

Policy Title: Athena Swan Silver Institutional Action Plan

Decision: Screen out

Contact: Professor Mary-Hannon Fletcher

Date of Completion: 15 March 2023

Part 1: Policy Scoping

Information about the policy

Name of the Policy

Athena Swan Silver Institutional Action Plan

Is this an existing, revised, or new policy?

New

What is it trying to achieve? (For example, intended aims and outcomes)

The Action Plan aims to advance gender equality within representation and career progression for staff and students as part of the University's commitment to the Athena Swan initiative.

The Athena Swan Charter was established in 2005 to encourage women in science, technology, engineering, maths, and medicine (STEMM) subjects. Since then, it has expanded to recognise work undertaken in arts, humanities, social sciences, business and law (AHSSBL). The Charter also recognises work undertaken across gender equality more broadly and not just barriers to progression that affects women.

Are there any Section 75 categories which might be expected to benefit from the policy? If so, explain how below.

Note: The Section 75 categories are:

- religious belief
- political opinion
- racial group
- age
- marital status
- sexual orientation
- sex
- disability
- dependants

We expect the following categories to benefit from the Action Plan: men and women generally, race and dependants. The Action Plan aims to advance gender equality, with a specific focus on race.

Who initiated or wrote the policy?

The Athena Swan Self-Assessment Team (SAT).

Who owns and implements the policy?

The Dean of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) owns the Action Plan. The Athena Swan Committee implements the Action Plan.

Implementation factors

Are there any factors which could contribute to or weaken the intended aim or outcome of the policy?

Yes

If yes, are they financial, legislative, or other?

Financial: subject to availability of resources

Legislative: changes to legislation

Other: priorities within the University's Operational Plan

Main stakeholders affected

Who are the internal and external stakeholders (actual or potential) that the policy will impact upon?

- Staff
- Students
- Other service users (for example: prospective students or conference delegates)

Other policies with a bearing on this policy

What are they and who owns them?

Policy: Returning Carer's Scheme

Policy owner: Athena Swan Committee

Policy: EDI Operational Plan

Policy owner: Chief People Officer

Policy: People and Culture Operational Plan

Policy owner: Chief People Officer

Policy: Maternity Leave Guidance

Policy owner: Chief People Officer

Policy: Menopause Policy

Policy owner: Chief People Officer

Policy: Parental Leave Guidance

Policy owner: Chief People Officer

Policy: Paternity Leave Guidance

Policy owner: Chief People Officer

Policy: Flexible and Hybrid Working Framework

Policy owner: Chief People Officer

Policy: Shared Parental Leave and Statutory Shared Parental Pay

Policy owner: Chief People Officer

Policy: Adoption Leave Guidance

Policy owner: Chief People Officer

Policy: Equal Pay Policy

Policy owner: Chief People Officer

Policy: Academic Promotions Policy

Policy owner: Chief People Officer

Policy: Balanced and Appropriate Workload Distribution

Policy owner: Chief People Officer

Policy: Policy on Equality for Transgender Staff and Students

Policy owner: Chief People Officer

Policy: Recruitment and Selection

Policy owner: Chief People Officer

Policy: Work Life Balance Policy

Policy owner: Chief People Officer

Policy: Career Break Policy

Policy owner: Chief People Officer

Policy: Emergency Family Leave Guidance

Policy owner: Chief People Officer

Policy: Professional Development Policy and Code of Practice

Policy owner: Chief People Officer

Available evidence

What evidence or information (both qualitative and quantitative) have you gathered to inform this policy? Please specify details for each of the Section 75 categories below.

Note: Evidence can come from many sources. Examples include the University's management information systems, internal or external research, surveys or consultation exercises. The Equality Commission has produced a guide to [signpost to S75 data](#). Anecdotal evidence, such as feedback from service users may also be used.

The following evidence was considered:

Staff Equal Opportunities Monitoring Data (2023)

Student Equal Opportunities Monitoring Data (2023)

Athena Swan Bronze Application

Advance HE – Equality in Education Statistical Report (2022)

Advance HE – SSET 2016 Summary Report

Advance HE – Findings: Sector-leading and innovative practice in advancing equality and diversity (2017)

Focus Groups

Feedback and Evaluation documents

Northern Ireland Census (2021)

Religious Belief

The University's EO data were reviewed. On 6 February 2023, our staff profile was 51.4% Catholic and 48.6% Protestant. Compared with 6 February 2018, this indicates a 4.1% increase in Catholic staff.

