

Athena Swan Ireland Report

1 May 2020 – 30 April 2022

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Engagement with Athena Swan Ireland

This period has seen a continued rise in engagement with Athena Swan Ireland, at both institutional and departmental levels.

1. Overall institutional engagement with Athena Swan Ireland

Advance HE staff are currently supporting 95% (all but one) of eligible institutions to engage with the charter (see Table 1 for details).¹

Table 1: Irish HEI engagement with Athena Swan Ireland (as of April 2022)

Institution	Status
Atlantic Technological University	Planning application
Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology	Bronze
Institute of Technology, Sligo	Bronze
Letterkenny Institute of Technology	Bronze
Carlow College, St Patrick's	Bronze
Dublin City University	Bronze, renewed
Dublin Institute of Advanced Studies	Committed to updated principles
Dún Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology	Re-application planned for April 2022 round
Dundalk Institute of Technology	Bronze
Mary Immaculate College	Bronze
Maynooth University	Bronze
Munster Technological University	Legacy Award
Cork Institute of Technology	Bronze
Institute of Technology, Tralee	Now part of legacy award
National College of Ireland	Bronze
National College of Art and Design	Application planned for April 2022 round
National University of Ireland, Galway	Bronze, renewed
RCSI University of Medicine and Health Science	Bronze
South East Technological University (to be established)	Planning application
Institute of Technology, Carlow	Bronze
Waterford Institute of Technology	Applied
St Angela's College, Sligo	Have observed assessment process
St Patrick's College, Maynooth	-

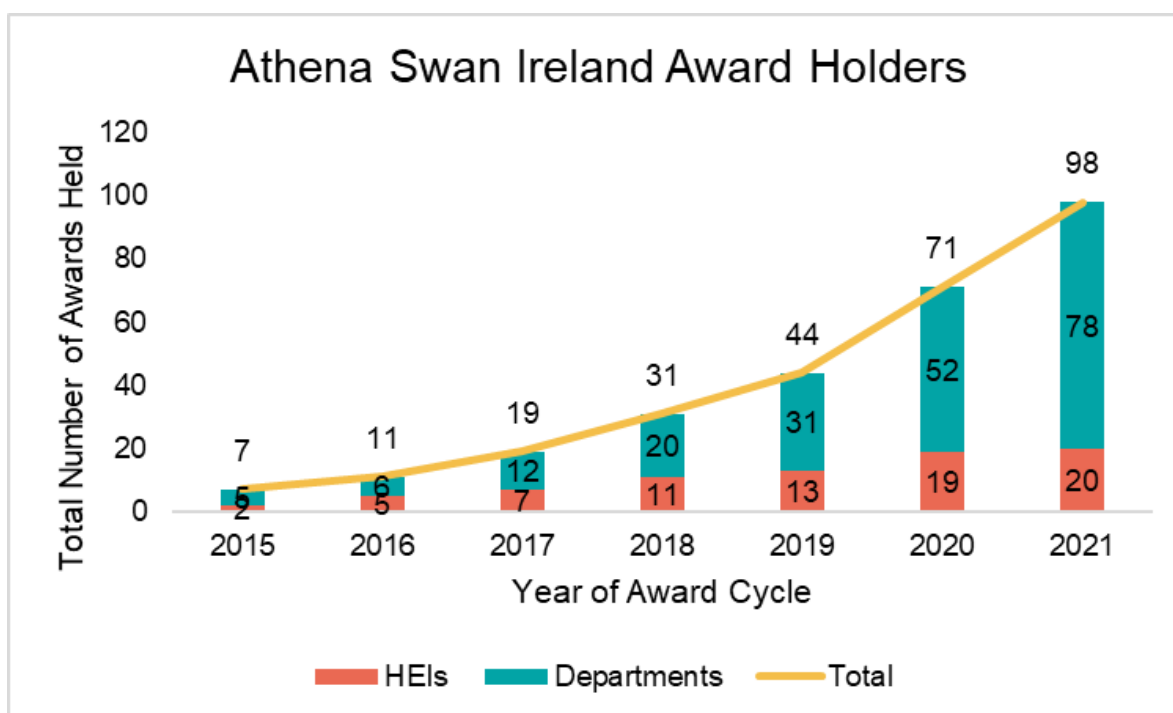
¹ As per the HEA-Advance HE agreement, institutions eligible to apply for Athena SWAN are HEIs on the "free fees" list.

Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest	Submitted legacy application
Athlone Institute of Technology	Bronze
Limerick Institute of Technology	Bronze
Trinity College Dublin	Bronze, renewed
TU Dublin	Bronze
University College Cork	Bronze, renewed
University College Dublin	Bronze, renewed
University of Limerick	Bronze, renewed

2. Current award holders across institutions and departments

Ninety-eight awards are held by institutions and departments (20 institutions, 78 academic departments²). For a full list of award holders, see the Appendix. Figure 1 demonstrates the growth in award holders since 2015, and includes those conferred up to the November 2021 round.

Figure 1. Athena Swan Ireland Award Holders



Institutional awards have nearly doubled since the previous reporting period. In addition to Bronze renewals from six Universities, new awards have been conferred to Institutes of Technology (6), Technological Universities (1, not including legacy awards and award transfers), and Colleges (2). Significant progress has also been made at departmental level. There are now 78 department awards held in the sector, compared to 26 department awards held at the end of the previous reporting period,

² Academic departments refer to any academic sub-unit that sits below institutional level, including faculties, colleges, schools and departments.

reflecting a 200% increase. Progress by institution can be seen in Table 2, showing impressive activity over the last two years. Department awards are now held by nine institutions (an increase from 6 in the previous reporting period), with Dublin City University, RCSI University of Medicine and Health Sciences and IT Carlow achieving department awards for the first time.

Table 2. Department awards held by institutions

Institution	First institutional award date	Total departmental awards (department awards held in previous reporting period)
University College Dublin	2017	16 (7)
Trinity College Dublin	2015	15 (3)
University of Limerick	2015	14 (8)
University College Cork	2016	11 (5)
NUI Galway	2018	9 (1)
Maynooth University	2018	6 (2)
RCSI	2018	3
IT Carlow	2018	2
Dublin City University	2016	2

It should be noted that the University of Limerick holds the first Silver award, which was conferred to the Department of Physics in the April 2021 round.

3. Applications submitted by institutions and departments

The increase in awards holders during the period is underpinned by an increase in applications submitted for peer-review via the Athena Swan Ireland panel process.

Institutional and departmental applications were managed across five assessment cycles³:

