

2018 Athena SWAN review - FAQs

What is the Athena SWAN Charter?

The Athena SWAN Charter is Advance HE's accreditation scheme recognising the work of higher education institutions and research institutes in addressing gender equality within academia and research. Athena SWAN was established in 2005 with a focus on advancing the careers of women in science, technology, engineering, maths and medicine (STEMM) employment. In May 2015 the Charter was expanded to recognise work undertaken in in arts, humanities, social sciences, business and law (AHSSBL), and in professional and support roles, as well as for trans staff and students. The charter now recognises work undertaken to address gender equality more broadly, and not just barriers to progression that affect women.

Why is Advance HE reviewing the Charter?

The launch of Advance HE is an opportunity to evaluate our programmes to ensure they are fit for current and future needs of institutions, individuals and the sector as a whole.

While we have had positive feedback that Athena SWAN has enhanced careers and opportunities for many, some institutions have asked for the Charter to be reviewed to ensure it continues to maintain its rigour and credibility, while reducing the administrative burden. The review will help ensure the Athena SWAN Charter continues to be a highly valued accreditation scheme.

What is the purpose of the review?

The purpose is threefold:

- 1 To consult on and clarify the purpose and remit of Athena SWAN.
- 2 To consider and address concerns that have already been raised across the sector, as well as any that emerge in the consultation.
- 3 To investigate how Athena SWAN can:
 - meet the challenges posed by the changing higher education environment;
 - evolve to embrace new thinking and developments in the sector;
 - maintain rigour and reduce burden whilst remaining a kite mark of EDI excellence; and
 - learn from other equality measures, peer review processes and kite marks, both from within Advance HE, the sector and beyond.

Who will lead the Athena SWAN review?

The review will be led by a steering group, chaired by Professor Julia Buckingham, CBE, vice-chancellor and president of Brunel University London. A former member of the Athena Forum, an independent committee focused on diversity in STEMM, Professor Buckingham is Brunel's first female vice-chancellor. She is also on the board of Universities UK, chair of the Researcher Concordat Strategy Group and a member of the All-Party Parliamentary University Group Council.

The steering group will consult with the higher education sector and organisations that support and contribute to the work of the Athena SWAN Charter.

Group members have been carefully selected to ensure that we have the best possible representation across institution types, geographical regions, professional expertise, ethnicity and gender.

The members of the Athena SWAN Steering Group are:

- Professor Julia Buckingham, CBE (Chair), vice-chancellor and president (Brunel University London).
- Ben Browne, COO, De Montfort University
- Professor Paul Carmichael, associate dean (global development), Ulster University
- Alison Cross, director of human resources, Oxford Brookes University, and member of Executive Committee of Universities HR (UHR)
- Professor Dame Athene Donald, DBE, FRS, professor of experimental physics, Master of Churchill College, University of Cambridge
- Professor Jenny Higham, principal, St George's, University of London and chair of the Medical Schools Council
- Professor Hilary Lappin-Scott, OBE, senior pro-vice-chancellor – Research and Innovation and Strategic Development, Swansea University and vice president of the Federation of European Microbiological Society (FEMS)
- Patrick Johnson, head of equality and diversity, University of Manchester
- David Sweeney, executive chair, Research England, Council of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI)
- Professor Paul Walton, department of chemistry, University of York
- Professor Lesley Yellowlees, MBE, CBE, head of College of Science & Engineering, University of Edinburgh.

When will the review take place?

The Athena SWAN review will start in the summer of 2018 and we expect it will take approximately 12 months to complete the work. Once the review has concluded, we will communicate any changes with sufficient advance notice to inform future applications and set out any transitional arrangements.

The work will be done in three phases:

- consultation and evidence gathering, July 2018 to December 2018
- analysis of quantitative and qualitative data, January 2019 to March 2019
- development of policy and implementation recommendations, April 2019 to June 2019.

How will the review affect existing awards and future award applications?

The review will not affect existing awards or applications due to be submitted in November 2018 or April 2019. We will update you as soon as possible after the outcomes of the review are published on the arrangements for applications for the November 2019 deadline and beyond.

How can I get involved in the Athena SWAN review?

There will be various opportunities for individuals to contribute to the review and we are delighted that we have had many offers of help which we expect to take up as the project progresses.

We will keep you updated with our progress in the coming months. Our consultation will go across and beyond the sector and will include a substantive survey, focus groups and a webinar, all which will be designed to enable you to provide feedback, suggestions and ideas.

Where can I get more information about the review?

You can read the latest news on the Athena SWAN review [here](#).