In the Academic Year (AY) 2022/23, 60.2% of our students identified as Christian and 11.0% identified as having 'No religion'. Compared with AY2017/18, 76.1% identified as Christian and 13.5% identified as having 'No religion'.

Political Opinion

The University does not collect information on Political Opinion or make assumptions regarding Political Opinion based on Community Background.

Racial Group

The University's EO data were reviewed. On 6 February 2023, our staff profile was 93.5% White, 6.5% Black and Minority Ethnic (BME). This indicates a 1.8% increase in BME staff compared with 2018.

In AY2022/23, 11.2% of students identified as BME. This indicates a 6.7% increase in BME students compared with AY2017/18.

Our BME profile suggests that we are twice as diverse as the local population. The Northern Ireland Census 2021 suggests that 3.4% of the NI population is BME.

The 2022 Advance HE Equality in Higher Education Staff Report suggested that across UK Higher Education institutions, 11.4% of those UK staff identified as BME, and in Northern Ireland this figure was 3.2%.

Age

The University's EO data were reviewed. On 6 February 2023, almost one third (32.1%) of our staff were in the '46-55' age band. 25.4% of staff were in the '36-45' age band and 26.7% of staff were aged '56 and above', which represents a 4.4% increase in '56 and above' compared to 2018 (22.3%).

In AY2022/23, the majority of students (65.7%) were aged 21 and under 40. This indicates a 1.4% increase in students within this age band compared with AY2017/18.

Marital Status

The University's EO data were reviewed. In February 2023, 57.1% of staff were 'Married or in a Civil Partnership', a decrease of 6.7% compared to 2018 (63.8%).

In AY2022/23, 63.2% of students were 'Single', 15.1% decrease compared with AY2017/18 (78.3%).

Sexual Orientation

The University's EO data were reviewed. In 2023, 72.2% of staff were 'Heterosexual'; 3.6% were 'LGBT+' and 24.2% were 'Not Known'.

Although we collect student data on sexual orientation, this is not considered to be reliable.

Men and Women generally

The University's EO data were reviewed. In 2023, 57.9% of staff were 'Female'. This indicates a 2.6% increase in female staff compared with 2018.

In AY2022/23, 57.2% of students were 'Female', a 1% increase compared with AY2017/18.

Across the UK in AY2020/21 54.2% of staff working in UK Higher Education were female and 45.8% were male. As for students, a total of 57.2% were female, while 42.8% were male across the UK. Both staff and student statistics for the UK were taken from the 2022 Advance HE Equality in Higher Education Staff Report.

Disability

The University's EO data were reviewed. In 2023, 5.6% of staff declared a disability, an increase of 0.5% compared with 2018.

In AY2022/23, 15.5% of students declared a disability, an increase of 5.1% compared with AY2017/18.

Our disability declaration rate is lower than expected, compared with the local population. The NI Census (2021) found that 24% of the NI population stated that their day-to-day activities were limited because of a health problem or disability.

Dependants

The University's EO data were reviewed. In 2023, 44.1% of staff had dependants. This indicates a decrease of 4.3% compared with 2017.

In AY2021/22, 13.3% of students declared they had dependants, a decrease of 4.4% compared to AY2017/18.

Prior to submitting this Action Plan, it was found that 86% of Returning Carers' Scheme awardees reported that the support directly benefitted their careers and progression.

Needs, experience and priorities

Taking into account the information referred to above, what are the different needs, experiences and priorities of each of the following categories, in relation to the particular policy or decision? (Please specify for each of the Section 75 categories below the needs, experiences and priorities)

Religious Belief

None identified. The Athena Swan Action Plan aims to advance gender equality within representation and career progression for staff and students.

Political Opinion

None identified. The Athena Swan Action Plan aims to advance gender equality within representation and career progression for staff and students.

