

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. 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:

+ paradigm shift from prescription to autonomy and flexibility
+ a reduction in administrative burden, including a halving of data requirements
+ Advance HE moving from a focus on assessment or judging, to a developmental and supporting approach.

This is a very significant step in advancing gender equality, ensuring that the Charter centres the key dimension of positive and supportive cultures, and is inclusive of people of all gender identities and those facing 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

In this document, participants will find all the information and materials you need to apply for an 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.

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 or get in touch with our team. We look forward to working with you.

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 upholding. 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 enshrined within.

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. Acceptance of 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.

Guidance for participants

Any department (or faculty) interested in participating in the transformed Athena Swan Charter should first consider the Principles, and together with their senior leadership teams and communities decide if they agree to uphold 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 participant intending to submit an application for an Athena Swan Award must first submit confirmation from the Head of Department (or Head of Faculty if submitting a faculty-level application) that they commit to the Charter Principles. You can find a template letter on our website, 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, though we encourage you to do this before you start preparing an application under the transformed Charter so that Advance HE can ensure you receive tailored support and guidance to prepare your award 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 should be developed based on 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 for people of all genders, including not tolerating gender-based violence, discrimination, bullying, harassment or exploitation.
4. understanding and addressing intersectional inequalities.
5. fostering collective understanding that individuals have the right to determine their own gender identity, and tackling the specific issues faced by trans and non-binary people because of their identity.
6. examining gendered occupational segregation, and elevating the status, voice and career opportunities of any identified under-valued and at-risk groups.
7. mitigating the gendered impact of caring responsibilities and career breaks, and supporting flexibility and the maintenance of a healthy ‘whole life balance’.
8. 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 will be expected to 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.

Transparent and consistent

These Award Criteria form the basis of how your award application will be assessed. The panel of experts assessing your application 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.

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 culture
+ evaluated their policies
+ evaluated their approach to exploring intersectional inequalities (*through a narrative question*)
+ evaluated the inclusivity of their culture for staff and students of all gender identities (*through a narrative question*)
+ 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

Bronze 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 priorities

+ the previous Bronze action plan is underway or completed

Silver 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 culture
+ evaluated their policies
+ evaluated intersectional inequalities (*through a narrative question*)
+ evaluated the inclusivity of their culture for staff and students of all gender identities (*through a narrative question*)
+ 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 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 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 priorities

+ the previous Silver action plan is underway or completed

Gold 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 culture
+ evaluated their policies
+ evaluated intersectional inequalities (*through a narrative question*)
+ evaluated the inclusivity of their culture for staff and students of all gender identities (*through a narrative question*)
+ evaluated practices and policies for the inclusion and support of 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

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 priorities

+ 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 must 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 standardised 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.

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.

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 for: 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

The letter should 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. The letter should outline the personal commitment and involvement of the head of the department (for example, any involvement in the self-assessment or particular actions) and evidence 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

The description should provide an overview of the department. The description should highlight 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 and should not be duplicated 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.

The description should 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.

Detail should be included about 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

The description should 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. This should include an overview of any consultative approaches (with staff, students or external stakeholders) which are used to inform these processes. The description should indicate how the department ensures that policies support an inclusive culture and do not negatively impact people of particular gender identities. If the department does not set any policies at this level, this part of the question can be omitted.

The description should 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

An overview should be provided on the self-assessment team (SAT) undertaking the self-assessment work. This should be provided in a table showing the gender of SAT members, their professional/student role in the department, and their role in the SAT. The SAT should be representative of the department in relation to gender profile and staff type, grades and roles.

A summary should be provided 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. Details should be provided (where appropriate) of consultation response rates disaggregated by gender. Where relevant, applicants should reflect on how the SAT responded to and acted on the panel feedback provided on the previous application.

An overview should be provided on 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

In this section, applicants should consider the department's 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. Applicants should reflect on how the department actively considers gender equality and inclusivity within their culture, including how instances of negative practices or behaviours are addressed. Applicants should draw on their data including the departmental culture survey findings and, where appropriate, other consultation findings with reference to data presented in Appendices 1-2.

The description should 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, actions should be included in the action plan which will support the department to evaluate and address intersectional inequalities in the next award cycle. The department can choose to focus on the intersection of gender with any other characteristic; this prioritisation should be evidence-based, informed by the department's specific context and/or regional or national data and trends.

Applicants should consider the ways in which they actively strive (or could in future, through action) for the inclusion of people of all gender identities within the department's culture and practices. The provision of quantitative data is not required. Applicants should not be deterred if the department's demographic data indicate no or low rates of disclosure from e.g. trans or non-binary people, and are encouraged to consider how to embed inclusive practices and approaches within culture and activity.

