Athena SWAN Bronze and Silver Department award application

Name of institution: The University of York    Date of application: 30/4/12

Department: Electronics

Contact for application: Dr Janet Clegg

Email: janet.clegg@york.ac.uk    Telephone: 01904 323223

Departmental website address: http://www.elec.york.ac.uk/

Date of university Bronze and/or Silver SWAN award: 2006, 2009

Level of award applied for: Silver SWAN award

Athena SWAN Bronze and Silver Department awards recognise that in addition to university-wide policies the department is working to promote gender equality and to address challenges particular to the discipline.

Not all institutions use the term ‘department’ and there are many equivalent academic groupings with different names, sizes and compositions. The definition of a ‘department’ for SWAN purposes can be found on the Athena SWAN website. If in doubt, contact the Athena SWAN Charter Coordinator well in advance to check eligibility.

It is essential that the contact person for the application is based in the department.

At the end of each section state the number of words used.

1. Letter of endorsement from the Head of Department – maximum 500 words

An accompanying letter of endorsement from the Head of Department should explain how the SWAN action plan and activities in the department contribute to the overall department strategy and academic mission.

The letter is an opportunity for the Head of Department to confirm their support for the application and to endorse and commend any women and SET activities that have made a significant contribution to the achievement of the departmental mission.

Letter attached.
2. The self-assessment process – maximum 1000 words

Describe the Self-Assessment Process. This should include:

a) A description of the self assessment team: members’ roles (both within the department and as part of the team) and their experiences of work-life balance;

The Athena SWAN working group was formed in April 2008 and has been meeting regularly since this time. The group consists of the following members:-

Prof. David Howard - Head of Department
Dr Janet Clegg – Lecturer, Athena Swan Coordinator, Equal Opportunities Officer
Dr Stephen Smith – Deputy Head of Department
Prof Jon Timmis – Director of Research
Dr Julian Miller – Lecturer
Dr Roderigo de Lamare – Senior Lecturer
Dr Eugene Avrutin - Chair, Board of Studies
Dr Alice Courvoisier – Teaching Fellow
Ms Jude Brereton – PhD student (previously Research Fellow)
Mr Tim Clarke – Senior Lecturer
Mr Tony Ward – Senior Lecturer
Steven Johnson - Lecturer
Ms Yuan Zhang – PhD student
Ms Min Xu – PhD student
Ms Jenny Mikhail – MSc student
Ms Anna Perkins – Undergraduate student
Ms Erin Harkins – Undergraduate student

As Head of Department, Prof. David Howard has the authority to implement any local polices and initiatives that further the activities and charter principles of Athena SWAN. As a member of the University since 1990 he has gained a thorough knowledge of the university and has been centrally involved in the recruitment and promotion of staff. In this time he has also the experience of achieving a work/life balance that supports family life and a successful academic career.

Dr Janet Clegg has been employed by the department since January 1993; initially as a research fellow and subsequently appointed as lecturer in 2006. She has been coordinator of Athena SWAN for the department since 2006 and formed the departmental Athena SWAN working group in 2008. Janet’s role within the group has been to organise meetings, organise the initiatives that the group decides to put into place and lead in the female events that have been held within the department since 2008. Janet has much experience of work-life balance, her two children were both quite young when she started working in the department in 1993 until her youngest child went to university in 2002.
Dr Stephen Smith is senior lecturer and currently Deputy Head of Department and Director of the Graduate School which provides insight on the opportunities for women in postgraduate programmes. He joined the University in 1994 and has also raised a family during this time, providing valuable experience of achieving a healthy work/life balance.

Professor Jonathan Timmis is Professor of Natural Computation and holds a joint appointment between the Departments of Electronics and Computer Science. He is currently Director of Research in the Department of Electronics which allow for insight into the development of opportunities for women in research. He currently holds a Royal Society Wolfson Research Merit award, a senior research fellowship of the Royal Society. He joined York in 2005, is currently raising two children which provides him with an up to date insight into achieving an healthy work/life balance.

