



**Athena
Swan**

AdvanceHE

Transformed UK Athena Swan Charter: Information pack for departments

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Welcome

I am delighted to share this information pack with you. Gender equality remains a priority, for the sector, for Advance HE, and for me personally. The transformed UK Athena Swan Charter takes forward the recommendations of the Independent Review established by Advance HE, significantly enhancing the Charter to bring about:

- + a paradigm shift that champions institutional autonomy and flexibility
- + a reduction in administrative burden, including a halving of data requirements
- + a more developmental and supporting approach from Advance HE.

This is a very significant step in advancing gender equality, ensuring that the Charter centres the key dimension of positive and supportive cultures.

We have also reviewed this guidance to ensure that members undertaking the charter remain on solid legal footing. The guidance clearly relates to UK equality legislative requirements, whilst supporting members to achieve their broader ambitions in relation to gender equality in a manner that is legally compliant.

Inclusivity is central to the Charter, which recognizes that advancing gender equality encompasses addressing inequalities experienced due to sex, gender reassignment and pregnancy and maternity, as well as broader equality work relating to gender identity, trans inclusion and caring responsibilities, as well as addressing intersectional inequalities.

I am grateful for the very positive part you have played in helping to shape these important enhancements. These documents will guide you through the changes.

We will continue to work with the Athena Swan Governance Committee and the higher education sector as a whole to ensure the Charter remains current and relevant, and meets the needs of all to drive forward gender equality in higher education and research institutes.

Alison Johns

Chief Executive, Advance HE



Introduction

Athena Swan UK is a sector-led charter that universities and research institutes voluntarily participate in to advance gender equality for staff and students. The Charter supports institutions to undertake an assessment of their context, identify priority issues, and design and implement actions to advance gender equality autonomously and flexibly. Advance HE provides and manages the Charter infrastructure on behalf of the sector and our members. The Charter is a framework used across the globe to promote gender equality in higher education and research. Established in the UK in 2005 by the sector to recognise commitment to advance the careers of academic women in Science, Technology, Engineering, Maths and Medicine (STEMM), the charter is now being used around the world to address gender inequality more broadly. Over time the sector has asked that the Charter be more inclusive, which has seen it expand to include all disciplines, and professional staff, and to address the inclusion of trans people and the underrepresentation of men where appropriate.

In June 2021, the transformed UK Athena Swan Charter was launched based on recommendations from an Independent Review and consultation with the sector, including through its Athena Swan Governance Committee.

In this document, participants will find all the information and materials you need to apply for a University award under the transformed Athena Swan Charter. This includes:

- + the Charter Principles, which underpin Athena Swan and set out shared goals for gender equality
- + the Award Criteria, providing clear and transparent descriptions of each level of award
- + the application materials, including guidance on application forms, data requirements, word limits and consultation word limits, consultation, and the departmental culture survey
- + a glossary of key terms.

Advance HE is committed to supporting all Athena Swan participants to progress their gender equality goals, and we will provide additional developmental guidance and resources in the coming months.

For more information and access to our other Charter services and support, please [visit our website](#). We look forward to working with you.

Gender equality and the supporting legal frameworks in the UK

The Athena Swan Charter's strength rests in being a flexible, sector-led framework for institutions to develop their own plans and initiatives to create inclusive teaching and research environments. Institutions participating in the Charter are encouraged to adopt approaches that work in their contexts. It is also important for institutions to understand the connection between Charter activities and their broader legal or regulatory obligations.

Terminology

Athena Swan recognises that sex and gender are different. Please see the Glossary for further definitions of the terminology used in this guidance. For the purposes of Athena Swan guidance, 'gender equality' is used as an umbrella term and covers the legal protections relating to sex, gender reassignment and pregnancy and maternity, as well as broader equality work relating to gender identity, trans inclusion and caring responsibilities. This is in keeping with a key recommendation of the Independent Review that the sector want the Charter to recognise gender as a spectrum. Where appropriate, the guidance distinguishes between sex, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, gender identity, trans status, and caring responsibilities.

Equality law and institutions' responsibilities

Individuals and groups across the UK are protected from discrimination, harassment and/or victimisation on the basis of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex, and sexual orientation. Public sector bodies (including most higher education institutions) have statutory responsibilities to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and promote good relations between different people. In England, Scotland, and Wales these laws and the associated responsibilities for public bodies are within the Equality Act 2010 and the specific duties of the Public Sector Equality Duty. In Northern Ireland, there are several relevant pieces of legislation, most notably Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, the Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 1976, and the Fair Employment & Treatment (Northern Ireland) Order 1998.

When engaging with the Athena Swan Charter, institutions will undertake activities that can support them in their work to fulfil their statutory responsibilities, including:

- + collecting equality monitoring data for staff and students
- + developing targeted initiatives and actions to advance equality and inclusion. This includes positive action where justified and focused on protected characteristics

- + evaluating progress and success of actions in relation to equality and inclusion outcomes.

For more information on the relevant legislation, please see [the Equality and Human Rights Commission website](#) for those working in England, Scotland and Wales and [the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland website](#) for those working in Northern Ireland.

Freedom of speech and academic freedom

Free speech and academic freedom are core values of the higher education sector which work in tandem with other laws and rights. Institutions have a responsibility to balance their free speech duty with their responsibilities to safeguard the dignity and respect of students and staff, as outlined in the Equality Act 2010 and other related legislation mentioned above.

Freedom of expression is protected in all UK nations through the Human Rights Act 1998. Additionally, in England and Wales, laws and associated responsibilities relating to freedom of speech and academic freedom are enshrined in the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023, the Education (No. 2) Act 1986 and the Education Act 1994, the last of which has elements relevant to Scotland. Scottish institutions can find additional responsibilities under the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 2005 and in Northern Ireland, the Education (Academic Tenure) (Northern Ireland) Order 1988.

An institution's Athena Swan activity complements their duties and goals relating to freedom of speech as it helps promote the voices of all, including those who may have previously lacked the opportunity to engage.

The Athena Swan Charter Principles and senior leaders' commitment

Introduction to the Charter Principles

The first, and arguably most important, aspect of the Athena Swan Charter are the Charter Principles. These are the commitments that underpin Athena Swan and set out shared goals for gender equality that all participants agree to support. These Principles act as the foundation for the transformed Charter, with all other elements – including criteria, application and assessment – aligned to the commitments and values within it.

The updated Charter Principles have been revised to:

- + empower participants to join a global community through a shared commitment to tackle gender inequality and shared principles that align with local gender equality goals
- + support greater inclusivity for people of all gender identities and people facing intersectional inequalities
- + ensure that participating institutions, departments and directorates recognise and reward staff
- + working on gender equality.

The Principles of the Athena Swan Charter articulate positive statements that participants demonstrate their support for. Support for these Principles underpins the Athena Swan Awards, which act as a framework for sustainable change through which participants enhance their inclusivity and performance, with a particular focus on gender equality. The Awards recognise commitment and achievement in upholding the Principles and driving positive change.

Institutions, departments, and directorates across the UK can use the Charter Principles to help focus and structure their gender equality work and to highlight their ongoing commitment to gender equality to their staff, students and wider community.

Based on members' feedback, in August 2022 we revised the wording of two principles. These changes do not alter the intent of the principles but aim to give members confidence that Athena Swan is compatible with their wider obligations to protect and promote freedom of speech and academic freedom.

Guidance for participants

Any university, department or directorate interested in participating in the transformed AthenaSwan Charter should first consider the Principles, and together with their senior leadership teams and communities decide if they can agree to these commitments.

Under the transformed Charter, each applying unit will commit to the principles; for example, the Vice-Chancellor will commit to the Principles on behalf of the university and the Head of Department will also commit to the Principles on behalf of a departmental applicant in that university.

Any university intending to apply for an Athena Swan Award will need to first submit confirmation from the Vice-Chancellor (or equivalent) that they commit to the Charter Principles. You can find a [template letter](#) on our website and on [Connect here](#) and once confirmed, you will receive a co-signed certificate which you can use to help promote your gender equality work to your community. You can commit to the Principles at any time prior to submitting your application.

Athena Swan Principles

In committing to the principles of the Athena Swan Charter, we recognise that we join a global community with a shared goal of addressing gender inequalities and embedding inclusive cultures.

Each institution, research institute, department and directorate has different gender equality challenges and development priorities. These priorities are determined by an understanding of the local evidence-base and national and global gender equality issues.

In determining our priorities and interventions, we commit to:

1. adopting robust, transparent and accountable processes for gender equality work, including:
 - a. embedding diversity, equity and inclusion in our culture, decision-making and partnerships, and holding ourselves and others in our institution/institute/department/directorate accountable
 - b. undertaking evidence-based, transparent self-assessment processes to direct our priorities and interventions for gender equality, and evaluating our progress to inform our continuous development
 - c. ensuring that gender equality work is distributed appropriately, is recognised and properly rewarded
2. addressing structural inequalities and social injustices that manifest as differential experiences and outcomes for staff and students
3. tackling behaviours and cultures that detract from the safety and collegiality of our work and study environments, including not tolerating gender-based violence, discrimination, bullying, harassment or exploitation
4. understanding and addressing intersectional inequalities
5. recognising that individuals can determine their own gender identity, and tackling the specific issues faced by trans and non-binary people
6. examining gendered occupational segregation, and elevating the status, voice and career
7. opportunities of any identified under-valued and at-risk groups
8. mitigating the gendered impact of caring responsibilities and career breaks, and supporting

9. flexibility and the maintenance of a healthy 'whole life balance'
10. mitigating the gendered impact of short-term and casual contracts for staff seeking sustainable careers.

The Athena Swan award criteria

Introduction to the Award Criteria

The Athena Swan Charter provides a framework which supports participants to make sustainable change toward gender equality, with Awards recognising participants' commitment and achievement along this journey. The Awards build on the Charter Principles and are defined with a set of clear and transparent Award Criteria.

The updated Award Criteria:

- + provide greater clarity and transparency on the expectations at each award level and what applicants must do to meet the award criteria
- + embed greater flexibility for applicants to focus on what is important within their context
- + support greater transparency and consistency of decision making at assessment.

Over the following pages you will find the details of the Award Criteria at each level and what applicants demonstrate for each criterion when applying. The Criteria are designed to be flexible and developmental, supporting applicants through a journey of self-reflection, action and learning from success.

Applying as a faculty?

Applicants submitting as a faculty are assessed using the departmental Award Criteria and should use the departmental application materials. If you're considering a faculty-level application, you can [find more guidance on our website](#) and on [Connect here](#).

Transparent and consistent

These Award Criteria form the basis of how your award application will be assessed. The peer review panels that assess your application are made up of experts from across the sector who have been rigorously trained using the same detail and definitions provided over the coming pages, to ensure transparency and a shared understanding for both applicants and Reviewers. For more information about how your application is assessed, [please see our website](#) and [Connect](#).

Athena Swan Award Criteria

	High-level award criteria	Bronze	Bronze Renewal	Silver	Silver Renewal	Gold	Gold Renewal
A	Structures and processes underpin and recognise gender equality work	X	X	X	X	X	X
B	Evidence-based recognition of the key issues facing the applicant	X	X	X	X	X	X
C	Action plan to address identified key issues	X	X	X	X	X	X
D	Demonstration of progress against the applicant's previously identified priorities		X	X	X	X	X
E	Evidence of success addressing gender inequality			X		X	
F	Evidence of sector-leading gender equality practice and supporting others to improve					X	

Expectations underpinning the Athena Swan award criteria

Bronze applicants - Department

Criterion A: Structures and processes underpin and recognise gender equality work

- + evidence of leadership and senior buy-in
- + clear governance structure for EDI
- + formal processes for recognition and reward of EDI work
- + self-assessment undertaken by a representative team and informed by staff/students
- + processes in place for evaluating the implementation of policies.

Criterion B: Evidence-based recognition of the key issues facing the applicant

- + collected and analysed mandatory data
- + evaluated their policies
- + evaluated their approach to exploring intersectional inequalities¹
- + evaluated the inclusivity of their culture for staff and students of all gender identities
- + identified and justified key priorities.

Criterion C: Action plan to address identified key issues

- + SMART action plan that addresses all priority areas
- + actions which will enable the applicant to evaluate intersectional inequalities in the future.

