



The Athena SWAN Charter

The Athena SWAN Charter is a scheme which recognises excellence in Science, Engineering and Technology (SET) employment in higher education. The Charter was launched in June 2005.

The beliefs underpinning the Charter are:

- The advancement of science, engineering and technology (SET) is fundamental to quality of life across the globe.
- It is vitally important that women are adequately represented in what has traditionally been, and is still, a male-dominated area.
- Science cannot reach its full potential unless it can benefit from the talents of the whole population, and until women and men can benefit equally from the opportunities it affords.

The University of Southampton is one of 10 founding members of [The Royal Society Athena SWAN \(Scientific Women's Academic Network\) Charter](#). This Charter recognises excellence in science, engineering and technology (SET). We joined the Universities of Bristol, Cambridge, Heriot-Watt, Imperial College, Loughborough, Oxford, Plymouth, Queen's Belfast and University College London in previous Athena initiatives prior to the formal launch in 2005 and as founding members.

When the Athena SWAN Charter was launched in June 2005, all UK universities were invited to become Charter signatories. The University had an association with Athena through its participation in its university good practice survey in 2003 which led to the university becoming a founder member of the SWAN Charter in 2005. Our Vice-Chancellor, Professor Bill Wakeham, confirmed the University's acceptance of the six Charter Principles in a [letter of commitment](#) to become one of the founding members.

The six Charter Principles are as follows:

1. To address gender inequalities requires commitment and action from everyone, at all levels of the organisation.
2. To tackle the unequal representation of women in science requires changing cultures and attitudes across the organisation.
3. The high loss rate of women in science is an urgent concern which the organisation will address.
4. The use of short-term contracts has particularly negative consequences for the retention and progression of women in science, which the university recognises.
5. The transition from PhD into a sustainable academic career in science can be particularly difficult for women and requires active consideration by the organisation.
6. The absence of diversity at management and policy-making levels has broad implications which the organisation will examine.

In March 2006 the University of Southampton was awarded an Athena SWAN Charter Bronze Award to all departments in SET. In September 2009 this award was renewed for a further three years.

In receiving a bronze award Athena has recognised the University has developed a number of successful working practices to support female employees. These practices include flexible working hours, the introduction of child care vouchers, carer's information pack, staff networks and mentoring schemes.