Athena SWAN
Charter for Women in Science

Awards
November 2011
### Programme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11.00</td>
<td>Registration, refreshments and photographs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.45</td>
<td>Professor David Eastwood, vice-chancellor of the University of Birmingham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.00</td>
<td>Professor Dame Julia Higgins, Athena SWAN patron</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.15</td>
<td>David Ruebain, chief executive of ECU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.30</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.30</td>
<td>Award ceremony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.30</td>
<td>Close</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

2011 was an exciting year for the Athena SWAN Charter. In addition to developments with the awards themselves, such as the introduction of biannual rounds of submissions, in a letter to the Medical Schools Council in July 2011, the Chief Medical Officer, Professor Dame Sally Davies, outlined her intention that in the future, all medical schools who wish to apply for National Institute of Health Research biomedical research centres and units funding need to have achieved an Athena SWAN Silver award. This is the first time that criteria for major funding have been explicitly linked to gender equality.

The successful growth of the Athena SWAN Charter across science, engineering, technology, maths and medicine departments is highlighted in this booklet by the range of award holders, each identifying and implementing good practices to support and advance the careers of female academics in their universities and departments. In addition, in this round of awards we have conferred the first Silver Athena SWAN university award since the criteria for this level of award were amended. We are pleased to see new institutions joining the Charter regularly, achieving Bronze university awards and committing to driving forward gender equality.

We look forward to another inspiring awards round in April 2012.

November 2011 awards in figures

- 29 awards
- 22 new awards
- 7 renewals
- 18 Bronze awards
- 11 Silver awards

Sarah Dickinson
Senior Policy Adviser
Equality Challenge Unit
Opening the ceremony
Professor David Eastwood

Vice-chancellor, University of Birmingham

Professor Eastwood became vice-chancellor of the University of Birmingham in April 2009. Former posts include chief executive at the Higher Education Funding Council for England, vice-chancellor at the University of East Anglia, and chief executive of the Arts and Humanities Research Board.

Professor Eastwood has served on numerous national bodies and committees, including as a member of the Research Support Libraries Group 2002/03, the Roberts Review of the Research Assessment Exercise, the Tomlinson Group on 14–19 Education 2003/04, the Councils of the John Innes Centre and the Sainsbury Laboratory, and the board of the Quality Assurance Agency. He has chaired the 1994 Group of universities, Universities UK’s longer term strategy group, the Association of the Universities of the East of England, and Supporting Professionalism in Admissions. He also chaired the Westminster Education Commission in 2009. More recently he was a member of the Government’s independent review panel looking at higher education funding and student finance, and he now serves as an international member of the Hong Kong University grants committee.

He is currently a director of Universities Superannuation Scheme, a board member of Universities UK, and chair of Universities and Colleges Admissions Service. He is also a member of the advisory board of the Higher Education Policy Institute, a board member of Marketing Birmingham and also the Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP. He is also chair of Universities West Midlands.
Speaker and award presenter: 
Professor Dame Julia Higgins, Athena SWAN Charter patron

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 has 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.
The Athena SWAN Charter is a scheme to promote and recognise good employment practice for universities and research institutes recruiting and promoting women to senior positions in science, engineering, medicine and mathematics departments.

For more information about any of the policies and practices outlined here, please contact the university directly. Athena SWAN contacts at all member institutions are available online [www.athenaswan.org.uk](http://www.athenaswan.org.uk).
Bangor University

Bronze award

Bangor University was established in 1884 and currently has approximately 12,000 students supported by 2000 staff. Bangor aims to be a leading research-led university and has a strong research base across a spectrum of academic disciplines. The university prides itself on the quality of the student experience and it is placed in the top 15 of UK universities for teaching excellence. The university has three SET colleges: the college of physical and applied sciences, the college of health and behavioural sciences and the college of natural sciences.

A key initiative of the university’s Athena SWAN group was a Women in Science conference to launch Athena SWAN in the university and raise awareness of women in science. The conference provided delegates with an opportunity to discuss how the university could best support them in their career development. The conference has generated much enthusiasm among staff and now college groups are addressing some of the issues that arose from the conference.

Another key area for development has been the university’s involvement with the Women’s Universities Mentoring Scheme. Bangor has had a high participation rate in the scheme and participants noted improved confidence following encouragement and support from their mentors.

In the future, key initiatives will be centred around supporting women’s career development, including improvements to the academic promotion policy and process to streamline it and develop clear criteria. The aim of these changes is to encourage women to apply for promotion. To support this, the university is also developing a framework for continuous professional development to assist staff throughout their career.
University of Birmingham

Bronze award

The University of Birmingham has been challenging and developing great minds for more than a century. Characterised by a tradition of innovation, research at the university has broken new ground, pushed forward the boundaries of knowledge and made an impact on people’s lives. We continue this tradition today and have ambitions for a future that will embed our work and recognition of the Birmingham name on the international stage.

As the university moves forward with its global strategic framework, the self-assessment exercise undertaken for our Athena SWAN Bronze award has presented us with a timely opportunity to assess our practices and data against the sector. Our college of medical and dental sciences has developed a successful Women in Academic Medicine Group to provide focused development and networking opportunities for its female staff. Our Bronze award action plan seeks to take this further, through the development of network groups throughout our SET colleges to support development and progression.

Through our Bronze assessment, we have also identified a number of interventions we will implement to offer greater support to academic staff taking maternity leave and returning to work, enabling them to continue to develop their research and maintain career progression.

