

Departmental Restructuring: Athena SWAN Bronze and Silver Interim Award Application

Please note: this guidance and the accompanying application form are subject to revision following pilot testing of the interim award process

Purpose

Universities sometimes undergo structural changes with new departments arising. Such changes may invalidate any Athena SWAN awards held by pre-existing units.

The Athena SWAN interim award application enables departments affected by restructures to retain an award, if consideration of gender equality (and gender equality initiatives) are apparent in the restructuring process.

The interim award recognises the department's efforts to ensure that gender equality is embedded in the new structure, and the continuation and appropriate modification of its actions to address the key issues identified by the self-assessment and restructuring processes.

Restructured departments may face challenges including difficulty in accessing historical data. Athena SWAN interim awards provide an opportunity to consolidate data and evidence in preparation for the department's next application for an Athena SWAN award.

Eligibility

In order to apply for an interim award, the majority of any previous constituent parts must be covered by Athena SWAN awards. Applicants may only apply for a Silver interim award if the majority of the previous constituent parts held Silver awards.

Example 1: a department is formed from the merger of three constituent units, two of which held Bronze Athena SWAN awards. The third unit did not hold an Athena SWAN award. The department is eligible to apply for a Bronze interim award.

Example 2: two departments are formed from the splitting of one previous unit which held a Silver Athena SWAN award. Both departments are eligible to apply for Silver interim awards.

Example 3: a department is formed from the merger of two constituent units, one of which held a Bronze Athena SWAN award. The second unit did not hold an Athena SWAN award. The department is not eligible to apply for an interim award.

Example 4: a department is formed from the merger of two constituent units, one of which held a Silver Athena SWAN award, and one of which held a Bronze Athena SWAN award. The department is eligible to apply for a Bronze interim award.

The Athena SWAN interim award application process focuses on changes to the policies, practices and structures which were previously evaluated and recognised through the peer-reviewed Athena SWAN assessment process. It may not be possible to confer an interim award where the scale of the restructuring is such that these previously evaluated policies, practices and structures are unrecognisable in the restructured department.

Application process

Departments may apply for an interim award up to 12 months following the restructure.

Interim award applications will be reviewed by a panel constituted by ECU. Notice of intention to submit must be received by the last working day of February and September respectively, and applications must be submitted no later than the last working day of April and November.

Validity

If awarded, interim awards will be valid for three years from the round of assessment. For the avoidance of doubt, the department will be an award-holding entity, not an 'interim award holder'.

Only one interim award application will be accepted from a department; it is expected that the department will follow the standard Athena SWAN application process for its next application.

The department should prepare to submit their next application no later than the last submission deadline before the award validity ends.

Example 1: a department applies successfully for an interim award in November 2018. Their award is valid until November 2021. The department should prepare to submit their next application no later than November 2021.

Potential outcomes

The review panel will assess whether the department has ensured:

- = that changes to the structure of the original award-holding unit(s) does/do not adversely impact on gender equality or gender equality initiatives in the department;

- = that action has been taken to ensure gender equality is embedded in the new structure; and
- = the continuation and appropriate modification of its actions to address the key issues identified by the self-assessment and restructuring processes.

Based on their assessment, the panel will recommend:

- = to confer the interim award; or
- = not to confer the award.

The level of the interim award will be determined by the previous awards held by the constituent units (see Eligibility above).

Word count

The overall word limit for applications are shown on page 3 of the application form.

There are no specific word limits for the individual sections and applicants may distribute words over each of the sections as appropriate (recommendations have been provided as a guide). At the end of every section, applicants must state how many words have been used in that section.

Please see the website for further details on what is included and excluded in word count.

Terminology

Where 'department' is used, this refers to the newly restructured entity applying for an interim award.

'Unit' refers to a previous entity which may have held an Athena SWAN award and now forms part or all of the department.

Completing the form

All data should be disaggregated by gender. Where this is not possible, an explanation must be provided.

Please note that consideration should be given to all staff in sections 1, 2, 3, 4.5, 4.6, 5, and 6. Sections 4.1 and 4.3 are specific to academic staff, and sections 4.2 and 4.4 are specific to professional and support staff.