Racial Group

According to our Article 55 Review (2019-2022) small numbers of BME staff applied for Academic and Research promotions and were successful over the period. Of the 21 BME staff that applied for promotion, 7 were successful, showing a 33% success rate. No inferences can be drawn regarding success rates, due to the low numbers involved.

Age

None identified. The Athena Swan Action Plan aims to advance gender equality within representation and career progression for staff and students.

Marital Status

None identified. The Athena Swan Action Plan aims to advance gender equality within representation and career progression for staff and students.

Sexual Orientation

None identified. The Athena Swan Action Plan aims to advance gender equality within representation and career progression for staff and students.

Men and Women generally

The Action Plan was developed to address the gaps between male and female staff and students in terms of representation, career progression and achievement.

In 2023 at Grades 8 and above (that is, at Senior Management Level), 53% of staff are male and 47% are female. Compared to 2018, female staff at Grades 8 and above have seen a 12% increase, while male staff have seen a 12% decrease.

In 2023, women represented 31% of the Heads of School, compared to men representing 61%. This means women have seen a 5% decrease compared to 2018 and men have seen a 5% increase.

In Senior Management Committees in 2023, the representation was as follows: Council - 44% female (7 out of 16 members including the Chair) and 56% male; Senate – 63% female (19 out of 30 members) and 37% male (11 out of 30 members); and SLT – 55% female (6 out of 11 members) and 45% male (in AY2022/23).

Since the introduction of the academic promotion's workshops in 2015, hosted by the Athena Swan Committee, the number of male and female academics applying for promotion has become more balanced. In the 2022 promotions round there were 41 female applicants and 43 male applicants for promotion and 31 females were promoted and 28 males were promoted. A total of 75.6% of females applicants were successful in receiving promotion compared to 65.1% of males.

For the REF 2021, 61% of eligible male staff (n=368) were submitted compared with 39% of eligible female staff (n=234).

Disability

None identified. The Athena Swan Action Plan aims to advance gender equality within representation and career progression for staff and students.

Dependants

Representation, career progression and achievement are directly affected when a person has caring responsibilities. Staff with dependants are more likely to require and apply for flexible working. The Action Plan aims to support progression and success for all staff with caring responsibilities.

Consultation

Consultation with relevant groups, organisations or individuals about the policy can provide useful information about issues or opportunities which are specifically related to them (that is evidence to inform the policy).

Please indicate whether you carried out or intend to carry out any consultation exercises prior to equality screening?

Yes

The following groups were consulted during the development of this Action Plan:

The Athena Swan SAT
The Deans of Faculties
Staff and students through focus groups and surveys
The Action Plan working group
The Pro Vice Chancellors
The Senior Leadership Team

Part 2: Screening questions

Introduction

The answers to the following screening questions will assist the University in making a decision whether or not there is a need to carry out an equality impact assessment on the policy. The following information is provided to help you to identify and comment on the level of likely impact of the policy in question 1 to 4.

Select 'major' impact if:

- a) The policy is significant in terms of its strategic importance;
- b) Potential equality impacts are unknown, because, for example, there are insufficient data upon which to make an assessment or because they are complex, and it would be appropriate to conduct an equality impact assessment in order to better assess them;
- c) Potential equality and/or good relations impacts are likely to be adverse or are likely to be experienced disproportionately by groups of people including those who are marginalised or disadvantaged;
- d) Further assessment offers a valuable way to examine the evidence and develop recommendations in respect of a policy about which there are concerns amongst affected individuals and representative groups, for example in respect of multiple identities;
- e) The policy is likely to be challenged by way of judicial review;
- f) The policy is significant in terms of expenditure.

Select 'minor' impact if:

- a) The policy is not unlawfully discriminatory and any residual potential impacts on people are judged to be negligible;
- b) The policy, or certain proposals within it, are potentially unlawfully discriminatory, but this possibility can readily and easily be eliminated by making appropriate changes to the policy or by adopting appropriate mitigating measures;
- c) Any asymmetrical equality impacts caused by the policy are intentional because they are specifically designed to promote equality of opportunities for particular groups of disadvantaged people;

- d) By amending the policy there are better opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations;
- e) Differential impact observed and opportunities exist to better promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations.