¹ No quantitative or demographic data is required for this evaluation at departmental level

Bronze Renewal applicants – Department

Criterion A: Structures and processes underpin and recognise gender equality

- + evidence of leadership and senior buy-in
- + self-assessment undertaken by a representative team and informed by staff/students.

Criterion B: Evidence-based recognition of the key issues facing the applicant

- + collected and analysed mandatory data
- + evaluated their progress
- + identified and justified key priorities.

Criterion C: Action plan to address identified key issues

- + SMART action plan that addresses all priority areas.

Criterion D: Demonstration of progress against the applicant's previously identified priorities

- + the previous Bronze action plan is underway or completed.

Silver applicants – Department

Criterion A: Structures and processes underpin and recognise gender equality

- + evidence of leadership and senior buy-in
- + clear governance structure for EDI
- + formal processes for recognition and reward of EDI work
- + self-assessment undertaken by a representative team and informed by staff/students
- + processes in place for evaluating the implementation of policies.

Criterion B: Evidence-based recognition of the key issues facing the applicant

- + collected and analysed mandatory data
- + evaluated their policies
- + evaluated intersectional inequalities²
- + evaluated the inclusivity of their culture for staff and students of all gender identities
- + identified and justified key priorities.

Criterion C: Action plan to address identified key issues

- + SMART action plan that addresses all priority areas
- + actions which address intersectional inequalities as identified through the applicant's priority areas, if relevant.

² No quantitative or demographic data is required for this evaluation at departmental level

Criterion D: Demonstration of progress against the applicant's previously identified priorities

- + the previous Bronze action plan is completed or superseded.

Criterion E: Evidence of success addressing gender inequality

- + evidence of desired outcome/improvement against at least two priorities.

Silver renewal applicants – Department

Criterion A: Structures and processes underpin and recognise gender equality

- + evidence of leadership and senior buy-in
- + self-assessment undertaken by a representative team and informed by staff/students.

Criterion B: Evidence-based recognition of the key issues facing the applicant

- + collected and analysed mandatory data
- + evaluated their progress
- + identified and justified key priorities.

Criterion C: Action plan to address identified key issues

- + SMART action plan that addresses all priority areas.

Criterion D: Demonstration of progress against the applicant's previously identified priorities

- + the previous Silver action plan is underway or completed.

Gold applicants – Department

Criterion A: Structures and processes underpin and recognise gender equality

- + evidence of leadership and senior buy-in
- + clear governance structure for EDI
- + formal processes for recognition and reward of EDI work
- + self-assessment undertaken by a representative team and informed by staff/students
- + processes in place for evaluating the implementation of policies.

Criterion B: Evidence-based recognition of the key issues facing the applicant

- + collected and analysed mandatory data
- + evaluated their policies
- + evaluated intersectional inequalities³

³ No quantitative or demographic data is required for this evaluation at departmental level

- + evaluated the inclusivity of their culture for staff and students of all gender identities
- + evaluated practices and policies for the inclusion and support of staff and students of all gender identities.³
- + identified and justified key priorities.

Criterion C: Action plan to address identified key issues

- + SMART action plan that addresses all priority areas
- + actions which address intersectional inequalities as identified through the applicant's priority areas, if relevant.

Criterion D: Demonstration of progress against the applicant's previously identified priorities

- + the previous Silver action plan is completed or superseded.

Criterion E: Evidence of success addressing gender inequality

- + evidence of desired outcome/improvement against at least three priorities
- + evidence of longitudinal improvement, over the course of more than one award cycle.

Criterion F: Evidence of sector-leading gender equality practice and supporting others to improve

- + evidence of how the applicant continually monitors and updates their policies and practice in order to remain innovative, intersectional, and inclusive of people of all gender identities, providing (where possible) examples of innovation
- + evidence that through their activity, good practice has been taken up by other departments/institutions/sectors.

Gold Renewal applicants – Department

Criterion A: Structures and processes underpin and recognise gender equality work

- + evidence of leadership and senior buy-in
- + self-assessment undertaken by a representative team and informed by staff/students.

Criterion B: Evidence-based recognition of the key issues facing the applicant

- + collected and analysed mandatory data
- + evaluated their progress
- + identified and justified key priorities.

Criterion C: Action plan to address identified key issues

- + SMART action plan that addresses all priority areas.

Criterion D: Demonstration of progress against the applicant's previously identified

- + the previous Gold action plan is underway or completed.
-

Athena Swan application materials

Introduction to the award application materials

Participants seeking recognition through Charter Awards of their commitment to and achievements in gender equality will submit an application for assessment by peer-review.

Over the following pages you will find guidance to help you prepare for your application, including:

- + details of the application forms and guidance to help you answer the application questions;
- + guidance on the mandatory data requirements;
- + guidance relating to word limits;
- + guidance relating to the departmental culture survey.

The application materials are designed to be flexible and developmental, supporting applicants' self-assessment and future gender equality work, with clear alignment to the Award Criteria so that applicants and Reviewers alike are confident about what is required at each level and why.

The updated application materials:

- + reduce the administrative burden through streamlined, shorter application forms and data requirements which have been more than halved
- + enable greater flexibility for applicants to focus on their key priorities
- + provide greater clarity and transparent alignment to the Award Criteria
- + empower applicants to focus on the assessment of culture, through a recommended departmental survey, with flexible options for implementation
- + embed greater inclusivity for all staff types, people of all gender identities and people facing intersectional inequalities.

You can find editable versions of the application forms on our website and on [Connect](#).

Applying as a faculty?

Applicants submitting as a faculty use the same application materials as departments, and are assessed using the departmental Award Criteria – but be mindful of the additional considerations which are flagged in the guidance provided over the next pages. If you're considering a faculty-level application, you can find more guidance [on our website](#) and [on Connect](#).

We're here to help

As you prepare to submit your application, if you encounter any challenges remember that Advance HE is here to help. We have a wealth of strategic and operational experience in gender equality and can also connect you with a vast network of universities, research institutes and departments globally who have faced similar challenges in their own gender equality journeys. Get in touch!

Bronze department application form

Section 1: An overview of the department and its approach to gender equality

In Section 1, applicants should evidence how they meet Criterion A:

- + structures and process are in place to underpin and recognise gender equality work

Recommended word count: 2500 words

1. Letter of endorsement from the head of the department

Please insert (with appropriate letterhead) a signed letter of endorsement from the head of the department.

Guidance

Please highlight the key priorities and challenges within the department relating to gender equality and how the principles of the Athena Swan Charter are linked to departmental strategy. It is an opportunity to evidence the personal commitment and involvement of the head of the department (for example, any involvement in the self-assessment or particular actions) and how the department's gender equality work is led and supported by the senior management of the department.

2. Description of the department

Please provide an introduction to the department.

Guidance

Please provide an overview of the department including a description of the contextual factors that are particular to the department; for example, location, discipline coverage, structure, split-site locations or organisational information (such as the department's relationship with the faculty, university or community partners). Data analysis is covered in subsequent sections so there is no need to include it in this section.

3. Governance and recognition of equality, diversity and inclusion work

Please provide a description of your equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) structures, staff and department-level resources.

Guidance

Please describe the department's key management and committee structures, and the formal structures in place to carry out and support the department's equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) activity. Please describe the formal processes in place to distribute, recognise and reward EDI work, referencing university-level policies where appropriate.

Please provide an overview of how EDI work is supported by and embedded within the governance structure of the department, and how it links with university-level EDI structures.

Please explain how EDI work (including work relating to Athena Swan) is distributed, accounted for, recognised and rewarded; for example, in a workload allocation model, at appraisal, and/or through promotions and progression pathways.

4. Development, evaluation and effectiveness of policies

Please describe the processes in place for developing, evaluating and revising departmental policies (where relevant), and for evaluating the implementation of university-level policies in the department.

Guidance

Please provide an overview of how the department ensures that departmental policies are fit-for-purpose, how they are evaluated and how their effectiveness and impact are assessed. Please include an overview of any consultative approaches (with staff, students or external stakeholders) which are used to inform these processes. Explain how the department ensures that policies support an inclusive culture and do not negatively impact on staff or students due to sex, gender reassignment pregnancy and maternity, gender identity, trans status or caring responsibilities. If the department does not set any policies at this level, there is no need to respond to this part of the question.

Please also reflect on how the department evaluates the implementation of university-level policies in the department, including how feedback is collected and returned to the university for consideration.

5. Athena Swan self-assessment process

Please provide an overview of who was involved in the preparation of this application, how it was prepared, and what plans are in place to support the department's future gender equality work.

Guidance

Please provide an overview of the self-assessment team (SAT) undertaking the self-assessment work, including a table briefly describing SAT members' professional/student role in the department and their role in the SAT. The SAT's composition should reflect the profile of the department in relation to staff type, grades and roles.

Where possible, SAT membership should include a diverse range of people in relation to sex, trans status, gender identity and caring responsibilities, including those experiencing intersectional inequalities. Please provide an explanation of how the process for recruiting SAT members has considered the diversity of the department. Applicants are not required to provide data on the characteristics of individual SAT members.

In constituting and describing their SAT, applicants are reminded to be mindful of individuals' privacy and confidentiality, that an undue burden of work or emotional labour is not placed on those impacted negatively by existing structures, policies and cultures and that the work of the SAT members is appropriately recognised and rewarded (see section 1.3).

Please include a summary of how the SAT has undertaken the self-assessment process, including details of what sources of data have been used to inform the application, and how the SAT has consulted with staff and students (see page 62 for more information on the departmental culture survey). Details should be provided (where appropriate) of consultation response rates disaggregated by sex. If the SAT have collected additional demographic information on consultation respondents, disaggregation of consultation response rates by other characteristics can be provided, where this is appropriate and where confidentiality can be assured. Where relevant, applicants should reflect on how the SAT responded to and acted on the panel feedback provided on the previous application.

Please also include an overview of how the department plans to deliver and maintain gender equality activity over the coming 5-year period, including how often the SAT will meet, how SAT succession and turnover will be planned and managed, and (where appropriate) how the action plan will be implemented, evaluated and updated.

Section 2: An assessment of the department's gender equality context

In Section 2 applicants should evidence how they meet Criterion B:

- + evidence-based recognition has been demonstrated of the key issues facing the applicant

Recommended word count: 3500 words

1. Culture, inclusion and belonging

Please describe how the department ensures their culture and practices support inclusion and belonging.

Guidance

Please outline key findings from the department's evaluation of its culture as it relates to gender equality and inclusion. This could include the department's values, traditions, leadership, practices and behaviours and other formal and informal structures and interactions that characterise the working and learning environment of the department, affecting all staff and students. Please reflect on how the department actively considers gender equality and inclusivity within their culture, including how instances of negative practices or behaviours are addressed.

Please draw on data including departmental culture survey findings and/or other consultation findings with reference to data presented in Appendices 1-2. Whether or not you are using the culture survey as part of your evaluation, please consider your evaluation of culture through a gender equality lens across the six themes of the culture survey - belonging and inclusion, gender equality, work life balance, bullying and harassment, career development and well-being. These themes and their relevance to gender equality are described in detail on pg 64.

Please reflect on the department's current understanding of and capacity to identify and address intersectional inequalities for staff and students. If existing infrastructures and evidence-bases do not support the evaluation of intersectional inequalities, please include actions in the action plan which will support the department to evaluate and address intersectional inequalities in the next award cycle. The department can choose which intersecting characteristics to focus on providing the analysis is relevant to the understanding of gender equality. The choice of intersecting characteristics should be evidence-based, informed by the department's specific context and/or regional or national data and trends.

Please evaluate the ways in which the department actively strives (or could in future, through action) for the inclusion of trans and non-binary people within the department's culture and practices. The provision of quantitative data is not required. If applicants choose to draw on quantitative data and the data indicate no or low rates of disclosure from eg. trans or non-binary people, applicants should still consider how to embed inclusive practices and approaches within culture and activity and are encouraged to use knowledge of wider good practice to do this.

Please evaluate the department's approach to ensuring culture and practices are inclusive and supportive of people with caring responsibilities and should consider how the department strives (or could in future, through action) to mitigate the gendered impact of caring responsibilities and career breaks. Applicants are encouraged to reflect on how the department supports flexibility for staff and students and supports the maintenance of a healthy 'whole life balance'.

2. Key priorities for future action

Please outline the department's key issues relating to gender equality and explain the department's key priorities for future action.

