AdvanceHE

Word count guidance

Guidance on word count for an Athena SWAN application

Contents

1. Word count guidance

Panellists may assess up to six applications and words limits help ensure this task is manageable and reasonable.

Maximum word limits are specified in the Athena SWAN application forms and awards handbook, and there are no margins for tolerance. **Please note, the expanded/ post-May institutional word count has increased by 500 words.** The new word count limits for **expanded/ post-May institutional awards** are:

+ Bronze: 10,500

+ Silver: 12,500

+ Gold: 13,500

Additional word allocations must be agreed in advance in correspondence with the Equality Charters team. **Emails confirming the granting of extra words must be included within the introduction of the submission.**

The word counts must be clearly indicated at the end of each main section of the application (letter of endorsement, description of the department, self-assessment process, supporting and advancing careers etc). Applicants will not have the opportunity to edit their application to bring it within the word limit if their application is found to exceed the allowance following submission. **Any application deemed by the review panel to have exceeded the word allowance will be rejected and will not be assessed.**

2. Requests to extend word limits

You may request to extend your word limit in the following circumstances:

2.1 Exceptional circumstances

Examples of circumstances which might qualify include a recent restructure, an institute having a particularly unique or unusual structure, or an institute being subject to particular constraints. Additional words should always be used to explain how the circumstances have been taken into account when considering, or have impacted on, Athena SWAN activities and the progression of gender equality.

2.2   Clinical and non-clinical staff

Departmental and research institute applicants with both non-clinical and 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 them to analyse and reflect on any differences between the two staff groups.

Where a university has both non-clinical and clinical staff, any additional word count is not automatically granted, but awarded on a case-by-case basis.

2.3   Faculty applications

Faculty applicants (i.e. an applying unit which is made up of component departments) 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 them to analyse and reflect on any departmental or discipline-specific differences, and to demonstrate how Athena SWAN principles (and impact for Silver applications) are embedded in each constituent unit.

3.   Apply for an extended word limit

Applicants who wish to extend their word limit on these grounds should contact Advance HE's Equality Charters Team for approval at least **two weeks** in advance of the submission deadline.

All requests are considered on a case-by-case basis. Please **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, extra words can be used across the submission document, but it should be noted in the word counts at the end of each section, where they have been used.

4. Word limits

The word limit includes:

+ all body text, including quotes from qualitative analysis, and words in screenshots

+ any standalone text or prose included in tables, graphs or footnotes

+ quotes, descriptions or analysis are included in the word count.

The word limit does not include:

+ details of your self-assessment team, providing you use a maximum of 20 words for each team member (excluding their name and job title). These can be displayed in a table

+ tables and graphs, providing they do not include standalone prose. Examples of text excluded from the word count include: titles, data labels, data points

+ for example, references to data sources such as Advance HE's statistical reports

+ the action plan

+ action points quoted within the body of the application and references to action points.

Example:
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]

4.1 Writing Crisp Prose

If you are struggling with the word limit, please refer to the following resource which provides examples of 'crisp prose'. This resource provides examples of how to reduce word count whilst ensuring appropriate analysis of data trends and issues.
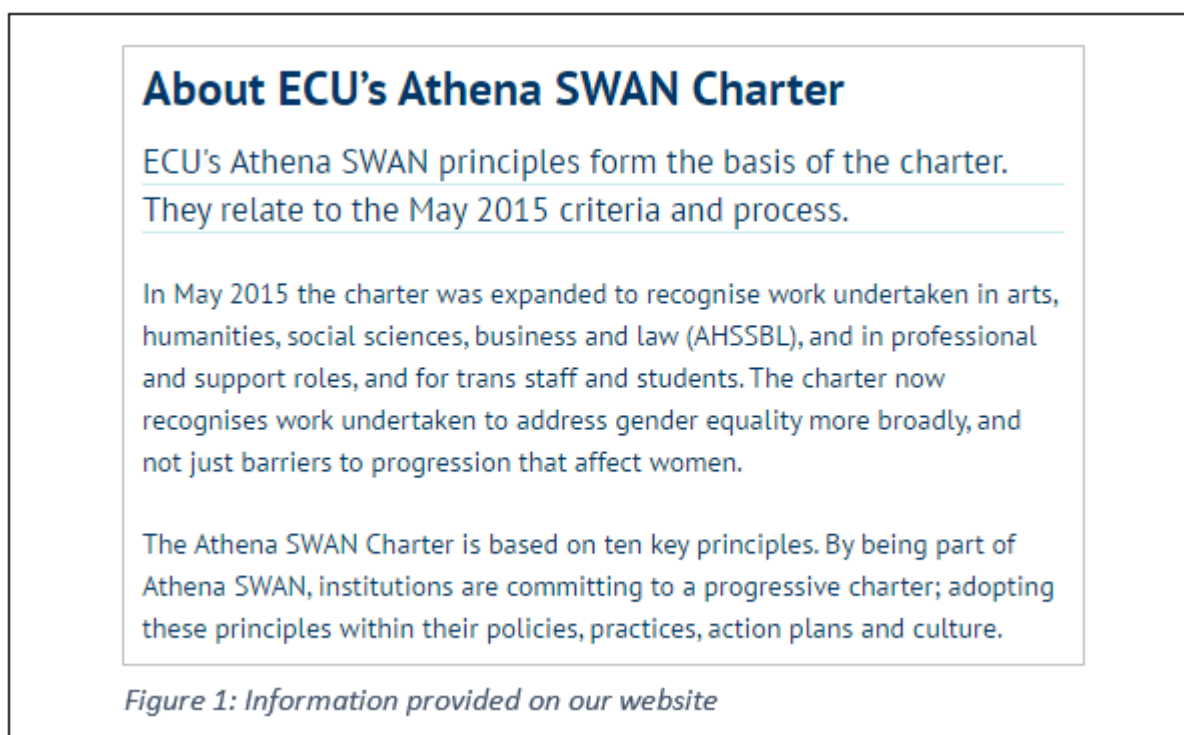
Writing Crisp prose