Finally, we are encouraging individual schools to apply for Athena SWAN awards and to demonstrate their commitment to the recruitment, progression and retention of women in SET.
School of Chemistry
Cardiff University

Bronze award

The School of Chemistry at Cardiff University provides an outstanding and stimulating environment for chemical research and education. Its research and teaching is led by 38 academic members of staff with support from more than 80 postdoctoral and other staff, and about 120 research students.

The school offers four-year MChem, three-year BSc and one-year MSc degree programmes that are oriented towards modern fundamental and applied chemistry, and admits approximately 90 undergraduates each year.

The school has an excellent international research reputation across the range of modern chemical science, and in the 2008 Research Assessment Exercise, all of its research output was rated of at least international standard, with 60 per cent internationally leading.

Together with its aspiration to foster world-leading research and teaching, the school is committed to providing a supportive working environment for all of its staff and students that enables all to fulfil their potential.

The school has implemented proactive measures to address career progression, and embraces the Women in Universities Mentoring Scheme and the Cardiff Women Professors’ Forum. The school has established a staff opportunities group that actively promotes career development, including enabling specific opportunities for women.

There is a key and adopted strategic need for the school to increase both the number of female academic staff, and the number promoted into senior positions, and this is being addressed through positive action in recruitment, and specific mentoring of promotion planning for current staff.
School of Nursing and Midwifery Studies
Cardiff University

Silver award

The School of Nursing and Midwifery has as its primary focus and main source of income, learning and teaching; we also have clear aspirations to develop and enhance high quality research and scholarship. We are innovative, dynamic with clearly articulated goals and have well established strategies for developing all our staff. The school is part of a Russell Group university, yet our teachers and researchers have not followed a traditional academic career pathway. Most have had a long, successful clinical career before embarking on teaching and research.

In this context, the school’s priority has been to create new developmental opportunities with appropriate support through mentoring, coaching, and leadership. We value diversity, promote equality and create opportunities for talent to thrive. We treat people with courtesy and respect and are committed to the university equality policy. We have established a ‘can do’ culture where support is offered positively and enthusiastically to all staff. We recognise natural hesitation and fear of failure and provide ongoing support for those considering applying for promotion to senior lecturer, reader and professor. Over the last five years we have been innovative in providing new opportunities for staff to develop their natural skills and abilities. We have established line management, regular appraisal, feedback and specific guidance as to the expectations of academic staff, now we are seeing the initial results.

In the future we intend to build on these developments: we are increasing postgraduate research; significantly increasing our research capacity and capability and providing research scholarships. We are seeing new promotions to senior lecturer through both research and teaching scholarship pathways. Through these activities and promotion of our Silver Athena SWAN department award we will continue to pursue our aspiration to be a school with authentic leadership where we foster and develop all of our people’s talents.
Durham University

Bronze award

Durham University is one of the leading universities in the UK and a world top 100 university. A full-subject university, its strengths in teaching and research lie across all of its faculties: science, social sciences and health and arts and humanities. The faculty of science is made up of seven departments and schools (28 per cent of all university departments), including: biological and biomedical sciences, chemistry, earth sciences, engineering and computing sciences, mathematical sciences, physics and psychology. This is equivalent to 3881 undergraduates, 612 postgraduates and 758 members of staff, including 302 core academic staff, and 235 researchers.

The university currently runs supportive events which are open to female staff and postgraduates and the partners of male postgraduates. At these events women can work together to share in the personal growth and development process and acquire personal development skills. The faculty of science has a multi-faceted action plan that aims to introduce measures that advance the careers of women. Our action plan represents a large undertaking for many individuals. We will report our findings to major committees, such as the university executive committee, the diversity and equality advisory group and finally the concordat implementation group, who support the career development of research staff. This supportive structure will ensure that we have influence and that the lessons learned can be widely disseminated.

The Athena SWAN project has support at the highest levels, and the vice-chancellor writes:

‘The university is fully committed to providing an equitable working environment for all staff. As a university we are concerned about the lack of females in the higher ranks of the university, particularly in the faculty of science. The Athena SWAN programme provides an ideal framework through which we can take action to improve the retention of females in the sciences and to assist their career development.’
The Roslin Institute
University of Edinburgh

Bronze award

The Roslin Institute undertakes top-class basic and translational science to tackle some of the most pressing issues in animal health and welfare, their implications for human health and for the role of animals in the food chain. In 2008, the Roslin Institute joined the University of Edinburgh, incorporated and co-located with the Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Sciences. The school has an international reputation for its teaching, research and clinical services. The veterinary school was placed first for veterinary research in RAE 2008 and delivered the largest volume of four-star research in the whole UK.

The institute actively promotes gender equality. This is evident in the equal gender split among the academic population. The institute is often cited within the university as an example of good practice, especially in terms of our appraisal process, mentoring scheme and strong induction programme. We recently embedded a career development policy which includes clear succession paths for Roslin academics. In line with this, the institute created the role of career track fellow. Through appropriate mentoring and managerial support, this position is seen as a stepping stone to a senior lecturer role. Careful and targeted recruitment ensured that the gender split of those holding such positions is very much equal, securing the next generation of female senior lecturers and professors. The institute has also implemented a career development committee. The committee meets annually after the appraisal period. As part of the Athena SWAN process, the remit of the committee was expanded to review female postdoctoral progression and training needs.

