The Oxford Research and Policy Athena Swan Application Checklist

INTRODUCTION

The Oxford Research and Policy Athena Swan Application Checklist for university departments making applications for awards under the 'transformed' Athena Swan scheme is one of set of 'tools' to support university departments in their Athena Swan work.

Further guidance is being developed on carrying out the self assessment and using, recording and reporting the findings from the assessment.

The Application Checklist was drawn up by Caroline Fox and Sean McWhinnie. Comments from users are welcomed on the usefulness (or not) of the Checklist. If you do find it useful, please refer to its usefulness in your Athena Swan award application.

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Notes:

- Our checklist should only be used alongside the Advance HE Guidance for Athena Swan Applications.
- In the following - the text in italics is taken from the Advance HE guidance.
- Our Checklist uses the ordering in the Advance HE guidance, with one exception - the section that relates only to Gold applications. This is positioned at the end of the checklist.
- We have made some small changes to names of sections and subsections in the Advance HE guidance.
- In several places the Advance HE guidance refers to department Policies. Where we felt it was appropriate we refer to "Practices and Procedures", on the basis that Policy is likely to be made at University rather than department level.

The 2021 Advance HE transformed Athena Swan principles commit departments to undertake an evidence-based, transparent self-assessment to direct their EDI priorities and interventions, to evaluate their progress and to inform the department's continuous development.

A thorough and honest self assessment remains key to a successful Athena Swan application. The self assessment should be carried out before completing the Athena Swan application form. Advance HE is not specific on what it expects from department self assessments. We have produced a self assessment record which takes as its starting point the 2015 Athena Swan scheme application form. More details can be found on our website together with information about our other tools to support the 2021 Athena Swan scheme.

https://www.oxfordresearchandpolicy.co.uk/supporting-athena-swan/

Advance HE's definition of culture is broad. Advance HE acknowledges that there is no prescribed way of defining, evaluating or assessing culture - what matters is what is relevant to your context. Advance HE suggests that definitions of culture are likely to have some kind of tangible framework. Their guidance adopts a five-dimension framework incorporating: Social Culture; Professional Culture; Hierarchical Culture; Physical Space; and Partnership Working. Oxford Research and Policy's self-assessment record sets out an alternative approach to assessing culture. This approach has worked well since 2005.

Intersectional inequalities are highlighted in Advance HE's guidance but the guidance also acknowledges that evidence-bases may not support evaluating intersectionality. At department level, numbers are unlikely to support the exploration of most gender intersectionalities: it is likely that only the gender-ethnicity intersection will have large enough numbers to support exploration.

Inclusion of people of all gender identities is highlighted in the guidance. Departments are encouraged to consider how to embed inclusive practices and approaches within their culture and activities.

Application Checklist Contents

1. OVERVIEW OF DEPARTMENT

*Evidence to meet **criterion A***

The structures and processes in place to underpin and recognise gender equality work.

Word Count 2,500

1.1 HEAD OF DEPARTMENT LETTER

Bronze   [1.1]
Silver   [1.1]
Gold   [1.1]
Renew   [1.1]

CHECK that the HoD letter includes:

No		Yes/No
1.1.1	A demonstration of the HoD's commitment to / involvement in equality diversity and inclusion (EDI).	
1.1.2	A description of the HoD's personal experiences and interests in EDI, and any relevant family circumstances.	-
1.1.3	Evidence of how the department's EDI work is led and supported by the senior management.	
1.1.4	The department's key concerns, priorities and achievements.	
1.1.5	How the department's Athena Swan priorities link with its academic priorities.	
Your Notes		

1.2   DESCRIPTION OF DEPARTMENT

Bronze   *[1.2]*
Silver   *[1.2]*
Gold   *[1.2]*
Renew   *[1.2]*

CHECK that the description of the department includes:

No		Yes/No
1.2.1	The size, location(s) and geography of the department.	
1.2.2	Department facilities, building(s) and sites.	
1.2.3	Common rooms and social spaces.	
1.2.4	Disciplines covered by the department.	
1.2.5	Where the department sits within the university's structure (e.g. faculty)	
1.2.6	Department organisational structure: line management, research groups, teaching organisation.	
1.2.7	Any significant recent and future changes and events e.g. Covid/its impact.	
1.2.8	Links with community partners.	
Your Notes		