5. Additional information

The panel will only consider the information provided in the application form, and will not take into account any additional information.

+ appendices are not permitted

+ all relevant information should be included in the application form. Panellists cannot be expected to - and are therefore instructed not to - visit external websites

5.1 Use of screenshots

The word count includes legible words in screenshots. For example:

About ECU's Athena SWAN Charter

ECU's Athena SWAN principles form the basis of the charter. They relate to the May 2015 criteria and process.

In May 2015 the charter was expanded to recognise work undertaken in arts, humanities, social sciences, business and law (AHSSBL), and in professional and support roles, and 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.

The Athena SWAN Charter is based on ten key principles. By being part of Athena SWAN, institutions are committing to a progressive charter; adopting these principles within their policies, practices, action plans and culture.

Figure 1: Information provided on our website

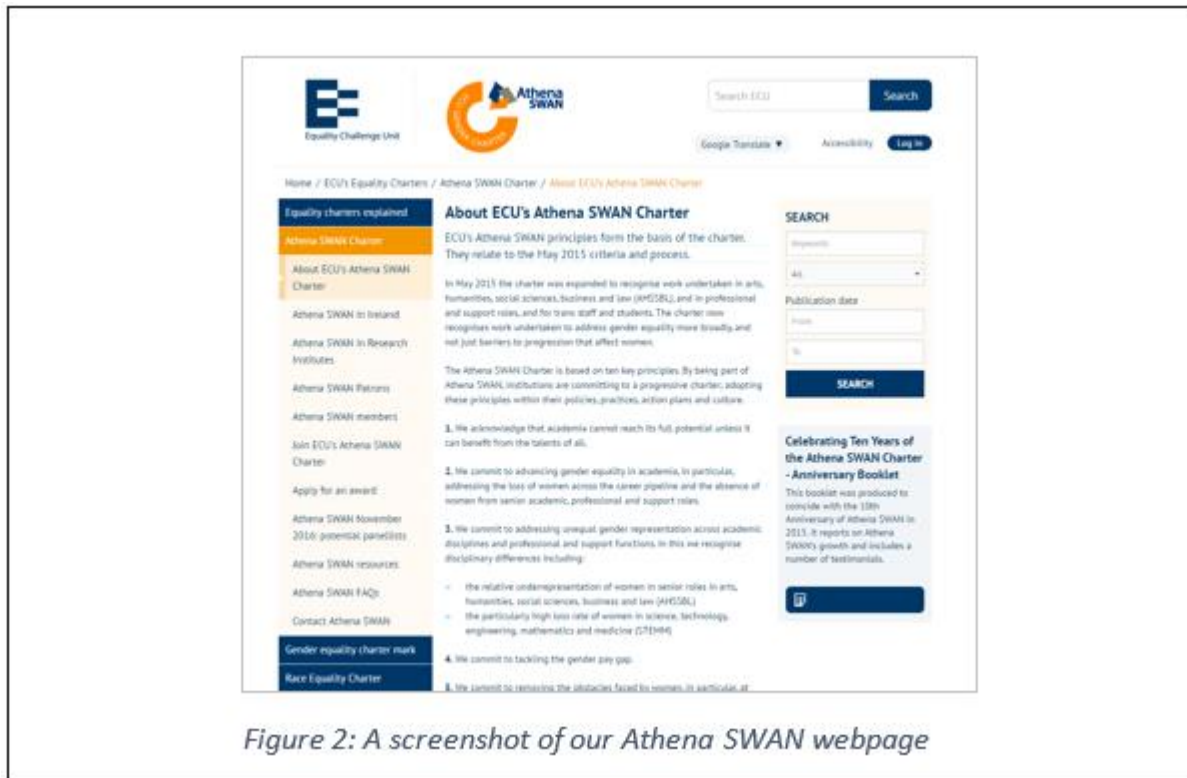The text in Figure 1 is legible and is included in the word count [111 words]. The figure legend is excluded.