The Athena SWAN process has encouraged the institute to further improve working practices. We look forward to embedding action plan objectives over the next three years, and more importantly seeing the impact of Athena SWAN initiatives on our staff.
University of Exeter

Bronze award

The University of Exeter is a top UK university that combines world leading research with very high levels of student satisfaction. It is one of the UK’s most popular and successful universities with campuses in Exeter, Devon, and near Falmouth in Cornwall as well as project offices in Shanghai, Beijing and Bangalore.

The university is ranked tenth out of more than 100 UK universities in the Times league table. It was the 2007/08 Times Higher Education university of the year. Exeter has been shortlisted for the Sunday Times university of the year award more times than any other university and has won three Queen’s anniversary prizes for its research.

The inspiration for the university’s Athena SWAN project derived from work to progress three of its key strategic priorities; to improve our research performance and impact, to further develop our innovative science strategy, and to maintain the highest standards in our equality and diversity policies and practices.

Recently an Inspiring Science lecture programme was launched, inviting celebrated women speakers to talk about their experience of working in the sciences. The university provides a coaching network that offers informal coaching conversations for staff who feel they can benefit from the experience of a skilled listener and reflector, and the women’s network provides networking opportunities specifically for female employees of the university.

The university wishes to inspire and support not only our current female scientists, but also the next generation.

One of our new initiatives is to promote the achievements of the first woman to be awarded a PhD from the university who passed away aged 101 on 2 January 2012 by setting up a named scholarship in her honour. The scholarship will have a role in communicating the joys of science to secondary schools with a focus on female students.
Department of Chemistry
Imperial College London

Silver award (renewal)

The Department of Chemistry at Imperial College London is the third largest in the UK with 51 academic staff, 97 postdoctoral research assistants and 37 operational staff originating from all around the world. We have six academic women and two female fellows at lecturer equivalent. The department has a current research grant income of £12 million per year, and it is the single largest recipient of Chemistry funding from the EPSRC.

The head of department and Athena SWAN committee are committed to creating a departmental culture that harnesses freely given mutual support on a day-to-day basis. We want the department to become known as a fulfilling, productive and happy place in which to learn, teach and carry out research.

As part of our initial Athena SWAN action plan we set up and support an early career development committee and a chemistry postdoctoral research assistants’ development team; together they have made outstanding progress. This includes an annual postdoctoral research assistants’ survey and symposium, a new early career award, a supportive induction package and the development of a mentoring framework. Enhanced alternative skills courses are highly regarded and all young staff, including fellows and lecturers, receive substantial advice and help with career planning and goals. The early career committees and initiatives are being disseminated as best practice inspiration for other departments and their efforts are being recognised externally.

Our maternity and flexible working support is substantial and openly offered in an affirmative encouraging environment. We have a 100 per cent return rate after maternity leave.

Our future goals include sharing these good results more widely with academic staff and offering a more joined-up mechanism for support of PhD students. Feedback from the Athena SWAN workshops showed that more social and networking events are desired at all levels.
Lancaster University

Bronze award (renewal)

Lancaster University was inaugurated by Royal Charter in 1964 and from the very outset has maintained a dual commitment to excellence in teaching and research. The SET departments were all founded during the first decade of the university’s existence, and health and medicine were added at the beginning of the new millennium with the faculty of health and medicine and the Lancaster medical school. The university has more than 12,000 undergraduate and postgraduate taught and research students, and more than 900 full-time equivalent academic staff, 46 per cent of whom are in SET departments.

Lancaster places great emphasis on the quality of the student experience and gives students ready access to academics who are also research experts in their fields.

Some of the key university policies which have been embedded since our initial Athena SWAN Bronze application include: flexible benefits, family friendly policies, a new recruitment system and training, workload allocation models and performance development review. These have supported our efforts to increase the number of women in post and the number of women being promoted to senior positions.

In December 2009, the university held its first Making Professor awareness and networking event for 34 female academics (41 per cent from the sciences). The event featured an update on promotion to personal chair by gender, personal reflections of three recently promoted female professors, and the departmental approach of Athena SWAN Gold award holders.

We have introduced workload models which give consideration to staff returning from maternity leave or other family commitments to enable them to temporarily reduce their teaching and administrative loads to enable their research to get back on track.

Our future plans include an expanded Making Professor event in 2012 and to apply for Athena SWAN Silver awards in two departments.
Faculty of Mathematics and Physical Sciences
University of Leeds

Silver award

The Faculty of Mathematics and Physical Sciences encompasses more than 2300 undergraduate and postgraduate students, and 440 members of staff, across the schools of chemistry, food science and nutrition, mathematics, and physics and astronomy. Teaching and research strengths span a diverse range of subjects, covering the limitless expanse of space to the minute world of sub-atomic particles. Much of the research is interdisciplinary, focusing on both the fundamental development of scientific and mathematical knowledge alongside the application of science to meet the needs of industry and the consumer.

The faculty has a strong commitment to promoting equality, for both students and staff, as illustrated by the steady increase in the numbers of women in academic positions within the schools. The culture is people focused, as evidenced by the ongoing implementation of the University of Leeds people management framework, which will ensure best practice in people management and staff engagement in all areas. The institutional and local development of revised policies and support mechanisms has contributed to a great improvement in the application rates and success of women applying for promotion to senior lecturer, reader and professor in the faculty.