Guidance

Please reflect on the evaluation in previous sections (including policies and culture), and all data sources used to inform the application in order to identify the department's key issues relating to gender equality. Please draw on the analysis of the mandatory datasets (and any additional datasets where relevant). Please analyse data by sex as a minimum and present data in tables and/or charts in Appendices 1-2.

Please reflect on insights from the data analysis as they relate to gender equality (eg. the representation and progression of people of a particular sex, or trans or non-binary status). Please consider any trends or issues across job families, contract types or functions, or grades. Consider any aspects of good practice that could be translated to other areas, and any areas where improvement could be gained through future action. For the progression of professional, technical and operational (PTO) staff, reflect on the progression pathways available for PTO staff, drawing on evidence as appropriate to inform the identification of good practice and areas for improvement. Please consider how issues have been influenced by external events; for example, the Covid-19 pandemic.

Based on the department's identification of key issues, please identify between four and eight key priorities that the department seeks to address with future action. Please ensure key priorities are appropriate to the department's context and justified based on quantitative and qualitative evidence. Please consider how their priorities address intersectional inequalities.

Applicants can carry previously identified key priorities into the upcoming award period; where previously identified priorities are adjusted or edited for incorporation in the coming award period, please explain the rationale for these changes.

Please ensure priorities are specific and detailed, allowing the department to target attention to areas of greatest need. Other, lower-priority goals can still be addressed through the action plan. Priority areas may be addressed through multiple SMART actions. Please cross-reference to the key priorities in the future action plan.

Section 3: Future action plan

In Section 3, applicants should evidence how they meet Criterion C:

- + an action plan is in place to address identified key issues

1. Action plan

Please provide an action plan covering the five-year award period.

Guidance

Based on the department's evidence base and self-assessment, please present an action plan that addresses the department's key issues and priorities. Please ensure the plan covers ongoing and planned actions for the next five years, and clearly cross-references the key priorities as identified in the previous section.

For each action define an appropriate success/outcome measure, identify the person/ position(s) responsible for the action, and timescales for beginning and completion (and milestones where relevant). Please provide specific detail to indicate what intervention is planned to address identified issues.

Applicants will need to assure themselves that their planned actions are within the law, including when making use of positive action measures (the Equality and Human Rights Commission provide further guidance for those working in England, Scotland and Wales, and the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland offer guidance for those working in Northern Ireland.)

While ongoing self-assessment and data collection actions are likely to be necessary throughout the award period, please ensure these actions are balanced with proactive intervention that will effect change.

It is useful to include the baseline for actions (for example, in a "rationale" column) which will support the creation of measurable targets and the ongoing evaluation of progress. Measurable, quantifiable targets are strongly preferred, where possible.

Please ensure actions, and their measures of success, are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound (SMART).

Appendix 1: Culture survey data or equivalent

Please present the results of the culture survey questions used, or the results of equivalent survey questions or consultation findings related to the culture survey themes.

Appendix 2: Data tables

Please present the mandatory data tables, and if desired, any additional datasets.

Appendix 3: Glossary

Please provide a glossary of abbreviations and acronyms used in the application.

Silver department application form

Section 1: An overview of the department and its approach to gender equality

In Section 1, applicants should evidence how they meet Criterion A:

- + structures and process are in place to underpin and recognise gender equality work

Recommended word count: 2,500 words

1. Letter of endorsement from the head of the department

Please insert (with appropriate letterhead) a signed letter of endorsement from the head of the department.

Guidance

Please highlight the key priorities, achievements and challenges within the department relating to gender equality and how the principles of the Athena Swan Charter are linked to departmental strategy. It is an opportunity to evidence the personal commitment and involvement of the head of the department (for example, any involvement in the self-assessment or particular actions) and how the department's gender equality work is led and supported by the senior management of the department.

2. Description of the department and its context

Please provide an introduction to the department.

Guidance

Please provide an overview of the department, including a description of contextual factors that are particular to the department; for example, location, discipline coverage, structure, split-site locations or organisational information (such as the department's relationship with the faculty, university or community partners). Outline key contextual changes and developments which have taken place since your last award. Data analysis is covered in subsequent sections so there is no need to include it in this section.

3. Governance and recognition of equality, diversity and inclusion work

Please provide a description of your equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) structures, staff and department-level resources

Guidance

Please describe the department's key management and committee structures, and the formal structures in place to carry out and support the department's equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) activity. Please describe the formal processes in place to distribute, recognise and reward EDI work, referencing university-level policies where appropriate.

Please provide an overview of how EDI work is supported by and embedded within the governance structure of the department, and how it links with university-level EDI structures.

Please explain how EDI work (including work relating to Athena Swan) is distributed, accounted for, recognised, and rewarded; for example, in a workload allocation model, at appraisal, and/or through promotions and progression pathways.

4. Development, evaluation and effectiveness of policies

Please describe the processes in place for developing, evaluating and revising departmental policies (where relevant), and for evaluating the implementation of institutional policies.

Guidance

Please provide an overview of how the department ensures that departmental policies are fit-for-purpose, how they are evaluated and how their effectiveness and impact are assessed. Please include an overview of any consultative approaches (with staff, students or external stakeholders) that are used to inform these processes. Please explain how the department ensures that policies support an inclusive culture and do not negatively impact on staff or students due to sex, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, gender identity, trans status or caring responsibilities. If the department does not set any policies at this level, there is no need to respond to this part of the question.

Please reflect on how the department evaluates the implementation of university-level policies in the department, including how feedback is collected and returned to the university for consideration.

5. Athena Swan self-assessment process

Please provide an overview of who was involved in the preparation of this application, how it was prepared, and what plans are in place to support the department's future gender equality work.

Guidance

Please provide an overview of the self-assessment team (SAT) undertaking the self-assessment work, including a table briefly describing SAT members' professional/student role in the department and their role in the SAT. The SAT's composition should reflect the profile of the department in relation to staff type, grades and roles.

Where possible, SAT membership should include a diverse range of people in relation to sex, trans status, gender identity and caring responsibilities, including those experiencing intersectional inequalities. Please provide an explanation of how the process for recruiting SAT members has considered the diversity of the department. Departments are not required to provide data on the characteristics of individual SAT members.

In constituting and describing their SAT, departments are reminded to be mindful of individuals' privacy and confidentiality, that an undue burden of work or emotional labour is not placed on those impacted negatively by existing structures, policies and cultures and that the work of the SAT members is appropriately recognized and rewarded (see section 1.3).

Please include a summary of how the SAT has undertaken the self-assessment process, including details of what sources of data have been used to inform the application, and how the SAT has consulted with staff and students (see page 62 for more information on the departmental culture survey). Details should be provided (where appropriate) of consultation response rates disaggregated by sex. If the SAT have collected additional demographic information on consultation respondents, disaggregation of consultation response rates by other characteristics can be provided, where this is appropriate and where confidentiality can be assured. Where relevant, applicants should reflect on how the SAT responded to and acted on the panel feedback provided on the previous application.

Please also include an overview of how the department plans to deliver and maintain gender equality activity over the coming 5-year period, including how often the SAT will meet, how SAT succession and turnover will be planned and managed, and (where appropriate) how the action plan will be implemented, evaluated and updated.

Section 2: An evaluation of the department's progress and success

In Section 2, applicants should evidence how they meet Criteria D and E:

- + progress against the applicant's previously identified priorities has been demonstrated
- + success in addressing gender inequality has been evidenced

Recommended word count: 2000 words

1. Evaluating progress against the previous action plan

Please provide a critical evaluation of your most recent action plan and any other actions you have initiated since your award.

Guidance

Please provide the most recent iteration of the action plan associated with the department's previous award. Please 'RAG' rate (rate 'red', 'amber' or 'green') the action plan using the following definitions:

- + Red: No progress was made on this action. For example: The action was never undertaken; the action was started but was permanently discontinued; further work is needed to begin the action or to revise the approach.
- + Amber: Partial progress was made on this action. For example: the action has begun but is incomplete; the action was completed but the outcomes or impacts were not as predicted/desired; further work is needed to complete the action or to obtain the desired outcome or impact.
- + Green: Good progress was made on this action. For example: the action was completed with outcomes or impacts as (or very close to) predicted/desired; no further work is needed on this action.

Please provide an overview of the progress achieved in implementing the department's previous action plan. Please describe the methodology of action implementation, evaluation and iteration. Please reflect on actions from the previous action plan which have been rated as amber or red, and any actions which were removed over the course of the award.

Please provide detail about how the department evaluated the success (or otherwise) of actions, and what factors (internal or external to the department) acted as barriers or facilitators to the department's implementation of actions and achievement of success measures. Where challenges to successful implementation were noted, please outline what steps were made to respond to these, and how the action plan was adjusted. Please describe the main learnings and outcomes from the evaluation of the action plan and consider how the department can apply the learning to ensure an improved implementation of the future action plan, and secure better outcomes or impacts.

2. Evaluating success against the department's key priorities

Please describe the department's key achievements in gender equality.

Guidance

Please provide evidence of how the department has achieved the desired outcome or improvement against at least two of the department's previously identified key priorities.

When describing success observed against the key priorities, please refer to qualitative and quantitative data to evidence their statements where possible. Please reflect on the main facilitators or factors that supported the department to achieve success and identify whether there are any aspects that could be translated to other areas to support success against the department's other key priorities.

Section 3: An assessment of the department's gender equality context

In Section 3, applicants should evidence how they meet Criterion B:

- + evidence-based recognition has been demonstrated of the key issues facing the applicant

Recommended word count: 3500 words

1. Culture, inclusion and belonging

Please describe how the department ensures their culture and practices support inclusion and belonging.

Guidance

Please outline key findings from the department's evaluation of its culture as it relates to gender equality and inclusion. This could include the department's values, traditions, leadership, practices and behaviours and other formal and informal structures and interactions that characterise the working and learning environment of the department, affecting all staff and students. Please reflect on how the department actively considers gender equality and inclusivity within their culture, including how instances of negative practices or behaviours are addressed.

Please draw on data including departmental culture survey findings and/or other consultation findings with reference to data presented in Appendices 1-2. Whether or not you are using the culture survey as part of your evaluation, please consider your evaluation of culture through a gender equality lens across the six themes of the culture survey - belonging and inclusion, gender equality, work life balance, bullying and harassment, career development and well-being. These themes and their relevance to gender equality are described in detail on pg 64.

Please reflect on the department's current understanding of intersectional inequalities for staff and students, drawing on the department's cultural and qualitative evidence. Where issues have been identified, please include actions in the action plan that will support the department to address intersectional inequalities within this award cycle. The department can choose which intersecting characteristics to focus on providing is the analysis is relevant to the understanding of gender equality. The choice of intersecting characteristics should be evidence-based, informed by the department's specific context and/or regional or national data and trends.

Please evaluate the ways in which the department actively strives (or could in future, through action) for the inclusion of trans and non-binary people within the department's culture and practices. The provision of quantitative data is not required. If applicants choose to draw on quantitative data and the data indicate no or low rates of disclosure from eg. trans or non-binary people, applicants should still consider how to embed inclusive practices and approaches within culture and activity and are encouraged to use knowledge of wider good practice to do this.

Please evaluate the department's approach to ensuring culture and practices are inclusive and supportive of people with caring responsibilities and should consider how the department strives (or could in future, through action) to mitigate the gendered impact of caring responsibilities and career breaks. Applicants are encouraged to reflect on how the department supports flexibility for staff and students and supports the maintenance of a healthy 'whole life balance'.

2. Key priorities for future action

Please outline the department's key issues relating to gender equality, and explain the department's key priorities for future action.

Guidance

Please reflect on the evaluation in previous sections (including of policies, progress and culture), and all data sources used to inform the application in order to identify the department's key issues relating to gender equality. Please draw on the analysis of the mandatory datasets (and any additional datasets where relevant). Please analyse data by sex as a minimum and present data tables and/or charts in Appendices 1-2.

Please reflect on insights from the data analysis as they relate to gender equality (eg. the representation and progression of people of a particular sex, or trans or non-binary status). Please consider any trends or issues across job families, contract types or functions, or grades. Please also consider any aspects of good practice that could be translated to other areas, and any areas where improvement could be gained through future action. For the progression of professional, technical and operational (PTO) staff, please reflect on the progression pathways available for PTO staff, drawing on evidence as appropriate to inform the identification of good practice and areas for improvement. Please consider how issues have been influenced by external events; for example, the Covid-19 pandemic.

