between 10am and 3pm
- introducing a postdoctoral forum
- ensuring female representation during student and staff recruitment
- establishing a workload model and a return to work policy to help those returning after maternity leave

The school is committed to strengthening and supporting its female representation at all levels. This will be achieved by expanding outreach activities, ensuring gender balance in all promotional material, improving integration between students and staff at all levels and encouraging participation in development opportunities.
The School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences at the University of Manchester is a world-class teaching and research-intensive school, and one of five schools in the faculty of medical and human sciences. The school hosts an undergraduate population of approximately 700 students on the four-year MPharm programme, and around 175 postgraduate students. Over 60 per cent of undergraduates and 57 per cent of postgraduate students are women. At the time of the Bronze award Athena SWAN application in April 2011, 20 out of 40 academics, 15 out of 27 research staff, and 12 out of 18 honorary teaching staff were women.

Our female students perform exceptionally well on the MPharm and postgraduate courses, and we have a range of initiatives in place that aim to build awareness and a culture of equality and diversity among our students and staff. These include: involving students in admissions interviews, building equality and diversity into the curriculum, providing a maternity scheme for postgraduate students, and ensuring new academic staff have separate teaching and research mentors.

The school’s main challenge over the next few years is to reduce the significant gender gap that exists in the most senior academic grade. To increase the number of female professors we will ensure a proactive approach to recruiting or promoting women is taken when new posts or promotion opportunities arise; we also aim to provide a one-to-one bespoke career coaching scheme for female academics.

Finally, we will firmly embed and utilise our new workload model more prospectively to ensure there is a transparent and equitable distribution of key tasks, and we aim to host a series of special events aimed at undergraduate and postgraduate students to encourage them to have high expectations and ambitions for a future career in science.
We have been proactive in these areas by:

- supporting applications of a number of young female scientists for early career awards designed to foster academic independence, including the highly successful university-supported scheme specifically for women ([www.nottingham.ac.uk/research/early-career-fellowships--support/index.aspx](http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/research/early-career-fellowships--support/index.aspx))

- hosting an early-career researcher forum to discuss particular difficulties faced by contract research staff as well as a national seminar on women’s careers in psychology which covered issues common to all of the SET disciplines

Our future plans include ensuring that the cultural and organisational changes that we are establishing through our Athena SWAN work extend to our colleagues at the University of Nottingham Malaysia campus.

In common with the other sciences, women in psychology face problems at two specific career points – transitioning from postdoctoral researchers to lectureships and moving from senior lecturer to professor.
Dr Kylie Vincent (RCUK fellow), recent winner of the science and technology women of the future award.

The department launched the Athena SWAN process in October 2011, with the establishment of an Athena SWAN working group to focus our commitment to addressing gender equality issues. As part of the Athena review process, student and staff opinion surveys were carried out to canvass views on working and studying chemistry at Oxford.

Through the Athena SWAN initiative, Oxford Chemistry is now actively progressing an ambitious action plan to improve the environment for all of those working and studying in the department. This process is seen as a major driver for organisational change that will improve communication and decision-making, enhance career development processes, and support those who are trying to achieve a good work and home life balance.
Department of Experimental Psychology
University of Oxford

Bronze department award

The Department of Experimental Psychology at the University of Oxford engages in teaching for two honour schools and has a wide-ranging research programme. The department is best known for its work on neuroscience, but also does basic work in cognitive, social and developmental psychology. The department achieved outstanding results in the 2008 RAE with 35 per cent of its work rated in the highest category. We have a young staff profile, with 11 new university lecturers or equivalent being appointed in the past ten years.

Maternity is a key transition point for female staff. The department has made improvements to ensure that staff are aware of parental leave arrangements and are supported through parenthood. Our action plan includes an explicit commitment to take parental leave into account in a workload model, so that staff are not expected to undertake onerous administrative tasks for one year after the birth of their child.

Although we have a high proportion of senior female staff, we have noted that they are not always as visible as the men. We have therefore established an annual lecture named after a distinguished female former member of the department.

As a simpler step, we are also introducing more images of women in our seminar room, where the photographs presently include a high proportion of older men.

Other plans include monitoring the destinations of staff and postgraduate students in greater detail, using exit questionnaires to ascertain their reasons for leaving and identify sources of dissatisfaction.