In developing the Athena SWAN submission, the faculty identified a number of potential development areas that need to be addressed, for example:

- further improve data collection, monitoring, evaluation and follow up action
- further promote the family friendly policies so that more staff benefit from them
- build on and extend mentoring and networking opportunities (especially for researchers)

Additionally, MaPS staff are already working with and encouraging other STEM areas to engage with Athena SWAN across the University of Leeds.
School of Healthcare  
University of Leeds  
Bronze award

The School of Healthcare at Leeds is a large multidisciplinary school within the faculty of medicine and health and is a leading provider of health and social care research and education in the UK. The activity of the school includes pre-registration programmes in nursing (adult, child and mental health), midwifery, audiology, clinical physiology, midwifery, pharmacy, radiography and social work.

The school has approximately 2800 students across all programmes, and is predominantly female (87 per cent of undergraduates are women) and the highest ratio of female staff in any school in the university (66.2 per cent), contributing to the delivery and support of education, research, practice, innovation and knowledge transfer. Of these, a significant number hold senior research, academic and leadership positions, with the professoriate being female-led.

In recent years the school has worked to introduce a mentorship scheme and to overcome perceived and real barriers to promotion for female staff. The school has a network of promotional advisers who can give mentorship and advice to candidates wishing to progress through promotion. This has been implemented since the new promotional procedures were put in place and has proved invaluable in enabling female members of staff to gain the support required to be successful in this process. The senior management team has ensured that the culture of the school is supportive for women balancing a career and family commitments.

Plans for the future, supported by Athena SWAN recognition, include embedding the co-operative, open and supportive no-blame culture, through congruent and authentic leadership and opportunities for dialogue.

We continue to encourage all our female staff to engage with the Universities WISET programme and the Springboard leadership programme, and are in the process of developing a programme of support for female academics returning from maternity and carer leave.
University of Leicester

Bronze award (renewal)

The University of Leicester is driven by a fundamental belief that there is an overriding synergy between research and teaching. Research by the Times Higher Education and Opinion Panel, published in February 2011, rated Leicester third best in England (after Oxford and Cambridge) for the quality of lecturing staff.

In declaring Leicester as university of the year in 2008/09, the Times Higher Education described it as ‘elite without being elitist’. Our inclusivity and accessibility is reflected in the quality of student support offered by the university. The university won the 2009/10 Times Higher award for outstanding student support. In 2011 the university was ranked third in level of student satisfaction in the national student survey.

The university has 22,503 students, 6878 of whom study within our SET departments, of which 54 per cent are male and 46 per cent female. It has a total of 3850 employees, with 1488 (45 per cent female, 55 per cent male) working within SET.

The university first gained the Athena SWAN Bronze award in 2008. Its self-assessment group has continued to meet on a regular basis (every six to eight weeks) and the minutes of its meetings are always reported to the university’s equal opportunities committee. The activities of the group are therefore embedded within the wider governance of equal opportunities within the university.

Following a reorganisation of the university into colleges, the group has adopted a more strategic approach to its action plan and has encouraged activity at college and departmental level through events and the establishment of a three year strategy to obtain an institutional Silver award.

All our 17 SET departments have participated in Athena SWAN work, and most have self-assessment groups preparing Silver submissions, thereby advancing gender equality through improving local practices.
Department of Infection, Immunity and Inflammation
University of Leicester

Bronze award

The Department of Infection, Immunity and Inflammation was formed in 2003 from an amalgamation of eight departments in the medical school. The department has approximately 230 members comprising 36 academic staff, 54 research staff, 39 support staff and over 100 postgraduate students.

The department has strong links with the NHS and brings together clinical and non-clinical scientists with established strengths in microbial sciences, respiratory diseases, kidney disease and immunology.

The department has endeavoured to create a culture of equality and Athena SWAN has been a great opportunity to validate and formalise existing practices. The department has focused activities in facilitating a successful balance within research careers with family life. Flexible working is promoted and workload allocation models have been discussed and reviewed, although it is our intention to formalise this process. We are expanding our mentoring scheme to include postdoctoral researchers as we have identified that this is a key stage with respect to female attrition.

Our application showed that although women were represented in almost equal numbers at graduate and postdoctoral level, they are underrepresented in senior academic roles. Although appointments and promotions of non-clinical posts are redressing the gender imbalance, we have recognised some grave concerns regarding gender imbalance in clinical posts.

The challenge, therefore, is to improve this gender bias. By raising awareness of this issue within the department, the university and the local deanery, and by promoting workload allocation models and flexible working, we hope to increase recruitment of women to clinical research posts.
London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine

Bronze award

The mission of the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) is to improve health and health equity in the UK and worldwide by working in partnership to achieve excellence in public and global health research, education and translation of knowledge into policy and practice. Part of the University of London, the LSHTM is a leading postgraduate institution with a remarkable depth and breadth of expertise encompassing many disciplines. It is one of the highest-rated research institutions in the UK.

The majority of academic staff is female, up to and including lecturer grade. More than 30 per cent of professors are female. Promotions to professorship are gender neutral, and the school monitors carefully the process of professorial appointments from outside.

The school is proud of its predominately female top management. There are currently six female and four male members of the senior leadership team. The vice-director of the school (a former head of faculty) and one of the three current faculty heads are women.

Teaching duties are allocated transparently and fairly and the teaching load is similar for male and female academic staff. The school has a range of policies including flexible working, working from home, carer leave, maternity and paternity leave, nursery vouchers, and training opportunities to support academics in their careers. Commitment to equalities is demonstrated in the equality and diversity strategy, policies and schemes. The school regularly provides female speakers at media and high profile events.