Applicants should reflect on the department's approach to ensuring culture and practices are inclusive and supportive of people with caring responsibilities 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 describe the department's key priorities for future action

Guidance

Applicants should reflect on their 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. This should draw on the mandatory datasets (and any additional datasets where relevant) with reference to data presented in Appendices 1-2.

The department's evaluation should reflect on insights particularly as these relate to gender equality (eg the representation and progression of people of particular gender identities). To support their evaluation, applicants should consider any trends or issues across job families, contract types or functions, or grades. Applicants should 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, applicants should 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. Applicants should consider how issues have been influenced by external events; for example, the Covid-19 pandemic.

Based on the department's identification of key issues, between four and eight key priorities should be identified that the department seeks to address with future action. These key priorities must be appropriate to the department's context and be justifiable based on quantitative and qualitative evidence. Applicants should 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, the rationale for these changes should be presented.

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 actions (these actions should be SMART). Applicants should 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, an action plan should be presented which addresses the department's key issues and priorities. The plan should cover ongoing and planned actions for the next five years, and clearly cross-reference 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).

Applicants should provide specific detail to indicate what intervention is planned to address identified issues. While ongoing self-assessment and data collection actions are likely to be necessary throughout the award period, the action plan should balance these actions 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.

Actions, and their measures of success, should be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound (SMART).

Appendix 1: Culture survey data

Please present the results of the core culture survey questions, and if desired, the results of any additional survey questions or consultation.

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: 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

The letter should 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. The letter should outline the personal commitment and involvement of the head of the department (for example, any involvement in the self-assessment or particular actions) and evidence 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

The description should provide an overview of the department. The description should highlight 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 and should not be duplicated 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.

The description should 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.

Detail should be included about 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

The description should 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. This should include an overview of any consultative approaches (with staff, students or external stakeholders) which are used to inform these processes. The description should indicate how the department ensures that policies support an inclusive culture and do not negatively impact on people of particular gender identities. If the department does not set any policies at this level, this part of the question can be omitted.

The description should 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

An overview should be provided on the self-assessment team (SAT) undertaking the self-assessment work. This should be provided in a table showing the gender of SAT members, their professional/student role in the department, and their role in the SAT. The SAT should be representative of the department in relation to gender profile and staff type, grades and roles.

A summary should be provided 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. Details should be provided (where appropriate) of consultation response rates disaggregated by gender. Applicants should reflect on how the SAT responded to and acted on the panel feedback provided on the previous application.

An overview should be provided on 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 how the action plan will be implemented, evaluated and updated (where appropriate).

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. The action plan should be 'RAG' rated (rated 'red', 'amber' or 'green') dependent on progress.

Please provide an overview of the progress achieved in implementing the department's previous action plan. The description should focus on the methodology of action implementation, evaluation and iteration. Applicants should 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. Detail should be provided 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 meeting of success measures. Where challenges to successful implementation were noted, applicants should outline what steps were made to respond to these, and how the action plan was adjusted. Applicants should describe the main learnings and outcomes from the evaluation of the action plan, and consideration should be given to 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

The description should evidence how the department has achieved the desired outcome or improvement against at least two of their previously identified key priorities.

When describing success observed against the key priorities, applicants should refer to qualitative and quantitative data to evidence their statements where possible. Applicants should reflect on the main facilitators or factors that supported them 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

In this section, applicants should consider the department's 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. Applicants should reflect on how the department actively considers gender equality and inclusivity within their culture, including how instances of negative practices or behaviours are addressed. Applicants should draw on their data including the departmental culture survey findings and, where appropriate, other consultation findings with reference to data presented in Appendices 1-2.

The description should 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, actions should be included in the action plan which will support the department to address intersectional inequalities within this award cycle. The department can choose to focus on the intersection of gender with any other characteristic; this prioritisation should be evidence-based, informed by the department's specific context and/or regional or national data and trends.

Applicants should consider the ways in which they actively strive (or could in future, through action) for the inclusion of people of all gender identities within the department's culture and practices. The provision of quantitative data is not required. Applicants should not be deterred if the department's demographic data indicate no or low rates of disclosure from eg trans or non-binary people, and are encouraged to consider how to embed inclusive practices and approaches within culture and activity.

Applicants should reflect on the department's approach to ensuring culture and practices are inclusive and supportive of people with caring responsibilities, and 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 describe the department's key priorities for future action

Guidance

Applicants should reflect on their 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. This should draw on the mandatory datasets (and any additional datasets where relevant) with reference to data presented in Appendices 1-2.