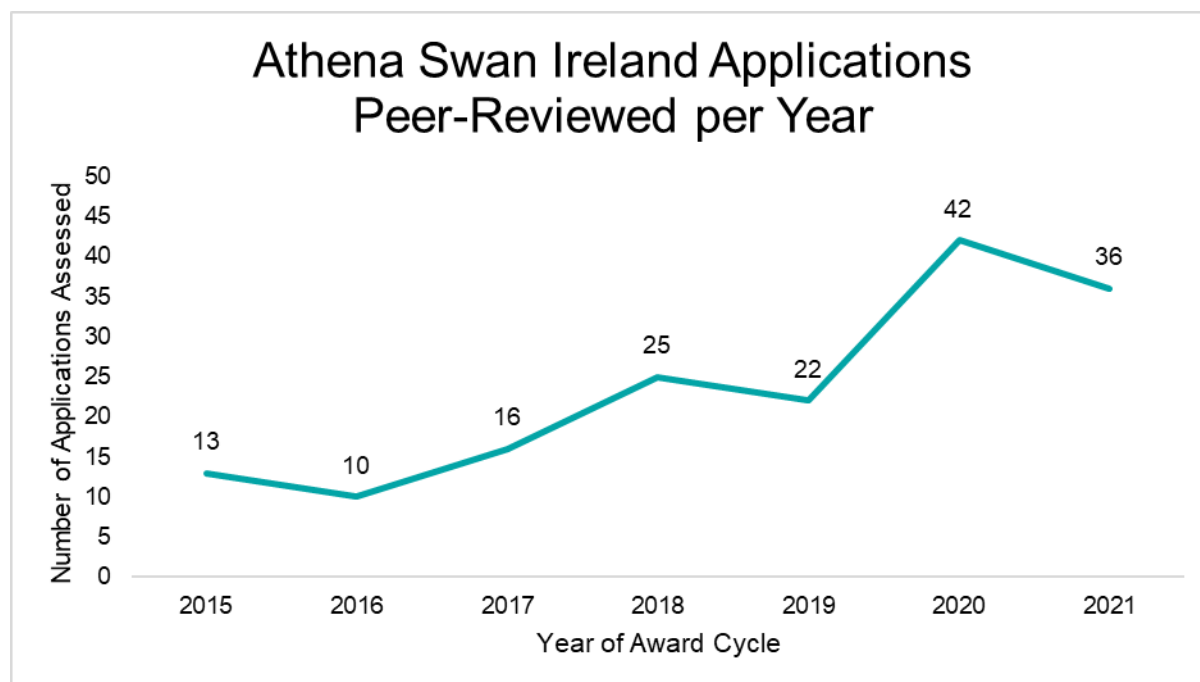
- November 2019 (this award round was split across the reporting periods)
- April 2020
- November 2020
- April 2021
- November 2021

Ninety-one applications were assessed in these award rounds, showing a strong upward trend seen in Figure 2. Further increases are expected, as applicants are due to submit renewal and upgrade submissions in the coming years. Additionally, the new charter framework will continue to support new applications from institutions, academic departments, as well as a new pathway for award for professional units.

³ Panels were moved online during the Covid-19 pandemic, and took place over Zoom. These will continue to take place online.

For more information on the new framework, see **4. Key materials and resources developed.**

Figure 2: Athena Swan Ireland Application Peer-Reviewed per Year



The success rate of applications has increased over time. During the pilot period, the overall success rate was 48%, whereas the overall success rate for 2017-2019 was 58%. Since the November 2019 round, the success rate has increased to 85%.⁴

The introduction of a Revisions Request process in the November 2020 round has contributed to an increase in applicant success rates. The Revisions Request process allows applicants to undertake specified revisions within 12 weeks of notification, rather than re-submitting a new application in a future award round. It should be noted that between 30% and 46% of applicants have undertaken revisions requests since its introduction, depending on award round.

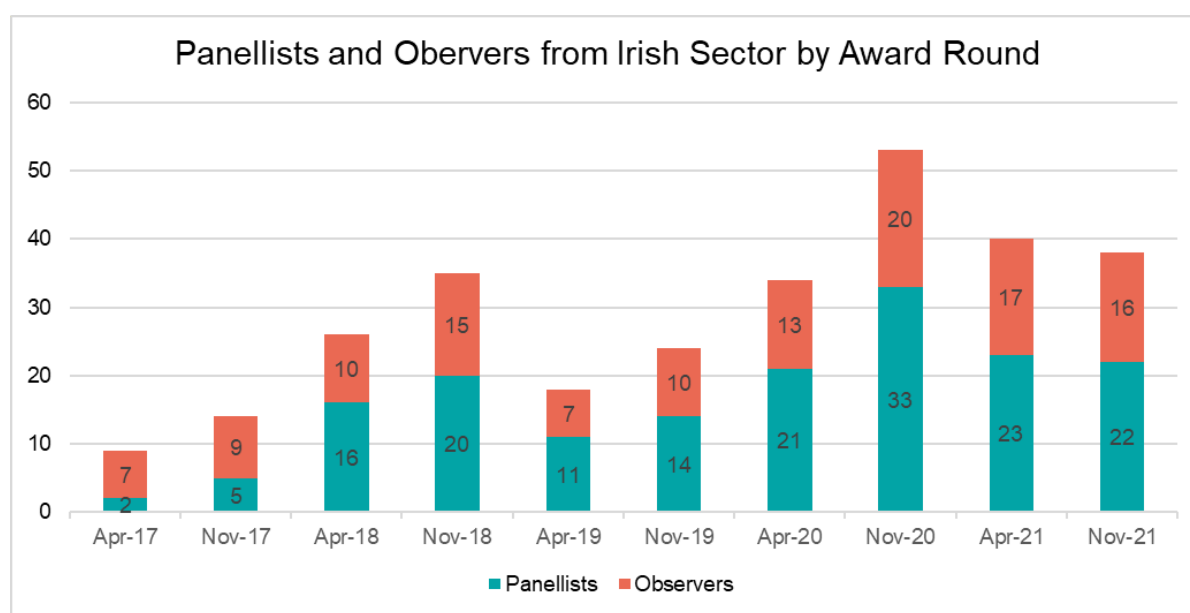
Table 3. Success rates by award round in this reporting period, accounting for revisions