The school believes that it has achieved a great deal in terms of gender balance as part of its commitment to equality. Participation in the Athena SWAN process is an excellent way to make our commitment public, and to reflect and improve on gender issues in the future.
University of Manchester

Bronze award (renewal)

The University of Manchester is a research-intensive university that employs approximately 11,000 staff and educates 40,000 students each year. There are four faculties and 22 academic schools, of which 15 are in SET disciplines.

Our 2008 Athena SWAN submission recognised the widening gap between the proportions of men and women through academic grades. The university made a commitment to address this gap by including a measure to increase the number of female staff in senior positions within its main strategy. Activities have included career development workshops, promotions master classes, mentoring opportunities and a women in leadership programme.

There has been an increase in the number and proportion of female core academic staff in SET, from 27 per cent in 2006/7 to 30 per cent in 2010/11. The percentage of senior lecturers (24 per cent) and professors (12 per cent) in 2006/07 has increased to 29 per cent and 15 per cent respectively.

The university’s recent application provided an opportunity to evaluate progress and to:

- increase awareness of flexible working options for all staff
- increase the number of schools using contribution mapping/workload model
- increase the number of female academic applications to SET schools
- ensure women remain research-active on return from maternity leave

The senior leadership team monitors recruitment and promotions information by gender on an annual basis and identify necessary actions.

We have set ambitious targets to engage with all schools across the SET faculties to get them involved with applying for a Athena SWAN awards. Athena SWAN provides an excellent framework to support the institution’s gender equality work.
Faculty of Life Sciences
University of Manchester

Silver award (renewal)

The Faculty of Life Sciences in the University of Manchester is a world-class research establishment, recognised in the last RAE as an international site of excellence in terms of research power and importance. It is also regarded highly for the quality of its teaching: courses averaged 92 per cent for student satisfaction in the 2011 national student survey and top graduate recruiters target our students more than any other UK university.

Research and teaching span a broad range of life science subjects, from molecular and cell biology, biochemistry and biomedical science through to optometry, computational biology, Egyptology and the history of science and technology. Delivery of these activities involves more than 1000 people, including over 200 academic staff, 300 research and around 250 support staff. Over 40 per cent are women and there is a female-friendly environment.

Support for staff returning to work is seen as vital for their continued career development and is tailored to suit individual circumstances. While some women have found reduced hours for a specified period helpful, others prefer to work full-time, but partly from home.

A range of flexible working patterns help both men and women, while technician support and reduced teaching loads help refocus research after maternity leave.

Recognising that female academics may take on less traditional roles or find it hard to accumulate international esteem markers, transparent promotion criteria include the full breadth of staff activities and are communicated through annual performance and development reviews, promotions workshops and the women in life sciences network.

The faculty’s main challenge for the future is to reduce the gender gap in senior positions. New initiatives aim at increasing the effectiveness of the annual performance and development review and improving career progression, as well as increasing the number of female applicants for senior posts.
Faculty of Engineering
University of Nottingham

Silver award

The Faculty of Engineering at the University of Nottingham has an undergraduate population of around 3000 undergraduate students, over 1000 postgraduate students and 450 members of research and teaching staff. It is a cross-disciplinary enterprise, with research and teaching encompassing engineering applications from the built environment to bio-mechanics.

The faculty’s success in fostering the careers of its female staff and students has been driven by a healthy culture pervading all levels. High profile faculty members actively champion a flexible and supportive working environment for all. This is supported by faculty policy on flexible working hours and a research group structure that provides both a stimulating research environment and allows for the continuation of projects and teaching over periods of leave.

Mentoring structures support career transition points and new researchers. However, the tearoom also provides a co-operative and helpful environment for those seeking less formal advice.

The faculty has benefitted strongly from the university’s Anne McLaren fellowship scheme – a prestigious award directed at female researchers and intended as a stepping-stone to a faculty position – and has been instrumental in increasing the number of available fellowships.

The self-assessment process has allowed best-practice policy to be identified and disseminated throughout the faculty. We now have a firm foundation to continue our progress in improving prospects and support for academics through actions, including a new type of mentor framework and an extensive review of the influences of internationalisation on our practices.

In the words of the dean of engineering:

‘I am pleased to be part of a family-friendly faculty that encourages flexible working patterns and helps employees find the support they need throughout their careers. I believe this culture has helped in attracting the best academics to apply for posts and to seek promotion.’
Department of Earth Sciences
University of Oxford

Silver award

The Department of Earth Sciences has a long-standing reputation for world-class teaching and research. Our work focuses on the scientific understanding of the Earth and other planets, employing and developing knowledge drawn from mathematics, physics, chemistry and biology. We pride ourselves on our supportive culture and the close interaction between students and staff.

The department actively fosters a culture of gender equality and our statistics compare favourably with the relevant national averages. Although the proportion of women at professorial level is lower than equivalent levels for researchers and lecturers, the current age profile of our female academics suggests that this number will increase significantly in the coming years.

Social events, seminars and formal departmental meetings are held at times when those with carer responsibilities are free to participate. Senior academic staff lead by example when it comes to working flexibly; children are welcome to social events and no application for flexible working has ever been turned down. Furthermore, teaching responsibilities are covered by colleagues when academics take sabbatical leave. It has been agreed that, in the future, if any member of staff is not offered appropriate paternity provision by their funding body, the department will cover any additional costs of paternity leave.

Several initiatives have been introduced in order to address the gender balance within the department, particularly in the transition from doctoral to postdoctoral level, and to encourage graduate students to continue in scientific careers. These include support in preparing research fellowship applications, recording undergraduate destinations via a new leavers’ survey, and assigning a mentor to all graduate students.