The department's evaluation should reflect on insights particularly as these relate to gender equality (e.g. the representation and progression of people of particular gender identities). To support their evaluation, applicants should consider any trends or issues across job families, contract types or functions, or grades. Applicants should 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, applicants should 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. Applicants should consider how issues have been influenced by external events; for example, the Covid-19 pandemic.

Based on the department's identification of key issues, between four and eight key priorities should be identified that the department seeks to address with future action. These key priorities must be appropriate to the department's context and be justifiable based on quantitative and qualitative evidence. Applicants should 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, the rationale for these changes should be presented.

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 actions (these actions should be SMART). Applicants should 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, an action plan should be presented which addresses the department's key issues and priorities. The plan should cover ongoing and planned actions for the next five years, and clearly cross-reference 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).

Applicants should provide specific detail to indicate what intervention is planned to address identified issues. While ongoing self-assessment and data collection actions are likely to be necessary throughout the award period, the action plan should balance these actions 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.

Actions, and their measures of success, should be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound (SMART).

Appendix 1: Culture survey data

Please present the results of the core culture survey questions, and if desired, the results of any additional survey questions or consultation.

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: 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

The letter should 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. The letter should outline the personal commitment and involvement of the head of the department (for example, any involvement in the self-assessment or particular actions) and evidence 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

The description should provide an overview of the department. The description should highlight 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 and should not be duplicated 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.

The description should 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.

Detail should be included about 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

The description should 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. This should include an overview of any consultative approaches (with staff, students or external stakeholders) which are used to inform these processes. The description should indicate how the department ensures that policies support an inclusive culture and do not negatively impact on people of particular gender identities. If the department does not set any policies at this level, this part of the question can be omitted.

The description should 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

An overview should be provided on the self-assessment team (SAT) undertaking the self-assessment work. This should be provided in a table showing the gender of SAT members, their professional/student role in the department, and their role in the SAT. The SAT should be representative of the department in relation to gender profile and staff type, grades and roles.

A summary should be provided 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. Details should be provided (where appropriate) of consultation response rates disaggregated by gender. Applicants should reflect on how the SAT responded to and acted on the panel feedback provided on the previous application.

An overview should be provided on 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. The action plan should be 'RAG' rated (rated 'red', 'amber' or 'green') dependent on progress.

Please provide an overview of the progress achieved in implementing the department's previous action plan. The description should focus on the methodology of action implementation, evaluation and iteration. Applicants should 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. Detail should be provided 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 meeting of success measures. Where challenges to successful implementation were noted, applicants should outline what steps were made to respond to these, and how the action plan was adjusted. Applicants should describe the main learnings and outcomes from the evaluation of the action plan, and consideration should be given to 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

The description should evidence how the department has achieved the desired outcome or improvement against at least three of their previously identified key priorities. Applicants should evidence how they have achieved longitudinal improvement over the course of more than one award cycle.

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

When describing success observed against the key priorities, applicants should refer to qualitative and quantitative data to evidence their statements where possible. Applicants should reflect on the main facilitators or factors that supported them 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: 1500 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

The description should include examples of how the department has been innovative in their gender equality work. The description should outline how the department continually monitors and updates their practices and policies in order to remain innovative and inclusive. This should 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

The description should 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. Applicants should consider their 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: 3500 words

1 Culture, inclusion and belonging

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

Guidance

In this section, applicants should consider the department's 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. Applicants should reflect on how the department actively considers gender equality and inclusivity within their culture, including how instances of negative practices or behaviours are addressed. Applicants should draw on their data including the departmental culture survey findings and, where appropriate, other consultation findings with reference to data presented in Appendices 1-2.

The description should 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, actions should be included in the action plan which will support the department to address intersectional inequalities within this award cycle. The department can choose to focus on the intersection of gender with any other characteristic; this prioritisation should be evidence-based, informed by the department's specific context and/or regional or national data and trends.

Applicants should consider the ways in which they actively strive (or could in future, through action) for the inclusion of people of all gender identities within the department's culture and practices. The provision of quantitative data is not required. Applicants should not be deterred if the department's demographic data indicate no or low rates of disclosure from eg trans or non-binary people, and are encouraged to consider how to embed inclusive practices and approaches within culture and activity.

Applicants should reflect on the department's approach to ensuring culture and practices are inclusive and supportive of people with caring responsibilities, and 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 describe the department's key priorities for future action

Guidance

Applicants should reflect on their 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. This should draw on the mandatory datasets (and any additional datasets where relevant) with reference to data presented in Appendices 1-2.

