The Future of Athena SWAN

The report of the Athena SWAN Charter Review Independent Steering Group for Advance HE
March 2020

Appendix 3 –
Formal consultation survey report from the University of Huddersfield
Independent Athena SWAN Review

Formal consultation survey report

University of Huddersfield
November 2019

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# Glossary of terms

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<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AHE</td>
<td>Advance HE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AP</td>
<td>Action Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AS</td>
<td>Athena SWAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECU</td>
<td>Equality Challenge Unit</td>
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<tr>
<td>EDI</td>
<td>Equality, Diversity and Inclusion</td>
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<tr>
<td>GDPR</td>
<td>General Data Protection Regulation (2018)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GPA</td>
<td>Grade point average</td>
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<tr>
<td>HE</td>
<td>Higher Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEI</td>
<td>Higher Education Institution</td>
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<tr>
<td>HESA</td>
<td>Higher Education Statistics Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>HR</td>
<td>Human Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NVIVO</td>
<td>Qualitative Data analysis software</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PTO</td>
<td>Professional, Technical and Operational (staff)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REC</td>
<td>Race Equality Charter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REF</td>
<td>Research Excellence Framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RI</td>
<td>Research Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAT</td>
<td>Self-assessment Team</td>
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<tr>
<td>SG</td>
<td>Steering Group (of the Athena SWAN Review)</td>
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<tr>
<td>SPSS</td>
<td>Statistical Package for the Social Sciences</td>
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<tr>
<td>STEMM</td>
<td>Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics and Medicine</td>
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Acknowledgements

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1. Executive Summary

1.1. Introduction
Advance HE began a process to carry out an independent review of the Athena SWAN Charter in 2018. The review is informed by three separate investigations:

i) The soft consultation (by the Athena SWAN Review Steering Group, directly with the sector)

ii) The impact evaluation (independent research, Loughborough University and Ortus Economic Research)

iii) The formal consultation, or survey of the sector (independent research, University of Huddersfield)

This report details the results of the formal consultation; a survey testing the key concepts generated from the soft consultation and the impact evaluation.

1.2. Methodology
The aim of the formal consultation was to evaluate the Athena SWAN Charter (in concept and practice) through consultation with those involved in the sector in which Athena SWAN applies (Higher Education Institutions and Research Institutes). An online survey methodology had been predetermined by the Steering Group, but was supported by the University of Huddersfield independent research team. The period of research was from May 2019 to October 2019, with the survey live for a six-week period between 31st July and 12th September 2019.

A survey based on key findings from the soft consultation and impact evaluation was developed by the Steering Group, consisting of 30 questions (plus seven demographic questions). Questions were a combination of single choice, multiple choice and free text, and were designed to address the main concerns voiced by the sector and to test key concepts derived from the soft consultation and impact evaluation.

The survey was created in Online Surveys (previously Bristol Online Surveys) and distributed to the sector through an online link (not password protected). Using Advance HE’s database of email addresses of Athena SWAN institutional and departmental leads, the survey was distributed (by Advance HE) to all past and present Athena SWAN award applicants. The accompanying email from Steering Group Chair, Professor Julia Buckingham, asked those receiving the survey link to share with all personnel who may have an interest in Athena SWAN and might be willing to participate. In addition, a separate email from Professor Buckingham was sent to all University Vice-Chancellors, and Directors of Human Resources, describing the study, and asking for participation. Attention to the survey (and links to it), at intervals during the six-week open period (31/7/19 – 12/9/19), was also drawn through:

- The Athena SWAN Charter Twitter page @Athena_SWAN (on 5/8/19, pinned tweet, 8,024 followers) and was re-tweeted 31 times
- Times Higher Education article: ‘Athena SWAN equality charter could cover ethnicity and disability’ (9/8/19)
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- Athena SWAN Charter Members Network August 2019 Update (Athena SWAN JISC mail, 30/8/19)

The survey received 1578 individual responses. In addition, Advance HE directly received requests to complete the questionnaire on behalf of an institution or department as opposed to individually. In these cases, respondents were advised to complete the questionnaire offline and return to Advance HE. Five institutional responses were received, as well as one direct email to the Chair of the Steering Group. These responses have not been included in this formal consultation as they could not be directly weighted against the individual responses. However, the Steering Group have included these institutional responses, along with this formal consultation, in considerations towards their final report.

Quantitative questions were analysed using the software package SPSS. Where respondents were offered the opportunity to expand upon their answer, give reasons for their answer, or answer an open question in a (non-limited) free text box, these comments were analysed using the software package NVivo.

11 of the 30 questions in the main body of the survey (excluding demographic information) offered participants the opportunity to provide qualitative comments. This was widely utilised, with a total of 7792 qualitative comments, and an average of 724 participants leaving comments per question. The question generating the highest number of comments was Q21: ‘How can the assessment process be improved?’ with 1,063 comments (67% of the total number of respondents to the survey), closely followed by Q26a: ‘The Athena SWAN Charter should be expanded to include additional characteristics, please give reasons for your answer’, which generated 1,049 comments (66% of the total number of respondents to the survey). The final question (Q30) asked participants to ‘use this box for any comments you would like to add about any of the questions, statements or suggestions included in this questionnaire’ and was used by participants both to describe attitudes generally towards the Athena SWAN Charter, and to expand upon other questions in the survey that did not invite further comment directly after the question. 552 respondents (35%) made a comment on this question.

1.3. Technical Information

- Where quotes have been used to demonstrate key findings within the qualitative data, these are illustrative only.

- For the purpose of highlighting the key results, where a five-point Likert scale question has been used, points 1 and 2, and points 4 and 5 have been combined. For example, where 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Undecided, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly Agree, ‘Strongly Disagree’ and ‘Disagree’ have been combined into ‘Disagree’, and ‘Strongly Agree’ and ‘Agree’ have been combined into ‘Agree’. Disaggregated quantitative results can be found in Appendix 1 (p 51).

- Within the representation of qualitative data, only themes with support from 1% of the total survey population (15 comments) have been included. Additional themes with fewer than 15 comments in support can be found in Appendix 2 (p 69).
1.4. Respondent profile

It was anticipated that most participants in the survey would have previously engaged with the Athena SWAN Charter, but it was hoped that targeted email invitations and the use of social media could help encourage individuals who had never been engaged with the Charter to participate in the survey. Some smaller institutions, particularly those that are not research focused, had voiced concerns during the soft consultation that an Athena SWAN award was perceived as a resource intensive process that ‘wasn’t for them’. Unfortunately, there was limited engagement by individuals and institutions that have never applied for an Athena SWAN award, with 88% of the total number of respondents working at an institution that has, has had, or has previously applied for, an Athena SWAN award. 72% of the total number of respondents work in a department that has or has had, or has previously applied for an Athena SWAN award, whereas just 8% of the total number of respondents work at a research institute that has or has had, or has previously applied for an Athena SWAN award.

Respondents represented institutions and institutes from all over the UK. The majority of respondents worked at institutions in England (78%), with 14% working in Scotland, 4% in Wales, 2% in Northern Ireland, and 2% ‘other’. This is roughly proportional to the number of Higher Education Institutions (HEI) in each region - approximately 80% of universities and research institutes are in England, 10% in Scotland, 6% in Wales, and 4% in Northern Ireland (HESA, Higher Education providers 2017/18). Over half of all respondents (57%) were academic staff. Just under a quarter (24%) were other professional, technical or operational staff, 10% were EDI professionals, 6% were research staff, and 3% were ‘other’.