A mentoring scheme will also be instigated for all postdoctoral research staff. In addition, we will improve our communications strategy with new intranet pages, factsheets and newsletters showcasing the family friendly initiatives available to our staff, students and job applicants.
Queen’s University Belfast

Silver award

Queen’s University Belfast has a student population of over 18,250 undergraduates (59 per cent female) and around 5800 postgraduates (54 per cent female). In 2011, Queen’s was awarded the prestigious Queen’s anniversary prize for higher and further education.

The university has a long history in dealing with equality issues and through its equal opportunities unit and gender initiative has undertaken a series of imaginative actions to address gender inequalities, including mentoring, improved childcare, overhaul of policies and procedures, improved maternity leave and an emphasis on equality and diversity training.

Queen’s was a founder member of the Athena SWAN Charter. In 2007, a self-assessment team, the Athena SWAN steering group, was established to monitor and oversee all of the university’s Athena SWAN activities. It is chaired by a SET dean who reports to the university management board, chaired by the vice-chancellor. SET schools comprise 11 of the 20 schools in the university; currently seven of these hold Silver Athena SWAN awards and three hold Bronze.

Since 2007 there has been an increase in the proportion of women in the undergraduate and postgraduate populations of SET schools, as well as among research and academic staff. This compares very favourably with UK trends. Women’s presence in the professoriate and senior management has improved considerably: with recent promotions and appointments, the university now has 53 female professors, representing 22 per cent of the total professoriate.

The university has extended the Athena SWAN principles and related activities to a pilot group of three non-SET schools and a further roll-out of Athena SWAN to all non-SET schools is planned.
School of Electronics, Electrical Engineering and Computer Science, Queen’s University Belfast

Silver award

The School of Electronics, Electrical Engineering and Computer Science is one of the largest schools in Queen’s University Belfast. It has an international reputation due to its far reaching research activities and many successes at both undergraduate and postgraduate level. Consistently in the top 10 of UK university league tables for its subjects, the school currently attracts students from over 20 countries worldwide.

The school includes the £40m world-class research centre, the institute for electronics, communications and information technologies and the centre for secure information technologies, an EPSRC/TSB innovation and knowledge centre. Overall, women represent approximately 22.5 per cent of the school’s population and, in 2010, two female staff members were promoted to professorial level, becoming the first female professors in the school’s history.

The school has a dedicated marketing and student recruitment officer, who undertakes a large number of activities to recruit students. For these events, the school specifically employs female role models from our existing undergraduate and postgraduate cohort and has introduced an ambassador scheme to formally recognise their contribution.

We provide support to women entering courses through an undergraduate peer mentoring scheme, by pairing them with female mentors.

The school has identified a drop-off in the number of women continuing to postdoctoral research from PhD studies. To address this, in addition to a school research society, which was established in early 2011 to enhance the quality of the research experience for all researchers, a number of new mentoring initiatives will be introduced, including a peer mentoring scheme and female academic support team for PhD and postdoctoral researchers.

Overall, the school feels that it currently has an ideal foundation on which to continue to build and develop its Athena SWAN activities.
School of Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering  
Queen’s University Belfast

Silver award

The School of Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering at Queen’s University Belfast, formed in 2005 following the merger of mechanical and manufacturing engineering and aeronautical engineering, is rated among the top 10 in the most recent RAE.

There are 31 academic teaching staff, 24 researchers, 5 academic-related staff, 11 clerical and 17 technical staff and some 655 undergraduate and postgraduate students from a diverse range of backgrounds. Research undertaken in the school covers national priority areas managed through three interacting clusters; advanced materials and processing, aerospace and manufacturing and clean energies.

The school engages in activities for groups at a range of school stages and has researchers in residence representing postgraduate students in schools, many of whom are female. Other outreach activities include a range of public exercises, some targeted specifically at women, which run in conjunction with W5, Belfast’s award-winning science and discovery centre.

Initiatives such as scholarships and bursaries prove an effective means of attracting high calibre students to the school. In order to foster female interest in research and raise awareness of academic careers, the school has established the Lilian Bland scholarship in recognition of an inspirational local pioneering female who built and flew her own biplane in the early 1900’s. The scholarship, which funds a female undergraduate in aerospace engineering to undertake a three month research project over the summer, was first awarded in July 2011.

Future plans include the introduction of a scholarship for female students, sponsored by Schlumberger Limited, the world’s leading oilfield services company. The first scholarship will be awarded in October 2012 to a female student on the MEng sandwich programme in mechanical and manufacturing engineering.
School of Pharmacy
Queen’s University Belfast

Bronze award

The School of Pharmacy at Queen’s is one of 20 schools in Queen’s University Belfast and one of four in the faculty of medicine, health and life sciences.

From its origins of seven academic staff, around 60 undergraduate students and a small number of postgraduate researchers, the school now hosts almost 600 undergraduates on the four-year MPharm programme and around 150 postgraduate and postdoctoral researchers.

As of November 2011, 14 out of 31 academics are women, and the most recent lecturer appointment was a woman. There are two female professors (from a total of six), one female reader (from a total of four), and one female senior lecturer, who was promoted to this grade in the most recent promotions’ exercise.

In preparing for the Athena SWAN application, a survey was sent to all academic staff, postdoctoral fellows and PhD students to help the self-assessment team identify issues and concerns in relation to women in the school. These questionnaires sought participants’ views on issues such as career development information, organisation and culture within the school, and flexibility and management of career breaks.

