

Athena Swan Ireland and Horizon Europe Brief

Aligning your Athena Swan Ireland Action Plan
to Horizon Europe Gender Equality Plan
requirements

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1. Purpose

For Horizon Europe calls for proposals with deadlines in 2022 and beyond, applying public bodies, research organisations and higher education institutions from EU Member States and associated countries must have a Gender Equality Plan or equivalent strategy in place to be eligible for funding.¹

Following national consultation and a period of redevelopment, an updated Athena Swan Ireland Charter Framework was launched at the end of 2021. Feedback from the sector stressed the importance of ensuring that the Action Plans developed as part of Athena Swan activities align to the requirements set by Horizon Europe.

While many aspects of the Athena Swan Ireland Charter Framework align directly with Horizon Europe requirements, institutions should be aware of that some further activity may be needed. Aimed at colleagues developing and implementing institutional Athena Swan Ireland Action Plans, this briefing provides higher education and research institutions guidance on how to use the charter framework to assist them in meeting the Horizon Europe Gender Equality Plan requirements.

2. Relevant Documents

2.1 European Commission

The Horizon Europe Guidance on Gender Equality Plans is [available here](#) and supports organisations to meet the Gender Equality Plan eligibility criterion of Horizon Europe.

2.2 Advance HE: Athena Swan Ireland

The Athena Swan Ireland Charter requires institutional senior management to sign up to eight Charter Principles to join the framework and accreditation process. The [Charter Principles letter template](#) can be used to join.

The Athena Swan Ireland [Application Framework](#) incorporates key data and themes which are meant to satisfy a broad and inclusive evaluation of gender equality, build capacity across additional and intersecting equality grounds, and support institutions to develop their own context-specific action plans.

¹ European Commission, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, *Horizon Europe guidance on gender equality plans*, Publications Office of the European Union, 2021, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2777/876509>

2.3 Higher Education Authority

Institutional applicants may also wish to consider how their Action Plan aligns with recommendations and activities associated with the Higher Education Authority's [Centre for Excellence for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion](#).

3. Aligning Athena Swan Ireland to Horizon Europe

3.1 Process-related requirements

To comply with Horizon Europe eligibility requirements, institutions must have active Gender Equality Plans that meet **four mandatory process-related requirements**.

Table 1 outlines these process-related requirements, how Athena Swan Ireland aligns to these requirements, and notes where further alignment should be led by institutions.

Table 1

Horizon Europe Gender Equality Plan (GEP) Process-related Requirements	Athena Swan Ireland (ASI) Requirements Aligned to Horizon Europe	Further Alignment Led by Institutions
Formal document published on institutional website and signed by management	Applications are submitted with a letter of endorsement from the head of the institution. Applicants must describe how the findings of the self-assessment are communicated to the wider institution. Applicants must confirm the action plan will be published on the institution's website.	No further alignment needed.
Commitment of resources and expertise to GEP implementation	Applicants must provide a description of the institution's equality, diversity and inclusion structures and resources.	While gender expertise is not explicitly stipulated in the ASI framework, institutions can include relevant detail.
Collect and publish sex/gender disaggregated data on staff (and students where relevant) and annual reporting	Applicants must provide and analyse disaggregated data linked to a four-year award validity period.	Institutions that don't provide annual reporting to the HEA should develop actions to meet this requirement.

Awareness raising/training on gender equality and unconscious gender bias	ASI is not prescriptive about training requirements, but relevant training is likely to be included in any action plan.	Institutions should include actions inclusive of training and capacity building, related to issues identified in their ASI self-assessment.
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3.2 Content-related requirements

To comply with Horizon Europe eligibility requirements, in addition to the mandatory process requirements, institutions are recommended to have active Gender Equality Action Plans (GEP) that cover **five content-related areas** using concrete measures and targets.

Table 2 outlines these content related areas, how Athena Swan Ireland aligns to these areas, and notes where further alignment should be led by institutions.

Table 2

Horizon Europe Gender Equality Plan (GEP) Content-related Requirements	Athena Swan Ireland (ASI) Requirements Aligned to Horizon Europe	Further Alignment Led by Institutions
Work-life balance and organisational culture	• Principle 1, 2, and 7 • Section 2.4	ASI criteria only require the development of a prioritised action plan where issues have been identified following a thorough self-assessment. Institutions may wish to consider if further activity is needed to satisfy Horizon Europe GEP requirements.
Gender balance in leadership and decision-making	• Principle 1 and 4 • Section 2.1c	
Gender equality in recruitment and career progression	• Principle 4 and 7 • Sections 2.2 and 2.3	
Integration of the gender dimension into research and teaching content	• Principle 2 • Section 2.2e	
Measures against gender-based violence, including sexual harassment	• Principle 3 • Section 2.4c	

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