Almost three quarters (73%) of all respondents were female, compared to 21% male, and 1% non-binary. This reinforces the perception that women make up the majority of the Athena SWAN workforce. Comparing the gender balance of respondents to that of HEI staff overall (54% female, HESA 17/18), this suggests that females are disproportionately engaged in Athena SWAN work. 64% of respondents were aged between 35 and 54 years of age, with 11% aged 34 and under and 20% aged 55 and over.

The vast majority of respondents (85%) identified within the White ethnic group¹. This feeds into the perception that Athena SWAN is predominantly for ‘white women’. However, the proportion of white individuals compared to other ethnicities is representative of HEI staff generally (81% white, HESA 2017/18), suggesting this is reflective of a systemic issue over and above Athena SWAN membership. Of the ‘White’ group, 77% were British, 4% were Irish, and 19% were of ‘any other white background’. 4% of respondents identified as Asian/Asian British, 3% as Mixed/Multiple Ethnic Groups, 1% as Black/African/Caribbean/Black British, and 1% as ‘Other ethnic group’. Numbers were too small to report on further breakdowns of these groups.

¹ The question on ethnicity from this survey uses the question from the 2011 Census from. Feedback has highlighted the problematic use of the word ‘White’ in relation to ethnicity, and alternative wording options will be explored for future research.
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1.5. Key Findings

1.5.1. Quantitative responses

Respondents showed very strong support (80-100% agreed) for:

- The streamlining of the award renewal process, focusing on progress on the action plan
- The downgrading of awards only if there is no evidence of progress on the action plan
- Panellists being both discipline and equality experts
- Institutional recognition of panel membership as equivalent to work on REF panels, Research Council or professional body committees

Respondents showed strong support (70-79% agreed) for:

- More scope to focus their application on the issues of particular concern to their department/institute/institution
- The mandatory inclusion of a culture survey in applications
- Fixed-term panel membership (if it were professionalised) as with REF, Research Council, and equivalent panels
- Mid-term monitoring if the length of award is increased
- Bronze applications having shorter application forms, and being a faster process overall

Respondents showed support (60-69% agreed) for:

- Policies being addressed in institutional applications only, with departments only showing adherence or reasons for divergence
- Increased support from Advance HE pre-submission
- The success of the inclusion of professional, technical and operational staff for Silver and Gold applications
- Bronze applications requiring fewer data

Respondents showed some support (50-59% agreed) for:

- More clearly defining the criteria needed to achieve each level of award (but some hesitancy was shown - 32% undecided)
- The inclusion of additional protected characteristics. However, 29% were undecided
- A pathway for central professional and support units to apply for departmental level awards
- Panel membership being professionalised by having a smaller pool of experts rather than relying on a wider pool of volunteers

Respondents were undecided/mixed opinion (fewer than 50% agree/disagree) on:

- Making Bronze panels virtual
- Whether the emphasis placed on demonstrating impact at Silver and Gold levels was too much
- Increasing award length
- Increasing the length of award with the level of the award
- Whether PTO staff should have different award criteria
- Replacing the current award system with a Grade Point Average (GPA) system
- Confidence in the consistency of the assessment process
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Respondents disagreed that:

- Applications should only require data which can be downloaded from HESA

1.5.2. Qualitative responses
- There is a strong desire to see the application form changed. Reducing the length of the application form and addressing formatting issues were of most concern
- There is strongly-felt lack of confidence in the consistency and objectivity of panel judgements
- There is a need for each level of award to have clearly defined criteria, especially to define exact differences between award levels and how to progress between them, and to understand how (and how much) impact is expected at higher levels
- There is a strong desire for some form of on-the-ground evaluation (not necessarily assessment) of culture to verify claims made in the application form
- More pre-application support from Advance HE would be welcomed, and the suggested support of site visits, online written guidance, and networking opportunities were all popular

1.6. Summary of findings
- Review application form in light of expanded Charter (PTO staff)
  Recommendation 1: The Steering Group should consider the merits of providing a separate pathway for central PTO staff groups (such as HR) to apply for awards

- Application form template. Online form, data templates
  Recommendation 2: The SG should consider providing an online application form for Athena SWAN applications, with data templates for quantitative data representation

- Professionalise panels with better training, payment, and encourage institutional recognition of serving on panels
  Recommendation 3: The SG should consider the professionalisation (and payment) of panel members, encourage institutions to recognise this panel membership as a significant contribution to external work, and provide full and increased training to panel members

- Develop clear expectations of panellists (preparation, feedback etc)
  Recommendation 4: The SG should consider developing more guidance and training for panellists and generate feedback forms commensurate with the effort demonstrated by departments and institutions in completing Athena SWAN applications

- Panels open to those outside of London – virtual or roaming
  Recommendation 5: The SG should consider making panels available and accessible to those in all areas of the UK, either by holding some panels outside of London or via a virtual platform

- Clear expectations of the moderator
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Recommendation 6: The SG should consider the role of the moderator in panel assessments, and clearly communicate the duties of the moderator to the sector

- Clear criteria for each level of award

Recommendation 7: The SG should consider providing clearer and static criteria to achieve each Athena SWAN award level, without compromising the ability of each applicant to tailor their focus to the local need

- Clear definition of impact

Recommendation 8: The SG should consider providing a clearer definition of what constitutes impact, how this is assessed, and how this is scored in relation to progress and effort

- Some form of site visit or face-to-face assessment

Recommendation 9: The SG should consider providing increased bespoke support for institutions and/or departments pre and post application, and particularly if award length is to be increased

- Online written guidance support from Advance HE

Recommendation 10: The SG should consider the need for increased online written guidance for applicants from Advance HE, including more examples of good practice

- A slimmed down Bronze application (fewer data, faster process, shorter application form)

Recommendation 11: The SG should consider the need for applications for Bronze awards to be shorter, and less labour intensive

- Streamlining of award renewal process, focussing on progress on the action plan

Recommendation 12: The SG should consider the need for the renewal process to be faster, less labour intensive than for a full application, more transparent criteria for success, and to focus on progress on the action plan, particularly for Bronze renewals

- Only downgrading awards if no evidence of progress on action plan

Recommendation 13: The SG should consider the need to reduce downgrading of higher awards unless there is no evidence of progress on the action plan, and take into account internal and external factors which could affect progress of the action plan

- Clearly define the scope of the Charter (define and expand ‘gender’)

Recommendation 14: The SG should consider the need to clearly define the scope of the Charter, including an updated definition or use of the word ‘gender’

- Expansion of the Charter – a note on the sector’s mixed feelings and that it needs to be addressed by the SG even if the decision is no action

Recommendation 15: The SG should consider the expansion of the Charter to include additional protected characteristics, and approve only if this is possible without increasing the workload associated with an Athena SWAN application, and avoiding GDPR related issues
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2. Results

The main body of survey questions are broken down into 14 broad themes (groups of questions) and the results of each are summarised in sections 2.1 to 2.17. All data is presented in Appendix 1 (Section 3).

2.1. General

83% of respondents had worked on an Athena SWAN application. However, only 26% describe this as having been a positive experience (Figure 2-1).

*Figure 2-1: Q2a. ‘Was your experience of working on an Athena SWAN application:’*

![Pie chart showing responses to Q2a](image)

2.2. Scope of the Application

The vast majority (83%) of respondents agreed that the applicant department or institution/institute should have more opportunity to focus their application on issues of particular concern. Furthermore, strong support was also expressed for action plans to be more focused on the key priorities of the institution/institute/department (71% agreed).

