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TECHNOLOGICAL
UNIVERSITY DUBLIN



Athena
SWAN
Bronze Award

Athena SWAN
Information for
Faculties, Schools
and Services



Athena SWAN in TU Dublin

The Athena Swan Awards recognise and celebrate good practice in adopting an intersectional approach to tackling gendered inequalities in academic and professional careers.

Supported by the [Higher Education Authority \(HEA\)](#) the Athena Swan Charter was launched in Ireland in 2015.

Athena Swan awards are available at Bronze, Silver and Gold levels and they are valid for 4 years.

TU Dublin currently holds an [Institutional Bronze Award](#) valid until December 2025 and one Departmental Bronze Award for the [School of Mathematics and Statistics](#), valid until September 2026.



Athena Swan Ireland Principles

There are 8 charter principles. These commitments underpin Athena Swan Ireland and articulate the shared goals of all charter participants. The principles act as the foundation for the Ireland charter, with all other elements of the framework – including criteria, application and assessment – aligned to these commitments and the values enshrined within them.

In committing to the principles of the Athena Swan Ireland charter, we join a global community with a shared goal of addressing systemic inequalities and embedding inclusive cultures in higher education.

The Athena SWAN principles are here: <https://www.advancehe.ac.uk/equalitycharters/international-charters/athena-swan-ireland>



What is the national response to gender inequality?

The HEA Centre of Excellence on Equality, Diversity & Inclusion was founded in August 2020. In addition to work in the broad area of EDI, the Centre oversees a number of initiatives in relation to gender equality in higher education, including the [Senior Academic Leadership Initiative](#), [Gender Equality Enhancement Fund](#), the [Athena SWAN](#) Charter, the annual [publication](#) of staff data by gender.

In 2016 the [HEA National Review of Gender Equality in Irish Higher Education Institutions](#) was published and informed the implementation of a gender equality framework in Irish higher education (HE). The HEA, along with an external Expert Group, conducted a Second Gender Equality Review of Irish Higher Education Institutions over the course of 2022. The review group comprised of five national and international experts, including Dr. Philip Owende from TU Dublin. The Expert Group findings and recommendations have now been published in the [Report of the Expert Group: 2nd HEA National Review of Gender Equality in Irish Higher Education Institutions](#).



The Expert Group made recommendations across a range of areas including

- Leadership;
- Organisational Culture;
- Teaching, Learning, Research and Quality Assurance;
- Intersectionality;
- Career Development;
- Precarity; and
- Data Analysis

Currently HEIs stand to lose access to research funding if they do not achieve and retain Athena Swan awards within a set timeframe. For TU Dublin, this means that we must apply for an institutional Athena Swan Bronze Renewal award in November 2025. Faculties, Schools and Services will be encouraged to start applying for Athena Swan Awards from September 2023 onwards.

What is TU Dublin's response to gendered inequalities?

The TU Dublin Athena Swan Action Plan 2022-2025 is divided into three key themes, with 8 subthemes and over 50 actions. We are progressing the actions according to the timelines outlined. The institutional priority actions are as follows:

1. Gender Balance in Leadership and Decision-making

1.1 A commitment to achieve and/or maintain gender balance in all senior decision-making roles and positions from Head of School upwards by 2025, and progress reported annually.

2. Recruitment and Career Progression

2.2.2 Streamline the available HR supports for maternity leave across the University, including a dedicated HR contact person and up-to-date information booklet. Make this information available to all School and Function Heads and their executives.

2.2.3 Improve the backfill process for maternity leave cover and facilitate a timely handover meeting aided by a handover template. This handover meeting will clarify the context, if any, in which the person going on leave can keep in touch on an occasional basis with the School/Department/Office through an agreed mechanism.

2.2.4 Four weeks before return, the Head of School and returning parent will devise a return to work plan that involves an appropriate academic workload for the first semester. This will also include discussion of the teaching timetable and course delivery. As far as possible, academic returners will resume lecturing on their previous modules.