Dr Julian Miller is a lecturer. He joined the University in 2003. He has been a lecturer in Napier University in Edinburgh and the University of Birmingham. He was formerly the careers liaison and industrial placement coordinator for the department of Electronics at York.

Dr. Rodrigo C. de Lamare is a senior lecturer in the Department of Electronics and has supervised a number women students and researchers. He joined the University in 2006 and is married to Valeria who works at the Department of Biology.

Alice Courvoisier has been a teaching fellow within the department since September 2010. She does not currently have dependents but teaches on the foundation year programme which has a high proportion of mature students and is therefore sensitive to the work/life issues they often present.

Jude Brereton is currently studying towards a PhD within the department. Previously she had been employed as a research assistant from 2003 - 2010, during which time she worked on fixed-term part-time contracts which allowed her the flexibility to combine research work and looking after her two very young children.

Tony Ward is a Senior Lecturer in Electronics and Provost of Alcuin College at the University of York. This latter role holds responsibility for the welfare needs of male and female students resident at Alcuin College, many of whom are away from home for the first time. He is frequently called upon to advise on and resolve issues in every-day college life.

In recognition of the substantial need to encourage women to study Electronic Engineering and progress to senior academic posts at all UK institutions, our group decided that initial action plans would be aimed towards attracting more female students to the subject. Existing female students within the department were therefore invited to join the Athena SWAN working group so they could use their own experiences to develop initiatives that would be appealing to prospective female students.
Yuan Zhang has done much valuable work in this regard by arranging presentations at schools in the region delivered by herself and fellow students. As an overseas student for both her undergraduate and postgraduate studies, she has extensive experience of the cultural issues that impact on the work/life balance.

Anna Perkins and Erin Harkins are working on items to be included in a special area of the departmental web site aimed at women, including videos and blogs.

b) an account of the self assessment process: details of the self assessment team meetings, including any consultation with staff or individuals outside of the university, and how these have fed into the submission;

The Athena SWAN working group meets at least three times a year to develop, implement and review initiatives and policies to further the Athena SWAN programme within the Department of Electronics. Meetings are chaired by Dr Clegg and documented through formal minutes and an action plan which are made available to all members of the Department. To help inform policy and initiatives, visits have been made to the Athena SWAN awards workshop in London in 2010 which provided a good opportunity for discussions with other universities’ Athena SWAN representatives. A visit has also been made to the Bradford women’s group at Bradford University in 2009 which provided useful ideas on how other groups work. In addition to these activities, discussions have been held with other Athena SWAN representatives at university wide Athena SWAN meetings.

c) Plans for the future of the self assessment team, such as how often the team will continue to meet, any reporting mechanisms and in particular how the self assessment team intends to monitor implementation of the action plan.

Meeting once termly has been found to work very successfully and therefore the group will continue to meet at these intervals. Monitoring of the action plan is documented through minutes of the meetings and reviewed both internally within the working group but also by the Department Management Team, Research Committees and Board of Studies to which the Athena SWAN working group reports.

3. A picture of the department – maximum 2000 words

a) Provide a pen-picture of the department to set the context for the application, outlining in particular any significant and relevant features.

The University of York is one of the world’s top 100 Universities and the Department of Electronics was ranked amongst the top ten electronics departments in the UK in the 2012 Guardian League Table. The Department was founded in 1978 and currently has 41 members of academic staff, 77
research assistants and 35 support staff. The department has a long-standing reputation for high-quality degrees; its MEng and BEng courses are fully accredited by the IET and were ranked first for electronic engineering in the 2008 and 2009 National Student Survey. The department currently has 400 undergraduate students and 160 postgraduate students.

b) Provide data for the past three years (where possible with clearly labelled graphical illustrations) on the following with commentary on their significance and how they have affected action planning.

Student data

(i) **Numbers of males and females on access or foundation courses** – comment on the data and describe any initiatives taken to attract women to the courses.