Based on the department's identification of key issues, please identify between four and eight key priorities that the department seeks to address with future action. Please ensure these key priorities are appropriate to the department's context and be justified based on quantitative and qualitative evidence. Please consider how the priorities address intersectional inequalities.

Applicants can carry previously identified key priorities into the upcoming award period; where previously identified priorities are adjusted or edited for incorporation in the coming award period, please explain the rationale for these changes.

Please ensure priorities are specific and detailed, allowing the department to target attention to areas of greatest need. Other, lower-priority goals can still be addressed through the action plan. Priority areas may be addressed through multiple SMART actions. Please cross-reference to the key priorities in the future action plan.

Section 4: Future action plan

In Section 4, applicants should evidence how they meet Criterion C:

- + an action plan is in place to address identified key issues

1. Action plan

Please provide an action plan covering the five-year award period.

Guidance

Based on the department's evidence base and self-assessment, please present an action plan that addresses the department's key issues and priorities. Please ensure the plan covers ongoing and planned actions for the next five years, and clearly cross-references the key priorities as identified in the previous section.

For each action, define an appropriate success/outcome measure, identify the person/ position(s) responsible for the action, and timescales for beginning and completion (and milestones where relevant). Please provide specific detail to indicate what intervention is planned to address identified issues.

Applicants will need to assure themselves that their planned actions are within the law, including when making use of positive action measures (the Equality and Human Rights Commission provide further guidance for those working in England, Scotland and Wales, and the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland offer guidance for those working in Northern Ireland.)

While ongoing self-assessment and data collection actions are likely to be necessary throughout the award period, please ensure these actions are balanced with proactive intervention which will effect change.

It is useful to include the baseline for actions (for example, in a “rationale” column) which will support the creation of measurable targets and the ongoing evaluation of progress. Measurable, quantifiable targets are strongly preferred, where possible.

Please ensure actions, and their measures of success, are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound (SMART).

Appendix 1: Culture survey data or equivalent

Please present the results of the departmental culture survey questions, or the results of any equivalent survey questions or consultation findings related to the culture survey themes.

Appendix 2: Data tables

Please present the mandatory data tables, and if desired, any additional datasets.

Appendix 3: Glossary

Please provide a glossary of abbreviations and acronyms used in the application.

Gold department application form

Section 1: An overview of the department and its approach to gender equality

In Section 1, applicants should evidence how they meet Criterion A:

- + structures and process are in place to underpin and recognise gender equality work

Recommended word count: 2,500 words

1. Letter of endorsement from the head of the department

Please insert (with appropriate letterhead) a signed letter of endorsement from the head of the department.

Guidance

Please highlight the key priorities, achievements and challenges within the department relating to gender equality and how the principles of the Athena Swan Charter are linked to departmental strategy. It is an opportunity to evidence the personal commitment and involvement of the head of the department (for example, any involvement in the self-assessment or particular actions) and how the department's gender equality work is led and supported by the senior management of the department.

2. Description of the department and its context

Please provide an introduction to the department.

Guidance

Please provide an overview of the department, including a description of contextual factors that are particular to the department; for example, location, discipline coverage, structure, split-site locations or organisational information (such as the department's structure, or relationship with the faculty, university or community partners). Outline key contextual changes and developments which have taken place since your last award. Data analysis is covered in subsequent sections so there is no need to include it in this section.

3. Governance and recognition of equality, diversity and inclusion work

Please provide a description of your equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) structures, staff and department-level resources.

Guidance

Please describe the department's key management and committee structures, and the formal structures in place to carry out and support the department's equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) activity. Please describe the formal processes in place to distribute, recognise and reward EDI work, referencing university-level policies where appropriate.

Please provide an overview of how EDI work is supported by and embedded within the governance structure of the department, and how it links with university-level EDI structures.

Please explain how EDI work (including work relating to Athena Swan) is distributed, accounted for, recognised and rewarded; for example, in a workload allocation model, at appraisal, and/or through promotions and progression pathways.

4. Development, evaluation and effectiveness of policies

Please describe the processes in place for developing, evaluating and revising departmental policies (where relevant), and for evaluating the implementation of institutional policies.

Guidance

Please provide an overview of how the department ensures that departmental policies are fit-for-purpose, how they are evaluated and how their effectiveness and impact are assessed. Please include an overview of any consultative approaches (with staff, students or external stakeholders) which are used to inform these processes.

Please explain how the department ensures that policies support an inclusive culture and do not negatively impact on staff or students due to sex, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, gender identity, trans status, or caring responsibilities. If the department does not set any policies at this level, there is no need to respond to this part of the question.

Please also reflect on how the department evaluates the implementation of university-level policies in the department, including how feedback is collected and returned to the university for consideration.

5. Athena Swan self-assessment process

Please provide an overview of who was involved in the preparation of this application, how it was prepared, and what plans are in place to support the department's future gender equality work.

Guidance

Please provide an overview of the self-assessment team (SAT) undertaking the self-assessment work, including a table briefly describing SAT members' professional/student role in the department and their role in the SAT. The SAT's composition should reflect the profile of the department in relation to staff type, grades and roles.

Where possible, SAT membership should include a diverse range of people in relation to sex, trans status, gender identity and caring responsibilities, including those experiencing intersectional inequalities. Please provide an explanation of how the process for recruiting SAT members has considered the diversity of the department. Departments are not required to provide data on the characteristics of individual SAT members.

In constituting and describing their SAT, departments are reminded to be mindful of individuals' privacy and confidentiality, that an undue burden of work or emotional labour is not placed on those impacted negatively by existing structures, policies and cultures and that the work of the SAT members is appropriately recognized and rewarded (see section 1.3).

Please include a summary of how the SAT has undertaken the self-assessment process, including details of what sources of data have been used to inform the application, and how the SAT has consulted with staff and students (see page 62 for more information on the departmental culture survey). Details should be provided (where appropriate) of consultation response rates disaggregated by sex. If the SAT have collected additional demographic information on consultation respondents, disaggregation of consultation response rates by other characteristics can be provided, where this is appropriate and where confidentiality can be assured. Where relevant, applicants should reflect on how the SAT responded to and acted on the panel feedback provided on the previous application.

Please also include an overview of how the department plans to deliver and maintain gender equality activity over the coming 5-year period, including how often the SAT will meet, how SAT succession and turnover will be planned and managed, and (where appropriate) how the action plan will be implemented, evaluated and updated.

Section 2: An evaluation of the department's progress and success

In Section 2, applicants should evidence how they meet Criteria D and E:

- + progress against the applicant's previously identified priorities has been demonstrated
- + success in addressing gender inequality has been evidenced

Recommended word count: 2500 words

1. Evaluating progress against the previous action plan

Please provide a critical evaluation of your most recent action plan and any other actions you have initiated since your award.

Guidance

Please provide the most recent iteration of the action plan associated with the department's previous award. Please 'RAG' rate (rate 'red', 'amber' or 'green') the action plan using the following definitions:

- + Red: No progress was made on this action. For example: The action was never undertaken; the action was started but was permanently discontinued; further work is needed to begin the action or to revise the approach.
- + Amber: Partial progress was made on this action. For example: the action has begun but is incomplete; the action was completed but the outcomes or impacts were not as predicted/desired; further work is needed to complete the action or to obtain the desired outcome or impact.
- + Green: Good progress was made on this action. For example: the action was completed with outcomes or impacts as (or very close to) predicted/desired; no further work is needed on this action.

Please provide an overview of the progress achieved in implementing the department's previous action plan. Please describe the methodology of action implementation, evaluation and iteration. Please reflect on actions from the previous action plan which have been rated as amber or red, and any actions which were removed over the course of the award. Please detail how the department evaluated the success (or otherwise) of actions, and what factors (internal or external to the department) acted as barriers or facilitators to the department's implementation of actions and meeting of success measures. Where challenges to successful implementation were noted, please outline what steps were made to respond to these, and how the action plan was adjusted. Please describe the main learnings and outcomes from the evaluation of the action plan and consider how the department can apply the learning to ensure an improved implementation of the future action plan, and secure better outcomes or impacts.

2. Evaluating success against the department's key priorities

Please describe the department's key achievements in gender equality.

Guidance

Please provide evidence of how the department has achieved the desired outcome or improvement against at least three of the previously identified key priorities. Please evidence how the department has achieved longitudinal improvement over the course of more than one award cycle.

Please outline the key priorities for action previously identified by the department at Bronze and Silver levels in this section in order to support the applicant's evaluation of longitudinal success.

When describing success observed against the key priorities, please refer to qualitative and quantitative data to evidence statements where possible. Please reflect on the main facilitators or factors that supported the department to achieve success and identify whether there are any aspects that could be translated to other areas to support success against the department's other key priorities.

Section 3: An evaluation of the department's sector-leading activity

In Section 3, applicants should evidence how they meet Criterion F:

- + evidence of sector-leading gender equality practice and supporting others to improve

Recommended word count: 1,500 words

1. Maintaining good practice and innovation

Please provide exemplars of good practice and/or beacon activities which demonstrate that the department is, and strives to remain, sector leading.

Guidance

Please provide examples of how the department has been innovative in their gender equality work. Please outline how the department continually monitors and updates their practices and policies in order to remain innovative and inclusive. Please take into account how the department is embedding an intersectional approach and ensuring the inclusion of and support for people of all gender identities.

2. Supporting others to improve

Please describe how the department has supported others to achieve success in gender equality.

Guidance

Please outline how the department has supported others to improve, and how the department's activity has resulted in good practice being taken up by others. Please consider the department's influence on, mentorships of, and support for others outside the department; for example, this could include departments within and beyond their university, organisations, industry partners, or professional bodies, within or beyond higher education.

Section 4: An assessment of the department's gender equality context

In Section 4, applicants should evidence how they meet Criterion B:

- + evidence-based recognition has been demonstrated of the key issues facing the applicant

Recommended word count: 3,500 words

1 Culture, inclusion and belonging

Please describe how the department ensures their culture and practices support inclusion and belonging.

Guidance

Please outline key findings from the department's evaluation of its culture as it relates to gender equality and inclusion. This could include the department's values, traditions, leadership, practices and behaviours and other formal and informal structures and interactions that characterise the working and learning environment of the department, affecting all staff and students. Please reflect on how the department actively considers gender equality and inclusivity within its culture, including how instances of negative practices or behaviours are addressed.

Please draw on data including departmental culture survey findings and/or other consultation findings with reference to data presented in Appendices 1-2. Whether or not you are using the culture survey as part of your evaluation, please consider your evaluation of culture through a gender equality lens across the six themes of the culture survey - belonging and inclusion, gender equality, work life balance, bullying and harassment, career development and well-being. These themes and their relevance to gender equality are described in detail on pg 64

Please reflect on the department's current understanding of intersectional inequalities for staff and students, drawing on the department's cultural and qualitative evidence. Where issues have been identified, please include actions in the action plan which will support the department to address intersectional inequalities within this award cycle. The department can choose which intersecting characteristics to focus on providing the analysis is relevant to the understanding of gender equality. This choice of intersecting characteristics should be evidence-based, informed by the department's specific context and/or regional or national data and trends.

Please evaluate the ways in which the department actively strives (or could in future, through action) for the inclusion of trans and non-binary people within the department's culture and practices. The provision of quantitative data is not required. If applicants choose to draw on quantitative data and the data indicate no or low rates of disclosure from eg. trans or non-binary people, applicants should still consider how to embed inclusive practices and approaches within culture and activity and are encouraged to use knowledge of wider good practice to do this.

Please evaluate the department's approach to ensuring culture and practices are inclusive and supportive of people with caring responsibilities and should consider how the department strives (or could in future, through action) to mitigate the gendered impact of caring responsibilities and career breaks. Applicants are encouraged to reflect on how the department supports flexibility for staff and students and supports the maintenance of a healthy 'whole life balance'.

2 Key priorities for future action

Please outline the department's key issues relating to gender equality and explain key priorities for future action

Guidance

Please reflect on the evaluation in previous sections (including of policies, progress and culture), and all data sources used to inform the application in order to identify the department's key issues relating to gender equality. Please draw on the analysis of the mandatory datasets (and any additional datasets where relevant). Please analyse data by sex as a minimum and present data tables and/or charts in Appendices 1-2.