There was agreement from 65% of respondents that institutional applications should address policies, but departmental applications should only be required to demonstrate adherence, or have good reason to diverge from those policies. Respondents who had not worked on an Athena SWAN application were less likely to agree that policies should be addressed in institutional level applications only, with departments only required to demonstrate that they adhere to their institution’s policies or have good reason to diverge - 49% agree compared to 67% of respondents who had worked on an Athena SWAN application (Figure 2-2).
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Figure 2-2: Q5. ‘Policies should be addressed in institutional level applications only, with departments only required to demonstrate that they adhere to their institution’s policies or have good reason to diverge’ – Split by whether respondents had or had not worked on an Athena SWAN application.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not worked on an application</th>
<th>Worked on an application</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
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</table>

2.3. Bronze Awards

Respondents showed support for the idea that Bronze awards should require fewer data (61% agreed). Higher levels of support were shown for the idea that Bronze applications should have a shorter application form and that the application process should be faster, with 70% and 74% of respondents agreeing respectively. Respondents who had not worked on an Athena SWAN application were less likely to agree that Bronze applications should require fewer data or have a shorter application form compared with respondents who had worked on an application. However, as expected, these respondents were more likely to be undecided (Figures 2-3 and 2-4).

Figure 2-3: Q6.1: ‘The initial application process for Bronze Awards should: Require fewer data’ – split by whether respondents had or had not worked on an Athena SWAN application.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not worked on an application</th>
<th>Worked on an application</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2-4: Q6.2: ‘The initial application process for Bronze Awards should: Have a shorter application form’ – split by whether respondents had or had not worked on an Athena SWAN application.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not worked on an application</th>
<th>Worked on an application</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A mixed verdict regarding Bronze panels taking place virtually was returned, with the most common opinion expressed as ‘undecided’ (42%). Over a third of respondents (37%) agreed that Bronze application panels should be virtual, whereas 22% disagreed. Responses to open questions (Q21, 22
and 30) suggest that the term ‘virtual panel’ was unclear, with respondents interpreting ‘virtual’ to mean an online panel (e.g. by Skype or Zoom in the same way as the current face-to-face panels), or independent and individual scoring by panel members.

### 2.4. Culture
Almost three quarters (73%) of respondents agreed that a culture survey should be a mandatory inclusion in application forms. Responses from open questions (Q21, 22, and 30) indicate that there is support for culture to be more and better represented within the Athena SWAN application. Some form of ‘on the ground’ assessment or follow-up (such as face-to-face interviews with self-assessment teams (SATs) or site visits) was more commonly referenced in the free text comments than a culture survey.

### 2.5. Data
Almost half of respondents (47%) were not in favour of applications only requiring data which can be downloaded from HESA (Higher Education Statistics Agency). However, just over a third of respondents (34%) agreed that applications should only require data that can be downloaded from HESA, and just under a fifth (19%) were undecided.

### 2.6. Support
63% of respondents agreed that applicants should have more support from Advance HE before they submit their application. 28% of respondents were undecided and just 8% disagreed that more pre-application support should be given.

Regarding the nature of the proposed support, online written guidance was the most popular option (45%), followed by online webinars (38%), and networking opportunities at institutional and departmental level were similarly popular (31% and 30% respectively). 150 respondents indicated that they would like ‘other’ forms of support. Of these, 149 provided free text answers. Of these additional suggestions, an Advance HE account manager (2%), more guidance (1%), a review service (1%), and a data processing tool (1%) were supported by a minimum of 1% of the total number of survey respondents (Figure 2-5).
2.7. Assessment criteria

58% of respondents agreed that the criteria for each level of award should be more clearly defined. The proportion of respondents who were undecided on this issue was also relatively high at just under a third (32%). Few respondents disagreed (10% combined) when asked if the criteria for each level of award should be more clearly defined (Figure 2-6).

Figure 2-6: ‘The criteria for each level of award should be more clearly defined’.

Respondents who had not worked on an Athena SWAN application were less likely to agree that the criteria for each level of award should be more clearly defined when compared with respondents.
who had worked on an application. However, as expected, these respondents were more likely to be undecided (Figure 2-7).

Figure 2-7: Q11. ‘The criteria for each level of award should be more clearly defined’ – split by whether respondents had or had not worked on an Athena SWAN application.

The follow up free text questions asked participants to indicate what they would like more clearly explained. This question generated 629 responses (41% of respondents who answered question 11 chose to follow up their answer with a free text comment). The themes from these comments are represented (proportionately) in Figure 2-8.

Figure 2-8: Q11a. ‘Please explain what you would like more clearly explained’.

Clear support was demonstrated for an increase in the clarity of the criteria expected for each level of award. Some respondents went as far as to suggest this could be defined in a bullet pointed table, separated by each award level, which could be used as a check-list. These criteria could then be scored during panel as demonstrated (or not demonstrated) according to the submitted evidence (which should be a combination of data, qualitative feedback and an audit trail of policy). Greater transparency of criteria is requested; there are many comments voicing that it is felt panels do not always assess an application solely against the published criteria, but have an undisclosed list of things they would like and sometimes expect to see. This leads to inconsistencies in judgements between those panels. These perceived opaque judging criteria are only identified by applicants after panel feedback, and applicants feel they are being judged on the omission of data or narrative
they were unaware they should have included. The inconsistency between panels, and the notion
that panels can be swayed by a strongly-voiced member is frequently commented upon.

“I’m more concerned by the tendency for panels to give reasons for dismissing
applications that are not explicitly addressed in the criteria - it seems common
for departments to have to go through a failed application process before they
understand what the panels are *actually* looking for.”

Some respondents felt they were unable to decide or define which level of award they should be
applying for based on the current esoteric nature of the criteria. Consequences are noted as
unexpected downgrading at renewal, or SATs being surprised at results, as there is little defining the
differences between award levels (and particularly between Bronze and Silver).

The second most frequent comment made was that impact expected for success in Silver and Gold
award applications was not clearly defined; how much impact is enough? What type of impact is
considered good?

“What counts as “impact” is not well defined or understood by applicants or panel
members. For example - there’s a huge difference between ”we ran an event, 90%
of the 20 attendees said they found it useful” and ”we changed our promotion
system”

There is a question over whether impact is fairly measured (and if it is, how is it measured).
Respondents claim that starting from a strong position makes it harder to show impact when
compared to those starting from a lower baseline. Is quantitative data supporting impact sufficient
to upgrade from Bronze to Silver, or should this be reinforced with more qualitative work
demonstrating impact? How many actions or initiatives should demonstrate impact to ensure a
Silver award? Should there be a defined percentage of the action plan points demonstrating impact
to secure a Silver award? Perhaps progress as opposed to impact could be sufficient?

“Impact is key, but what is impact? Applicants may believe they have demonstrated it, but assessment panellists disagree. Criteria, especially around impact, needs to be
more clearly defined or assessment panellists need to engage with applicants more
beyond the written submission.”

‘Beacon’ activity in Gold applications was highlighted as another area which would benefit from a
clearer definition (although it was acknowledged that this could, and indeed should, vary between
institutions and departments, dependent on the focus of their application). There were questions as
to the value of a Gold award. As they are notoriously difficult to achieve, should a unit be satisfied
with Silver and plan to maintain this rather than aspire to a Gold award which are perceived as
unachievable and unsustainable? Clarity on exactly what data are required for each level of award
was called for frequently. A clearer description of what makes an action plan SMART was called for;
it was not considered appropriate to leave this to individual panels to define.
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“The emphasis seems to be very much on providing measurable (quantitative) data to support the identification of issues and the impact of initiatives. But there is no corresponding quantitative guidance of what improvements are judged to be acceptable or creditworthy. This would be helpful”

Moving goalposts (or mission creep) was of concern to respondents, with comments made about the need to redefine criteria and fix them. What began as Bronze being ‘entry’ level, requiring only a critical self-evaluation, a demonstrated commitment for change, and a suitably well-considered action plan, has now morphed into a need to demonstrate actions already completed, and even evidence of impact. The boundary between Bronze and Silver is considered to have blurred; an application which would have been awarded as Silver in the past is now considered Bronze.