On the basis of the responses to these questionnaires and discussion within the self-assessment team, our action plan for the future has focused on a number of issues, notably key career transition points (particularly from lecturer to senior lecturer and beyond) and facilitating female staff and students who return from maternity leave in terms of workload such as reduced teaching load for six months after return.
University of Reading

Bronze award (renewal)

The University of Reading is a campus-based institution which is known for its community atmosphere and supportive approach. It aspires to be an employer of choice to recruit, retain and motivate talented staff and has long been committed to removing barriers to women’s advancement across the university as part of its corporate plan. Reading has around 18,000 students, from over 125 different countries. Over 40 per cent of these are studying at postgraduate level (around 1200 on research programmes). We have almost 4000 staff with 671 academic and research staff in STEM schools and 403 in non-STEM schools. The university is a member of the 1994 Group of smaller research intensive universities, and was recently ranked 164 in the THE top 200 universities of the world.

The impact of our involvement with the Athena SWAN Charter since 2007 has resulted in a number of significant initiatives including building a new university-funded childcare facility, with more places available and open longer hours and throughout the year, to replace the term-time only provision previously aimed at students.

The university has organised a women in research celebration event whereby at any point in their career, women in research who were good role models were nominated and a selected ten were showcased with portraits taken for public display (based upon the women of outstanding achievement award run by the UKRC). The unveiling of the portraits for the first time was a major event within the university calendar.

Reading is currently involved in ECU’s systemic change pilot project within which we are leading the development of a parallel scheme to the Athena SWAN Charter which aims to recognise and promote good employment practice for supporting women in non-STEM subject areas.
School of Chemistry, Food and Pharmacy
University of Reading

Bronze award

The School of Chemistry, Food and Pharmacy was established in 2006 and is a fully integrated set of three departments. The school comprises 70 academics, 30 technical staff, 15 administrative staff and 50 research staff and offers a range of undergraduate and postgraduate degree programmes in chemistry, food science and nutrition, and pharmacy. We teach approximately 950 undergraduate students and 80 MSc students, and deliver CPD modules to 100 students per year. We currently supervise around 180 PhD students.

The school has appointed an Athena SWAN leader and an Athena SWAN action team and the assessment process has allowed examples of good practice from across the school to be shared.

From the assessment process we have devised an action plan, incorporating many different elements from undergraduate level upwards.

In particular we have identified two key transitions to focus on:

• lecturer to senior lecturer and reader – due to the high numbers of female lecturers currently within the school

• postdoctoral research assistant to lecturer – as a large number of women are known to leave academia at this stage

We believe that networking and mentoring are valuable activities to facilitate career progression and we plan to introduce a career development and research day for postdoctoral researchers and an annual promotions seminar for academic staff.

Work has already started on implementing our action plan and we look forward to seeing the rewards this will bring.
School of Human and Environmental Sciences
University of Reading

Bronze award

The overall mission of the school is to promote excellence in teaching, research and enterprise activities in the broad field of environmental systems and human communities, and the interrelations between them over the past, present and future. The school is made up of two departments; archaeology and geography and environmental science. The latter was recently created from the amalgamation of the former departments of geography and soil science.

The school comprises 95 staff (42 academic, 17 research, 20 technical, 16 administrative). There are 700 students, 550 undergraduates (female: male ratio 46:53) and 150 postgraduates (female: male ratio 67:33). Within the school, teaching and research spans humanities and science with about half the staff specialising in each aspect but many covering both.

The Athena SWAN exercise highlighted cases of effective mentoring and promotion of female staff and cases where parental leave arrangements had worked effectively, enabling female staff to return to grant-winning and highly productive research. Unrelated to the Athena SWAN exercise the school has, since submitting the application, appointed its first female head, Professor Roberta Gilchrist FBA.

The exercise showed that women were underrepresented among the senior academic staff and on about half of the school committees. An objective for the future is to achieve a better gender balance in key decision-making committees and leadership roles.
Medical School
University of Warwick
Bronze award

Warwick Medical School, founded in 2000, is the leading UK provider of graduate entry medicine, making a significant national and international contribution to education and research in health. Clinical partners include University Hospital Coventry and Warwickshire, South Warwickshire NHS Foundation Trust, Heart of England Foundation Trust, Coventry Partnership Trust, the Arden Cluster and George Eliot Hospital NHS Trust. The school has five research divisions (health sciences, biomedical cell biology, reproductive health, metabolic and vascular health, mental health and wellbeing) and an education team.

Driven by our current dean, who is chair of the Athena SWAN self-assessment group, the school has been actively supporting and encouraging a key initiative in the development of female and male early career researchers by:

- offering a women’s mentorship programme
- employing an officer to work intensively with researchers to develop funding applications
- providing a specific early career researcher seminar programme
- facilitating access to funding to support career development and training, and allowing time to undertake these activities
- supporting early career researchers who are coming to the end of their contracts to continue in the school on new funding where possible

Working on the Athena SWAN submission gave the school opportunity to reflect and re-examine some policies and processes with a commitment to provide an inclusive environment which values and supports all members of staff and students, providing every opportunity to achieve their full potential.
Department of Computer Science
University of York

Bronze award

The Department of Computer Science at the University of York is one of the UK’s leading computer science departments. Founded in 1977 from a support department, it now comprises 42 academic staff, 39 research staff, and 38 support staff. There are currently around 350 undergraduates in the department and 125 doctoral (PhD and EngD) students.