![Figure 1: Numbers of electronics foundation course students](image)

The percentage of female students on foundation courses has risen steadily since 2008 to 10% in 2011.

Recent initiative - advertising in the local press has attracted mature women local to the University.

(ii) **Undergraduate male and female numbers** – full and part-time – comment on the female: male ratio compared with the national picture for the discipline. Describe any initiatives taken to address any imbalance and the impact to date. Comment upon any plans for the future.
Since 2008 there has been a steady rise in female undergraduate numbers. This trend in increasing students suggests that we are in line to achieve the national average figures this year, based on past data. Our undergraduate courses are not offered on a part time basis.

We are pleased with the progress made in this area, which has been aided by a number of activities implemented by the Athena Swan team. These included the introduction of scholarships for female students, talks by female students to sixth-form students. The department external website was also made more female friendly with profiles of female staff and students added to it. Female student guides are available on UCAS and open day.
We will continue with marketing activities specifically targeting female prospective students through school visits, an on-line blog by a current female undergraduate student and making sure that the departmental website continues to include female student/staff profiles.

(iii) Postgraduate male and female numbers completing taught courses – full and part-time – comment on the female: male ratio compared with the national picture for the discipline. Describe any initiatives taken to address any imbalance and the effect to date. Comment upon any plans for the future.

Figure 4: Numbers of students on taught postgraduate degrees

Figure 3: Female students (%) on taught postgraduate courses
The percentage of students on full-time postgraduate taught courses has been above national average since 2008. We believe this is a reflection of the quality of programmes on offer. (During this time period there has only been one part-time taught course post-graduate who was male).

Since 2009 there has been a sharp increase in female students on taught post-graduate courses which we believe stems from the high numbers of overseas students on some of our taught courses.

In order to maintain our high proportion of female students on taught post-grad courses in the future a number of new programmes are being considered. For example an MSc in Audio and Music Technology is planned, which is expected to attract a high proportion of female students.

(iv) Postgraduate male and female numbers on research degrees – full and part-time – comment on the female: male ratio compared with the national picture for the discipline. Describe any initiatives taken to address any imbalance and the effect to date. Comment upon any plans for the future.

![Figure 4: Numbers of students on research postgraduate degrees – full-time (Left panel) and part-time (right panel).](image)

![Figure 5: Female students (%) on postgraduate research degrees - full-time (left panel) and part-time (right panel).](image)
The proportion of female postgraduate students on full-time research degrees has been maintained at 14% since 2008, except for an unexplained dip in 2009, which has remained slightly below national average of 18%. We will try to address this by continuing to hold postgraduate student research workshops specifically aimed at encouraging current undergraduate students and taught post-graduate students to continue their studies on research degrees in the department.

The proportion of female students on part-time research degrees has been consistently higher than the national average since 2009. Indeed we are pleased that in 2011 half of those studying for part-time research degrees were female which is significantly higher than the national average. The option of studying part-time is helping to keep numbers of female postgraduate students strong, and this is an option we will continue to promote to female and male students alike.

(v) **Ratio of course applications to offers and acceptances by gender for undergraduate, postgraduate taught and postgraduate research degrees** – comment on the differences between male and female application and success rates and describe any initiatives taken to address any imbalance and their effect to date. Comment upon any plans for the future.

![Figure 6: Offers made as a percentage of applications received for undergraduate courses.](image)

We offer places to a high proportion of female applicants for undergraduate degrees; indeed we consistently offer places to a higher fraction of female
than male applicants e.g. last year to 72% of female applicants against 57% of male applicants.

Figure 7: Offers accepted as percentage of offers made for undergraduate courses.

There is now parity in the acceptance rate (as % of offers made) between male and female applicants. However, we are aware that our undergraduate female numbers remain low due to the small number of applications received from prospective female students; in general only 10% of applications to undergraduate courses are from female students.

Figure 8: Offers made as percentage of applications received for postgraduate courses.