“Currently even if you meet ALL criteria you may still not get the award due to ‘moving goalposts’ i.e. as one school does something good/innovative, it becomes expected from others. As a result, an application which would have been awarded silver years ago now wouldn’t even get bronze! We need explicit criteria which, if met, guarantees that the applicant receives that level of award.”

Several suggestions are made regarding moving to a grading system for each section of the form; this could help provide information on which areas to focus on, particularly after a failure to achieve the level applied for. Are some sections weighted more than others? If so, this needs to be communicated. The Stonewall Workplace Equality Index marking scheme is acknowledged as a fair and suitable method. What are the priorities for each level of award, and for renewals? Is maintaining a steady state acceptable for renewals if you’re already in a strong position? What about awarding Silver when well-thought-out and considered initiatives and actions have failed to demonstrate impact; is the effort made still acknowledged? For Bronze, should the emphasis be on honestly and openly identifying imbalances and describing plans to address these, or a focus on achievements?

Suggestions were made that sharing more examples of what is considered good, and what is considered weak would be helpful. Given the word count, it would be really beneficial to provide information on ‘essential’ versus ‘desirable’ work.

2.8. Demonstrating impact

This question, which asked respondents whether too much emphasis is placed on demonstrating impact at Silver and Gold level, failed to deliver a clear answer, with the largest proportion of participants (39%) expressing an undecided verdict. Just over a third of respondents (34%) did not believe the amount of emphasis placed on demonstrating impact at Silver and Gold level was too much, compared to 28% who did believe it was too much.

Respondents who had not worked on an Athena SWAN application were less likely to agree that too much emphasis is placed on demonstrating impact at Silver and Gold level when compared with respondents who had worked on an application. However, as expected, these respondents were more likely to be undecided (Figure 2-9).

*Figure 2-9: Q12. ‘Too much impact is placed on demonstrating impact at Silver and Gold level’ – Split by whether respondents had or had not worked on an Athena SWAN application.*
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Regardless of their choice, respondents were subsequently asked to give reasons for their answer. 62% of respondents (952) provided a free text response. For those that agreed that there is too much emphasis on impact in Silver and Gold levels, the most common reason for agreement was that impact is far too difficult both to define and to measure, and moreover, that progress takes time, often far longer than 3 or 4 years, and is therefore not possible to evidence in one Athena SWAN cycle. An award should not be downgraded simply because there has not been enough time to evidence impact; progress and sustained effort should be rewarded.

Respondents made frequent reference to the fact they felt they were being asked to make inferences they were uncomfortable doing; slight changes or suggestions of trends in data (with few data points) do not satisfactorily demonstrate impact, but they felt they were encouraged to embellish or emphasise these to prevent downgrading. Similar claims were made regarding the impact of qualitative work, and they felt there was undue pressure on them to make assumptions for fear of losing or downgrading an award and subsequently lose eligibility for funding. Impact is not clearly defined; what exactly is impact and how much is enough? Calls were made for stricter and clearer criteria on exactly what type of impact is expected; it is claimed that clarity on exactly what is required would help prevent panel inconsistency.

“There continues to be mystery surrounding what constitutes ‘impact’ and suitable ‘beacon activities’, as well as ‘how much is enough’...Panels make decisions through guesswork rather than articulated criteria in these areas, which is why it is important for more details to be provided”

Respondents claim that applicants focus on initiatives which are most likely to be measurable for impact within the Athena SWAN cycle, at the expense of other, more useful initiatives which would take longer to bear fruit or be problematic to quantify. Some respondents mentioned that their efforts were being spent ‘looking’ for impact in order to supplement their future applications, such as by evaluating events, or carrying out repeated staff surveys, and they felt the time and resource would be much better spent on other EDI work. The claims applicants are ‘expected’ to make in an application to demonstrate impact are felt to be tenuous and generally counterproductive. Rarely can an inference be made that one specific action led directly to a change; often change is down to a variety of factors and it is not possible to define exactly which one. Changes in staffing (for example) in Higher Education can be slow, and in smaller departments it is claimed that the loss or gain of one individual can have pronounced effects on the quantitative data. This may not be a ‘real’ change, and is just dependent on the personal circumstances of one individual. It was stressed that although impact is a useful measure of positive change, it is far from the only way of defining progress, and more emphasis being placed on culture, and qualitative evidence is frequently requested.
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The inequity associated with the fact that impact is a major part of the assessment of higher awards was mentioned; those departments or institutions claiming to be in an already strong position regarding gender equality find it much harder to demonstrate still further impact.

Respondents note that evidence of impact does not necessarily mean that a university’s or department’s processes are more equitable. Qualitative and cultural change are hard to measure and demonstrate through quantitative means, and so more emphasis on organisational culture is requested.

“It is very difficult to demonstrate impact from many of the significant changes brought about by Athena SWAN actions. Changes to culture can be real but hard to quantify... Surveys and questionnaires are a useful way of collecting impact evidence however our universities limit the amount of surveys we can run due to survey overload on staff and this again makes collecting evidence difficult”

Overall, it was felt by respondents that if progress is being made, and continued effort is evidenced, then an award should not be downgraded. It is not reasonable to expect the same level of progress and impact in all areas of an action plan. Provided the commitment remains high, time and resources are being invested appropriately, and there is evidence of continued improvement, this should be recognised and rewarded; downgrading should not occur, regardless of evidence of impact. Some suggestions were made that progress on the action plan should be sufficient for a first renewal, but that impact should be demonstrated thereafter in subsequent renewals or applications for higher awards.

Whilst 599 respondents were undecided on this issue, just 236 gave comments. The most common reason for those who were undecided (and the only theme represented by a minimum of 1% of total respondents) was that there should be at least some attempt at demonstrating impact at higher levels, but acknowledged that impact is extremely difficult to demonstrate and evidence.

Four out of every five comments from those that disagreed that too much emphasis is placed on demonstrating impact at Silver and Gold level referenced the importance of impact. The need to demonstrate impact at Silver and Gold levels was described as ‘crucial’, ‘vital’, and ‘imperative’. This group clearly stated that it was futile to engage with Athena SWAN activities without the need to demonstrate impact, and indeed this was the whole point of doing it, and its ultimate aim. There were a number of calls for Advance HE to more clearly define impact, and to share examples of how best to measure it.
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2.9. **Award length**

When asked if the award length should be increased, a very mixed response was obtained, with 43% agreeing and 35% disagreeing with this proposal. A further 22% were undecided (Figure 2-10).

*Figure 2-10: Q13. ‘Awards should be held for longer than the current four years’*

Respondents who had not worked on an Athena SWAN application were much less likely to agree that awards should be held for longer than the current four years. Whilst 46% of respondents who had worked on an application agreed that the award length should be longer, 55% of respondents who had not worked on an application disagreed (Figure 2-11).