1.3   DEPARTMENT EDI GOVERNANCE

Bronze   *[1.3]*
Silver   *[1.3]*
Gold   *[1.3]*
Renew   *N/A*

CHECK that the description of the department's EDI structures, staff and resources includes:

No		Yes/No
1.3.1	The department management and committee structures that support EDI activity.	
1.3.2	The leadership of EDI/Athena Swan programmes, initiatives and interventions.	
1.3.3	Links with the university and faculty EDI structures and arrangements.	
1.3.4	EDI Committee chair/co-chairs, individual members and subgroups.	
1.3.5	Links to other department, faculty & university EDI committees.	
1.3.6	Department and individual contributions to faculty and university EDI work and its recognition	
1.3.7	Department and university recognition of the work and recognition of specialist/expert EDI staff.	
1.3.8	EDI committee links with/cross membership of the department Self-Assessment Team (SAT).	
1.3.9	Resources: the funding, time, expertise, and administrative support provided for EDI work.	
Your Notes		

1.4 DEPARTMENT EDI POLICIES, PRACTICES AND PROCEDURES - EVALUATION & ASSESSMENT

Bronze   [1.4]
Silver   [1.4]
Gold   [1.4]
Renew   N/A

CHECK that department processes for the development, review, updating, issue and implementation of its EDI policies and supporting practices and procedures include:

No		Yes/No
1.4.1	The post holders responsible for individual EDI policies, practices and procedures.	
1.4.2	Consultations at all levels, with academic and PTO staff, undergraduate and post graduate students.	
1.4.3	The maintenance and use of consultative mechanisms with the university, other departments and external partners	
1.4.4	Arrangements to ensure that departmental policies, practices and procedures are, and remain, fit for purpose	
1.4.5	Arrangements and responsibilities for the continuing impact assessments of department EDI policies, practices and procedures.	
1.4.6	Department systems that ensure that none of its policies practices and /or procedures negatively impact any under-represented staff groups.	
1.4.7	How the department evaluates its implementation of university EDI policies and how this feeds back to the university.	
1.4.8	How the department ensures that its EDI policies, practices and procedures link with university HR and EDI policies.	
Your Notes		

1.5   THE SELF ASSESSMENT TEAM (SAT): ITS MEMBERS, ROLE, THE SELF ASSESSMENT AND THE FUTURE

Bronze   [1.5]
Silver   [1.5]
Gold   [1.5]
Renew   [1.3]

1.5.1 ATHENA SWAN SELF ASSESSMENT TEAM (SAT)

CHECK that the information on the self assessment team includes:

No		Yes/No
1.5.1(i)	SAT members, chair(s), others with specific responsibilities, their length of service on the SAT.	
1.5.1(ii)	The posts/positions in the department/faculty/university that SAT members hold, or have held.	
1.5.1(iii)	Representativeness of SAT membership of the department as a whole.	
1.5.1(iv)	Information on SAT members external to the department.	
1.5.1(v)	Individual members with special interests and experience e.g. caring responsibilities & interrupted career progression.	
1.5.1(vi)	The involvement of the SAT in policy making and implementation, and policy reviews.	
1.5.1(vii)	Links with other department committees and cross membership of the SAT and the EDI/Athena Swan lead committee (if different).	
1.5.1(viii)	The individuals/ post holders involved in pulling the application together. and / or undertaking the assessment and how were they appointed	

1.5.2 ATHENA SWAN SELF ASSESSMENT PROCESS

CHECK that the information on how the department undertakes its self-assessment includes:

No		Yes/No
1.5.2(i)	The sources of the quantitative and qualitative data (staff and student) used to inform the application.	
1.5.2(ii)	How the SAT consults with staff and students.	
1.5.2(iii)	How the SAT uses information from their culture surveys including any gender differences.	
1.5.2(iv)	How the SAT uses output from the consultative exercises it has undertaken	
1.5.2(v)	How the SAT uses learning from previous applications including feedback from Advance HE on previous department applications.	
1.5.2(vi)	How the SAT uses comments from post holders and committees on draft action plans.	
1.5.2(vii)	How the SAT uses and shares its Self Assessment Record	