Award round	Applications received	Success rate
November 2019	13	62%
April 2020	20	75%
November 2020	22	91%
April 2021	23	100%
November 2021	13	tbc

⁴ The success rate includes completed revisions requests, which are usually valid from the following award round. Revisions from the November 2021 round are due 15 June 2022. It also includes awards conferred at a lower level, e.g. Silver applicants conferred a Bronze award.

All applications are assessed by panellists working in the Irish higher education sector. Details on the number of panellists required and observer places accommodated are provided in Figure 3. This was enabled by a 113% increase in registered panellists (from 64 in the previous reporting period to 136). There are 136 registered panellists from the Irish sector, an increase from 64 from the previous reporting period. A priority in the upcoming award rounds will be to update all panellist training to ensure it aligns to the updated charter framework and criteria.

Figure 3: Panellists and Observers from the Irish Sector by Award Round



Outputs of Period

4. Key materials and resources developed

Advance HE staff have supported the development of the charter in Ireland through the development of bespoke applications, policies, guidance and reports.

Most notably, this included the development of a new application framework for Athena Swan Ireland. This was developed in consultation with the sector, following a national survey (616 responses) and a series of engagement events with institutions and departments. Feedback was also sought through the Athena Swan Ireland National Committee and the Athena Swan Ireland Practitioner Network. In response to the consultation, the new framework aims to:

- Drive sustaining and impactful gender equality work;
- Build capacity in evidence-based interventions across the equality grounds at institutional level;

- Fully include professional, managerial and support staff at entry award level;
- Further align with the priorities of higher education in Ireland and the EU;
- Prove an effective, progressive charter that holds institutions to account;
- Reduce the administrative burden in the application process;
- Build in consideration of resourcing, workload distribution and recognition for equality, diversity and inclusion work within the application and criteria;
- Support exploration of how centralised policy and practice is embedded and experienced in departments and units.

The following resources were developed:

- Updated Athena Swan Ireland charter principles;
- Three information packs for Institutions, Academic Departments and Profession Units;
- Twelve new application forms including:
 - Bronze, Silver, Gold and renewal forms for Institutions
 - Bronze, Silver, Gold and renewal forms for Academic Departments
 - Bronze, Silver, Gold and renewal forms for Professional Units
- Five topic guides to support applicants with the new framework, including:
 - Topic guide 1: forming a self-assessment team (SAT)
 - Topic guide 2: collecting and analysing data
 - Topic guide 3: consulting with your community
 - Topic guide 4: developing and implementing a targeted action plan
 - Topic guide 5: evaluating and evidencing progress and success for award renewal/upgrade
- Updated word count allocation guidance;
- A template to provide required themes and suggested questions for staff consultation activities;
- The EDI literacy glossary, a resource designed with the Intersectionality Working Group, to support understanding of inclusive approaches to equality work in higher education and research in Ireland;
- New website materials, including updated Frequently Asked Questions to support engagement with the new framework.