*Figure 2-11: Q13. ‘Awards should be held for longer than the current four years’ – split by whether respondents had or had not worked on an Athena SWAN application.*

Those who were in favour of increasing the length of award were then asked whether the award should be extended to 5, 6, or 7 years. The largest proportion of respondents selected 5 years. When taken as a proportion of the whole population, support for the length of award to be extended to 5 years was expressed by 20% of respondents. Just under half of respondents (47%) disagreed that the length of award should increase with the level of award. Just over a third (35%) of respondents were in favour of this option, whereas 18% were undecided. Respondents who had not worked on an Athena SWAN application were more likely to disagree that the length of the Award should increase with the level of the Award (Figure 2-12).
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Figure 2-12: Q14. ‘The length of the Award should increase with the level of the Award: Bronze 4 years, Silver 5-6 years, Gold 7 years’ – split by whether respondents had or had not worked on an Athena SWAN application

If the length of award was increased, almost three quarters of respondents (71%) agreed with mid-term monitoring of progress on the action plan. Both options provided were favourable (Figure 2-13). Written progress reports were selected by 46% of respondents and site visits were selected by 32%. The 76 respondents that selected ‘other’ forms of mid-term monitoring (5%) were asked to elaborate on this by free text. The only theme that garnered support from a minimum of 1% of respondents was for site visits and interviews with staff. Respondents that commented were keen to suggest that any written report or action plan update on progress should be light touch, and not necessarily assessed or published. The review should be seen as a supportive and encouraging process, identifying potential problems and creating an environment where institutions and departments can work together with Advance HE to pre-empt or solve these.

Figure 2-13: Q15a. ‘What form should this take?’

2.10. Scope of the Charter

Participants were asked if ‘the Athena SWAN Charter should be expanded to include additional characteristics’. Over half (51%) of respondents agreed that the Charter should be expanded, 29% were undecided, and 20% disagreed, showing a preference for no expansion of the Charter (Figure 2-14). Respondents were asked to give reasons for their answer; this generated 1049 comments. Of the 1550 people who answered the multiple choice part of this question, 1049 (68%) also left a comment in the free-text box.
Some respondents were unclear to the meaning of this question and it should have perhaps references additional protected characteristics, as defined in the 2010 Equality Act. A mixture of clear opinions and conflicted views were gained in response to this question. Although the most common answer was agreement towards expansion of the Charter (51%), the large number of undecided responses is notable (29%). Many of those in agreement with the idea that the Athena SWAN Charter should expand to include other protected characteristics did so because they felt morally and ethically it was appropriate, and because the current focus on gender drew EDI effort away from other marginalised groups within their institutions and departments. Many mentioned other protected characteristics that they felt should be included specifically, particularly race, sexual orientation and disability, and quoted the intersectional nature of these characteristics with gender as a reason to include them in the Charter. The need to cover challenges experienced by all underrepresented groups was specified, and it was identified that many marginalised groups already felt that one protected characteristic (gender) was given priority over all others.

"Focus on gender is artificial and too narrow. Causes resentment amongst colleagues (e.g. why single out gender than say, race, age, disability and so on)."

Several respondents felt that the focus on gender by the Athena SWAN Charter was outdated, and particular reference was made to the binary nature of the application form regarding gender, with little or no regard for gender fluidity, or intersex individuals. It was noted that the Charter seemed to confuse or conflate sex and gender. Similarly, the notion that Athena SWAN was developed by, and shows support for, white, middle-class female academics only was mentioned repeatedly, and that expanding the Charter to include other protected characteristics could go some way toward dispelling this area of contention.

"Athena SWAN ...lags far behind the times with respect to understanding gender identity as a spectrum and not limited to binary understandings of gender. With its current limitations, the focus will continue to be on white, heterosexual women. That purposefully limits applicants’ efforts around equality and diversity (particularly with already limited university resources) and encourages narrow perspectives."
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The expansion of the Charter in 2015, with specific regard to the inclusion of intersectionality at higher levels, was acknowledged as a welcome development of the Charter, and requests were made to make a more significant and sustained attempt to develop this further. The importance and significance of intersectionality was by far the most common reason for support of the expansion of the Charter. However, many respondents went further and elaborated on the practicalities: they identified the additional workload associated with the expansion of the Charter as unmanageable and unworkable, and clearly identified that at departmental level, the small numbers within different groups would allow identification of individuals and would not be acceptable under the 2018 GDPR regulations. Collection of data on additional characteristics was identified as difficult at best, in some ways because of non-disclosure. These were the most common reasons given against the expansion of the Charter.

“Whilst there may be valid reasons to expand the charter to include additional characteristics, a significant amount of data is already required. Also consideration needs to be given to GDPR issues regarding gathering data for additional characteristics. This is already a problem for some of the datasets required”

The large number of undecided respondents on this particular question was as a result of the expansion being generally supported in theory, but overall it was clearly identified as likely to be problematic in its delivery. The obvious increase in workload and data requirements which would be required if the Charter were expanded were quoted as reasons for indecision. Some suggestions were made that additional characteristics should only be included at institutional level to prevent data increases in departmental level applications and avoid the inclusion of small, likely unreportable numbers. Other suggestions described the inclusion of additional characteristics at higher (Silver and Gold) levels only, but some expressed a desire to improve upon the current (oft considered) tokenistic inclusion of intersectionality at higher levels only. Requests for institutions and departments themselves to have the freedom to focus on and discuss the protected characteristics that are central to their local environment were made. Overall, culture change is desired and this is extremely difficult to embed and evidence.

“Adding additional elements, while I welcome the ethos, makes this even more challenging. One way would be to let us pick a few areas to focus on from a pre-set list - you have a number of areas with clear criteria and we pick which ones we want to showcase.”

It was suggested that the knowledge and learning gained during past and current gender work could, and should, be successfully applied and developed to support work on other protected characteristics. Conversely, there were many comments claiming respondents felt an expansion of the Charter would dilute the focus from gender, that work in this area was not yet finished, and that much remained to be achieved before any expansion should be considered.

“If it adds more characteristics then it is moving too far away from its original meaning and diluting what Athena SWAN stands for. Originally women, then gender equality, this time you added in BAME and intersectionality. You need to decide what Athena SWAN is about and stick to it”
Many of those in support of an expanded Charter felt that development of an entirely new Charter was warranted, and that it should encompass all other Charters, including REC, and Stonewall. Charters that focus on only one characteristic are by their very nature, not intersectional. It was acknowledged that the increase in workload associated with an expanded Charter must be offset by a reduction in work in other areas. Conversely, those against the expansion felt other Charters were already in place for protected characteristics other than gender, and Athena SWAN should remain separate from them and gender focussed. Duplication of effort should be avoided as much as possible; many respondents expressed an urgent need to reduce the workload and burden associated with making an Athena SWAN application, and recoiled at the idea of an expanded Charter, purely because of the increase in workload associated with it (regardless of their feelings on the morality or necessity of the expansion).

### 2.11. Professional, Technical, and Operational staff

It was confirmed that the inclusion of PTO staff in Silver and Gold applications has been a successful addition to the Charter (62% agreed). There was very little variation by staff type, however Academic Staff and EDI Professionals were slightly more likely to disagree (Figure 2-15).

*Figure 2-15: Q17. ‘This (inclusion of PTO staff to Silver and Gold applications) has been a successful addition to the Charter.’*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Staff Type</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic Staff</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Professional, Technical or Operational Staff</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDI Professional</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Staff</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Less support was shown for including PTO staff in applications which are governed by different criteria (47% agreed, 28% were undecided, 25% disagreed). See Figure 2-16. Again, with little variation by job type (Figure 2-17).
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Figure 2-16: The Charter should include a pathway for central professional and support units to apply for departmental level awards

![Pie chart showing the responses to the statement: Agree 47%, Disagree 25%, Undecided 28%]

Figure 2-17: Q18. ‘If PTO staff are included should there be different criteria for them?’