The findings and possible actions to address any issues identified will be discussed annually at a meeting of the Athena SWAN panel. A newly-established mentoring scheme for postdocs and probationary staff will also be monitored and reviewed annually by the panel.
The Oxford Department of Materials aspires to deliver world-class teaching and research, focusing on developing an understanding of how the structure and chemistry of materials control their properties and how they perform in practical applications. We work closely with UK and international industry, and are delighted to have students and staff from more than 45 countries. We aim for a supportive working environment where students and all staff (academic, technical and administrative) form an effective team to deliver excellence in all activities.

The department actively fosters gender equality, and over the past ten years we have seen an increasing proportion of women in the undergraduate, postgraduate and academic populations. However, we are not satisfied with the proportion of women in the department making the transition from postgraduate to postdoctoral researcher and ultimately to academic positions, and have active policies in place to encourage colleagues to continue in academic careers. These include initiatives to assign a mentor to all graduate students, and to support students in preparing independent research fellowship applications.

The departmental management team promotes and encourages flexible working, and all requests for reshaping the working week have been successful. This allows family responsibilities to be undertaken while maintaining a strong academic trajectory. In recent years we have ensured that events, seminars and departmental meetings are scheduled at times when those with caring responsibilities can play a full part.

In a new initiative to support the career aspirations of postdoctoral researchers, we are introducing a mentoring scheme for all research staff, and we will improve how we communicate opportunities for career development and family friendly initiatives to all staff with new intranet pages, factsheets and newsletters.
The Department of Physics at Oxford is one of the largest in Europe and faces unique challenges. For example, we are located in four buildings on two sites, separated by a busy road. The department has made great strides in increasing the number of women at all levels: 22 per cent of undergraduates (in line with the proportion of female students taking physics A-level) and 14 per cent of professors are female, the latter increased from just 8 per cent in 2008.

Much of our activity has been aimed at increasing the number of women choosing physics nationally through a wide-ranging programme of outreach to schoolchildren, totalling more than 200 events each year. We have also run a ‘future science leadership’ workshop to support the career development of women which attracted over 100, mostly early-career, female scientists from across the country. We are seeking funding to repeat this event biennially to allow every UK female physics graduate student to attend at least once.

The department has worked hard to improve its career support for junior researchers, introducing a compulsory annual appraisal for postdoctoral researchers and enhancing the formal university appraisal scheme for faculty by offering additional annual reviews and rolling face-to-face discussion with the head of department.

We have moved our key teaching and research meetings to family-friendly hours and sponsored a number of prioritised nursery places to support those with family responsibilities.

The department has embedded its Athena SWAN activities into its management structure by creating an equal opportunities and diversity committee which meets every term. The head of department is a full member, and reports directly to the physics management committee.

Among our immediate plans is the roll-out of a new workload-allocation model to provide increased transparency and fairness.
The current head of department, Jane Langdale, has embedded much good practice in the department. She developed and runs a 30 week ‘preparation for academic practice’ course for researchers that covers a wide range of scientific, people and management skills and anticipates the transition to a senior role. In addition, she introduced research staff appraisals and an academic workload model.

The Athena SWAN panel is now embedded in the department and has adopted an approach that does not focus on gender as the issue, but implements policies and behaviour that provide solutions that are fair and equitable to all staff.

Future plans include strengthening the mentoring and induction schemes for new staff, increasing recruitment of independent research fellows by underwriting the best candidates while they prepare full applications, and improving information flow throughout the department.
School of Electronic Engineering and Computer Science, Queen Mary, University of London

Bronze department award

The School of Electronic Engineering and Computer Science (EECS) was created in 2007–08 to deliver world-class electronic engineering and computer science research and apply these skills to real-world problems. As a multidisciplinary school, its researchers work with the arts and sciences collaborating with psychologists, biologists, musicians and actors, mathematicians, medical researchers, dentists and lawyers.

The school has a range of outreach and public engagement campaigns which put an emphasis on attracting women into computer science and electronic engineering. In a field where the recruitment and promotion of women is notoriously difficult, the school has recently made significant advances in increasing the number of female academic staff. It has had significant success in increasing the number of female PhD students.

The school supports staff with family commitments by encouraging flexible working practices and supporting members of academic staff who choose to work part-time. Seminars and meetings are held at times which are suitable for staff with caring responsibilities. They are also recorded and made available for those who cannot attend.

The school actively supports a wide range of gender equality initiatives, from its undergraduate outreach programme through to PhD and postdoctoral activities such as G.Hack (Girls who Hack, a space for hands-on experience, experimental production and a female friendly learning environment). The school takes an active role in the college’s women in science and engineering (WISE) association and has recently led national events such as the London Hopper Colloquium that showcases the exciting research in computer science carried out by women.