3. Organisational Culture and Work-Life Balance

3.1.1 40% of Schools make application for Athena SWAN awards by 2025

3.1.2 Prioritise Athena SWAN School applications from areas in which female staff and students are heavily under-represented: Faculty of Engineering and Built Environment; Faculty of Computing, Digital & Data. The Dean of the Faculty of EBE will lead and organise a Faculty Athena SWAN team who will prepare a Faculty Athena SWAN submission. In other Faculties, Deans and Heads of School will identify specific Schools for Athena SWAN application within the 2022-2025 timeframe.

3.2.1 Prepare and present an annual report on EDI to the UET, Academic Council, Governing Body and the HEA. To include a report on progress in addressing the institutional Athena Swan priority actions. The report to be a public document via the University website.

There are several cross-cutting actions shared by the TU Dublin Athena Swan, Ending Sexual Violence and Harassment, and Race Equity Action Plans, and the Gender Identity and Gender Expression Policy and supports.

- [Athena Swan Action Plan](#)
- [Gender Identity and Gender Expression Policy and Supports](#)
- [Ending Sexual Violence and Harassment Action Plan](#)
- [Race Equity Action Plan](#)

Athena Swan Applications

What are the key elements of an Athena Swan application?

Applying for an award entails common steps including:

- Establishing a Self-Assessment Team (SAT)
- Collecting data (quantitative and qualitative)
- Critically analysing data
- Identifying reasons for exclusion and under-representation/over representation
- Developing an action plan to address these reasons
- Evidencing progress over time



Any Faculty, School or Service interested in participating in the Athena Swan Ireland charter should first consider the charter principles and, together with their senior leadership teams and communities, decide if they agree to uphold these commitments.

Professor David FitzPatrick, President, has committed to the principles on behalf of TU Dublin. Deans, Heads of School and Heads of Service will commit to the principles on behalf of their respective Faculty, School or Service.

You will first apply for a Bronze Award. You can commit to the principles at any time prior to submitting your application; however, Athena Swan Ireland encourage you to do this at the outset of your preparation for application.

[Principles Letter Template](#)

Athena Swan Ireland Award Criteria

High-level award criteria	Bronze	Bronze Renewal	Silver	Silver Renewal	Gold	Gold Renewal
Structures and processes underpin and recognise gender equality work and, where relevant, wider equality work	X	X	X	X	X	X
Evidence-based recognition of the issues and opportunities facing the applicant	X	X	X	X	X	X
Action plan to address identified issues	X	X	X	X	X	X
Demonstration of progress against the applicant's previously identified priorities		X	X	X	X	X
Evidence of success addressing gender inequality and, where relevant, wider inequalities			X		X	
Evidence of sector-leading gender equality and, where relevant, wider equality practice, and of supporting others to improve					X	



What is a department application?

Faculties and Schools should apply for an Athena Swan via the [department application framework](#).

Faculty-level applications need to demonstrate

- That there is adequate faculty-wide decision-making power to make changes to policy, practice and culture. This usually means that the Faculty Dean has responsibility for resource allocation, budgets, academic strategy and policy in the faculty – so as to effect the changes set out in the action plan.
- Communication of and commitment to the charter principles needs to be apparent across the faculty – responsibility and ownership should not be driven by an individual School or discipline
- The application needs to demonstrate clearly that the self-assessment is representative of the whole faculty and that issues specific to different disciplines and/or Schools have been identified and actioned.
- Data should be disaggregated by School/discipline as relevant across the application. If this is not possible for some data, an explanation should be provided.
- When applying for Silver and Gold awards, applicants need to demonstrate that progress and success are evident across the faculty and not driven by an individual School or discipline.

Joint applications from two Schools may also be made via the department application framework.

Joint application may be appropriate where Schools are small (e.g. fewer than 20 staff) and/or have closely-related disciplines. The following factors should be considered when deciding whether or not to make a joint department application:

- The links between both Schools should be evident, and the rationale for a joint application needs to be provided in the application.
- Communication of and commitment to the charter principles need to be apparent across both Schools and should not be driven by one School.
- The application needs to demonstrate clearly that the self-assessment is representative of both Schools and that issues specific to different disciplines and/or Schools have been identified and actioned.
- Data from both Schools should be presented in the application. If this is not possible for some data sets, an explanation should be provided.
- When applying for Silver and Gold awards, applicants will need to demonstrate that progress and success are evident across both Schools and not driven by an individual School.