Please reflect on insights from the data analysis particularly as these relate to gender equality (eg. the representation and progression of people of a particular sex, or trans or non-binary status). Please consider any trends or issues across job families, contract types or functions, or grades. Please also consider any aspects of good practice that could be translated to other areas, and any areas where improvement could be gained through future action. For the progression of professional, technical and operational (PTO) staff, please reflect on the progression pathways available for PTO staff, drawing on evidence as appropriate to inform the identification of good practice and areas for improvement.

Please consider how issues have been influenced by external events; for example, the Covid-19 pandemic.

Based on the department's identification of key issues, please identify between four and eight key priorities that the department seeks to address with future action. Please ensure these key priorities are appropriate to the department's context and justified based on quantitative and qualitative evidence. Please consider how the priorities address intersectional inequalities.

Applicants can carry previously identified key priorities into the upcoming award period; where previously identified priorities are adjusted or edited for incorporation in the coming award period, please explain the rationale for these changes.

Please ensure priorities are specific and detailed, allowing the department to target attention to areas of greatest need. Other, lower-priority goals can still be addressed through the action plan. Priority areas may be addressed through multiple SMART actions. Please cross-reference to the key priorities in the future action plan.

Section 5: Future action plan

In Section 5, applicants should evidence how they meet Criterion C:

- + an action plan is in place to address identified key issues

1. Action plan

Please provide an action plan covering the five-year award period.

Guidance

Based on the department's evidence base and self-assessment, please present an action plan that addresses the department's key issues and priorities. Please ensure the plan covers ongoing and planned actions for the next five years, and clearly cross-references the key priorities as identified in the previous section.

For each action define an appropriate success/outcome measure, identify the person/ position(s) responsible for the action, and timescales for beginning and completion (and milestones where relevant). Please provide specific detail to indicate what intervention is planned to address identified issues.

Applicants will need to assure themselves that their planned actions are within the law, including when making use of positive action measures (the Equality and Human Rights Commission provide further guidance for those working in England, Scotland and Wales, and the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland offer guidance for those working in Northern Ireland.)

While ongoing self-assessment and data collection actions are likely to be necessary throughout the award period, please ensure these actions are balanced with proactive intervention which will effect change.

It is useful to include the baseline for actions (for example, in a "rationale" column) which will support the creation of measurable targets and the ongoing evaluation of progress. Measurable, quantifiable targets are strongly preferred, where possible.

Please ensure actions, and their measures of success, are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound (SMART).

Appendix 1: Culture survey data or equivalent

Please present the results of the core culture survey questions or the results of equivalent survey questions or consultation on the culture survey themes.

Appendix 2: Data tables

Please present the mandatory data tables, and if desired, any additional datasets.

Appendix 3: Glossary

Please provide a glossary of abbreviations and acronyms used in the application.

Department renewal application form

Section 1: An overview of the department and its approach to gender equality

In Section 1, applicants should evidence how they meet Criterion A:

- + structures and process are in place to underpin and recognise gender equality work

Recommended word count: 2,500 words

1. Letter of endorsement from the head of the department

Please insert (with appropriate letterhead) a signed letter of endorsement from the head of the department.

Guidance

Please highlight the key priorities and challenges within the department relating to gender equality and how the principles of the Athena Swan Charter are linked to departmental strategy. It is an opportunity to evidence the personal commitment and involvement of the head of the department (for example, any involvement in the self-assessment or particular actions) and how the department's gender equality work is led and supported by the senior management of the department.

2. Description of the department and its context

Please provide an introduction to the department.

Guidance

Please provide an overview of the department, including a description of contextual factors that are particular to the department; for example, location, discipline coverage, structure, split-site locations or organisational information (such as the department's relationship with the faculty, university or community partners). Outline key contextual changes and developments which have taken place since your last award. Data analysis is covered in subsequent sections so there is no need to include it in this section.

3. Athena Swan self-assessment process

Please provide an overview of who was involved in the preparation of this application, how it was prepared, and what plans are in place to support the department's future gender equality work.

Guidance

Please provide an overview of the self-assessment team (SAT) undertaking the self-assessment work, including a table briefly describing SAT members' professional/student role in the department and their role in the SAT. The SAT's composition should reflect the profile of the department in relation to staff type, grades and roles.

Where possible, SAT membership should include a diverse range of people in relation to sex, trans status, gender identity and caring responsibilities, including those experiencing intersectional inequalities. Please provide an explanation of how the process for recruiting SAT members has considered the diversity of the department. Departments are not required to provide data on the characteristics of individual SAT members.

In constituting and describing their SAT, departments are reminded to be mindful of individuals' privacy and confidentiality, that an undue burden of work or emotional labour is not placed on those impacted negatively by existing structures, policies and cultures and that the work of the SAT members is appropriately recognized and rewarded (see section 1.3).

Please include a summary of how the SAT has undertaken the self-assessment process, including details of what sources of data have been used to inform the application, and how the SAT has consulted with staff and students (see page 62 for more information on the departmental culture survey). Details should be provided (where appropriate) of consultation response rates disaggregated by sex. If the SAT have collected additional demographic information on consultation respondents, disaggregation of consultation response rates by other characteristics can be provided, where this is appropriate and where confidentiality can be assured. Where relevant, applicants should reflect on how the SAT responded to and acted on the panel feedback provided on the previous application.

Please also include an overview of how the department plans to deliver and maintain gender equality activity over the coming 5-year period, including how often the SAT will meet, how SAT succession and turnover will be planned and managed, and (where appropriate) how the action plan will be implemented, evaluated and updated.

Section 2: An evaluation of the department's progress and issues

In Section 2, applicants should evidence how they meet Criteria B and D:

- + progress against the applicant's previously identified priorities has been demonstrated
- + evidence-based recognition has been demonstrated of the key issues facing the applicant
Recommended word count: 3,000 words

1. Evaluating progress against the previous action plan

Please provide a critical evaluation of your most recent action plan and any other actions you have initiated since your award.

Guidance

Please provide the most recent iteration of the action plan associated with the department's previous award. Please 'RAG' rate (rated 'red', 'amber' or 'green') the action plan using the following definitions:

- + Red: No progress was made on this action. For example: The action was never undertaken; the action was started but was permanently discontinued; further work is needed to begin the action or to revise the approach.
- + Amber: Partial progress was made on this action. For example: the action has begun but is incomplete; the action was completed but the outcomes or impacts were not as predicted/desired; further work is needed to complete the action or to obtain the desired outcome or impact.
- + Green: Good progress was made on this action. For example: the action was completed with outcomes or impacts as (or very close to) predicted/desired; no further work is needed on this action.

Please provide an overview of the progress achieved in implementing the department's previous action plan. Please describe the methodology of action implementation, evaluation and iteration. Please reflect on actions from the previous action plan that have been rated as amber or red, and any actions which were removed over the course of the award. Please detail how the department evaluated the success (or otherwise) of actions, and what factors (internal or external to the department) acted as barriers or facilitators to the department's implementation of actions and meeting of success measures. Where challenges to successful implementation were noted, please outline what steps were made to respond to these, and how the action plan was adjusted. Please describe the main learnings and outcomes from the evaluation of the action plan, and consider how the department can apply the learning to ensure an improved implementation of the future action plan, and secure better outcomes or impacts.

2. Key priorities for future action

Please describe the department's key issues relating to gender equality and explain the key priorities for action.

Guidance

Please reflect on the evaluation of progress and all data sources used to inform the application in order to identify the department's key issues relating to gender equality.

Please consider whether and how the department's gender equality issues have changed since their previous award. Please draw on the analysis of the mandatory datasets (and any additional datasets where relevant). Please analyse data by sex as a minimum and present data tables and/or charts in Appendices 1-2. Please reflect on insights from the data analysis as these relate to gender equality (eg. the representation and progression of people of a particular sex, or trans or non-binary status).

Please consider any aspects of good practice that could be translated to other areas, and any areas where improvement could be gained through future action. Please also consider how issues have been influenced by external events; for example, the Covid-19 pandemic.

Based on the identification of the department's key issues, please identify no more than 4-8 key priorities that the department seeks to address with future action. Please ensure these key priorities are appropriate to the department's context and justified based on quantitative and qualitative evidence. Please consider how the priorities address intersectional inequalities.

Please refer to previously identified key priorities. If applicable, applicants can carry previously identified key priorities into the upcoming award period; where previously identified priorities are adjusted or edited for incorporation in the coming award period, please explain the rationale for these changes.

Please ensure priorities should be specific and detailed, allowing the department to target attention to areas of greatest need. Other, lower-priority goals can still be addressed through the action plan. Priority areas may be addressed through multiple SMART actions. Please cross-reference to the key priorities in the future action plan.

Section 3: Future action plan

In Section 3, applicants should evidence how they meet Criterion C:

- + an action plan is in place to address identified key issues

1. Action plan

Please provide an action plan covering the five-year award period.

Guidance

Based on the department's evidence base and self-assessment, please present an action plan that addresses the department's key issues and priorities.

Please ensure the plan covers ongoing and planned actions for the next five years, and clearly cross-references the key priorities as identified in the previous section.

For each action define an appropriate success/outcome measure, identify the person/ position(s) responsible for the action, and timescales for beginning and completion (and milestones where relevant). Please provide specific detail to indicate what intervention is planned to address identified issues.

Applicants will need to assure themselves that their planned actions are within the law, including when making use of positive action measures (the Equality and Human Rights Commission provide further guidance for those working in England, Scotland and Wales, and the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland offer guidance for those working in Northern Ireland.)

While ongoing self-assessment and data collection actions are likely to be necessary throughout the award period, please ensure these actions are balanced with proactive intervention that will effect change.

It is useful to include the baseline for actions (for example, in a "rationale" column) which will support the creation of measurable targets and the ongoing evaluation of progress. Measurable, quantifiable targets are strongly preferred, where possible.

Please ensure actions, and their measures of success, are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound (SMART).

Appendix 1: Culture survey data or equivalent

Please present the results of the departmental culture survey questions used or the results of equivalent survey questions or consultation related to the culture survey themes.

Appendix 2: Data tables

Please present the mandatory data tables, and if desired, any additional datasets.

Appendix 3: Glossary

Please provide a glossary of abbreviations and acronyms used in the application.

Athena Swan data requirements for Department applicants

Department applications

In first-time Bronze applications, please present three years of data where possible (where not possible, please explain why). In Bronze renewal, Silver and Gold applications, please present data covering the period since the previous application. Data for earlier periods can be included if desired; for example, to support the applicant's demonstration of longitudinal improvement. When presenting data, please include both numbers and proportions for ease of interpretation.

Please disaggregate mandatory staff and student data by grade (for staff data) and sex. Applicants can also choose to analyse data about gender identity if it is available (e.g. via self-service data systems). When collecting data on sex, it is important to accept the sex that staff and students declare; responses do not need to be verified and applicants are advised not to ask staff and students to prove their sex by showing a birth certificate or Gender Recognition Certificate. Asking about a respondent's gender identity in the same form as asking about their sex can inadvertently out someone who has a trans identity or history. For this reason, departments are advised to only ask both questions where 'prefer not to say' options are available and respondents are informed about the level of confidentiality that can be assured. Further guidance on questions for asking staff about their sex, gender identity and other characteristics can be found in Advance HE's [Guidance on the Collection of Diversity Monitoring Data](#).

Faculty-level applications

In addition to the above advice, in applications from faculties (eg. containing sub-units, often called departments, which have their own academic or professional focus, context and structures), please present data disaggregated by sub-unit wherever possible.

Department data requirements

Please present the following datasets where possible. Where not possible, please explain why and, where appropriate, include an action in the action plan to address this moving forward.

Department data requirements	
1	Students at foundation, UG, PGT and PGR level
2	Degree attainment and/or completion rates for students at foundation, UG, PGT and PGR level
3	Academic staff by grade and contract function
4	Academic staff by grade and contract type
5	Professional, technical and operational (PTO) staff by grade and job family
6	PTO staff by grade and contract type
7	Applications, shortlist and appointments made in recruitment to academic posts by grade
8	Applications, shortlist and appointments made in recruitment to PTO posts by grade
9	Applications and success rates for academic promotion by grade
10	Applications and success rates for PTO progression by grade (where there are formal routes for progression)

Please present these data in Appendix 2 and cross-reference from the main sections of the application.

