



Athena Swan Ireland: 2021 charter framework

Word allocation guidance

Word Allocation Guidance

Each application form has an overall word allocation (see below). Word allocations are limited in order to help applicants focus on what is important and to support peer-reviewers who may assess up to four applications per assessment panel.

	Bronze	Silver	Gold	Renewal
Institution	12,500	18,500	19,500	12,000
Department	10,000	12,000	13,000	6,000
Professional unit	8,000	10,000	11,000	6,000

The application forms also provide recommended word allocations for each section of the application form. These section allocations are purely for guidance and applicants have flexibility to use the overall word allocation across the application as they deem appropriate.

Applicants should provide section word counts in the application form as well as on the word allocation table inserted at the beginning of each form.

Example word allocation table: Silver application form for Institutions

Section	Words used
Section 1: An introduction to the institution's Athena Swan work	/2,000
Section 2: An assessment of the institution's gender equality context and, where relevant, wider equality context	/10,500
Section 3: An evaluation of the institution's progress and success	/6,000
Section 4: Action Plan	N/A
Overall word count	18,500

Excluded from word allocation

The word allocation excludes the following aspects of your application:

- + details of the members of your self-assessment team, presented as a table, using a maximum of 30 words for each team member.
- + glossary of terms or abbreviations used in the application.
- + tables and graphs with data, providing they do not include standalone text or prose.
- + qualitative quotations, provided that individual quotations do not exceed 50 words and no more than 25 quotations are used across the application.
- + embedded action points, including cross references to action points.
- + the action plan. The action plan provides a summary of actions referenced across the application, complete with information on ownership and timeframes. It should not include any additional commentary.

Included in word allocation

Aside from the exclusions noted above, the word allocation includes all other aspects of the application. For example, the following text would be included in the allocation:

- + readable words in screenshots.
- + standalone text or prose included in tables, graphs, footnotes or references.
- + qualitative quotations that exceed 50 words.
- + additional qualitative quotations beyond the 25 excluded from the word allocation.

Any application found to have exceeded the word allowance may be rejected and not assessed by the peer-review panel.

Additional word allocation

The overall word allocation for an application may be increased in certain circumstances. The process relating to some common circumstances where additional words may be justifiable are listed below:

Organisational restructure

If an organisational restructure has recently taken place, applicants may avail of an extension to reflect on the impact of the restructure on the institution/department's equality work in the application (e.g. arising from changes to their staff or student demographic profile, policies, or context). Applicants should email the Athena Swan Ireland team no less than one month prior to the application submission date to request this additional word allowance and ensure it is noted in Advance HE's records.

Exceptional circumstances

Requests for additional word allowance to account for exceptional circumstances are considered on a case-by-case basis. Any increase in the word allowance should always be used to explain how the special circumstances have impacted on, or been taken into account in relation to, the applicant's equality context or activity. Applicants should email the Athena Swan Ireland team no less than two months prior to the application submission date to explain any exceptional circumstances and request related additional word allowance.

Small size

An application from an institution/department with a small population may need to take a more qualitative approach to self-assessment. In these circumstances, an increase in the number of qualitative quotations or the overall application word count may be justified. Applicants applying from small units should email the Athena Swan Ireland team early in the self-assessment process with information on their population size and proposed approach to self-assessment.

Clinical and non-clinical staff

Department applicants with clinical and non-clinical staff are automatically eligible for an additional word allowance of 1000 words. These applicants must present data for clinical and non-clinical staff separately, and the additional word allowance is granted to allow analysis and reflection on any differences between the two staff groups.

Where an institution has both clinical and non-clinical staff, additional word allocation is not automatically granted but awarded on a case-by-case basis. Applicants should contact the Athena Swan Ireland team.

Faculty/multi-discipline applications

Faculty applicants are eligible for an additional word allowance of up to 1000 words. These applicants must present data for their component departments separately, and the additional word allowance is granted to allow the unit to analyse and reflect on department and discipline-specific differences, to demonstrate how Athena Swan principles are embedded in each constituent unit, and, for Silver and Gold applications, to evidence key achievements in sub-units.

Applications from units comprising of multiple disciplines may also be eligible for additional words to support exploration of discipline specific challenges and opportunities. Faculty/multi-discipline applicants should email the Athena Swan Ireland team no less than two months prior to the application submission date to request additional word allocation.

Requesting additional word allocation

Requests for additional word allocation should be made in writing to the Athena Swan Ireland team. All requests are considered on a case-by-case basis. In your email you should outline the number of words you require. Where additional words are granted, the increased allowance will be at the discretion of Advance HE, usually to a maximum of 1000 words.

If approved, additional words can be used across the application document but word counts should be included at the end of each section as well as in the word allocation table at the beginning of the application form. You must also include the approval email received from the Athena Swan Ireland Team at the beginning of the submission document.