IMPORTANT NOTE: *School applicants should be aware that achievement of an award will be invalidated if the School is subsequently included in a successful faculty submission.*

Similarly, should Schools included in a successful faculty submission wish to apply individually, the faculty award would be invalidated.

What is a professional unit application?

The term 'professional unit' is used to refer to units of institutions that provide professional services or strategic or operational support to institutional Services (e.g. Library, HR, Finance, IT, Estates, EDI). Services in TU Dublin should apply for an award using the [professional unit application framework](#).

An applying unit needs to hold sufficient decision-making power to make changes to the unit's policy, practice and culture – this usually means that the head of the applying unit has responsibility for resource allocation, budgets, strategy and policy in the submitting unit – so as to be able to effect the changes set out in the action plan.

Amalgamated applications from several professional units may be made via the professional unit application framework. Professional units considering an amalgamated application should get in touch with the Athena Swan Ireland team, through the EDI office, to discuss their proposed configuration.

An amalgamated application may be appropriate where units are small (e.g. fewer than 20 staff) and/or carry out closely-related Services.

The following factors should be considered when deciding whether or not to make an amalgamated professional unit application:

- The links between units should be evident, and the rationale for an amalgamated application needs to be provided in the application.
- Communication of, and commitment to, the charter principles need to be apparent across all units and should not be driven by one single unit.
- The application needs to demonstrate clearly that the self-assessment is representative of all units and that issues specific to different Services and/or units have been identified and actioned.
- Data from all units should be presented in the application. If this is not possible for some data sets, an explanation should be provided.
- When applying for Silver or Gold awards, applicants need to demonstrate that progress and success are evident across all units and not driven by an individual unit



Athena Swan Workload for Faculties, Schools and Services

A successful award application (Bronze) takes 12 months to prepare. A 250 hour workload allocation for the Athena Swan lead over a 12 month period is strongly recommended.

Participating in the [self-assessment team](#) is also a significant commitment and will need to be recognized accordingly. Members will need to be given time to attend meetings and take responsibility for tasks such as data analysis and writing sections of the application.

The EDI Directorate in TU Dublin

- Advises on the set-up of your SAT and can outline the whole process to members
- Can provide a training session on gender equality in higher education for SAT members
- Offers a fortnightly drop-in clinic for Athena Swan leads and SAT members
- Supports the AS Lead and Head of School via email and phone
- Convenes a network of Athena Swan 'champions' from the Schools which will provide them with a supportive peer framework to enable discussion of issues, barriers, and solutions.
- Will critically read and provide constructive feedback on draft applications
- Will oversee and administer the University Quality Assurance process on draft applications

What next?

To **express interest** in submitting a departmental or professional unit award application (Bronze) please complete an Athena Swan Unit Level Application EOI.

- [Microsoft Form: Expression of Interest in submitting an Athena Swan Application \(Bronze\)](#)
- [Section 2 Athena Swan Expression of Interest \(Bronze\).docx](#)

To further discuss **simple steps** you can take to begin to address gendered and other inequalities in your unit, please email equality@tudublin.ie.

Further Guidance

[Information Pack for Faculties and Schools](#)

[Information Pack for Services](#)

[Athena Swan Ireland FAQ](#)

[Athena Swan Ireland](#)

Topic Guides:

- [Forming a Self-Assessment Team \(SAT\)](#)
- [Collecting and analysing data](#)

- [Consulting with your Community](#)
- [Developing and Implementing a Targeted Action Plan](#)
- [Word Allocation Guidance](#)
- [Scoring Matrix](#)
- [EDI Literacy Glossary](#)
- [Consultation Template](#)
- [Athena Swan Ireland and Horizon Europe – Aligning your Action Plan](#)