Consultation with your community

To explore the gender equality context and identify priorities for action, all applicants are expected to undergo a self-assessment, led by a representative team reflecting the profile of the department, and informed by staff and student communities. There are a variety of ways that staff and students can input to and inform your self-assessment, including full or pulse surveys, focus groups, interviews, liaising with networks and unions, town hall meetings, and many more.

As you begin your application preparation, we encourage applicants to map existing opportunities to gather information and input from your communities – this will help you mitigate ‘consultation fatigue’. For example, you may already be collecting relevant evidence through an annual staff survey, the National Student Survey (NSS) or Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES). If desired, you can include the results of consultation exercises such as these in Appendix 1 of your application.

Additionally, as you progress through your self-assessment, you might find that you require further exploration to help you understand the issues emerging from your assessment. For example, the departmental culture survey (discussed further below) can help you to evaluate culture in your institution or department and to identify your key gender equality issues. You might need to triangulate these findings with other forms of evidence or staff and student consultation in order to fully understand the issues and propose priorities for future action.

The departmental culture survey

We have created and piloted a survey to support departmental applicants to explore and assess the inclusivity of your culture, through a gender equality lens (see Box below). We recommend that departmental applicants use either the full culture survey (28 questions) or embed seven 'core' questions into existing staff survey, however the use of the survey is not mandatory.

Survey questions are organised by six themes:

Theme 1: Belonging and Inclusion

Theme 2: Gender Equality

Theme 3: Work-Life Balance

Theme 4: Bullying and Harassment

Theme 5: Career Development

Theme 6: Wellbeing

Please see the 'Culture Survey themes' section below for further in-depth guidance on the themes. To support flexibility, departments also have the choice to consult staff on the survey themes through other means; for example, via focus groups or equivalent survey questions. This option is intended to support small departments for whom a qualitative approach may be more valuable, as well as departments who already ask very similar questions in existing surveys, including as part of regular institution-wide surveys.

The culture survey is primarily designed with a focus on staff. Evaluation of the inclusivity of your culture for students may draw on a range of sources, including existing surveys (eg, National Student Survey, Student Academic Experience Survey, Postgraduate Research Experience Survey). If desired, departments can also adapt the culture survey for use with students, taking into account that some themes and questions are less relevant to them.

If your department chooses not to use the survey questions outlined on the following pages, please ensure that your consultation still evaluates the inclusivity of your culture for people of all gender identities and with reference to the survey themes described below.

Applying as a faculty?

The culture survey (or its core questions) is also recommended for use by faculty applicants to inform your assessment of culture. Please analyse and present faculty-level survey findings disaggregated by sub-unit wherever possible.

When to run the survey

To ensure that your results are relevant to your current context, we recommend that you run your survey in the year leading up to your submission, and at a minimum, within two years of your application.

Data collection and analysis take time, so we encourage applicants to consider and make a plan for the timing of the survey as they begin their application preparation. Consider other events in the departmental and university calendar that might be facilitators or barriers to gaining good participation in the survey; eg. school holidays, examination or marking periods, other consultation deadlines. Consult with central EDI and data teams for their support and guidance on timing. Where there are several departments in your institution using the survey, you may wish to consider coordinating data collection efforts.

Athena Swan culture survey – Department applicants

Implementation of the departmental culture survey

Departmental applicants have a choice of running the full culture survey, embedding the core questions into existing surveys, or using alternative consultation exercises to reflect on the survey themes. As a minimum, please include the results of your consultation on the inclusivity of your culture for people of all gender identities, with reference to the survey themes in the application under Appendix 1.

We recommend that survey respondents are asked to respond to each statement using a 5-point scale:

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not applicable	Don't know	Prefer not to say
1	2	3	4	5	X	X	X

Applicants may introduce open text fields in their survey to collect additional comments if they wish.

As a minimum, please ask respondents a question about their sex and a question about their role in the department (eg. academic, PTO staff) to enable analysis of differences by sex, job family or career type. Applicants have the flexibility to tailor how they phrase monitoring questions based on their context, and are encouraged to refer to Advance HE's latest guidance on diversity monitoring questions for recommended wording.⁴

Departments may also wish to use the survey to evaluate the inclusivity of their culture for trans and non-binary staff, however, you are not required to present quantitative data. Where numbers are very small, quantitative methods may not be appropriate. Also, asking about a respondent's gender identity or trans status in the same form as asking about their sex can inadvertently out someone who has a trans identity or history. For this reason, departments that choose use the culture survey in this way are advised only to ask both questions where 'prefer not to say' options are available, and respondents are informed about the level of confidentiality that can be assured.

⁴ www.advance-he.ac.uk/guidance/equality-diversity-and-inclusion/using-data-and-evidence/monitoring-questions

Where this is not feasible (for example in small departments), please explore the inclusivity of culture for trans and non-binary staff through other means appropriate to the department's context, eg. engaging with staff networks, qualitative data collection and analysis, or drawing on wider practice in the sector.

To support the fulfilment of members' statutory obligations (eg. PSED), we have recommended the collection and analysis of departmental survey data by sex. We recognize that some applicants will have existing surveys in which gender identity data is collected to complement activities relating to sex as a protected characteristic. Where applicants have assured themselves that they are meeting their legal responsibilities, they may choose to use survey data analysed by gender identity instead of sex to inform their Athena Swan assessment and action plan.

Culture Survey themes

The Athena Swan culture survey supports you to explore inclusion across your population at an individual level, from a gender equality perspective. Survey questions are organised by six themes:

- Theme 1: Belonging and Inclusion
- Theme 2: Gender Equality
- Theme 3: Work-Life Balance
- Theme 4: Bullying and Harassment
- Theme 5: Career Development
- Theme 6: Wellbeing

Please find below further information on how analysis of your culture on each of these themes can help you to identify and address gender equality issues.

If you choose to use other means to evaluate your culture, please assess the inclusivity of your culture with a gender equality lens, across these six culture survey themes. You may wish to refer to the objectives listed under each theme below to inform any alternative consultation methods.

Belonging and inclusion

Workplace inclusion can be defined as ‘the extent to which everyone at work, regardless of their background, identity, or circumstance, feels valued, accepted, and supported to succeed at work.’² Inclusion is often understood as the satisfaction of two fundamental human needs – one for belonging and safety and the other for uniqueness.³ Feelings of belonging and inclusion may affect staff members’ engagement with their role, willingness to contribute ideas and likelihood of staying and progressing in an organisation.⁴

Inclusion and a sense of belonging can be more challenging for those who do not identify with or feel part of the dominant culture or whose voices have historically been marginalised. In higher education institutions, as in wider society, the voices and contributions of women – particularly those facing intersectional inequalities - have often been less visible and valued than their male counterparts.⁵ Trans and non-binary people may, in addition, not always feel safe to be open about their identity or face challenges with being recognised and accepted, such as being misgendered.⁶

The objectives of exploring this theme are:

- + To examine how various aspects of belonging and inclusion are experienced by people of different sexes and gender identities and depending on their staff roles.
- + To monitor changes in how different individuals experience of belonging and inclusion, and any relationship to specific actions taken – such as changes to departmental communications or decision-making processes – that may affect sense of belonging from a gender equality perspective.

Insights from exploring this theme can help to identify aspects of inclusion which need addressing, or groups who need to be given greater voice, visibility, or support. This, in turn, can improve staff engagement, and job satisfaction as well as retention and progression.

Gender Equality

This theme focuses explicitly on individual staff perceptions of the department's commitment to addressing gender equality and inclusion.

The Athena Swan survey questions relate to women's visibility in leadership, evidence of progression and recognition of staff contributions to EDI work. There is also a specific question related to efforts to mitigate the impacts of Covid-19 on staff, which has been retained due to the ongoing impacts of the pandemic.

The objectives of exploring this theme are:

- + To understand how departmental commitment and efforts to progress gender equality are perceived by staff of different sexes and gender identities and depending on their staff roles;
- + To assess perceptions of how contributions to the department's EDI work are recognised and rewarded.
- + To identify any group specific concerns or vulnerabilities regarding efforts to address gender equality.
- + To monitor changes in the overall culture and climate in the department regarding gender equality including in response to actions in this area.

Exploring this theme can help departments to address any gaps between well-intentioned actions and views of progress on gender equality, and how they are perceived by the groups they are intended to benefit. Findings on this theme may inform, for example, how you consult stakeholders and create spaces for discussions with and between women, men, and non-binary people on gender equality issues and priorities.

Work-Life Balance

This theme explores how individuals experience departmental support for balancing work with caring responsibilities, whether departments enable flexible working, and whether decisions about workload are perceived to be made fairly.

Gendered norms related to caring responsibilities mean that women typically pay a greater 'parenthood penalty' than men in terms of career progression, with a higher likelihood of working part time.⁷ The Covid -19 pandemic highlighted the challenge of balancing caring responsibilities with work demands – particularly for parents with young children - and created potential opportunities for positive disruption to gendered norms.⁸ While there has been progress in extending access to flexible working, gaps in support remain and may be particularly constraining for women's careers.⁹

The objectives of exploring this theme are:

- + To highlight whether departmental support for people with caring responsibilities - and those impacted negatively by the Covid-19 pandemic - is experienced differently, by people of different sexes and gender identities, and depending on their staff roles.
- + To identify differences in perceptions of departmental support for flexible working.
- + To assess individual perceptions of how fairly departments allocate workload.
- + To monitor changes in how staff perceive and experience support for their work-life balance, including in response to actions in this area.

Findings on this theme may highlight gaps in staff awareness of formal policies on flexible working or family leave or discrepancies in how workloads are allocated. Insights may be useful to inform, for example, support to line managers in implementing policies to ensure consistency and sensitivity to diverse needs and situations.

Bullying and Harassment

This theme explores individual experiences of bullying and harassment and of the actions of departments to address this.

Bullying and harassment can have long term impacts on mental and physical wellbeing as well as on retention and career progression, with those reporting experiences often leaving their institution or sometimes even their profession.¹⁰ Cultures that openly recognise bullying and harassment and address incidents when they occur are more likely to encourage people to raise issues and seek support. How instances of bullying and harassment are responded to can also mitigate or exacerbate their impact on individuals.

Instances of gender-based violence and harassment - including sexual harassment as well as bullying and harassment experienced by trans and non-binary staff or students related to their gender identity¹¹ - are widespread in the sector. While progress has been made in recent years, there is still a long way to go in improving institutional responses to gender-based violence and harassment¹².

The objectives of exploring this theme are:

- + To highlight the extent to which staff of different sexes or gender identities experience bullying and harassment.
- + To highlight gaps in awareness of procedures for reporting.
- + To assess how satisfied staff are with departmental efforts to address bullying and harassment including how this differs for people of different sexes or gender identities.
- + Over time, to monitor changes in extent to which different groups are impacted by bullying and harassment, including in response to actions in this area. Paradoxically, cultures that recognise bullying and harassment as an issue may experience a surge in cases, where this has previously gone unreported, so, this should not necessarily be seen as a negative indicator.

Findings on this theme can help to inform improvements to reporting processes as well as the identification of support needs for specific groups experiencing bullying and harassment.

Career Development

This theme explores individual experiences of the support from their manager and department for career development. The 'leaky pipeline' where the representation of women - particularly those facing intersectional inequalities - drops off at more senior levels - is well documented across most academic disciplines, as well as under representation in leadership roles more generally¹³. A wide range of factors contribute to this phenomenon.¹⁴ Bias or inconsistencies in line manager support for career development as well as in promotion and selection processes, may, over time, reinforce patterns of under-representation in senior roles,¹⁵ as well as in specific disciplines and job families.

The objectives of exploring this theme are:

- + To understand how individual staff perceive departmental support for their career development, including differences in experience between people of different sexes or gender identities and depending on their role.
- + To highlight any perceived lack of fairness in decisions affecting career development.
- + To monitor changes in perceptions of support for career development, from a gender equality perspective, including in response to actions in this area.

Findings on this theme may, for example, identify needs for review of appraisal systems, or promotion and recruitment processes, or for training for those managing these processes.

Wellbeing

How well people feel supported and cared for is an important dimension of workplace inclusion. This theme focuses on staff wellbeing in higher education, which is gaining increasing attention, alongside a longstanding and necessary focus on wellbeing as well as mental health in the student population.¹⁶ Worries about job insecurity, excessive workload and challenges with workplace relationships among other factors can contribute to lack of well-being or mental health problems among staff,¹⁷ and may affect individuals differently including by gender¹⁸.