The picture is similar for postgraduate course applications with, in general, a higher proportion of female applicants receiving offers than male applicants.
for example, in 2011/12 the offer rate for female applicants was 79% for taught post-graduate courses against 62% for male applicants.

![Figure 9: Offers accepted as percentage of offers made for postgraduate courses.](image)

Again, there is a lower percentage of overall applications to postgraduate courses by female students. For example, in 2011/12 only 25% of applications to postgraduate courses were from female applicants.

### Degree classification by gender

(vi) Degree classification by gender – comment on any differences in degree attainment between males and females and describe what actions are being taken to address any imbalance.

![Figure 10: Degree classification (% of total for each gender) for undergraduate courses.](image)
Although our numbers of female students are low, they do well at undergraduate level with the majority of female students achieving an upper second class degree or above. We will continue to make sure that female students feel supported in the department through social events for female staff and students, a female support officer in place and through our strong links with other science departments across campus.

Staff data

(vii) **Female:male ratio of academic staff and research staff** – researcher, lecturer, senior lecturer, reader, professor (or equivalent). comment on any differences in numbers between males and females and say what action is being taken to address any underrepresentation at particular grades/levels

Figure 11: Degree classification (% of total for each gender) for undergraduate courses since 2008.

Figure 12: Academic and research staff at each level as a % of total for each gender.
Since its inception in 1978 the department has traditionally employed 100% male academic staff, until 2006 when the first female academic member of staff was recruited. Between 2006-2008 the University implemented a freeze on new recruitment in the department. However, since 2010 two new female members of academic staff have been recruited to teach on the foundation level course.

Female staff are not represented at Grade 8 and professorial level.

The department monitors and supports career progression for all staff through annual appraisal, regular meetings with Head of Department. Each member of research staff has a principal investigator who can provide advice and support on future funding and career development.

A mentoring scheme is being developed within the department specifically for female post-graduates, post-doctoral researchers and academic staff members.

(viii) **Turnover by grade and gender** – comment on any differences between men and women in turnover and say what is being done to address this. Where the number of staff leaving is small, comment on the reasons why particular individuals left.

![Figure 12: Turnover (number of leavers) by gender and grade for all staff](chart)

Supporting and advancing women’s careers – maximum 5000 words
4. Key career transition points

a) Provide data for the past three years (where possible with clearly labelled graphical illustrations) on the following with commentary on their significance and how they have affected action planning.

(i) **Job application and success rates by gender and grade** – comment on any differences in recruitment between men and women at any level and say what action is being taken to address this.

![Figure 13: Numbers of applications for research and teaching posts by gender.](image)

![Figure 14: Success rate of job applicants by gender.](image)

Numbers of females applying for research and teaching jobs within the department has risen since 2008. The success rate of female applicants is just over 8% for 2009 and 2010 (although no females were appointed in
In the same time period the male success rate seems to drop sharply – this is due to a very large number of applications for two grade 7 posts in 2011 (in the end only 1 post was filled).

Although the success rates for female and male applicants have been similar (except 2011) the department will concentrate on increasing the proportion of female applicants for posts by making sure that job adverts highlight flexible working policies in place and ensuring that a female staff member sits on interview panels.

(ii) **Applications for promotion and success rates by gender and grade** – comment on whether these differ for men and women and if they do explain what action may be taken. Where the number of women is small applicants may comment on specific examples of where women have been through the promotion process. Explain how potential candidates are identified.

Since 2008 no female academic members of staff have applied for promotion. There have been 7 applications to Grade 8 and above from male members of staff with a success rate of 40%.

b) For each of the areas below, explain what the key issues are in the department, what steps have been taken to address any imbalances, what success/impact has been achieved so far and what additional steps may be needed.

(i) **Recruitment of staff** – comment on how the department’s recruitment processes ensure that female candidates are attracted to apply, and how the department ensures its short listing, selection processes and criteria comply with the university’s equal opportunities policies

The department describes itself as family friendly when advertising new vacancies. It is also made clear in the job advert that the department offers flexible working.