Figure 2: A screenshot of our Athena SWAN webpage

The text in Figure 2 is not legible at this size, and is not counted towards the word allocation.

5.2 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 this table would be included [125 words].

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.

5.3 Use of quotes

The word count includes quotes, descriptions and analyses.

For example:

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."

[118 words]

5.4   Self-assessment team table

The word count does not include details of your self-assessment team, providing you use a maximum of 20 words for each team member (excluding their name and job title). These can be displayed in a table. For example:

Member	Job	SAT role	Experience
Jane Greene	Principle Investigator (employed 2005)	- Survey analysis - Focus group lead - Action writing	- Promoted (2010) - Group management - Industry employment
From 2005-2010, my PI actively encouraged my career development through: identifying relevant training; supporting me to 'act up' for 12 months; encouraging me to apply for more senior positions.			

[25 words]

Name	Role	Represents	Comments
Stuart Johnson	Laboratory Support Officer	Technicians	Stuart joined the department in 2012 from a previous role in the faculty. Stuart has one child and works flexibly to accommodate the school run.

[5 words]

5.5   Use of graphs and tables

The word count does not include action points quoted within the body of the application and references to action points, nor 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.

For example, the following information is presented in two different formats:

5.5.1   Format 1

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.
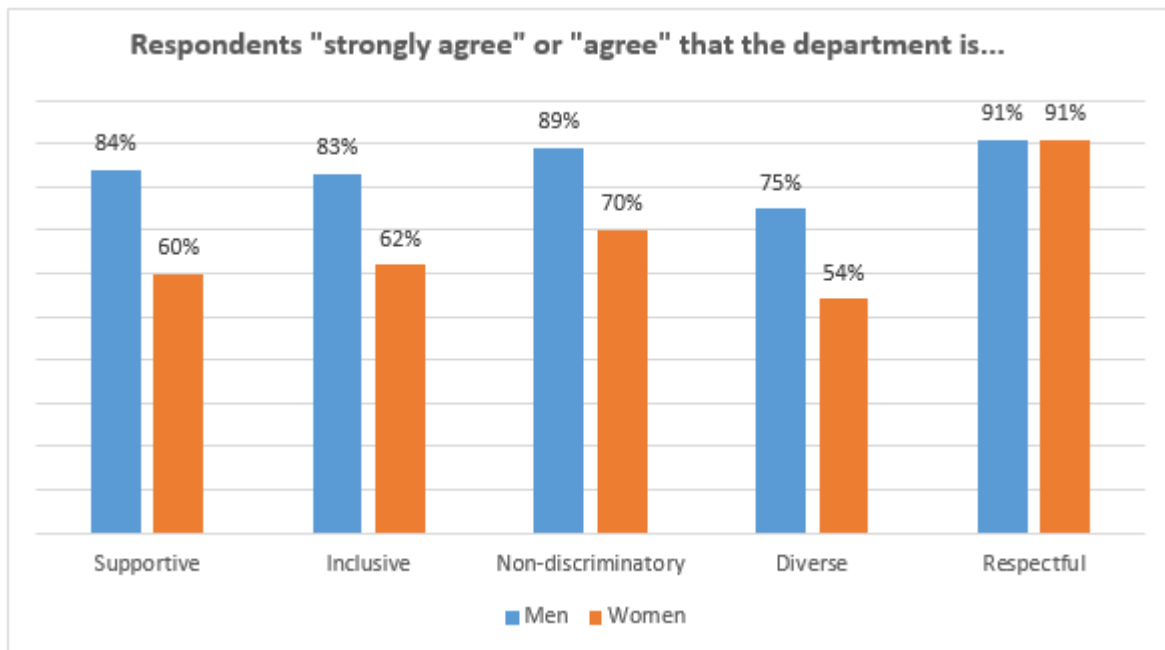
[252 words]

5.5.2   Format 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 (Figure 3).

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Respondents "strongly agree" or "agree" that the department is...

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).

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]

AdvanceHE

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