The objectives of exploring this theme are:

- + To understand perceptions of workload and how these may be experienced differently by staff of different sexes or gender identities and depending on job role.
- + To understand how departmental support for staff mental health and well-being are experienced
- + To monitor changes in perceptions of workload and support for well-being, including in response to any actions taken to address gender equality issues in this area.

Findings on this theme can help to identify where particular groups need targeted support and inform how workloads are allocated.

Full survey questions

Theme 1: Belonging and Inclusion

1. I feel like I belong in my department
2. I feel that people really care about me in my department
3. My contributions are valued in my department
4. I feel comfortable speaking up and expressing my opinions
5. Departmental communications are clear and relevant to me and my role

Theme 2: Gender Equality

6. Departmental leadership actively supports gender equality
7. My department is committed to achieving gender balance in leadership positions
8. The rate people progress in my department is not affected by their gender
9. Equality, diversity and inclusion work is recognised when workload is allocated
10. Equality, diversity and inclusion work is recognised in applications for promotion/progression
11. My department has taken action to mitigate the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on staff ⁵

Theme 3: Work-Life Balance

12. My department enables flexible working
13. Workloads in my department are allocated fairly
14. The timing of departmental meetings and events takes into consideration those with caring responsibilities
15. My department provides staff with support around all types of caring leave

⁵ This question will be included temporarily until deemed no longer necessary by review of the Athena Swan Governance Committee

Theme 4: Bullying and Harassment

16. I have experienced bullying and/or harassment in my department in the past 12 months
17. I have witnessed bullying and/or harassment in my department in the past 12 months
18. I know how to report bullying and/or harassment
19. Departmental management is active in tackling bullying and harassment
20. I am satisfied with how bullying and harassment are addressed in my department

Theme 5: Career Development

21. My line manager supports my career development
22. Decisions about recruitment are made fairly
23. Decisions about promotion/progression are made fairly
24. I receive useful feedback on my career development through performance reviews

Theme 6: Wellbeing

25. My current workload is manageable
 26. My mental health and/or wellbeing are supported in my department
 27. I know where to seek support for mental health and/or wellbeing at work
 28. I feel confident asking for mental health and/or wellbeing support at work
-

Core questions

1. My contributions are valued in my department.
 2. Department leadership actively supports gender equality.
 3. The department enables flexible working.
 4. I am satisfied with how bullying and harassment are addressed in my department.
 5. My line manager supports my career development.
 6. My mental health and wellbeing are supported in my department.
 7. My department has taken action to mitigate the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on staff.²
-

Word allocation guidance

Each award application has an overall word allocation, shown below. Word allocations are limited in order to help applicants retain a focus on what is most important, and to support review panels which assess up to 10 applications per panel.

Recommended word allocations are provided for each section; these are purely for guidance and applicants have the flexibility to use the overall word allocation across the application as they deem appropriate. At the beginning of every section, please state how many words have been used in that section.

Bronze Department	
Section 1: An overview of the department and its approach to gender equality	2,500 words
Section 2: An assessment of the department's gender equality context	3,500 words
Section 3: Future action plan ³	
Appendix 1: Culture survey data or equivalent ³	
Appendix 2: Data tables ³	
Appendix 3: Glossary ³	
Overall word allocation	6,000 words

Silver Department	
Section 1: An overview of the department and its approach to gender equality	2,500 words
Section 2: An evaluation of the department's progress and success	2,000 words
Section 3: An assessment of the department's gender equality context	3,500 words
Section 4: Future action plan ³	
Appendix 1: Culture survey data or equivalent ³	
Appendix 2: Data tables ³	
Appendix 3: Glossary ³	
Overall word allocation	8,000 words

Gold Department	
Section 1: An overview of the department and its approach to gender equality	2,500 words
Section 2: An evaluation of the department's progress and success	2,500 words
Section 3: An evaluation of the department's sector-leading activity	1,500 words
Section 4: An assessment of the department's gender equality context	3,500 words
Section 5: Future action plan ³	
Appendix 1: Culture survey data or equivalent ³	
Appendix 2: Data tables ³	
Appendix 3: Glossary ³	
Overall word allocation	10,000 words

Department Renewal	
Section 1: An overview of the department and its approach to gender equality	2,500 words
Section 2: An evaluation of the department's progress and issues	3,000 words
Section 3: Future action plan ³	
Appendix 1: Culture survey data or equivalent ³	
Appendix 2: Data tables ³	
Appendix 3: Glossary ³	
Overall word allocation	5,500 words

³ These sections and appendices should not contain any commentary contributing to the overall word limit.

What is included in and excluded from the wordcount?

The word count includes all body text throughout the application, including quotes from qualitative analysis and readable words in screenshots. It also includes any standalone text or prose included in tables, graphs, footnotes or references.

The following are not counted towards the word limit:

- + data tables, figures and graphs providing they do not include standalone prose. These data should be presented in appendices 1-2 and can be cross-referenced from the main sections of the application
- + details of your self-assessment team when displayed as a table
- + action points within the body of the application and references to them
- + references; for example, to literature or benchmarking sources
- + your future action plan, which should not include any commentary contributing to the overall word limit
- + your 'RAG' rated action plan, which should not include any commentary beyond brief status updates
- + your glossary of terms used in the application (Appendix 3).

Any application found to have exceeded the word allowance may be rejected and not assessed by the peer-review panel.

Additional word allocation

The overall word allocation for your application can be increased in certain circumstances. The process relating to some common circumstances are listed below:

Covid-19 pandemic

In recognition of the impact of the pandemic on institutions, a 500-word extension to the application word limit to consider the impact of Covid-19 is available. These words can be used to discuss practical impacts on the self-assessment process (eg. format and timing of SAT meetings and/or membership; consultation methodologies; resourcing changes), on action plan implementation, or to address gender equality impacts of Covid-19 more broadly (eg. publication outputs). The additional words are available to both existing award-holders and to those who currently do not hold an award. In the case of existing award-holders, the word count extension applies to the first application after March 2020. In the case of applicants who do not currently hold an award, the word count extension applies up to (and including) the July 2026 submission round. This extension is all-inclusive meaning there is no need to apply to the Equality Charters team for permission to use the additional words. Applicants are also not obliged to use the additional words if the self-assessment team determine that the application has not been impacted by Covid-19 or the extra words are not needed.

Organisational restructure

If an organisational restructure has recently taken place, applicants can avail of a 750-word extension to reflect on the impact of the restructure to their gender equality work in their application (eg. arising from changes to their staff or student demographic profile, policies, or context). Please email the Equality Charters team no less than one month prior to the application submission date to confirm this additional word allowance and ensure it is noted in our records.

Clinical and non-clinical staff

Departmental applicants with both non-clinical and clinical staff can avail of a 500-word extension to the application word limit to allow them to analyse and reflect on any differences between the two staff groups. Applicants are encouraged to disaggregate their data for clinical and non-clinical staff to support this analysis. Please email the Equality Charters team no less than one month prior to the application submission date to confirm this additional word allowance and ensure it is noted in our records.

Faculty-level applications

Faculty applicants (ie. an applying unit which is made up of component sub-units, often departments) can avail of a 1000-word extension to the application word limit to allow them to analyse and reflect on any departmental or discipline-specific differences. Applicants are encouraged to disaggregate their data by sub-unit wherever possible to support this analysis. Please email the Equality Charters team no less than one month prior to the application submission date to confirm this additional word allowance and ensure it is noted in our records.

Exceptional circumstances

Requests for additional word allowances to account for exceptional circumstances are considered on a case-by-case basis. Any increase in the word allowance should always be used to explain how the special circumstances have impacted on or been taken into account with respect to the applicant's gender equality context or activity. Please email the Equality Charters team no less than two months prior to the application submission date to agree and confirm this additional word allowance and ensure it is noted in our records.

Submitting your application

There are six submission dates a year for Athena Swan applications, normally on the last working day of January, March, May, July, September and November. For details of these deadlines and to provide notice of your intention to submit an application, please see the Advance HE website. Please provide us with notice of your intention to submit at least two months prior to the submission deadline.

Please submit your application via the Equality Charters Portal found on the My Advance HE platform.

Only those with a My Advance HE account can access the portal (you can sign in or create a new account here). We encourage all institutions to ensure that the individual responsible for submitting the application has a My Advance HE account prior to the application deadline.

Should you have any issues using the Portal please get in touch with us via email at: athena.swan@advance-he.ac.uk.

Considering the accessibility of your application

Your Athena Swan application is an important resource which will be of interest to a wide range of people within and beyond your staff and student communities. Your application will also be processed by Advance HE staff members and reviewed by panel Chairs and Reviewers. For it to be readable by as wide an audience as possible, including those with visual impairments and dyslexia, it is good practice to consider the accessibility of the document and how well it works with assistive technology.

Please submit your application in Microsoft Word format (or equivalent) as well as PDF format, as PDF files are often more challenging to access using assistive technology.

Some tips for ensuring your document is as accessible as possible:

- + Use the built-in Accessibility Checker to identify any issues with the document
- + Keep the language simple – avoid jargon and write in short, simple sentences
- + Avoid italics and all caps text, only underline hyperlinks
- + Use built-in styles (eg. headings, paragraphs, lists) to provide a structure that can be navigated by assistive technology
- + Use tables for tabular data
- + If you are using images, include alternative text (Alt Text)
- + Use a sans serif font like Arial or Helvetica and a minimum size of 12 points
- + Ensure hyperlink text describes where the link goes and is understandable on its own, even if read out of context.
- + Do not use colour or shape alone to show meaning
- + Do not use images containing text (eg. screenshots), as it's not possible to resize the text in the image and screen readers cannot read text which is part of an image

More guidance can be found online, including:

- + the [Accessible Digital Office Document \(ADOD\) Project website](#).
- + the [AbilityNet website](#).
- + the [British Dyslexia Association website](#).

Glossary

Glossary of terms

Within individual institutions terminology may be used in different ways, with differing names given to units or practices. To support your engagement with the Athena Swan Charter framework, over the next few pages, we have provided definitions for some of the terms we use.

All Athena Swan award applicants are encouraged to include their own glossary of terms in Appendix 3 of their applications. This can include any acronyms or institution-specific terminology used in the application.

We're here to help

If you are unsure about any terminology used in this document or the Athena Swan framework, please don't hesitate to get in touch with our Equality Charters team for more support.

Term	Definition
Academic staff	Staff responsible for the planning, direction and/or undertaking of academic teaching and/or research. This includes staff with teaching-only, research-only, and teaching and research contract functions.
Appraisal	Appraisal (sometimes called a performance review) is a process providing a formal opportunity for constructive dialogue and feedback on an individual's work, effectiveness and development.
Beacon activity	Activity which disseminates and promotes the uptake of innovative and impactful good practice to others.
Bullying	Bullying is behaviour from a person or group that's unwanted and makes you feel uncomfortable, including feeling frightened, less respected, made fun of, or upset.
Career break	A career break is a period of time out from employment or career. Career breaks are often taken by parents and carers, and can also be used to take time for personal or professional development.
Caring leave	A period of absence from work or study relating to a person's caring responsibilities. This includes maternity leave, adoption leave, paternity leave, shared parental leave, parental leave, time off for dependents.

Casual contract	Contracts where staff deliver non-permanent or intermittent services, often in response to seasonal or fluctuating trends in the volume of work. This includes single assignment contracts, zero-hour contracts.
Charter Principle	The commitments that underpin the Athena Swan Charter and set out shared goals for gender equality that all participating institutions, departments and directorates agree to upholding.
Clinical staff	Staff who normally undertake clinical duties in addition to teaching and/or research activities. This includes academic Clinical Fellows, academic Clinical Lecturers, health professionals employed directly by your department/institution, academic staff employed directly by your department/institution who also carry out programmed activities outside the institution in a medical or healthcare setting.
Completion rate	The proportion of a student cohort successfully completing their studies. This is a useful dataset for analysis particularly for programmes that do not award classifications upon completion, for example PhD programmes.
Contract function	The main function of employment a staff member is employed to deliver, as set out in their employment contract. This includes teaching-only, research-only, teaching and research.
Contract type	The type of contract a staff member is employed on, including open-ended, permanent, fixed-term, atypical, casual.
Degree attainment	The awarding of degree classifications to students; for example, first-class honours, upper second-class honours, lower second-class honours, third-class honours/pass.
Department	A sub-unit within an institution that normally aligns with a particular academic discipline or professional area. Institutions may use other terms to describe these units, such as 'School'. Department is the term used by Advance HE to refer to academic sub-units eligible to apply for an Athena Swan award.
Directorate	A sub-unit within an institution that normally aligns with a particular professional, technical or operational area, and which may be made up of smaller units or departments. Institutions may use other terms to describe these units. Directorate is the term used by Advance HE to refer to professional, technical and/or operational sub-units eligible to apply for an Athena Swan award.
Diversity monitoring	The collection of data about staff and student identity characteristics to provide insights into the demographic diversity of a population.