![Bar chart showing the responses of different staff groups to the question]

Amongst respondents who had not worked on an Athena SWAN application there was a roughly even split across those who agreed, disagreed, and were undecided as to whether, if PTO staff were included, there should be different criteria for them. This is in contrast to respondents who had worked on an Athena SWAN application, of which almost half agreed that there should be different criteria for PTO staff (Figure 2-18).
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Figure 2-18: Q18. ‘If PTO staff are included there should be different criteria for them’ – Split by whether respondents had or had not worked on an Athena SWAN application

Support was given for creating a pathway for central professional and support units to apply for departmental level awards (56% agreed, 28% were undecided, and 15% disagreed). EDI professional and other PTO staff were the most likely to agree that the Charter should include a pathway for central professional and support units to apply for departmental level awards (63% and 60% respectively). However, these two groups were also the most likely to disagree, with 18% disagreement from both EDI professional and other PTO staff (Figure 2-19). Research staff were the least likely group to agree, with just under half of respondents undecided.

Figure 2-19: Q19: ‘The Charter should include a pathway for central professional and support units to apply for departmental level awards’

Regardless of choice, respondents were asked to give reasons for their answer to this question. 53% of respondents chose to give a free text response with their answer, resulting in 817 comments.

Of those that agreed that there should be a pathway for central professional and support units to apply for departmental level awards, the most common theme was the rationale that the career progressions of PTO and academic staff are too different to be included in a single Athena SWAN application. These disparities range from differences in structure and hierarchies to a belief that the principles of the Charter either apply differently or manifest in different ways within the two groups. Promotion criteria within PTO staff is noted as a particularly difficult issue to address when combining academic and PTO staff. In addition to the differences between the two staff groups, the similarities were also used as rationale for separate pathways. It is argued that the principles of Athena SWAN apply equally to PTO and academic staff, and thus equal recognition should befall both. This is linked to a desire for PTO staff as a group to be monitored more closely and be
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accountable for their successes/failures within the remit of the Charter through a more detailed assessment than they are subjected to in the current application.

There is a strong feeling that by providing a separate pathway, a current ‘rift’ or ‘chasm’ between PTO and academic staff would be bridged. There is recognition of this rift as it currently stands, with PTO staff referred to as ‘second class’ and an ‘add on’ within the current set up.

“You need to show that the experience of non-academic females is equally important to that of academic females, particularly given their relative whiteness, wealth and other areas of privilege”

A second pathway is claimed to potentially bring ‘parity’ to these two groups by imposing equal value on each within the Charter. This links to the advocating of a culture of inclusivity across institutions and recognition for the role PTO staff play in developing and upholding this culture.

There is also recognition that PTO staff are often centralised and that even departmental PTO staff are often overseen by centralised policies and practices which are impossible to be influenced at departmental level. This is a particular sticking point for the current application process, as respondents report feeling that the current Athena SWAN process holds departments accountable for issues within PTO staff that they are unable to influence or address as departmental PTO staff are often centrally governed. Within this group of respondents there was recognition that an alternative pathway for PTO staff in central units would bring an additional burden of work, and that the current application form is not appropriate for PTO groups. These concerns were echoed by respondents who were undecided.

Over a quarter of respondents (28%) were undecided on whether a separate pathway for PTO staff should be introduced. This group was characterised by reservations about the introduction and implementation of a separate pathway for PTO groups, citing division between PTO and academic staff, the additional workload, and the general feeling that PTO staff should be better recognised but that a separate award may not be the right way of achieving this. Scepticism about the practicalities of introducing a separate pathway for PTO staff were voiced by the 15% of respondents who disagreed with this suggestion, including the difficulty of separating PTO staff from within different departmental/institutional structures. The additional burden of work was the most commonly noted theme amongst this group of respondents, alongside the suggestion that PTO staff should be better recognised (and indeed only recognised) within institutional submissions. Of concern is the idea that, despite expansion of the Charter, that Athena SWAN is or should be either wholly or primarily focussed on academics in STEM. Whilst the number of respondents referencing this is relatively small (ca. 20 comments), it demonstrates a need for unquestionable clarity about the focus of the Athena SWAN Charter going forward.

“It depends on the purpose of the exercise. At the outset Athena SWAN was clearly about the academic pipeline in STEM. This has gradually been diluted and means the focus is less clear. The addition of PTO staff really highlighted this.”
2.12. Panels

Just under half of respondents (48%) were ‘not confident’ or ‘not at all confident’ with the consistency of the assessment process. Just 15% were confident or strongly confident in the consistency of the assessment process, whilst 23% were undecided (Figure 2.20). Several comments about panel judgements were made in the free text questions (Sections 2.13 and 2.16).

Figure 2.20: Q20. Concerns have been raised about the consistency of judgements by panels. If you have submitted an application how confident are you in the consistency of the assessment process?

54% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that panel membership should be professionalised (by having a smaller pool of experts rather than a wider pool of volunteers), compared to 22% who disagreed. 89% of respondents agreed that panellists should be both discipline and equality experts (the question did not clarify whether each individual should be both, or whether the panel should be comprised of both). Over three quarters of respondents (76%) agreed that panel membership should be fixed-term. There is very strong agreement (90% agree or strongly agree) that panel membership should be recognised by institutions as equivalent work to REF, Research Council or professional body panel membership. Additional comments on the specification of panellists were made in the free text questions Q21, 22, and 30.

2.13. Assessment

Question 21 was an open question with an unlimited free-text box. It received the most responses of any free-text question and garnered 1063 responses. Question 22 was also an open question with an unlimited free-text box. It received 997 responses. Responses to these questions were analysed separately using thematic analysis in NVivo. Due to the similarity of responses and themes across the two questions, responses to questions 21 and 22 have been summarised and reported together. The responses to Q21 ‘How can the assessment process be improved?’ and Q22 ‘What would you most like to change about the assessment process?’ covered a wide range of themes, the largest of which related to the application form and panels (Figures 2.21 and 2.22).

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2 As the question specified ‘if you have submitted an application’ the question was ‘Not Applicable’ to 15% of respondents.
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Figure 2-21: Q21. ‘How can the assessment process be improved?’ – themes represented proportionately

Figure 2-22: ‘What would you most like to change about the assessment process?’ - themes represented proportionately
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As is already understood from the soft consultation with the sector, there is a lack of confidence in the assessment panels for Athena SWAN applications. Inconsistency in judgement and thus application outcome/award is the most commonly raised issue. The majority of these comments simply state a desire for more consistency; however, where elaboration is made, the burden of work on panellists and inconsistent moderation are flagged as key contributors to inconsistencies across panels. It is suggested that panel membership be professionalised and that the number of applications looked at in a day be reduced. It is believed that members being paid for their time and a reduced workload would encourage a more even spread of attention across applications throughout the day which in turn would lead to greater consistency in panel decisions. There is no clear support for either reducing or increasing the number of panellists per panel. However, there is support for having a smaller pool of panellists that each appear on a higher number of panels (multi-panel panellists) again to increase consistency across the process. It is believed that panellists should have personal experience of completing an Athena SWAN application and should be matched to applications based on institution/department size and type to avoid misunderstandings based on institutional or structural differences. Comments also support the findings from question 25, calling for panellists to be both equality and discipline experts. There are many suggestions that panellists are not as objective as they should be. The depth of feeling on this issue is strong with the word ‘bias’ used frequently. The majority of these comments simply state ‘less bias’ or ‘more objectivity’, however where the comments are elaborated on these comments come from personal experience and word of mouth. Clear criteria, clearly communicated expectations of panellists, and better moderation will address this issue.