The department's evaluation should reflect on insights particularly as these relate to gender equality (eg the representation and progression of people of particular gender identities). To support their evaluation, applicants should consider any trends or issues across job families, contract types or functions, or grades. Applicants should 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, applicants should 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. Applicants should consider how issues have been influenced by external events; for example, the Covid-19 pandemic.

Based on the department's identification of key issues, between four and eight key priorities should be identified that the department seeks to address with future action. These key priorities must be appropriate to the department's context and be justifiable based on quantitative and qualitative evidence. Applicants should 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, the rationale for these changes should be presented.

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 actions (these actions should be SMART). Applicants should 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, an action plan should be presented which addresses the department's key issues and priorities. The plan should cover ongoing and planned actions for the next five years, and clearly cross-reference 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).

Applicants should provide specific detail to indicate what intervention is planned to address identified issues. While ongoing self-assessment and data collection actions are likely to be necessary throughout the award period, the action plan should balance these actions 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.

Actions, and their measures of success, should be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound (SMART).

Appendix 1: Culture survey data

Please present the results of the core culture survey questions, and if desired, the results of any additional survey questions or consultation.

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: 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

The letter should 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. The letter should outline the personal commitment and involvement of the head of the department (for example, any involvement in the self-assessment or particular actions) and evidence 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

The description should provide an overview of the department. The description should highlight 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 and should not be duplicated 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

An overview should be provided on the self-assessment team (SAT) undertaking the self-assessment work. This should be provided in a table showing the gender of SAT members, their professional/student role in the department, and their role in the SAT. The SAT should be representative of the department in relation to gender profile and staff type, grades and roles.

A summary should be provided 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. Details should be provided (where appropriate) of consultation response rates disaggregated by gender. Applicants should reflect on how the SAT responded to and acted on the panel feedback provided on the previous application.

An overview should be provided on 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: 3000 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. The action plan should be 'RAG' rated (rated 'red', 'amber' or 'green') dependent on progress.

Please provide an overview of the progress achieved in implementing the department's previous action plan. The description should focus on the methodology of action implementation, evaluation and iteration. Applicants should 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. Detail should be provided 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 meeting of success measures. Where challenges to successful implementation were noted, applicants should outline what steps were made to respond to these, and how the action plan was adjusted. Applicants should describe the main learnings and outcomes from the evaluation of the action plan, and consideration should be given to 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

Applicants should reflect on their 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.

Applicants should consider whether and how the department's gender equality issues have changed since their previous award. This should draw on the mandatory datasets (and any additional datasets where relevant) with reference to data presented in Appendices 1-2. The department's evaluation should reflect on insights particularly as these relate to gender equality (eg the representation and progression of people of particular gender identities).

Applicants should consider any aspects of good practice that could be translated to other areas, and any areas where improvement could be gained through future action. Applicants should 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, no more than 4-8 key priorities should be identified that the department seeks to address with future action. These key priorities must be appropriate to the department's context and be justifiable based on quantitative and qualitative evidence. Applicants should consider how their priorities address intersectional inequalities.

Applicants should refer to their 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, the rationale for these changes should be presented.

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 actions (these actions should be SMART). Applicants should 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, an action plan should be presented which addresses the department's key issues and priorities. The plan should cover ongoing and planned actions for the next five years, and clearly cross-reference 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).

Applicants should provide specific detail to indicate what intervention is planned to address identified issues. While ongoing self-assessment and data collection actions are likely to be necessary throughout the award period, the action plan should balance these actions 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.

Actions, and their measures of success, should be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound (SMART).

Appendix 1: Culture survey data

Please present the results of the core culture survey questions, and if desired, the results of any additional survey questions or consultation.

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, three years of data should be presented where possible (where not possible, an explanation should be provided). In Bronze renewal, Silver and Gold applications, data should be presented 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. Data presentation should include both numbers and proportions for ease of interpretation. Wherever possible, data should be disaggregated by gender and grade (for staff data).

Faculty-level applications

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

Department data requirements

Department (and faculty) applicants should present the following datasets where possible. Where not possible, an explanation should be provided and where appropriate an action included 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 job family
6	PTO staff by contract type
7	Applications, shortlist and appointments made in recruitment to academic posts
8	Applications, shortlist and appointments made in recruitment to PTO posts
9	Applications and success rates for academic promotion
10	Applications and success rates for PTO progression

These data should be presented in Appendix 2 and can be cross-referenced from the main sections of the application.

