

Athena Swan UK transformation update February 2021

Draft award criteria and expectations

1. Introduction

Through the valuable evidence presented in the Independent Review and from feedback from our members and applicants, we have heard the concerns of the sector relating to the consistency and transparency of Athena Swan award outcomes and identified this as a priority for action.

Since the publication of the revised Charter Principles, we have held monthly meetings working with the Athena Swan Governance Committee (ASGC) and subgroups focusing on particular aspects of gender equality in order to develop defined and transparent expectations to support high-level award criteria.

Feedback has suggested that introducing more explicit award expectations – that are still flexible to applicant context – will provide useful clarity and direction to applicants, helping them to streamline their approach, while providing transparency relating to the assessment process.

One of the central tenets to our transformation work is ensuring that our members have the opportunity to engage with and input to the development of the Athena Swan Charter in the UK. With this in mind, we are publishing below the draft award criteria and expectations and will seek feedback through the [engagement events](#) taking place during February 2021.

This is the first time that it has been attempted to provide this additional clarity relating to the award criteria and we are keen that this development is informed by the voices of our stakeholders across the UK sector.

Please note the information shared below is in draft and should not be used for any purpose other than informing the feedback and discussions of the engagement events. The feedback received on the draft award criteria and expectations will be collated and considered by the ASGC as they work to develop a final version.

If you have any queries about the transformation of Athena Swan in the UK or the draft materials below, please get in touch with Advance HE's Equality Charters team at athena.swan@advance-he.ac.uk

2. Draft award criteria

Working with the ASGC we have been able to build on the work of the Independent Review and further refine the criteria. The draft award criteria present in broad terms the thresholds for Bronze, Silver and Gold awards and for renewing those awards. These draft criteria will apply to every applicant type; department, directorate, university and research institute.

Table 1: Draft award criteria

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

B = Bronze, BR = Bronze Renewal, S = Silver, SR = Silver Renewal, G = Gold, GR = Gold Renewal

How an applicant is able to demonstrate each of these criteria is captured in the draft expectations (Table 2).

3. Draft underpinning expectations

The following draft expectations have been developed by the ASGC with input from subgroups focusing on particular aspects of gender equality; for example, considering intersectionality, or gender as a spectrum rather than a binary.

The underpinning expectations seek to clarify what successful applications would consider.

Table 2 presents an outline of each of these expectations, indicating (where relevant) where an expectation is relevant only for a particular applicant type. For each expectation, additional detail and guidance will be developed to support applicants in their work and to clearly indicate to applicants and panel members how the expectation can be demonstrated and to which part of the application form it is linked.

Guidance will also be produced to help applicants understand, identify and respond to issues referenced in the draft expectations. For example, to support applicants composing a narrative-based answer relating to intersectional inequalities, guidance will include (and reference to) other support materials, guidance and training that Advance HE and other experts in the sector have developed. Additionally, we plan to provide case studies and 'mock examples' to share good practice and illustrate the demonstration and assessment of expectations.

Table 2: Draft outline of the content of expectations proposed to underpin the award criteria

	High-level award criteria	Bronze	Bronze renewal	Silver	Silver renewal	Gold	Gold renewal
A.	Evidence-based recognition of the key issues facing the applicant	X	X	X	X	X	X
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> collected and analysed mandatory data evaluated their culture evaluated their policies evaluated their approach to exploring intersectional inequalities (<i>through a narrative question</i>) evaluated the inclusivity of their culture for trans and non-binary staff and students (<i>through a narrative question</i>) evaluated practices and policies for the inclusion and support of trans and non-binary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> evaluated their progress identified and justified key priorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> collected and analysed mandatory data (<i>including intersectional analysis at university/RI level</i>) evaluated their culture evaluated their policies evaluated intersectional inequalities (<i>through a narrative question</i>) evaluated the inclusivity of their culture for trans and non-binary staff and students (<i>through a narrative question</i>) evaluated practices and policies for the inclusion and support of trans and non-binary staff and students (institution only) identified and justified key priorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> evaluated their progress identified and justified key priorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> collected and analysed mandatory data (<i>including intersectional analysis at university/RI level</i>) evaluated their culture evaluated their policies evaluated intersectional inequalities (<i>through a narrative question</i>) evaluated the inclusivity of their culture for trans and non-binary staff and students (<i>through a narrative question</i>) evaluated practices and policies for the inclusion and support of trans and non-binary staff and students identified and justified key priorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> evaluated their progress identified and justified key priorities

	High-level award criteria	Bronze	Bronze renewal	Silver	Silver renewal	Gold	Gold renewal
		<p>staff and students (institution only)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> identified and justified key priorities 					
B.	Action plan to address identified key issues	X	X	X	X	X	X
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SMART action plan that addresses all priority areas Actions which will enable the applicant to evaluate intersectional inequalities in the future 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SMART action plan that addresses all priority areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SMART action plan that addresses all priority areas Actions which address intersectional inequalities as identified through the applicant's priority areas (if relevant) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SMART action plan that addresses all priority areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SMART action plan that addresses all priority areas Actions which address intersectional inequalities as identified through the applicant's priority areas (if relevant) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SMART action plan that addresses all priority areas
C.	Demonstration of progress against the applicant's previously identified priorities		X	X	X	X	X
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The previous Bronze action plan is underway or completed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The previous Bronze action plan is completed or superseded 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The previous Silver action plan is underway or completed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The previous Silver action plan is completed or superseded 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The previous Gold action plan is underway or completed
D.	Evidence of success addressing gender inequality			X		X	
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of desired outcome/improvement against at least 2 priorities 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of desired outcome/improvement 	

	High-level award criteria	Bronze	Bronze renewal	Silver	Silver renewal	Gold	Gold renewal
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policies are considered to be effective and appropriate by staff/students (institution only) AND/OR Evidence of the positive impact of policies on staff/students (institution only)		against at least 3 priorities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of longitudinal improvement, over the course of more than one award cycle • Policies are considered to be effective and appropriate by staff/students (institution only) AND/OR Evidence of the positive impact of policies on staff/students (institution only)	
E.	Evidence of sector-leading gender equality practice and supporting others to improve					X	
						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of how the applicant continually monitors and updates their policies and practice in order to remain innovative, intersectional, and inclusive of trans and non-binary people, providing (where 	

	High-level award criteria	Bronze	Bronze renewal	Silver	Silver renewal	Gold	Gold renewal
						<p>possible) examples of innovation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence that through their activity, good practice has been taken up by other departments / institutions / sectors 	
F.	Structures and process underpin and recognise gender equality work	X	X	X	X	X	X
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 developing, evaluating and revising policies (institution only) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-assessment undertaken by a representative team and informed by staff/students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 developing, evaluating and revising policies (institution only, including evaluation for intersectional inequalities) processes in place for evaluating implementation of policies (department only) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-assessment undertaken by a representative team and informed by staff/students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 developing, evaluating and revising policies (institution only, including evaluation for intersectional inequalities) processes in place for evaluating implementation of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-assessment undertaken by a representative team and informed by staff/students

	High-level award criteria	Bronze	Bronze renewal	Silver	Silver renewal	Gold	Gold renewal
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • processes in place for evaluating implementation of policies (department only) • processes in place for developing, evaluating and revising policies to include and support trans and non-binary staff and students (institution only) 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • processes in place for developing, evaluating and revising policies to include and support trans and non-binary staff and students (institution only) 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • policies (department only) • processes in place for developing, evaluating and revising policies to include and support trans and non-binary staff and students (institution only) 	

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