1.5.3 FUTURE OF ATHENA SWAN SELF ASSESSMENT TEAM/PROCESS

CHECK that the department's future plans for the delivery and maintenance of their EDI activities over the coming five years include:

No		Yes/No
1.5.3(i)	SAT's succession planning and turnover of members	
1.5.3(ii)	Frequency of SAT meetings.	
1.5.3(iii)	How the SAT uses the Self Assessment Record and keeps it up to date	
1.5.3(iv)	How the action plan will be implemented, evaluated and updated as necessary.	
Your Notes		

2.   THE EVALUATION / SELF ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS

*The evidence to meet **criteria D and E***

Progress against applicants previously identified priorities has been demonstrated

Success in addressing the inequalities that has been evidenced (Bronze N/A)

*Silver   [2]   **Word count 2,000***
*Gold   [2]   **Word count 2,000***
*Renew   [2]   **Word count 3,000***

2.1   EVALUATION OF PROGRESS IN IMPLEMENTING THE PREVIOUS ACTION PLAN

CHECK that the assessment/evaluation (of the success and failure of actions) has been undertake, by whom, when and includes:

No		Yes/No
2.1.1	Reflections on actions in the department's previous/current action plan that were rated amber or red including those action that were removed during the life of the award.	
2.1.2	A description of factors (internal and external) that affected successful implementation.	
2.1.3	How findings from the evaluation were shared.	
2.1.4	The action taken when things went wrong, and consequential changes to the action plan	
2.1.5	Lessons from the evaluation that will be taken into account in future plans	
2.1.6	The actions that were needed have been completed, and/or are in progress or are scheduled for the future	
2.1.7	The checks made to ensure that the department, its staff, students and partners benefitted, recognised and welcomed the changes that were made	
2.1.8	The actions resulting from the department's checks:	
2.1.8(i)	When the action was taken	
2.1.8(ii)	Who took the action	
2.1.8(iii)	Whether the action was successful	
2.1.8(iv)	The people who benefitted from the action	
2.1.8(v)	Further changes planned	

Your Notes		

2.2   EVALUATION OF SUCCESS OF KEY PRIORITIES

CHECK that the description of the department's key EDI achievements includes:

No		Yes/No
2.2.1	Evidence on how the department achieved its desired outcomes or achieved improvements in its key priority areas:	
2.2.1(i)	**Silver award applications** A description of at least <u>two</u> of the department's previously identified key priorities.	
2.2.1(ii)	**Gold award applications** A description of at least <u>three</u> of the department's previously identified key priorities.	
Your Notes		

CHECK that when the department describes its success it includes:

No		Yes/No
2.2.2	(Wherever possible) References to qualitative and quantitative data from staff and student surveys.	
2.2.3	Reflections on the main facilitators/factors in their success.	
2.2.4	Reflections on translatable features.	

Your Notes		

3.   EDI CONTEXT EVALUATION / ASSESSMENT

*To evidence how applicants meet **Criterion B***

Evidence based recognition has been demonstrated of key issues facing the applicant

Bronze   [2]
Silver   [3]
Gold   [4]
Renew   [2]

Word Count 3,500

3.1   CULTURE, INCLUSION AND BELONGING

CHECK that department practices and procedures support its culture, its values, its inclusivity and a sense of belonging for those who work and study in it and includes:

No		Yes/No
3.1.1	The department's arrangements (formal and informal) that deal with bullying, harassment and poor behaviour, are well regarded, are used, are effective and are trusted.	
3.1.2	How the department addresses negative behaviours and practices.	
3.1.3	Examples of the good practice the department has in place, and any gaps and weaknesses in workplace arrangements (career development, career progression, flexibility, support and encouragement)	
3.1.4	How the department ensures that individuals from under-represented groups (staff and students; people of all gender identities) are fully involved in its work, in its social life and in the development and implementation of department policies, practices, procedures, activities, and programmes.	
Your Notes		

3.2. KEY PRIORITIES FOR FUTURE ACTION

CHECK that the department's future plans and considerations include:

No		Yes/No
3.2.1	Improvements to inclusivity in all department practices, procedures, arrangements and activities	
3.2.2.	Meeting individuals' needs for flexibility particularly for those with caring responsibilities, interrupted, or unusual career paths and career breaks	
3.2.3	Improvements in the inclusion of ALL who work in the department, in the life and work of the department.	
3.2.4	Evaluation/assessment and addressing intersectional inequalities (staff and student) if intersectional inequalities are identified.	
Your notes		

AND CHECK that the department's decisions on other characteristics to prioritise take account of its circumstances and are evidence-based using data from its culture surveys and consultative exercises. This should provide indicators of the department's current understanding of intersectionality and intersectional inequalities (staff and student) in the department.

Together the evaluations/assessments undertaken by the department and the trends and issues identified in the data, and collected and analysed by it provides the evidence base for it to select four to eight key priorities as part of its action plan.

CHECK that the selected priorities comply with Advance HE advice and that the priorities:

No		Yes/No
3.2.1	Allow the department to target the greatest inequalities that it has identified.	
3.2.2	Are appropriate to departmental circumstances.	
3.2.3	Can be justified based on the qualitative and quantitative evidence the department has collected, and the events over which it does not have control.	
3.2.4	Are detailed and specific to allow the department to target the areas of greatest need.	
3.2.5	Address any intersectional inequalities that the department has identified if the numbers make it practicable /sensible	

Your Notes	14	

Note: Some priorities may be carried over to the next award period and some may require adjustment to fit in the next award period (the rationale for this should be provided).

CHECK that the priorities selected are firmly based on the assessments/evaluations undertaken by the department, the trends and issues identified in the data it had collected and include:

No		Yes/No
3.2.6	Staff career progression	
3.2.7	External events eg Covid	
Your Notes		

4.   THE DEPARTMENT FUTURE ACTION PLAN

*To evidence how applicants meet **Criterion C***

An action plan is in place to address identified key issues

Bronze   [3]
Silver   [4]
Gold   [5]
Renew   [3]

CHECK that the department plan (and the actions, interventions, activities and programmes in it) links with the priorities that the department intends to address, and that the plan:

No		Yes/No
4.1	Covers the five-year award period.	
4.2	Is based on the evidence collected by the department.	
4.3	Addresses the department's key issues and priorities.	
4.4	Identifies the post holder/s who are responsible/accountable for each action.	
4.5	Is clear on which interventions are planned for each key priority.	
4.6	Identifies the barriers and facilitators to success	
4.7	Relates to the department's existing priorities.	
4.8	Includes a mix of ongoing activities (for example self assessment, data collection and analysis) and proactive interventions.	
Your Notes		

CHECK that each action in the Action Plan includes:

No	Item	Yes/No
4.9	A baseline/the rationale for the action to help to identify measurable targets and steps towards them.	
4.10	Appropriate outcome measures that are specific, measurable, achievable and time limited (SMART).	
4.11	Time scales for beginning and completing the action (and where appropriate milestones).	
Your Notes		

CHECK that each action in the Action Plan includes:

5. SECTOR LEADING ACTIVITY EVALUATION / ASSESSMENT

The evidence to meet Criterion F

Evidence of sector leading EDI practice & supporting others to improve

Bronze   *N/A*
Silver   *N/A*
Gold   *[3]*   ***Word count 1,500***
Renew   *N/A*

5.1 MAINTAINING GOOD PRACTICE & INNOVATION

CHECK that the examples of good practice and innovation provided by the department include demonstrate how it covers the following:

No	Items	Yes/No
5.1.1	How the good practice in all aspects of the department's work, and activities are embedded.	
5.1.2	How the good practice and procedures are supported, monitored and updated	
5.1.3	How the department ensures that its practices and procedures continue to be leading edge.	
5.1.4	How the departments its intersectional and inclusive approach (that benefits everyone is embedded	
Your Notes		

5.2 SUPPORTING OTHERS TO IMPROVE

CHECK that the examples provided by the department show clearly what was done, when it was done, for how long it was done, how it was done, who did it, who benefitted from it, and the professional organisations, universities and departments involved.