(ii) **Support for staff at key career transition points** – having identified key areas of attrition of female staff in the department, comment on any interventions, programmes and activities that support women at the crucial stages, such as personal development training, opportunities for networking, mentoring programmes and leadership training. Identify which have been found to work best at the different career stages.

The Head of Department has regular meetings with all members of academic staff to discuss their work loads and future plans. Additionally, each member of academic staff belongs to a research group within the department and the heads of these groups encourage its members to progress in their research by regular meetings to discuss future research plans.
Every member of research staff has a principal investigator who endeavors to provide further funding and offers career development support at key transition points in the researcher’s career.

Special postgraduate workshops are arranged which specifically target issues which postgraduate students may benefit from (including a special course planned to discuss mixing family and work life). All researchers are expected to complete 60 hours teaching experience annually to improve their prospects to stay in academia.

The department is developing a mentoring network for postgraduate, postdoctorate researchers and academic staff. The mentoring network aims to provide information and support which will include information of particular use to female staff.

5. Career development

a) For each of the areas below, explain what the key issues are in the department, what steps have been taken to address any imbalances, what success/impact has been achieved so far and what additional steps may be needed.

(i) **Promotion and career development** – comment on the appraisal and career development process, and promotion criteria and whether these take into consideration responsibilities for teaching, research, administration, pastoral work and outreach work; is quality of work emphasised over quantity of work?

The department ensures that all members of staff complete an Annual Performance Review which includes a discussion with a senior member of staff on career development and possible promotion. The department also requests members of staff to complete an Appraisal at the Point of Delivery every year.

All staff are encouraged to attend professional development training workshops regularly.

Researchers are requested to gain teaching experience in the department to increase their chances of a future more permanent post.

Part time work is not considered to be a barrier to promotion for those members of staff who choose to work part time.

The department offers prizes to both students and staff for outstanding performance in their work.

The Athena Swan group has decided on the following action plans to improve promotion and career development within the department:

1. To actively encourage female applicants for posts
2. To ensure that every job advert includes information about how the department supports people with family commitments
3. To provide information and support on career breaks
4. To develop some mentoring network for all staff within the department
(ii) **Induction and training** – describe the support provided to new staff at all levels, as well as details of any gender equality training. To what extent are good employment practices in the institution, such as opportunities for networking, the flexible working policy, and professional and personal development opportunities promoted to staff from the outset?

Induction training is available for all new members of academic staff and they are allocated to a mentor who will advise them on their role. There is a teaching qualification (PGYCAP) for those with little teaching experience, and those members of staff who do the PGYCAP course have their workload reduced to take this into account.

(iii) **Support for female students** – describe the support (formal and informal) provided for female students to enable them to make the transition to a sustainable academic career, particularly from postgraduate to researcher, such as mentoring, seminars and pastoral support and the right to request a female personal tutor. Comment on whether these activities are run by female staff and how this work is formally recognised by the department.

Annual events are have been held where female alumni visit the department to talk to current students about their own experiences in building a career, and to give advice and encouragements to current students. Good feedback was received from students who attended these events, and future sessions are planned.

At least twice yearly social gatherings are held where female students and staff get together informally.

The department has given out three £1000 female scholarships each year for the last three years to new female students and these are given out based on the student’s achievements prior to entering the department. These scholarships were advertised on the department’s web pages to encourage female applicants.

The department has a female support officer who offers support and advice to students who may encounter problems.

All students are allocated a member of staff as their personal supervisor throughout their time within the department. Their supervisor is available to support and advise them on any issues (personal or academic) which may be a problem for them at the time. The supervisor’s role also includes being vigilant towards a student who may be experiencing problems but not requesting help and support. If a student is absent frequently from lectures and workshops, they are requested to have an interview with their supervisor before any misconduct procedure is carried out.
The department has recently videoed lectures for which students with family commitments cannot attend.