Equality Impact Assessment	An evidence-based assessment tool to help institutions ensure that their policies, practices and decisions are fair, meet the needs of their staff and students and that they are not inadvertently discriminating against any protected group.
Faculty	A group of sub-units, often called departments, in related academic fields that are managed through an over-arching decision-making body or governance structure. Institutions may use other terms to describe these groupings, for example 'College'. Faculty is the term used by Advance HE to refer to groups of academic sub-units eligible to apply for an Athena Swan award. Faculty applicants use the same application materials as departments but should note additional considerations in the departmental guidance.
Flexible working	A working arrangement which gives some flexibility on how long, where, when and at what times employees work. Flexible working includes part-time working, term-time working, compressed hours, annual hours, flexitime, working remotely on a regular basis.
Freedom of expression / Freedom of speech	Freedom of expression (which is typically defined so as to include freedom of speech) relates to the right which every person has to express lawful views and opinions freely, in speech or in writing, without interference from the state or other bodies carrying out public functions, including most higher education providers.
Gender	Gender can be considered to consist of three related aspects: gender roles, socially constructed norms and behaviours which are essentially based on stereotypes associated with the sex recorded at birth; gender identity, which is a person's internal perception of their identity; and gender expression, which is the way a person lives in society and interacts with others. These different aspects of gender have typically been understood as binary. However, gender does not represent a simple binary choice, it is more fluid and some people have a gender identity that cannot be defined simply by the use of the terms woman or man. A person's gender is self-determined by their internal perception, identification and experience. Therefore, a person's gender identity may not be the same as the sex the individual was recorded as at birth. It may also change over time.
Gender-based violence	Gender-Based violence refers to harmful acts directed at people based on their real or perceived sex, gender identity or trans status or that disproportionately affects people of a particular sex, gender identity or trans status. It includes physical, sexual, psychological or economic harm; examples of gender-based violence include (but are not limited to) domestic violence and sexual harassment. It is rooted in gender

	inequality, the abuse of power and harmful norms.
Gender equality	For the purposes of Athena Swan guidance, 'gender equality' is used as an umbrella term and covers the legal protections relating to sex, gender reassignment and pregnancy and maternity, as well as broader equality work relating to gender identity, trans inclusion and caring responsibilities. This is in keeping with a key recommendation of the Independent Review, that the sector wanted the Charter to recognise gender as a spectrum. Where appropriate, the guidance distinguishes between sex, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, gender identity, trans status, and caring responsibilities.
Gender identity	A person's internal perception of their identity. A person's gender is self-determined by their internal perception, identification and experience. Therefore, a person's gender identity may not be the same as the sex the individual was recorded as at birth. It may also change over time.
Gender reassignment	<p>The term used in UK legislation to describe the process of reassigning a person's sex. Across the UK, legislation prohibits discrimination on the basis of gender reassignment. In England, Scotland and Wales, gender reassignment is a protected characteristic and is defined as anyone who 'proposes to undergo, is undergoing or has undergone a process (or part of a process) for the purpose of reassigning the person's sex by changing physiological or other attributes of sex'. This is the characteristic that protects trans people from discrimination and harassment in employment, education and in using services in England, Scotland and Wales.</p> <p>Importantly, the Equality Act 2010 requires no medical supervision or interventions for a trans person to be afforded protection. As part of reassigning their sex, trans people often change their sex/gender markers on their day-to-day identity documents and educational records to reflect how they are living in society. Trans women and trans men can subsequently formally change their legal sex by obtaining a Gender Recognition Certificate, at which point a new birth certificate is issued if the person was born or adopted in the UK.</p> <p>In Northern Ireland, the Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 1976 prohibits discrimination on the</p>

	grounds of gender reassignment in relation to employment (including the provision of vocational training) and in the provision of goods, facilities and services. Gender reassignment is defined as ‘a process which is undertaken under medical supervision for the purpose of reassigning a person's sex by changing physiological or other characteristics of sex, and includes any part of such a process.’
Governance structure	The key management and committee structures, and other formal structures in place to carry out and support the organisation's activity.
Harassment	Harassment is bullying or unwanted behaviour that has the purpose or effect either of violating a person's dignity or of creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that person. In England, Scotland and Wales, harassment is unlawful under the Equality Act 2010 if related to a protected characteristic.
Institution	An organisation, often made up of academic, research and/or professional, technical and operational sub-units. Institution is the term used by Advance HE to describe the organisational-level units eligible to apply for an Athena Swan award, namely universities and research institutes.
Intersectional inequality	Intersectionality is the understanding that social inequalities are not just summative, they are mutually constituting. For example, the disadvantage experienced by a Black woman is compounded by the inequalities she faces as a woman and as a Black person, and is distinct from the experiences of a Black man or a White woman. In the Athena Swan framework, applicants are encouraged to reflect on and address how their staff and students experience intersectional inequalities, as relevant to the understanding of gender equality.
Intersex/Variations of sex characteristics	Some people are born with variations of sex characteristics, which do not fit society's perception of male or female bodies and are often referred to as intersex.
Job family	A group of jobs with similar characteristics, which are engaged in similar work. Although the level of responsibility, skill or competence will differ, the essential nature of activities carried out is similar across the job family. Examples of job families include: research and teaching; operations and facilities; technical services; administrative, professional and managerial.

Non-binary	<p>Non-binary is used to refer to a person who has a gender identity which is in between or beyond the two categories 'man' and 'woman', fluctuates between 'man' and 'woman', or who has no gender, either permanently or some of the time. People who are non-binary may have gender identities that fluctuate (genderfluid), they may identify as having more than one gender depending on the context (eg. bigender or pangender), feel that they have no gender (eg. agender, non-gendered), or they may identify gender differently (eg. third gender, genderqueer).</p> <p>Where a non-binary person is proposing to, is undergoing or has undergone any part of a process to reassign their sex, they will have protection from discrimination under the protected characteristic of gender reassignment.</p>
Occupational segregation	<p>The underrepresentation of certain groups (e.g. based on gender) in particular occupations or sectors. Occupational segregation is sometimes referred to as horizontal segregation. For example, the predominance of men in Estates roles and women in Catering roles, or the predominance of men in Computing and women in Education disciplines.</p>
Performance review	<p>Performance review (sometimes called appraisal) is a process providing a formal opportunity for constructive dialogue and feedback on an individual's work, effectiveness and development.</p>
Positive action	<p>Positive action, enables education providers and employers to take proportionate action to remedy disadvantage faced by particular groups. Such action could include targeted provision or resources or putting in place additional or bespoke provision to benefit a particular disadvantaged group. There are limitations on when this is justified within the law and the Equality and Human Rights Commission provides further guidance for those working in England, Scotland and Wales, and the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland offers guidance for those working in Northern Ireland.</p>
Progression	<p>A process or processes through which existing members of staff can move to a higher job grade, sometimes involving the submission of a successful application to an advertised vacancy. Professional, technical and operational members of staff are often subject to progression pathways that differ from academic promotion.</p>
Promotion	<p>A formal process for existing members of staff to move to a higher job grade usually within a defined career track. Academic members of staff can often progress through a promotion pathway; for example, academic promotion between Lecturer and Senior Lecturer roles. Professional, technical and operational staff are often</p>

	subject to different progression pathways (see progression).
Professional, technical and operational (PTO) staff	Staff not employed on an academic contract function. This includes administrators, technical staff, non-academic professionals, maintenance staff.
Protected characteristic	Under the Equality Act 2010, in England, Scotland and Wales, it is against the law to discriminate against someone because of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. These are the nine 'protected characteristics'. In Northern Ireland this term is often used to describe the grounds on which discrimination is prohibited, but other terminology is also used.
Qualitative data	Non-numerical information often related to characteristics and qualities rather than trends and statistics. It can be collected using questionnaires, interviews, or observation, and is often presented in narrative form.
Quantitative data	Numerical information describing measurements or counts, often related to trends and statistics. It can be collected using census exercises, monitoring processes such as recruitment or promotion, or surveys featuring a rating scale. Quantitative data is often presented in graphical or tabular format.
RAG rating	A rating system wherein items are rated 'red', 'amber' or 'green' dependent on progress. Advance HE recognises that the application of RAG ratings can be subject to different definitions. For the purpose of presenting the previous action plan, please use the following definitions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Red: No progress was made on this action. For example: The action was never undertaken; the action was started but was permanently discontinued; further work is needed to begin the action or to revise the approach. + Amber: Partial progress was made on this action. For example: the action has begun but is incomplete; the action was completed but the outcomes or impacts were not as predicted/desired; further work is needed to complete the action or to obtain the desired outcome or impact. + Green: Good progress was made on this action. For example: the action was completed with outcomes or

	impacts as (or very close to) predicted/desired; no further work is needed on this action.
Recognition	The Athena Swan framework encourages applicants to consider how gender equality work is recognised. This refers to how this work is formally acknowledged and accounted for through processes such as those relating to workload allocation, appraisal and progression.
Research institute	An organisation established to undertake research and development. Research institutes eligible to apply for Athena Swan awards must be independent of any higher education institution. Research institutes embedded within a university should participate through the departmental route.
Reward	The Athena Swan framework encourages applicants to consider how gender equality work is rewarded. This refers to how appreciation is formally shown through processes such as those relating to appraisal, progression and pay.
Self-assessment team (SAT)	The term used by Advance HE for a team made up of staff and student (where relevant) members, who are representative of the unit applying for an Athena Swan award. They are responsible for carrying out an assessment of the unit's gender equality context, issues and priorities and planning and evaluating future action.
Sex	<p>In England, Scotland and Wales, sex is a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010 and is defined as a male or female of any age (Equality Act 2010, Section 212 (1)). In UK equality law 'sex' is understood as binary – being male or female – with a person's legal sex being determined by what is recorded on their birth certificate.</p> <p>A trans person can change their legal sex by obtaining a Gender Recognition Certificate, at which point a new birth certificate is issued if the person was born or adopted in the UK. In most circumstances it would be inappropriate to ask a person to prove their legal sex by producing a birth certificate or Gender Recognition Certificate, and in some circumstances this could be unlawful.</p> <p>In Northern Ireland, under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, public authorities are required to promote equality of opportunity between men and women. People are additionally protected against discrimination on the grounds of sex under the Sex Discrimination (NI) Order 1976.</p>
SMART	Specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound. In setting their plans for future action, applicants are encouraged to include actions and measures of success which are SMART in nature.

Social injustice	Disparity and injustice in relation to the distribution of and access to wealth, health and well-being, opportunities, and privileges within a society.
Structural inequality	Structural inequality refers to the systems in which institutional policies and practices and individual behaviours are located, and how these systems interact with institutional culture, environment and other 'norms' compounded by history, culture and systemic privilege, to perpetuate inequality.
Trans/transgender people	<p>Trans people and transgender people are inclusive umbrella terms for people whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from the sex (male or female) recorded at birth. The term may include, but is not limited to, trans men, trans women, and non-binary people. Not all people that can be included in the term will associate with it.</p> <p>'Trans' is often used interchangeably with the protected characteristic of 'gender reassignment', which has a narrower definition set out by the Equality Act 2010 and Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 1976.. People have the protected characteristic of gender reassignment if they have stated their intent to transition.</p>
University	An organisation established to deliver higher education and research which grants academic degrees in a variety of subjects. Universities may be made up of academic and/or professional, technical and operational sub-units (referred to within the Athena Swan Charter as departments and directorates respectively).
Whole life balance	The ability for workers to enjoy a reasonable balance between all aspects of their lives, so that the demands of work do not pose a challenge to gaining satisfaction from their life outside work, and aspects of their personal life do not pose a challenge to being successful in their work or career.
Workload allocation model	A tool or process used to ensure the allocation of work among staff is fair, reasonable and equitable.