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, applicants should 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	2500 words
Section 2: An assessment of the department's gender equality context	3500 words
Section 3: Future action plan[1]	
Appendix 1: Culture survey data[1]	
Appendix 2: Data tables[1]	
Appendix 3: Glossary[1]	
Overall word allocation	**6000 words**

Silver Department	
Section 1: An overview of the department and its approach to gender equality	2500 words
Section 2: An evaluation of the department's progress and success	2000 words
Section 3: An assessment of the department's gender equality context	3500 words
Section 4: Future action plan[1]	
Appendix 1: Culture survey data[1]	
Appendix 2: Data tables[1]	
Appendix 3: Glossary[1]	
Overall word allocation	**8000 words**

Gold Department	
Section 1: An overview of the department and its approach to gender equality	2500 words
Section 2: An evaluation of the department's progress and success	2000 words
Section 3: An evaluation of the department's sector-leading activity	1500 words
Section 4: An assessment of the department's gender equality context	3500 words
Section 5: Future action plan[1]	
Appendix 1: Culture survey data[1]	
Appendix 2: Data tables[1]	
Appendix 3: Glossary[1]	
Overall word allocation	**9500 words**

Department Renewal	
Section 1: An overview of the department and its approach to gender equality	2500 words
Section 2: An evaluation of the department's progress and issues	3000 words
Section 3: Future action plan[1]	
Appendix 1: Culture survey data[1]	
Appendix 2: Data tables[1]	
Appendix 3: Glossary[1]	
Overall word allocation	**5500 words**

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

What is included in and excluded from the word count?

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 action plan, which should not include any commentary contributing to the overall word limit
+ 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, all applicants submitting in 2021 and 2022 are offered a 500-word extension to the application word limit to consider the impact of Covid-19. 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. The additional words are available to all applicants during this period so there is no need to apply to the Equality Charters team for permission. 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). Applicants should 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. Applicants should 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. Applicants should 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. Applicants should 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.

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 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) will 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 a survey for use by departmental applicants so that they may explore and assess their culture. To support flexibility, departmental applicants have a choice of running the full culture survey, or embedding the seven 'core' questions into existing surveys. You can find the details of each option on the following pages.

When to run the survey

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. So that you understand your current context and can use this in your application, ideally the survey should be run no more than a year prior to the application submission date.

Applicants intending to apply for an Athena Swan award in 2021 and 2022 may have already undertaken alternative consultation with their staff, or there may not be sufficient time to run the survey prior to their application submission date. Applicants wishing to explore the option of a short-term extension to allow them to run the new survey should get in touch with the Equality Charters team. Alternatively, applicants submitting in 2021 and 2022 will be allowed to omit the survey findings from their application, though we strongly encourage those applicants to run the survey (or its core questions) if possible, so as to inform their gender equality work and support longitudinal analysis in their future applications. Use of the survey will be expected of all departmental applicants submitting an application from (and inclusive of) the January 2023 round onwards.

Applying as a faculty?

Faculty applicants are also expected to run the survey (or its core questions) so as to inform their assessment of culture. Faculty-level applicants should analyse and present their survey findings disaggregated by sub-unit wherever possible.

We want your help

The departmental culture survey is a new introduction to the Athena Swan Charter. To ensure it is as effective and supportive of applicants' gender equality work as possible, we will review with the Athena Swan Governance Committee its use by early adopters during 2021 and 2022. We are asking any applicant planning on using the survey (or its core questions) during this period to register their interest in taking part in the pilot exercise so that we can learn from their experience and feedback. This applies to departments intending to run the survey themselves, or to universities planning on running the survey centrally.

Athena Swan culture survey – Department applicants

Implementation of the departmental culture survey

Departmental applicants have a choice of running the full culture survey, or embedding the core questions into existing surveys. As a minimum, the results of the core questions must be included in their application under Appendix 1.

Applicants should ask additional demographic and diversity monitoring questions to enable them to effectively analyse the results of the survey. Applicants will have the flexibility to tailor these questions to their context, and are encouraged to refer to Advance HE's latest guidance on diversity monitoring questions for recommended wording[1]. As a minimum, applicants are required to ask respondents: a question about their gender to allow a gender-specific analysis; and, a question about their role in the department (eg academic, PTO staff) to enable analysis by job family or career type.

Survey respondents will be 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.

Full survey

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 adverse gendered impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on staff[2]
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

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

2 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 appointments 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 adverse gendered impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on staff[2]

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 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.
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 assigned 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 registered as at birth. It may also change over time.
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 registered as at birth. It may also change over time.
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. 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, particularly the intersection of gender and other characteristics.
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	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).
Occupational segregation	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.
Performance review	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.
Progression	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.
Promotion	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 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.
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: + 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	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.
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	Trans and transgender are inclusive umbrella terms for people whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from the sex (male or female) they were assigned at birth. The term may include, but is not limited to, trans men and women, non-binary people and dual role people. Not all people that can be included in the term will associate with it.
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.