Workshops have been held where a female PhD student talks to undergraduate students about her experience doing a PhD.

6. Organisation and culture

   a) Provide data for the past three years (where possible with clearly labelled graphical illustrations) on the following with commentary on their significance and how they have affected action planning.

   (i) **Male and female representation on committees** – provide a breakdown by committee and explain any differences between male and female representation. Explain how potential members are identified.

   Board of Studies - 11 female, 69 male  
   Board of Examiners- 5 female, 44 male  
   Staff Student Liaison Committee- 8 female, 22 male  
   Mini Board of Studies - 3 female, 5 male  
   Research Committee- 1 female, 14 male  
   Graduate Schools Committee- 1 female, 5 male  
   Research Student Studies Committee- 1 female, 7 male  
   Mitigating Circumstances Committee – 3 female, 6 male  
   Course Review - 3 female, 18 male  
   Teaching Committee - 3 female, 16 male  
   Annual Programme Review - 4 female, 17 male  
   Department Management Team- 3 female, 7 male  
   Industrial Advisory Committee- 1 female, 16 male  
   Laboratory Committee- 1 female, 10 male  
   Marketing Committee- 5 female, 4 male  
   Health & Safety Committee- 3 female, 11 male

   Although most committees are mainly male, the proportion of male/female members above are similar to the general trend in electrical engineering departments of 10% female to 90% male. It is the Head of Department’s responsibility to allocate committee members.
(ii) **Female:male ratio of academic and research staff on fixed-term contracts and open-ended (permanent) contracts** – comment on any differences between male and female staff representation on fixed-term contracts and say what is being done to address them.

![Figure 15 Percentages of male and female academic and research staff on Fixed Term (FTC) and Open contracts.](image)

b) For each of the areas below, explain what the key issues are in the department, what steps have been taken to address any imbalances, what success/impact has been achieved so far and what additional steps may be needed.

(i) **Representation on decision-making committees** – comment on evidence of gender equality in the mechanism for selecting representatives. What evidence is there that women are encouraged to sit on a range of influential committees inside and outside the department? How is the issue of ‘committee overload’ addressed where there are small numbers of female staff?

The Head of Department is responsible for selecting representatives on decision-making committees. All committees have at least one female and the proportion of female to male is approximately the actual ratio of female staff to male staff. This ensures that the few female staff are not ‘committee overloaded’.

(ii) **Workload model** – describe the systems in place to ensure that workload allocations, including pastoral and administrative responsibilities (including the responsibility for work on women and science) are taken into account at appraisal and in promotion criteria. Comment on the rotation of responsibilities e.g. responsibilities with a
heavy workload and those that are seen as good for an individual’s career.

The department has a transparent management system in place and management information is available to all members of staff. Teaching loads are published on the department’s website and minutes of meetings are available to all staff. It is felt that an open and transparent management creates a better working environment for all members of staff. The department has recently improved the software which calculates workloads, in order to include hours spent marking the increasing number of coursework due to the new modular scheme.

(iii) **Timing of departmental meetings and social gatherings** – provide evidence of consideration for those with family responsibilities, for example what the department considers to be core hours and whether there is a more flexible system in place.

All meetings within the department are arranged wherever possible between the hours of 9.15am and 4.15pm so that members of staff who have family commitments are able to attend. The department holds social events which are as much as possible arranged such that those members of staff who have family commitments are able to join in. This ensures that female members of staff do not feel excluded from a very male-dominated working environment.

(iv) **Culture** – demonstrate how the department is female-friendly and inclusive. ‘Culture’ refers to the language, behaviours and other informal interactions that characterise the atmosphere of the department, and includes all staff and students.

The HOD is committed to gender equality and diversity within the department and this commitment is visible to all staff. This creates an example of good culture from the top down. The department is aware that the values and behaviours of all staff are vital in creating a good culture within the department. All members of staff within the department are encouraged to produce quality of work rather than quantity of work. The department is aware that female role models are important to inspire other females. The profiles of two of our female members of staff are highlighted on the University’s Athena Swan website. The Athena Swan group has identified that gender equality training, networking and mentoring within the department may help in retaining and acquiring new members of female staff.