Select 'none' if:

- a) The policy has no relevance to equality of opportunity or good relations;
- b) The policy is purely technical in nature and will have no bearing in terms of its likely impact on equality of opportunity or good relations.

Taking into account the evidence presented in Part 1, please complete the screening questions (Question 1 to 4).

Screening questions

1. What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this policy, for each of the Section 75 categories?

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Religious Belief**

The Action Plan is unlikely to impact on equality of opportunity for this category; it aims to advance gender equality within representation, career progression and success for staff and students.

What is the level of impact?

None

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Political Opinion**

The Action Plan is unlikely to impact on equality of opportunity for this category; it aims to advance gender equality within representation, career progression and success for staff and students.

Level of impact

None

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Racial Group**

The Action Plan is likely to have a positive impact on equality of opportunity for this category. An action has been included to collaborate with the BAME+ Network to improve the experience of BME staff (recruitment, progression, retention) and students. The measures of success for this action would include more BAME staff involved at all levels of the hiring and promotion process and the provisions of workshops and support for BAME staff and students.

Level of impact

Minor +

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Age**

The Action Plan is unlikely to impact on equality of opportunity for this category; it aims to advance gender equality within representation, career progression and success for staff and students.

Level of impact
None

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Marital Status**

The Action Plan is unlikely to impact on equality of opportunity for this category; it aims to advance gender equality within representation, career progression and success for staff and students.

Level of impact
None

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Sexual Orientation**

The Action Plan is unlikely to impact on equality of opportunity for this category; it aims to advance gender equality within representation, career progression and success for staff and students.

Level of impact
None

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Men and Women generally**

The Action Plan is likely to have a positive impact on equality of opportunity for this category. The main overarching aims of the Action Plan are to address gender inequalities and embed inclusive cultures in line with the Athena Swan Charter Commitments.

The Action Plan aims to advance gender equality within representation and career progression for staff and students as part of the University's commitment to the Athena Swan initiative.

Level of impact
Minor +

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Disability**

The Action Plan is unlikely to impact on equality of opportunity for this category; it aims to advance gender equality within representation, career progression and success for staff and students.

Level of impact

None

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Dependants**

The Action Plan is likely to have a positive impact on equality of opportunity for this category. The Action Plan was developed with caring responsibilities in mind to ensure this does not become a barrier to progression and success for all. This includes the widening of the Returning Carer's Scheme to include all staff members, not just academic. This scheme continues to offer grants to assist male and female carers returning to work after a period of leave due to caring responsibilities.

Other key factors affecting carers at the institution include the development and establishment of a carer's network and returning carer's having reduced work loads upon their immediate return to work.

Level of impact

Minor +

2. Are there opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within the Section 75 categories?

Religious Belief

No, the Action Plan is designed to advance gender equality within representation, progression and success for staff and students.

Political Opinion

No, the Action Plan is designed to advance gender equality within representation, progression and success for staff and students.

Racial Group

No, the Action Plan is designed to advance gender equality within representation, progression and success for staff and students.

Age

No, the Action Plan is designed to advance gender equality within representation, progression and success for staff and students.

Marital Status

No, the Action Plan is designed to advance gender equality within representation, progression and success for staff and students.

Sexual Orientation

No, the Action Plan is designed to advance gender equality within representation, progression and success for staff and students.

Men and Women generally

No, the Action Plan is designed to advance gender equality within representation, progression and success for staff and students.

Disability

No, the Action Plan is designed to advance gender equality within representation, progression and success for staff and students.

Dependants

No, the Action Plan is designed to advance gender equality within representation, progression and success for staff and students.

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3. To what extent is the policy likely to impact on good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?

Religious Belief

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Religious Belief**

The Action Plan is unlikely to impact on good relations for this category; it has no relevance to good relations.

Level of impact

None

Political Opinion

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Political Opinion**

The Action Plan is unlikely to impact on good relations for this category; it has no relevance to good relations.

Level of impact

None

Racial Group

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Racial Group**

The Action Plan is unlikely to impact on good relations for this category; it has no relevance to good relations.

Level of impact

No

4. Are there opportunities to better promote good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?

Religious Belief

No, the Action Plan has no relevance to good relations.

Political Opinion

No, the Action Plan has no relevance to good relations.