Other resources were also developed during this period, including:

- Updated training and guidance to panellists, including the sector briefing, training video and scoring matrix;
- An updated Athena Swan Ireland Guide to Processes to support the introduction of Revisions Requests and other key changes to policies and processes;
- A conversion application to support applicants who hold Juno awards from the Institute of Physics;

- Guidance document to support a new Departmental Restructure Award Validity Process, designed to put in place a procedure that recognises the gender equality work undertaken by award-holding units while maintaining the rigor of the Athena SWAN assessment process. The Award Validity Process encourages restructured units to ensure that gender equality is embedded in the new structure, and the continuation and appropriate modification of actions to facilitate progress with gender equality work in the new department.

5. Overview of Advance HE staff support to Irish HEIs

During this period, support for Irish HEIs moved online due to the ongoing impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.⁵ Prior to the pandemic, Advance HE offered up to 26 institutional visits per year as well as feedback surgeries for unsuccessful applicants. During this period, new supports were introduced to ensure continuity of support in the challenging environment.

A high volume of ongoing support took place via Zoom and Teams (>65 meetings). This type of support included, but is not limited to, advice and guidance on:

- Progress on action plans;
- Renewal and upgrade of awards;
- Undertaking revisions as part of the application process;
- Self-assessment, including data collection and consultation;
- Action planning and implementation.

Some of the support above would have normally been reserved for in-person institutional visits, whereas other support reflects increasing sector engagement with the various stages of the charter.

Sector-wide support was developed and delivered during the period in response to resourcing concerns and limitations presented by Covid-19. This included 21 national webinars, briefings and engagement events. Topics largely addressed the key stages of engaging with Athena Swan Ireland, including:

- Preparing for self-assessment
- Working with Data
- SMART action planning
- Evaluating progress and success

Sector-wide support also covered topics on good practice, as well as new areas reflected in the new charter framework launched in 2021. Between ~100 and ~200 attendees registered for each online sector-wide event.

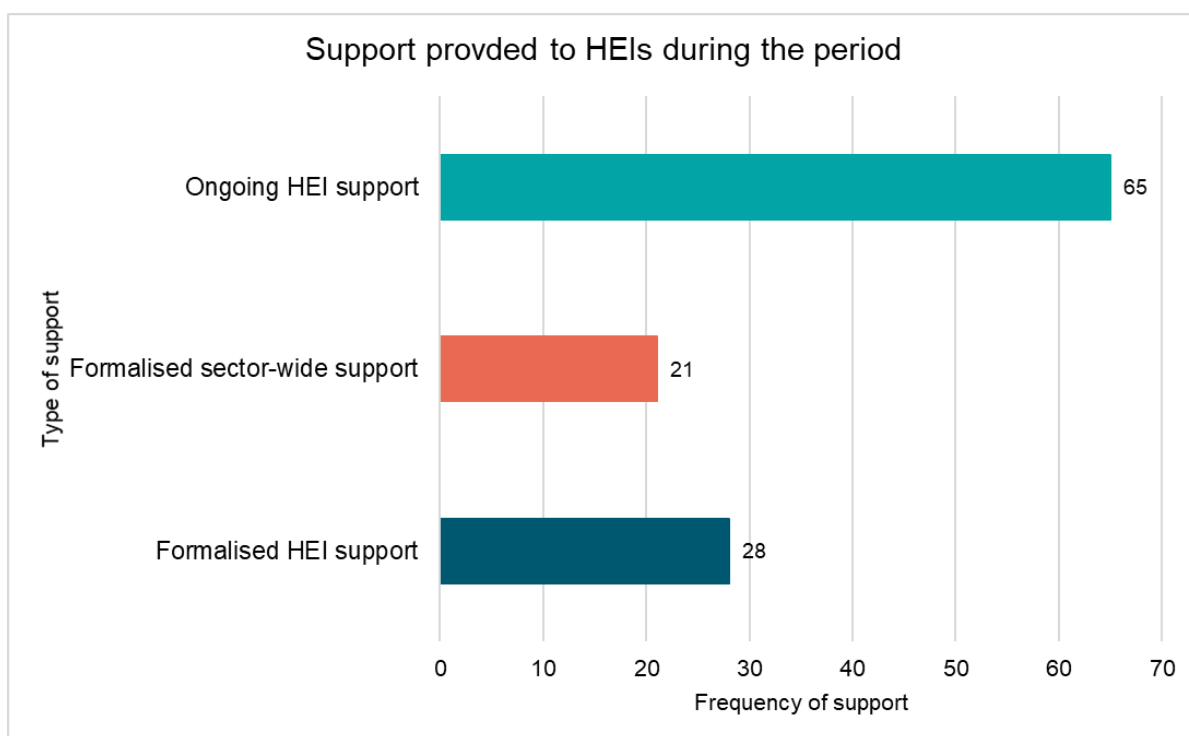
⁵ One in person site visit was carried out.