Letter of endorsement from the head of department

The letter must include a statement that the information presented in the application (including qualitative and quantitative data) is an honest, accurate and a true representation of the institute.

The letter of endorsement should demonstrate the support, commitment and investment of the head of the department and the department as a whole.

The letter should highlight key challenges and priorities for the department, and reflect on how staff and students have been engaged throughout the restructuring process and will continue to be engaged during the lifetime of the award.

If the head is soon to be/has been recently succeeded, and the incoming head has been recruited, applicants should include an additional short statement from the incoming head. An additional 200 words is permitted for use in this statement.

Letters should be addressed to:

Athena SWAN Manager
Equality Challenge Unit
First floor, Westminster Tower
3 Albert Embankment
London SE1 7SP

Description of the changes arising from restructure

Please provide a clear description of the department pre- and post-restructure, including any relevant contextual information. This should include detailed description of the changes arising from the restructure – for example, redistribution of staff, change of management structure, change of location, changes to course delivery.

The current numbers of all staff and students in the department must be provided, with comment on how these levels were affected by the restructure. Staff data should be disaggregated by grade, contract function and contract type. Student data should be disaggregated by level of study.

The purpose of this section is to provide the panel with context about the department. Assume that panellists have no prior knowledge of the department: its size, research/teaching profile or previous Athena SWAN work. Panellists will not view any previous Athena SWAN applications (either successful or unsuccessful) and will assess the application as a standalone document.

Presenting the restructure visually will help the panel: consider including organograms of the pre- and post-restructure department.

The self-assessment process

Provide detail on your self-assessment team. The self-assessment team should be representative of the department (for example, including a range of grades and job roles, professional and technical support staff as well as academic staff, men and women). Provide information about how the team has changed/been affected as a result of the restructure.

Provide details of any equality impact assessments of the restructure and how the results of this exercise, as well as the principles of the Athena SWAN charter, were taken into account.

This section should outline the self-assessment team's plans for the future, including how the department is planning for its next Athena SWAN award application.

Supporting and advancing careers

General approach

In answering each question of the 'Supporting and advancing careers' section, focus on what changes have occurred to policies and practices in the area in question. Reflect on what the department has done to address and mitigate any gendered aspect of these changes.

Provide details on how gender equality has been considered in the restructure and how the department has ensured and will continue to ensure that changes do not adversely impact on gender equality.

Where no changes have occurred in a particular area and no gendered issues are identified during the restructure, it is not necessary to go into detail about good practice that you may have mentioned in your previous application.

Some questions require additional detail or consideration and these are explored further below.

Questions requiring additional consideration

4.5 (i) Comment on whether there were/are any staff on maternity, adoption, shared parental or other long-term leave during the course of the restructure process. Reflect on how these staff were consulted with, how changes were communicated to these staff and how they will be/have been supported on their return.

4.6 (i) Comment on how the culture of the department has been affected by the restructure. Consideration should be given to how the Athena SWAN Charter principles will continue to be embedded into the culture and operation of the department.

4.6 (ii) Comment on how changes to policies and procedures as a result of the restructure have been communicated to staff (and students, where relevant), and how the department will ensure that staff and students can locate and understand these policy changes.

Reflect on how the department has ensured that policies relating to equality, dignity at work, bullying, harassment, grievance and disciplinary processes were consistently applied and monitored during the restructure.

4.6 (iii) If redundancies were carried out or are planned, comment on how gender equality was/is being considered during this process.

Further information

This section can be used to provide additional relevant information which has not already been discussed. Use of this section is not compulsory.

Action plan

An updated action plan for the restructured department should be provided. The action plan should present prioritised actions to address the issues identified by the previous self-assessment process(es) and any issues identified during restructuring. Actions, and their measures of success, should be Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound (SMART).

See the Athena SWAN awards handbook for an example action plan template.

Embedding actions within the application

Panellists will look to see that appropriate actions are being put in place to address the issues and challenges identified throughout the application.

There is no need for the narrative to describe each action in full. However, it is very helpful for a brief description to be provided of key actions formulated to address the issues identified. These descriptions should be cross-referenced to the action plan. The action plan should form a comprehensive summary of all actions.

Action points referenced/quoted in the application are not included in the word count.