Respondents would like to see the training of panellists improved. There is a strong feeling that the current training is insufficient and should be extended to include unconscious bias and an understanding of basic statistics. There is discontent with the current online training module. A more active face-to-face training model would be favourably received. There is also support for panellists to individually assess each application prior to the panel and for this to be strictly enforced by Advance HE. There is strong support for clarification of the role and expectations of the panel moderator. The current role of the moderator is unclear, with claims that moderators have both been uninvolved in discussions and overridden panel decisions. Going forward it is suggested by respondents that the Advance HE moderator play an active role in the panel and be prepared to step in if a single voice is influencing the direction of the discussion/decision, and to ensure that the criteria are being adhered to over gut feeling and personal opinion.

The current location of panels (all London based) is unsatisfactory. This is noted as deterring and discriminating against potential panellists from institutions that would incur high travel costs to attend a London-based panel. Having panels located across the UK is a favourable option, as are virtual panels, however there is concern that some valuable discussion could be lost with a move to exclusively virtual panels.

Respondents call for clearer criteria, for all levels of the award, both for applicants and panellists. This is directly linked to a lack of confidence in the consistency of panel decision-making. More information about respondents’ attitudes towards the clarity of criteria is included in Section 2.7.

The burden of work was also a highly commented on aspect of the assessment process. Unfortunately, the majority of these responses were statements recognising the current burden of work without recommendations for improvement, validating the difficulty in addressing this aspect.
of the process. The burden of the Athena SWAN process is perceived as too high across the board – for applicants, panellists, and Advance HE. Where solutions are suggested they are related to shortening the application form or reducing the amount of data requested, particularly because of the difficulty associated with some data collection. Mandated support from senior colleagues and recognition of the workload are very important to the sector, and there is a desire for the process to be expedited. The overwhelming conclusion was that any addition to the current workload, for any aspect of the process, would not be well received.

The application form is criticised for its length, with many comments expressing a strong desire for a shortened form. This is exacerbated by frustration that feedback often asks for expansion on points that could have been achieved had the word count been extended. Those that specify improvements suggest a level of repetition within the form that could be reduced, or a reduction in the amount of data. It is recognised that formatting changes to the application form would have the potential to reduce the burden of work, including an online application form and standardised templates for displaying data. The emphasis of the application form is contested, with claims that it should focus more on the action plan, balanced with claims that the action plan should give way to more metrics. There is a consensus that the focus of the action plan should be on factors of ‘substance’ that can lead to/demonstrate ‘real change’, however there is no clear suggestion on how to achieve this.

Figure 2-23: Q21 and Q22 comments about panels- themes represented are proportional
There is a call for recognition that some data is difficult to obtain (such as gender balance of seminar programmes, or outreach activity) and a desire for fewer data to be requested. One comment in particular raised concerns about a potential contravention of GDPR regulations where small numbers were reported (e.g. return from maternity leave numbers). This is a concern that needs to be addressed.

Feedback following panel assessment is claimed to be inconsistent and often insufficient or unclear. It is felt that an increase in the length and detail of feedback is warranted to bring it into proportion with the time and effort put into an application, and the cost associated with applying. There is concern that Advance HE do not have sufficient control over this aspect of the process and that insufficient panel feedback has to be relayed to the applicant by someone who was not present at the panel. A relatively simple fix, as repeatedly suggested in the comments, would be to have standardised feedback forms with a mandated level of feedback, overseen by Advance HE. There is a desire for the feedback to be more generally supportive and positive as opposed to ‘nit-picky’, ‘negative’ and ‘combative’.

Comments about the focus and scope of the Charter are wide-ranging without a common focus. Echoing earlier comments about the inclusion of additional protected characteristics, there are arguments both for and against expanding the Charter, including professional, technical and operational staff, changing or narrowing the focus of the application, and moving beyond an application-focussed process. What is clear is that the scope of the Athena SWAN Charter going forward needs to be clearly defined and justified.

Section 2.6 showed that the majority of respondents would like to see additional support from Advance HE before submitting an application. The qualitative comments reflected this desire for
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additional support, however the open question allowed respondents to be more specific about the nature of the support they wanted. The comments reflected the quantitative data, with online best practice examples the most commonly cited support wanted.

There were several comments referencing the need for the inclusion of culture in assessment. Whilst site visits were the most popular option, comments expanded on Q15a’s proposal for site visits as mid-term review, and put forward site visits as part of the assessment process as a potential way to gauge the culture of an institution or department, and to evaluate the accuracy of claims made within the application. This linked to concerns about the creative license afforded in the application and claims that data can easily be ‘spun’, which in turn linked to low confidence in the ability of panels to accurately evaluate substance over style.

There is support for a section-by-section, points-based scoring system for the application (similar to the GPA system offered in Question 23). It is felt that this would make the criteria clearer for both applicants and panellists and reduce inconsistent assessment outcomes. However, this must be balanced with a desire for the process to be less of a ‘tick box’ exercise and the strong feeling that application forms can be too easily manipulated. Other suggestions support initial consultation with the sector; a slimmed down Bronze and renewal application form and process, however there is no real discussion of how these suggestions would be implemented/work in practice and the difficulties associated are recognised by respondents.

Figure 2-24: Q21 and Q22 comments about the application form- themes are represented proportionately
General comments made in Q21 and Q22 are regarding a call for clarity and consistency in the Athena SWAN process as a whole but generally do not suggest how this could be achieved.

2.14. Award system

There was a roughly even split between undecided, for, and against replacing the current Bronze, Silver, and Gold system with a score for each section and an overall GPA. 37% disagreed with this proposed change, 32% were undecided, and 31% were in favour of replacing the current award levels with a GPA scoring system (Figure 2-25).

As mentioned in Section 2.13, reference was made to replacing the current Bronze, Silver, and Gold level system within questions 21 and 22 (‘How can the assessment process be improved?’ and ‘What would you most like to change about the assessment process?’). Whilst there is a proportion of the sector in favour of an overhaul of the Athena SWAN assessment system, there is not a clear preference for replacing it with a Grade Point Average format.
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Figure 2-25: Q23. ‘The Bronze, Silver, Gold system should be replaced with a score for each section and an overall Grade Point Average.’

2.15. Award renewal

The statement ‘...award renewal should be streamlined to focus on progress on the action plan and proposals for future action’ was strongly supported (81% agree or strongly agree). Support was shown for the statement ‘Award renewal is viewed as too cumbersome. The process should be streamlined to focus on progress on the action plan and proposals for future actions’ (62% agree or strongly agree). Respondents were asked to give reasons for their answer, 53% of whom chose to give a comment (817 comments).

There is very strong agreement that that award renewal is too cumbersome and that the process should be streamlined to focus on progress on the action plan and proposals for future actions (81% agree or strongly agree), and the reasons given for this agreement are similar in nature. From the ‘agree’ group, the most common comment refers to progress on the action plan being the most important criterion for renewal; without progress, awards are considered meaningless. The department or institution has committed to deliver progress on the action plan in their previous application, and this progress should be evidenced at renewal. There are several caveats to this theme that are identified however, particularly in reference to the need to prevent repetition or regurgitation of the previous application narrative (by completing a full application both for first time applications and for renewal at the same level). Several references were made to the renewal process currently not holding units accountable for previous action plans (and indeed panels were not given previous action plans to assess), and thus renewal on the basis of action plan progress and proposals would prevent this being the case. Applicants should be given the freedom to elaborate in renewal documents on reasons for lack of progress on the action plan however, or for a divergence or refocussing of efforts. The agree group clearly stated the need to focus effort and resource on delivering the action plan (and constantly devising new and improved initiatives), rather than spending a large portion of their time filling in forms, particularly so frequently.
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“This would place the emphasis appropriately on doing the work of change-making, rather than doing the work of the Athena SWAN process - currently, the onerous nature of the renewal process actively diverts resource from tackling EDI challenges”

Several calls are made for a streamlined process to involve a site visit to avoid any culture related changes being masked by a change in renewal assessment focus to the action plan progress. Some respondents made reference to renewal being a good point in the cycle to include a culture survey, and reference was made to the fact that a more streamlined process should only be applicable for one renewal, not several.