Formalised HEI support was also offered. Presentations and workshops previously offered as part of institutional visits were also moved online, as were feedback surgeries for unsuccessful applicants (21 took place during the period). In addition to feedback surgeries, a sample of topics covered include:

- Data analysis
- Applying for a department award
- SMART Action Planning
- Evaluating progress and impact
- Going for Silver

Figure 4 gives an overview of the support provided during the period, as noted above.

Figure 4: Support provided to Irish HEIs



Tailored guidance and advice on applying for Athena Swan Ireland awards was also provided via email and phone on a daily basis. Occasionally, institutions also request support from charter applicants in other countries, particularly the UK. Advice was primarily provided by Dr Victoria Brownlee and Sarah Fink. Some examples of topics and conversations include:

- Data requirements for applications
- Data and analysis of staff by category (academic, clinical academic, researcher, professional, etc.)
- Reward and recognition of EDI work

- Discipline-specific approaches to analysis and action planning
- Representation on, and role of, self-assessment teams
- Benchmarking data
- Approaches to staff and student consultation
- Role of Head of Department/School in departmental self-assessment
- Incorporating EDI into teaching activity
- Access to successful application examples
- Project timeline for applying for an award
- Meeting the requirements of a revision request
- Assessing readiness of going for Silver
- Good practice examples across application themes
- Strategic approaches to sub-unit applications
- Data protection
- Intersectionality
- TU Legacy Award processes and advice
- EDI Training
- Departmental restructures and mergers
- Word count guidelines and extensions
- Panel processes and becoming a panellist
- SMART action plan development and review
- Award criteria
- Award validity
- Athena Swan Ireland principles

6. Award ceremony organised

Due to Covid-19, the 2020 awards ceremony was postponed with the aim of hosting an in-person awards ceremony. Due to ongoing impacts of the pandemic, and limitations on gatherings, a decision was taken to host an online awards ceremony on 20 October 2021. The event celebrated 63 awards achieved in the November 2019, April 2020, November 2020, and April 2021 assessment rounds (up from 21 at the previous ceremony which recognised two award rounds).

Presentations were delivered by Dr Orla Flynn (GMIT), Professor Pól Ó Dochartaigh and Aoife Cooke (NUIG) and Dr Deirdre Ní Eidhin (UL). Simon Harris, TD, Minister of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science and Advance HE's CEO, Alison Johns also spoke.

An unlimited number of places were offered to institutions (442 were registered), and complimentary trophies were sent in advance.