Informed by our Athena SWAN process, we have vigorously promoted opportunities to develop research careers, including use of sabbaticals, supporting international research secondments, and seeking external recognition of research achievements – all with significant take-up by female staff.

We have improved how we communicate flexible working possibilities; flexibility of working practices will continue to be a key plank of our strategy for improving the working environment for all our staff, but with particular emphasis on aspects that disproportionately affect female staff.

We have set our performance criteria to value quality over quantity, achievement over presenteeism, adopting a workload model to facilitate informed allocation of duties, and providing a facility for staff to specify scheduling constraints on their engagements (for example due to family or other caring responsibilities).

The lack of visibility of women in computer science more generally restricts the talent pool for staff and students. We have modernised our presentation of externally available teaching and research information and have started a programme of high achieving female speakers, such as Gillian Arnold and Sue Black. We will continue to challenge external perceptions of women in computer science and aim to improve the experience of women who already work in our department (or who will now join us), providing better career advice and more encouragement to take up opportunities. We will continue to learn from our fellow departments at York with long-standing Athena SWAN engagement.
Department of Physics
University of York

Silver award

The Department of Physics at York is driven by excellence in both research and teaching, with particular expertise in condensed matter physics, plasma physics and fusion, nuclear physics and nuclear astrophysics. We are a relatively small department of 32 academic staff, with a supportive and collegiate culture. Our philosophy is that good practice applicable to all staff will be of particular benefit to women in overcoming barriers to their career aspirations.

The department introduced flexi-time for all staff more than fifteen years ago. Job-share and part-time working schemes are also available. Staff members benefit from the university maternity scheme, which exceeds the statutory minimum. Sabbatical terms can be applied for and are given every year to two or three staff members.

The journey of the department towards the Athena SWAN Silver award focused at first on Project Juno, a complementary project organised by the Institute of Physics. The department holds Juno Champion status.

A cornerstone was the creation, in 2008, of the gender equality committee (GEC), aimed at facilitating the application process for the Juno Practitioner award and as a commitment to the ongoing development of departmental practices. Following the positive impact of the GEC on the department and with the idea of widening its objectives to comprise equality in its various aspects, in 2010 the GEC naturally evolved into the departmental equality committee, with a wider departmental representation.

The terms of reference of the departmental equality committee summarise the ethos of our department:

‘The department aspires to provide a working environment where all staff are encouraged to work to their full potential and are rewarded without regard to gender, race, age, sexual orientation, disability, or belief. In achieving this we recognise that there are commonly recognised difficulties (e.g. gender issues, problems for part-time staff etc.) which we need to be aware of.’
Department of Psychology
University of York

Silver award (renewal)

The Department of Psychology at York was founded in 1974 and has become one of the leading centres for research and training in psychology in the UK.

The department is in the top ten for research quality in RAE 2008 and is consistently ranked within the top ten for teaching in the UK. The department has traditionally had a low turnover of staff, but there has been an active programme of recruitment over the last five years or so, prompted by an ambitious expansion plan and a wave of retirements in senior academic staff.

Many of the newly-recruited members of our department are female and with this changing profile, the Athena SWAN objectives are highly relevant: we aim to nurture this group of women and ensure that they develop into more senior academic roles, able to sustain and lead the cutting-edge research programme that the department prides itself on.

We have introduced a range of innovative schemes to support the development of all our academic staff. These include:

• an early career researchers forum, led by postdoctoral researchers, which hosts events on skills, careers and work-life balance issues

• a research mentorship programme for junior faculty

• deputy roles for key departmental committees, which allow academic staff to gain managerial experience to boost their prospects of promotion

We have recently added a new committee to the structure of the department, the committee for professional and personal development, which will sit alongside the committees overseeing teaching and research and ensure that gender equality and staff development issues are always at the forefront of our policy development.
Athena SWAN Charter awards November 2011

**Bronze university**
- Bangor University
- University of Birmingham
- Durham University
- University of Exeter
- Lancaster University (R)
- University of Leicester (R)
- London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine
- University of Manchester (R)
- University of Reading (R)

**Bronze departments**
- School of Chemistry, *Cardiff University*
- The Roslin Institute, *University of Edinburgh*
- School of Healthcare, *University of Leeds*
- Department of Infection, Immunity and Inflammation, *University of Leicester*
- School of Pharmacy, *Queen’s University Belfast*
- School of Chemistry, Food and Pharmacy, *University of Reading*
- School of Human and Environmental Sciences, *University of Reading*
- Warwick Medical School, *University of Warwick*
- Department of Computer Science, *University of York*

(R) = renewal
Silver university

- Queen’s University Belfast

Silver departments

- School of Nursing and Midwifery Studies, Cardiff University
- Department of Chemistry, Imperial College London (R)
- Faculty of Mathematics and Physical Sciences, University of Leeds
- Faculty of Life Sciences, University of Manchester (R)
- Faculty of Engineering, University of Nottingham
- Department of Earth Sciences, University of Oxford
- School of Electronics, Electrical Engineering and Computer Science, Queen’s University Belfast
- School of Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering, Queen’s University Belfast
- Department of Physics, University of York
- Department of Psychology, University of York (R)
Images from the April 2011 awards ceremony.
Athena SWAN is jointly owned by ECU and the UKRC. It is funded by ECU, the UKRC, Royal Society, Biochemical Society, HEFCE, HEFCW and Scottish Funding Council.