Additional information

The assessment panel will only consider the information provided in the application form and will not take into account any additional information. This means that appendices and hyperlinks are not permitted. All relevant information should be included in the application form.

Applying the word allocation guidance: examples

1 Embedded action points

Action points should be embedded throughout the application to demonstrate the link between data, analysis and intervention. Action points embedded in the application narrative are excluded from the word allocation (see example below).

A focus group of returners requested informal peer support prior to (and not just following) leave:

Action 5.4.2: All staff planning adoption, maternity or paternity leave will be invited to the carers' network.

[16 words included in the word count]

2. Screenshots

The word allocation includes legible words in screenshots. For example, the text in Figure A is legible and is included in the word count [111 words]. The figure legend is excluded.

Figure A

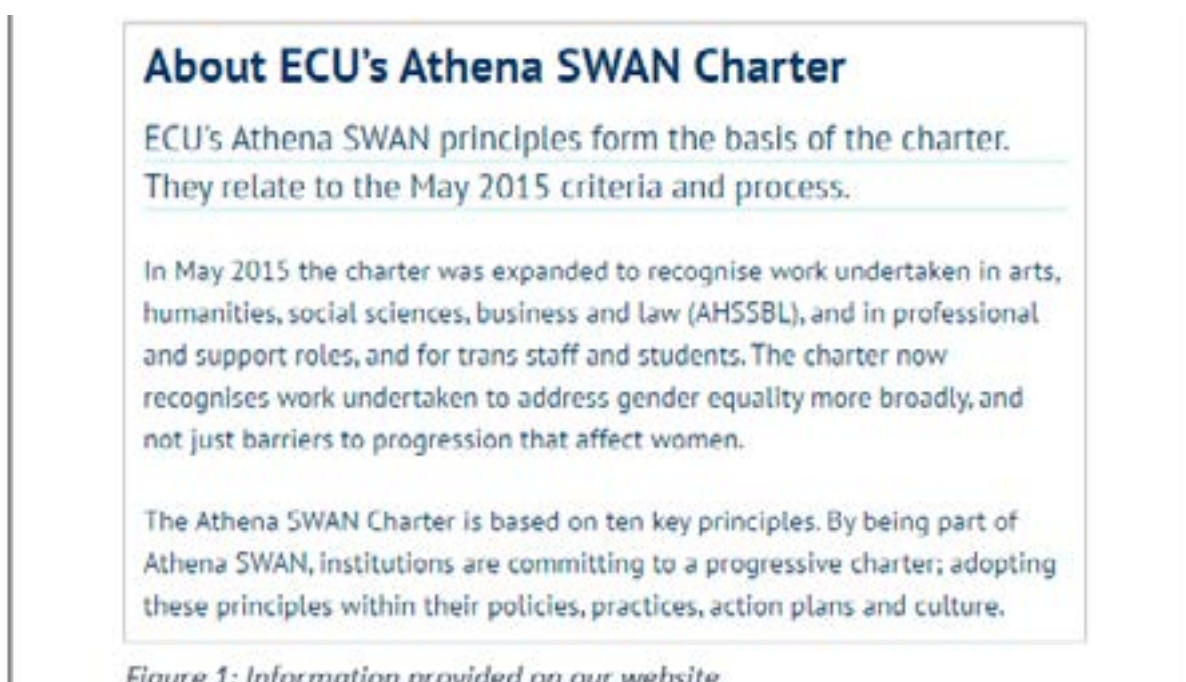


Figure 1: Information provided on our website

The text in Figure B is not legible at this size and is therefore not included in the word allocation.

Figure B



2 Standalone text in tables and graphs

The word count includes any standalone text or prose included in tables, graphs or footnotes. For example, all the text in the 'Course details' column of Table A would be included [125 words].

Table A

Course name	Course details
Online unconscious bias training	Based on the lower success rate of female shortlisted candidates in recent recruitment rounds, the department identified the need for recruitment panel members to be trained in unconscious bias awareness. Beginning in June 2016, an online training course was made available to all academics involved in recruitment. The training is mandatory for panel chairs, and monitored through the HR team.
Confidence and presentation skills	The issue of lack of confidence was raised in a focus group by a number of female academics and researchers, specifically in relation to the low representation of women on influential university committees. To address this, the department has engaged the university Training and Development Centre to deliver training sessions on Confidence and Presentation Skills at the next meeting of the Women in Science network.

3 Quotations

The word count excludes qualitative quotations under 50 words in length provided there are fewer than 25 quotations used across the application. Descriptions and analyses related to the quotation are included in the word allocation, as per the example below:

The department aims to be as supportive as possible, and encourages staff to work flexibly to accommodate their other commitments. In addition to holding all departmental meetings during core working hours (10:30-15:00), meetings are scheduled to avoid local school holidays. The 2016 staff survey revealed that 96% of women and 92% of men feel that the department supports their work-life balance, with some staff highlighting our good practice in supporting flexibility:

“The department has been really great in supporting me to work flexibly. I can adjust my starting time, or work at home if it fits in with my schedule. This is really helpful as I can get much more done while still being there for my family.”