EECS is implementing transparent models of workload allocation, supporting promotions workshops and is taking a leading role in Queen Mary’s new mentoring scheme and women into leadership programme.
School of Nursing and Midwifery
Queen’s University Belfast

Silver department award

The School of Nursing and Midwifery is one of the largest schools within Queen’s University Belfast and is the foremost provider of nursing and midwifery education in Northern Ireland with approximately 2,200 students, 100 academic and 10 research staff. Traditionally the school was teaching focused, and while this remains a significant element of core business there is a clear drive and commitment to developing staff and ensuring high quality research and scholarly activities. The school is committed to supporting staff in further education for career development and assuming an academic pathway.

Our previous Bronze award action plan sought to increase the number of female students progressing into an academic career trajectory, with success now evidenced by increased representation of students from nursing and midwifery backgrounds at postgraduate research level. One of the mechanisms implemented by the SWAN self-assessment team was the introduction of a researcher internship scheme for undergraduate nurses and midwives to ensure early exposure of students to research and the possibility of an academic career. Other initiatives to support the progression of nursing and midwifery students in academia include early identification and nurturing of high achieving students, a mentoring scheme for second and third year PhD students, and an annual seminar to showcase successful female academics.

The team plans to continue its work, implementing a three year action plan to promote good practice and support career progression and success for women within the School of Nursing and Midwifery. Evidence of impact will be monitored, for example, by successful promotion of female staff and uptake of family friendly policies. Future initiatives will also explore the issue of men in nursing and midwifery to identify potential barriers to applications to ensure appropriate gender representation for the discipline.
We have established several mutual support groups within the department, including a postgraduate forum, a research staff forum, and a research staff women in physics group (postgraduate, research and academic), which are designed to help staff and students make the most of their present position and plan for their future careers.

We also created a women in physics group for undergraduates, which meets twice termly, to which we typically invite physics graduates to speak about their present careers in SET.

The department’s Athena SWAN team interacts closely with the college women in science steering group to exchange good practices. Being the first RHUL science department to achieve a Silver SWAN award, we are pleased to assist the other departments to apply for Athena SWAN awards in the near future.
Department of Biosciences
Sheffield Hallam University

Silver department award

The Department of Biosciences provides education for undergraduate and postgraduate students through courses including, biomedical sciences, biology, biochemistry, analytical science and chemistry. We have over 600 undergraduates and around 100 master’s level students. Our courses have a significant laboratory-based component which is supported by a team of technical staff and many of our undergraduates take a placement year.

These courses are delivered by 30 academic members of staff, the majority of whom are engaged in research within the Biomedical Research Centre where we currently have 40 PhD students.

Our academic staff consists of equal numbers of men and women at senior lecturer level, with a significant number of women working part-time. Many staff members have families with young children. At principal lecturer scale, there are more men than women, although the department and research centre are both led by women. The Athena SWAN process, which involved staff focus groups and online surveys, brought to light issues surrounding promotion and opportunities to take on positions of responsibility, particularly for part-time staff. As a result of this we began ensuring that all opportunities to gain experience from specific roles of responsibility are advertised internally via email, rather than approaching individuals thought suitable for the post, as in the past.

We have also encouraged PhD students to take on the organisation of our summer research conference, including sponsorship and chairing of sessions to give them experience and confidence in this type of activity.

In addition to sharing good practice with other STEM departments, we will be formalising arrangements and support for deputising on committees to provide opportunities for career development and increased visibility for staff, and delivering a number of career development workshops for all academic staff to support progression.
Psychology Group
Sheffield Hallam University

Bronze department award

The Psychology Group is part of the department of psychology, sociology and politics and operates autonomously with respect to the delivery of all psychology student and staffing issues.

The number of staff within the group has grown rapidly since 2004 as the BSc (Hons) psychology degree and its associated joint honours awards grew in popularity. The course was recently commended by the BPS for its focus on graduate employability, professional development and the opportunity for placements.

There is a thriving postgraduate portfolio, comprising of eight awards serving approximately 100 students. We have ten full-time doctoral students supported by departmental bursaries.

There is a high number of women in the staff group and this is reflected in a higher proportion of women at senior lecturer and principal lecturer level. The Psychology Group prides itself in a culture of supportive and flexible working where opportunities for development and promotion are offered to all staff.