Appendix: Current Athena Swan Ireland award holders

There are currently 98 award holders in Ireland (97 Bronze; 1 Silver). 20 institutions (universities, institutes of technology and colleges) hold awards, as well as 78 departments. This data reflects awards made up to and including the November 2021 assessment round.⁶

Institution	Department name (if applicable)	Award level
Maynooth University		Bronze
	Department of Geography	Bronze
	Department of Biology	Bronze
	School of Law	Bronze
	Department of Psychology	Bronze
	Department of Chemistry	Bronze
	Faculty of Arts, Celtic Studies and Philosophy	Bronze
NUI Galway		Bronze
	School of Medicine	Bronze
	School of Physics	Bronze
	School of Business and Economics	Bronze
	School of Nursing and Midwifery	Bronze
	School of Natural Sciences	Bronze
	School of Mathematics, Statistics and Applied Mathematics	Bronze
	School of Psychology	Bronze
	School of Chemistry	Bronze
	School of Health Sciences	Bronze

⁶ Award numbers will be reviewed to ensure consistent approach to counting legacy award holders.

Trinity College Dublin		Bronze
	School of Chemistry	Bronze
	School of Natural Sciences	Bronze
	School of Physics	Bronze
	School of Social Work and Social Policy	Bronze
	School of Genetics and Microbiology	Bronze
	School of Psychology	Bronze
	School of Law	Bronze
	School of Computer Science and Statistics	Bronze
	School of Engineering	Bronze
	School of History and Humanities	Bronze
	School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences	Bronze
	Trinity Business School	Bronze
	School of Social Sciences and Philosophy	Bronze
	School of Biochemistry and Immunology	Bronze
	School of Medicine	Bronze
University College Cork		Bronze
	School of Public Health	Bronze
	Department of Business Information Systems	Bronze
	School of Biological, Earth & Environmental Sciences	Bronze
	School of Chemistry	Bronze
	School of Food and Nutritional Sciences	Bronze

	School of Pharmacy	Bronze
	Dental School and Hospital	Bronze
	School of Nursing and Midwifery	Bronze
	School of Law	Bronze
	School of Biochemistry and Cell Biology	Bronze
	School of Microbiology	Bronze
University College Dublin		Bronze
	School of Economics	Bronze
	School of Languages, Literatures and Cultures	Bronze
	College of Engineering and Architecture	Bronze
	School of Biology and Environmental Science	Bronze
	School of Biomolecular and Biomedical Science	Bronze
	School of Archaeology	Bronze
	School of Agriculture and Food Science	Bronze
	School of Medicine	Bronze
	School of Veterinary Medicine	Bronze
	School of Nursing, Midwifery and Health Systems	Bronze
	School of Psychology	Bronze
	School of Chemistry	Bronze
	School of Public Health, Physiotherapy and Sports Science	Bronze
	School of Politics and International Relations	Bronze

	Sutherland School of Law	Bronze
	School of Physics	Bronze
University of Limerick		Bronze
	Chemical Science	Bronze
	Department of Physics	Silver
	Graduate Entry Medical School	Bronze
	Kemmy Business School	Bronze
	School of Allied Health	Bronze
	School of Education	Bronze
	Department of Biological Sciences	Bronze
	Department of Mathematics and Statistics	Bronze
	Department of Physical Education and Sports Sciences	Bronze
	Department of Psychology	Bronze
	Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences	Bronze
	Department of Computer Science and Information Systems & Lero – the SFI Research Centre for Software	Bronze
	Department of Nursing and Midwifery	Bronze
	School of Engineering	Bronze
Dublin City University		Bronze
	School of Communications	Bronze
	Business School	Bronze
RCSI University of Medicine and Health Sciences		Bronze

	Department of Anatomy and Regenerative Medicine	Bronze
	Department of Physiology and Medical Physics	Bronze
	School of Pharmacy and Biomolecular Sciences	Bronze
Athlone IT		Bronze
IT Carlow		Bronze
	Department of Computing	Bronze
	Faculty of Engineering	Bronze
Dundalk IT		Bronze
Galway-Mayo IT		Bronze
Letterkenny IT		Bronze
Limerick Institute of Technology		Bronze
Mary Immaculate College		Bronze
Munster Technological University		Legacy Award
National College of Ireland		Bronze
Sligo IT		Bronze
Carlow College, St. Patrick's		Bronze
TU Dublin		Bronze