[71 words]

4 Tables and graphs

The word count does not include tables and graphs, providing they do not include standalone prose. Using graphs and tables can be a good way of reducing the amount of text required to present information. For example, Example A and B (below) present the same information in different formats.

Example A

The department recognises that aspects of how it is organised and governed (and the more general departmental culture) are central components of its capacity to address issues of gender equality in the discipline and in the department more generally. Formal organisational elements and less formal cultural matters need to be considered. Changing organisational culture presents a challenge to all organisations. Senior management needs to provide leadership and as an organisation we commit to a wide range of small actions to create better processes that endure through institutionalisation and habitual practice. This understanding is reflected in the drafting of the gender equality action plan. The department recognises that change is needed to meet our gender equality objectives; this involves changes in everyday behaviours and attitudes (Actions 1.3, 1.7, 2.1, 2.2).

Survey respondents were asked to rate the culture of their work environment. The survey data suggests a reasonably high level of satisfaction but it should be noted that a minority are generally less satisfied. Recognising that some employees are not satisfied, the department cannot be complacent.

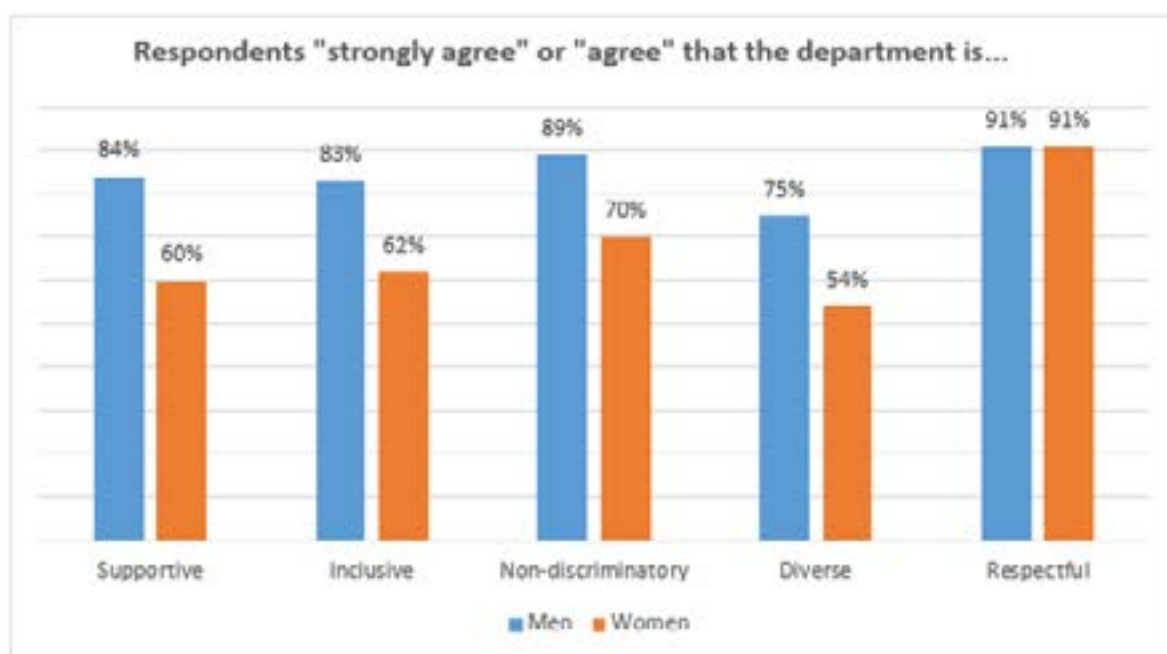
Men rated their work environment more favourably across all categories than women (except for 'respect' where the work environment was rated almost equally by both men and women at 91% agreement.) For example, 84% of men considered the work environment supportive, 83% said it was inclusive, 89% rated it as non-discriminatory and 75% rated it as diverse. This compares with female respondents where 62% agreed it was supportive, 60% agreed it was inclusive, 72% said non-discriminatory and 54% rated it as diverse.

[252 words]

Example B

Survey respondents were asked to rate the culture of their work environment. The survey data suggests a reasonably high level of satisfaction but it should be noted that a minority are generally less satisfied (see Figure 1.1).

Figure 1.1.



Men rated their work environment more favourably than women across all categories except for 'respect', where the work environment was rated almost equally by both men and women.

Recognising that some employees are not satisfied, the department cannot be complacent.

Action 1.3: Ensure images in departmental publicity material are diverse and gender-balanced

Action 1.7: Line managers to discuss career development support at appraisals

Action 2.1: SMT to include discussion of inclusive working environment in annual away day

Action 2.2: Monthly newsletter to highlight department's zero-tolerance of discrimination and harassment

[74 words]



Contact us

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