Preparing for our Silver application for Athena SWAN has allowed us to examine our informal practices in a way which will now ensure there is consistency and clarity for all staff in the understanding and administration of these practices and means by which we can monitor and enhance our approach. We established a new researcher group across the department to enhance the professional development and employability of our PhD students. This focuses on grant writing, publishing and showcasing individuals’ achievements post-PhD.

The feedback from our application will prove invaluable in taking forward our plans. We will identify key issues, a number of which are raised within our feedback, to concentrate on over the next year rather than our much broader action plan.
Department of Psychology  
University of Warwick

Bronze department award

The Department of Psychology at the University of Warwick offers a superb intellectual environment to all students and staff. Our research strengths lie in cognitive and experimental psychology (especially models of memory, language, perception and attention, motor control, and decision-making) and in lifespan developmental psychology (especially psychology of ageing, theory of mind, literacy acquisition and the impact of early environment on psychological development).

There is a variety of well-equipped, purpose-built laboratories where experimental research is undertaken. The department offers an undergraduate programme in single honours psychology and three MSc programmes, and is home to a growing cohort of postgraduate research students.

Placing great importance on the fair and equitable treatment of students and staff, the department has long had a culture of flexible working, whereby different needs are met while maintaining a coherent and productive group dynamic. This has allowed staff to organise their schedules or reduce their teaching hours in order to meet family commitments, without affecting their career trajectory. In the coming years we will build upon this approach with structured initiatives, such as a complete revision of our mentoring programme, aiming to include students at all levels as well as staff.

Undergraduates will have the opportunity to undertake a paid internship between their second and third years, working closely with a member of staff to gain further experience of research. At the same time, training of staff mentors will be enhanced so that junior academics are better prepared for promotion.

These and other initiatives will be developed specifically to meet the needs of women in science, ensuring opportunities for career advancement are available to all.
The University of York is one of the world’s top 100 universities and the Department of Electronics was ranked among the top ten electronics departments in the UK in the 2012 Guardian league table. The department was founded in 1978 and currently has 41 members of academic staff, 77 research assistants and 35 support staff. It has a long-standing reputation for high-quality degrees; its MEng and BEng courses are fully accredited by the IET and were ranked first for electronic engineering in the 2008 and 2009 national student survey. The department currently has 400 undergraduate students and 160 postgraduate students.

Since the general trend over all UK electronic engineering is a serious lack of women from undergraduate level to senior academic posts, our Athena SWAN group decided that our initial action plans would be aimed towards attracting more female students. We have had actions in place for the last three years to address this issue which include sending female students out to schools to deliver presentations on studying electronics to school children and holding social gatherings each year to which all female students and staff were invited. The department has had yearly events from female alumni who talk to current students.

Future plans involve continuing with current activities along with some new initiatives which include:

- developing the provision of an internal mentoring network for all students and staff
- inviting local female school children for visits to the department
- providing training sessions which will concentrate on mixing family life with academic life
- inviting high profile female engineers to visit the department
- providing female role models in the department.
Athena SWAN Charter awards
April 2012

Bronze university

• University of Aberdeen
• Birkbeck College, University of London
• Brunel University
• University of East Anglia

Bronze department

• School of Chemistry, University of Bristol
• Faculty of Health and Medicine, Lancaster University
• School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences, University of Manchester
• Department of Chemistry, University of Oxford
• Department of Experimental Psychology, University of Oxford
• Department of Physics, University of Oxford
• School of Electronic Engineering and Computer Science, Queen Mary, University of London
• Psychology Group, Sheffield Hallam University
• Department of Psychology, University of Warwick
• Department of Electronics, University of York
Silver department

- School of Physiology and Pharmacology, University of Bristol (R)
- Department of Earth Science and Engineering, Imperial College London
- Department of Physics, Imperial College London (R)
- School of Chemical Engineering and Analytical Science, University of Manchester
- School of Psychology, University of Nottingham (R)
- Department of Materials, University of Oxford
- Department of Plant Sciences, University of Oxford
- School of Nursing and Midwifery, Queen’s University Belfast
- Department of Physics, Royal Holloway, University of London
- Department of Biosciences, Sheffield Hallam University

Gold department

- School of Chemistry, University of Edinburgh (R) = renewal
Athena SWAN champions of science: Dr Antonella De Santo

*Reader in Experimental Particle Physics, University of Sussex*

Dr De Santo is part of ATLAS, one of two Large Hadron Collider experiments that discovered an elusive particle smaller than an atom highly likely to be the Higgs boson, which is said to prove theories of how the universe works.