Sometimes promotion procedures can ignore skills acquired during a career break and yet these skills can be very valuable. The department places value on these experiences when considering applications for posts or promotion in the department.

(v) **Outreach activities** – comment on the level of participation by female and male staff in outreach activities with schools and colleges and
other centres. Describe who the programmes are aimed at, and how this activity is formally recognised as part of the workload model and in appraisal and promotion processes.

Members of the Athena Swan group have discussed the serious lack of females in engineering nationwide. It was decided that the best initial action plan was to attract more female undergraduate students into engineering. We have therefore been sending some of our current female students out to schools to talk about the department and women in engineering.

It is evident that a higher proportion of women apply for taught Masters programmes in the department are from overseas. This cultural difference is embraced and is used as a positive exemplar for attracting women graduate students from the UK. Annual visits are made to China and India for the purpose of recruiting students and marketing material is designed to enhance the interest from women applicants.

7. Flexibility and managing career breaks

a) Provide data for the past three years (where possible with clearly labelled graphical illustrations) on the following with commentary on their significance and how they have affected action planning.

(i) **Maternity return rate** – comment on whether maternity return rate in the department has improved or deteriorated and any plans for further improvement. If the department is unable to provide a maternity return rate, please explain why.

Since 2008 there have been no requests for maternity leave.

(ii) **Paternity, adoption and parental leave uptake** – comment on the uptake of paternity leave by grade and parental and adoption leave by gender and grade. Has this improved or deteriorated and what plans are there to improve further.

Since 2008 four periods of paternity have been taken by members of staff.

(iii) **Numbers of applications and success rates for flexible working by gender and grade** – comment on any disparities. Where the number of women in the department is small applicants may wish to comment on specific examples.

Flexitime working was introduced university-wide in 2006 at all staff levels. The department recognizes that a flexible approach to working is vitally important in the recruitment and retention of women. The department offers flexible working hours to all staff and part time work is available on request. If
a member of staff requests part time work, the department does not look upon this as a barrier to promotion.

b) For each of the areas below, explain what the key issues are in the department, what steps have been taken to address any imbalances, what success/impact has been achieved so far and what additional steps may be needed.

(i) **Flexible working** – comment on the numbers of staff working flexibly and their grades and gender, whether there is a formal or informal system, the support and training provided for managers in promoting and managing flexible working arrangements, and how the department raises awareness of the options available.

All members of staff work flexitime.

(ii) **Cover for maternity and adoption leave and support on return** – explain what the department does, beyond the university maternity policy package, to support female staff before they go on maternity leave, arrangements for covering work during absence, and to help them achieve a suitable work-life balance on their return.

The department aims to provide a supportive environment for staff who are undertaking caring responsibilities alongside their job.

8. Any other comments – maximum 500 words

Please comment here on any other elements which are relevant to the application, e.g. other SET-specific initiatives of special interest that have not been covered in the previous sections. Include any other relevant data (e.g. results from staff surveys), provide a commentary on it and indicate how it is planned to address any gender disparities identified.

Since the general trend over all UK Electronic Engineering is a serious lack of women from undergraduate level to senior academic posts, our group decided that a lot of our initial action plans would be aimed towards attracting more female students to the subject. We have therefore had actions in place for the last three years which hopefully have addressed this issue a little; see Figures 1-3 which indicate a rise in female students over the last three years. The actions which have been running to create this increase have been as follows:-

- We have sent female students out to schools to deliver presentations on studying electronics to school children
- We have had at least two female social gatherings each year to which all female students and staff were invited.
• We have had three £1000 female scholarships per year and these were advertised on our web pages

• The department has introduced a new BSc degree which is felt will attract female applicants.

