

Athena Swan toolkit: Preparing an application

Indicative timeline for actions in the year leading up to making an application

Time	Initial bronze application	Bronze renewal application	Initial silver application
Month 1: Prepare for the application process	Ensure that you have structures in place to enable you to undertake this work: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • leadership buy-in • staffing resource (as outlined in 'Getting Started') • plans for a Self-assessment team (SAT) representative of the department – include plans for any sub-groups/working groups to focus on particular issues; • draft timeline for application process. 		
Develop external links	Consider external links and where these might be developed to support your evaluation of gender equality in your department within a national and global context. Do you have links within the division/University? Do you have links nationally with departments in other HEIs and learned societies?		
Month 2: first SAT meeting Ideally the HOD should be present.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss the new Athena Swan principles, the self-assessment process and expectations of SAT members. • Discuss and agree your initial approach to SAT meetings, to the application form, to document-sharing and record-keeping (<i>this can evolve as the application progresses</i>). • Agree how you will communicate with the wider department as your work progresses, including communications with all department members, and identifying key stakeholders/committees that will need to be involved in discussion or agreement of actions in particular areas (e.g. Course Directors, Research Committee etc.) • Discuss how to consult with staff and students (see further guidance under 'Sourcing your data'). • Explore resources available to support your gender equality work (e.g. from Advance HE and EDU/EDI Hub). Highlight GDPR considerations in relation to Athena Swan work (seek guidance from your divisional Athena Swan co-ordinator). 		
		The following actions should have been ongoing since the previous application, but this will be an opportunity to take stock of where the department is now, and to identify any further areas of work required. The SAT should: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Remind itself of any feedback from the assessment Panel on the previous application, and the up-to-date Action Plan. Evaluate progress against previously identified priorities. Consider whether there is evidence of success in addressing gender equality. If it has not already been decided, this will provide an 	

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		opportunity to consider whether the department should apply for a silver award, or apply to renew their bronze award, based on an assessment of whether there is sufficient evidence to meet the criteria for a silver award – “evidence of desired outcome/improvement against at least two priorities”.	
Communication	Communicate/launch application with wider department as agreed by SAT (e.g. town hall meeting, newsletter, etc.)		
Data work	Collect all the core data required for the application (p.55 of Advance HE guidance).		
		Collect other data already identified as important, and data already collected which supports the evaluation of progress and success so far.	
Month 3: second SAT meeting	Consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • core staff and student data required for the application, • further areas in which data should be collected in order to identify or further elucidate issues of gender equality. 	Consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • core staff and student data required for the application, • further areas in which data should be collected in order to identify or further elucidate issues of gender equality, • further areas in which data should be collected to support evaluation of progress so far. 	Consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • core staff and student data required for the application, • further areas in which data should be collected in order to identify or further elucidate issues of gender equality, • further areas in which data should be collected to support evaluation of progress so far. • Evaluate whether you are able to evidence success against previously identified priorities.
Staff and Student consultations	Analyse the results of any existing consultations (e.g. Staff Experience Survey) if not already undertaken. Run any additional staff and student consultations (e.g. Focus Groups). Analyse results for reporting to the SAT. (Aim to analyse results as a minimum by staff group and gender.)		
Month 4: third SAT meeting	Consider whether the department has the following effectively in place, and if not how to put in place:	Reflect on whether the department has all the structures in place as for a bronze or silver application, and	Consider whether actions are needed to strengthen:

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • leadership of and senior buy-in to the Athena Swan process; • effective governance structure for EDI; • formal processes for recognition and reward of EDI work; • processes in place for evaluating the implementation of policies. 	<p>whether any actions are needed. Note that you will need to evidence in the narrative of the application:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an appropriate self-assessment process; • buy-in from HOD/senior leadership. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • leadership of and senior buy-in to the Athena Swan process; • effective governance structure for EDI; • formal processes for recognition and reward of EDI work; • processes in place for evaluating the implementation of policies.
<p>Drafting work (It may be helpful to begin with a list of bullet points, and later refine into prose.)</p>	<p>Draft section “An overview of the department and its approach to gender equality” (excluding the Letter of endorsement from the HOD, which can be drafted later in the process).</p>		
<p>Month 5: fourth SAT meeting</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider results of staff and student consultation and identify issues arising. • Consider departmental culture and how departmental culture and practices support inclusion and belonging. • Include consideration of culture in relation to inclusivity for staff and students of all gender identities. • Evaluate policies (where applicable) and processes for implementing policies • Evaluate approach to exploring intersectional inequalities and identify actions required to 	<p>Departments should review the results of staff and student consultations and consider any issues arising, including any issues relating to culture. The evaluation will not need to be described in detail in the application, but should inform the action plan.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider results of staff and student consultation and identify issues arising. • Consider departmental culture and how departmental culture and practices support inclusion and belonging. • Include consideration of culture in relation to inclusivity for staff and students of all gender identities. • Evaluate policies (where applicable) and processes for implementing policies • Evaluate intersectional inequalities

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	enable evaluation of intersectional inequalities in future		
Month 6: fifth SAT meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin to identify and discuss priorities, based on evidence considered so far. Ultimately you will need to identify 4-8 gender equality priorities. • Ensure that consideration is given to how the department might explore, either now or as an action within the Action Plan, intersectional inequalities: is there evidence to encourage exploration of inequalities arising in relation to the intersection of gender with (an) other characteristic(s)? Which? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin to identify and discuss priorities, based on evidence considered so far. Ultimately you will need to identify 4-8 gender equality priorities. These are likely to build on or develop priorities identified in your previous application. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin to identify and discuss priorities, based on evidence considered so far. Ultimately you will need to identify 4-8 gender equality priorities. These are likely to build on or develop priorities identified in your previous application. • Evaluate intersectional inequalities: what evidence is there of inequalities arising in relation to the intersection of gender with (an) other characteristic(s)? Which?
Month 7: sixth SAT meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin to identify actions to include in the Action Plan, addressing all priority areas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin to draw to conclusions the evaluation of progress so far. • Begin to identify actions to include in the Action Plan, addressing all priority areas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin to draw to conclusions the evaluation of progress so far and evidence of success so far against previously identified priorities. • Begin to identify actions to include in the Action Plan, addressing all priority areas.
Drafting Work (It may be helpful to begin with a list of bullet points, and later refine into prose.)	Draft “Section 2: An assessment of the department’s gender equality context” and “Section 3: Future Action Plan”	Draft “Section 2: An evaluation of the department’s progress and issues” and “Section 3: Future Action Plan”	Draft “Section 2: An evaluation of the department’s progress and success”, “Section 3: An assessment of the department’s gender equality context” and “Section 4: Future Action Plan”

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Month 8: seventh SAT meeting	Review draft application		
Consult key stakeholders and action owners	Share draft application and actions with key stakeholders in the department (and ensure buy-in from all action owners and departmental leadership where this has not already been agreed).		
Drafting work	Redraft as necessary. Monitor wordcount and adjust accordingly. HOD to draft Section 1.1 Letter of Endorsement.		
Seek external input	External 'critical friend' to review draft application – this might be an Athena Swan lead in a similar department in another UK HEI, or other external contact. Redraft following feedback.		
Month 9: eighth SAT meeting	SAT to consider near-final draft of application.		
Departmental approval and communications.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take draft through departmental governance structures as necessary • If this does not include all staff, consider sharing the draft more widely with staff and students. 		
Notify Advance HE	Notify Advance HE of intention to submit, according to the deadlines at Athena Swan: Intention to Submit Advance HE (advance-he.ac.uk) The deadline for notifying is usually two months before the relevant submission date.		
Month 10	Review of draft application by divisional EDI co-ordinator and EDU Gender Equality Advisor, usually approximately 6 weeks before submission deadline.		
Month 11	Final SAT meeting to discuss any issues and changes arising.		
Month 12	Final changes/amendments to application and submission via Advance HE portal by 5pm on the deadline date.		