Racial Group

No, the Action Plan has no relevance to good relations.

Additional considerations**Multiple identity**

5. Generally speaking, people can fall into more than one Section 75 category. Taking this into consideration, are there any potential impacts of the policy or decision on people with multiple identities? (For example, disabled minority ethnic

people; disabled women; young Protestant men, and young lesbians, gay and bisexual people).

Please specify the relevant Section 75 categories concerned below.

Provide details of the policy impact and data which describes the policy impact.

Yes, the Action Plan is likely to have a positive impact on people of different gender, race and with dependants as identified above.

Disability Duties

6. Does the policy provide an opportunity to encourage disabled people to participate in University life?

No, the Athena Swan Action Plan aims to advance gender equality within representation, progression and success for all staff and students.

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7. Does the policy provide an opportunity to promote attitudes towards disabled people?

No, the Athena Swan Action Plan aims to advance gender equality within representation, progression and success for all staff and students.

Part 3: Screening decision

Based on the evidence considered and outlined in Part 1 and the responses to the screening questions (Part 2), please indicate the screening decision for this policy.

Note: The University should take particular care not to screen out policies that have a procurement aspect if there is potential to promote equality of opportunity through the procurement of services.

- ☐ **Screen in** the policy (that is, subject to an Equality Impact Assessment). The likely impact is **major** in respect of one, or more of the equality of opportunity or good relations categories.
- ☐ **Screen out** the policy without mitigation or an alternative policy proposed to be adopted (that is, **no** Equality Impact Assessment). The likely impact is **none** in respect of all of equality of opportunity or good relations categories.
- ☒ **Screen out** the policy and **mitigate the impacts on equality by amending or changing the policy**, or by **developing an alternative policy or action** (that is, **no** Equality Impact Assessment). The likely impact is **minor** in respect of one or more of the equality of opportunity or good relations categories.

If the decision is to subject the policy to an equality impact assessment (that is, 'screen in' the policy), please provide details of the reasons.

N/A

If the decision is not to conduct an equality impact assessment (that is, 'screen out' the policy), please provide details for the reasons.

N/A

If the decision is not to conduct an equality impact assessment (that is, 'screen out' the policy), and mitigate the impacts on equality of opportunity by amending or changing the policy, or by developing an alternative policy or action, please provide reasons to support your decision, together with the proposed changes, amendments or alternative policy.

The likely impact is minor in respect of one or more of the equality of opportunity categories. However, the Action Plan is likely to have a positive impact for these

categories. The Action Plan will be under annual review by the Athena Swan Committee to ensure actions are being met and the desired impact is being achieved in line with the transformed Athena Swan charter. Where appropriate, the Athena Swan Committee will remove or include actions to drive the Plan forward.

Timetabling and prioritising

If the policy had been '**screened in**' for an equality impact assessment, then please answer the following questions to determine its priority for timetabling the equality impact assessment.

On a scale of 1 to 3, with 1 being the lowest priority and 3 being the highest, assess the policy in terms of its priority for equality impact assessment.

Priority rating for timetabling the equality impact assessment in terms of effect on equality of opportunity and good relations:

Not applicable

Priority rating for timetabling the equality impact assessment in terms of social need

Not applicable

Priority rating for timetabling the equality impact assessment in terms of effect on people's daily lives

Not applicable

Priority rating for timetabling the equality impact assessment in terms of relevance to the University's functions

Not applicable

Note: The Total Rating Score will be used to prioritise the policy in rank order with other policies screened in for equality impact assessment. This list of priorities will assist the University in timetabling. Details of the University's Equality Impact Assessment Timetable will be included in its quarterly Screening Reports.

Is the policy affected by timetables established by other relevant public authorities?

Not applicable

If yes, please provide details.


Not applicable

Approval and authorisation

Screened by: 

Position or Job Title: Dean of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Date screened: 14 March 2024

Approved by: 
Position or Job Title: Chief People Officer
Date approved: 15 March 2024

Review

Note: Policies must be reviewed at least every two years, but sooner if changes in legislation or other variables require review.

This policy is due for review (in terms of its impact on equality of opportunity and good relations) by the policy owner on: 15 March 2026