• The department’s website has been made more attractive to women. More female students’ profiles have been added and more photographs of female students.

• The department plans to further improve its web pages by creating a special web area “Women in Engineering” where information, links, videos and blogs will be available.

• The department has introduced a new project available to final year students which researches into how best to attract more female students and staff to an engineering career. The results of this project will be examined by the Athena Swan group.

• The department has had yearly events where female alumni visit and talk to current students.

The Athena Swan group has carried out research on the opinion of our female members of the department into the main reasons that prevent women from staying in an engineering career. This involved one to one discussions and responses by email. The main factors these women expressed as reasons for not continuing in a career in engineering were:-

• The lack of a social system which supports women combining family commitments with their career.
• The lack of suitable part time engineering jobs within easy reach of the family home.
• The lack of initiatives to encourage young women onto engineering courses (which have been so male-dominated).
• There are very few female role models in engineering.
• Working in industry might not be flexible enough for women with children.
• Some women felt that there was still a general attitude that women (with working husbands) are simply earning extra money for the family and are not seriously committed to a career.
• Concern that having a gap in their career to start a family would mean them losing touch with their research area and that it would be difficult on return to become familiar again with current work in that area.
9. Action plan

Provide an action plan as an appendix. An action plan template is available on the Athena SWAN website.

The Action Plan should be a table or a spreadsheet comprising actions to address the priorities identified by the analysis of relevant data presented in this application, success/outcome measures, the post holder responsible for each action and a timeline for completion. The Plan should cover current initiatives and your aspirations for the next three years.

The action plan does not need to cover all areas at Bronze; however the expectation is that the department will have the organisational structure to move forward, including collecting the necessary data.

For Silver Department awards only

10. Case study: impacting on individuals – maximum 1000 words

Describe how the department’s SWAN activities have benefitted two individuals working in the department. One of these case studies should be a member of the self assessment team, the other someone else in the department. More information on case studies is available in the guidance.

Janet Clegg started working within the department as a researcher in January 1993. Janet was a single parent with two young children, but the flexitime work available within the department allowed Janet to easily combine her family and work commitments. Between 1993 and 2006 Janet’s PI managed to keep Janet funded on various research projects (apart from two one year periods which Janet spent as researcher in the mathematics department). Her PI from electronics on both occasions approached Janet to return when funding was available again in electronics. In 2000 Janet’s father had become seriously ill. The department agreed to her taking one month unpaid leave in order to help the family through the difficulties. The department also agreed for Janet to return to work part-time in order that she was able to run her father’s business while he was ill. When her father had recovered from his illness the department allowed her to return to full time work. In 2006 Janet applied for a post as lecturer in the electronics department and was successful in obtaining the post. She was the first female academic in the department which had been 100% male.

Helen Sharples started working in the department in October 2006. She was employed on a part-time contract (0.3FTE) to teach students in the foundation year.

Helen had taken a career break in 1998 to have children. Although she had taken on some work in the intervening years, such as exam marking and supply teaching, this was the first permanent post she had taken on as a
parent. Having no extended family in the area that could help out should any illness or problems arise with the children, it was important to know that the department would be supportive. From the outset, it was clear that this would be the case as it was agreed that she could delay the start of her teaching day to begin lectures at 9.30am so she could take her children to school, so avoiding having to use pre-school childcare. She was also able to organise her teaching load so she could spend time with her young family during half term holidays.

Fortunately, during her time working in the department, Helen has only had to take one day’s leave to look after her son when he was ill. However, when this happened she was not made to feel awkward and queries about her entitlement to take leave were quickly clarified. The current Head of Department is proactive about helping colleagues to support their family and recently allowed Helen to rearrange a lecture so she could take her son to his clarinet exam.

As Helen’s children have got older, she has been encouraged to extend her skills and to consider her career development in the department. This has been instigated by very constructive performance management reviews led by her line manager and followed up by the Head of Department. Helen took on the role of academic supervisor in 2011 and has increased her contract hours in line with this.