Very frequent reference is made to the burdensome and cumbersome nature of making a renewal application, and it is felt that equal (if not more) effort is required currently at renewal compared to a first application. This is not seen as an efficient use of time and energy of already overburdened staff, nor does it encourage continued and sustained engagement with the Charter. Any improvements made to award renewal in terms of streamlining, and simplifying and shortening the process are warmly welcomed, and are, in fact, strongly requested.

“The application process is immensely time-consuming, stressful, and burdensome and takes too much time away from other important activities, especially for female staff. I am actively unenthusiastic about spending the same amount of time and energy on our renewal application next year and am very much hoping that the process will change substantially as a result of this review and consultation.”

Whilst streamlining of the renewal process is strongly applauded, the need to demonstrate impact, rather than just progress on the action plan is highlighted, particularly for higher levels. Rigour should not be reduced if at all possible, and although submission of updated data in renewals is seen as a sometimes difficult or an even unnecessary process, the need to highlight backsliding is identified, and this may be masked if the renewal is granted in the basis of the action plan progress alone. The references to the burden of work mainly falling to (often junior) females are numerous, and the irony of this, as the group who should benefit from Athena SWAN activities, is noted. The engagement of volunteers on SATs is reduced when the burdensome nature of the work, and the cumbersome renewal process is revealed, particularly because securing Athena SWAN awards (and EDI work generally) is not necessarily viewed as a career-enhancing activity by promotion panels.

“The application and renewal process takes a huge amount of time and effort within the department. It is notable that since the emphasis is on gender equality, while the department is highly skewed in gender representation, efforts are made to ensure that the application team is diverse. But this means that women have to contribute disproportionately more to Athena SWAN activity! Important though this reflection is, the central university provides no additional resource for Athena SWAN...Hence, Athena SWAN contributes further to the overwork and overloading of people (and particularly women) in the HE sector.”

The ‘disagree’ group was relatively small (just 6% of respondents), but clearly identified that their reasons for disagreement was not necessarily that they disagreed with the streamlining of the renewal process itself, but more that they didn’t think focussing solely on the action plan was appropriate or comprehensive enough to evaluate progression in all its forms. The most common
element that was identified as a good marker of progress was data evaluation, and some respondents felt that any deviation from the inclusion of data in a renewal application would be seen as a backwards move to a less meaningful and more tokenistic process.

“In my opinion, in order to assess the progress on the Action Plan, one also needs to look at the current data. Without departments/institutions presenting an update on their data, the process may become less evidence-based and, ultimately, less transparent”

It was felt that in the event of renewal streamlining, downgrading would become rare or impossible, which would subsequently result in institutional and departmental complacency. The cumbersome nature of renewals was applauded by some as a measure of the value and worth of an award.

The ‘undecided’ group was also relatively small (12% of respondents), and the most frequently stated reason for their indecision was a lack of experience with renewal processes. However, the highest number of comments described the view that streamlining the process, and specifically focussing on the action plan progress alone, would not maintain the rigour of the process, would not capture important elements such as culture, and would not reflect departmental or institutional changes in staffing or organisation. The undecided group did not want streamlining at renewal to occur simply because the sector considered it too burdensome; they felt a full application could be warranted if progress was to be evaluated properly in all areas (data trends, culture, policies, gender equality).

There was agreement by 62% of respondents that downgrading should only occur if there is no evidence of progress on the action plan. 692 respondents chose to comment on their answer (45% of people who answered this question made a comment on it).

The reasons given for agreement are wide ranging. Clear support is given to panels resisting downgrading based solely on metrics or what might be considered tenuous links between initiatives and impact.

“The narrative linking an action to a result is difficult for scientists to accept since all we can provide is evidence that a change has occurred and then potentially associate that with one or more of the actions taken, often based on numbers that are too small to be reliable. This in turn leads to scepticism about the whole evaluation process”

The need to acknowledge the effort made to advance gender equality, regardless of success, is voiced repeatedly. Progress should not be defined only in terms of impact. Departments should not be penalised for actions that haven’t resulted in desired or successful outcomes. The unfairness of penalising departments when progress has been made in some, but not all, areas is acknowledged, and presented as a reason why downgrading should only occur when there is no evidence of action at all, or regression in terms of EDI activity is apparent. Reasons why a panel might consider a downgrade are blamed on mission creep and moving goalposts, and most importantly it is considered to be evidence of the lack of consistency in panel judgements. Once a department is deemed worthy of a higher award, there is a lack of understanding why, if they have demonstrated some progress on the action plan, a second panel might consider that department to be no longer worthy of a higher award.
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“If there is no progress on the Action Plan I can see the point for downgrading. But why would an institution be downgraded if it was deemed worthy of a certain level of award earlier and has worked towards the actions in the Action Plan? Does not make sense, and basically indicates that the criteria for a level of an award are not used consistently by panels”

Lack of progress based on external factors beyond the control of the SAT (such as a changing external environment, institutional processes, or a change in management) should not lead to downgrading, as long as these factors are sufficiently explained in the narrative. Action plans are, of course, subject to changes over time, and this should be accepted. Complacency, or a lack of commitment however, should not be tolerated.

The difficulty in maintaining a higher award is acknowledged as much increased relative to gaining that award initially, and this is attributed to the inadequacies of the assessment process; sustaining and evidencing impact from an already good position is considered much more problematic than starting from a lower baseline. Suggestions are made that maintaining a level is sufficient for renewal, without having to try to improve upon already good departments by inventing new initiatives.

“The requirement to continually show impact can make the process for silver challenging, especially as when you reach a certain point it becomes harder to show large changes. For example if you have already put in place a strong set of policies, have improving staff and student numbers and have a good culture it gets increasingly difficult to show new impact”

There are comments suggesting downgrading indicates the work that has gone before is no longer valued. Downgrading is considered extremely demoralising and demotivating for the staff (often described as volunteers) and causes damage to the credibility of the Charter and a strong reluctance to re-engage by staff and departments alike. Suggestions are made to reduce the likelihood of downgrading and include:

- Increasing the length of the awards, so there is more time to demonstrate meaningful change and impact
- Undertaking a light touch renewal based on an updated action plan (for at least one cycle)
- Developing a template for the action plan/progress review at renewal
- Having a live action plan document that allows progress to be judged at renewal
- Providing tailored support from Advance HE to department at risk of downgrade (perhaps ‘at risk’ units should be put on probation and allowed to resubmit several times)
- Downgrading only if there has been a serious incident (bullying and/or sexual harassment for example)
- Downgrading can cause individuals to be prevented from applying for certain types of funding, and so this should be avoided

Disagreement with the statement that downgrading should only occur if there is no evidence of progress on the action plan was relatively low at 17%. Disagreement with the statement was not necessarily because the respondent didn’t agree with downgrading on the basis of action plan progress per se, but that they believed progress on the action plan alone was not a good indicator of culture change, development of good practice, or indeed impact. Many felt that completion of tasks
indicated on the action plan could mask or even hide other factors, not mentioned in the action plan, particularly regarding departmental culture. Therefore, maintaining an award should not be based on progress on the action plan alone, and downgrading should not be solely based on lack of progress on the action plan either.

“You can still progress on the AP whilst having backslid on many other baseline measures! Sustaining equality is hard work, downgrading recognises that sometimes we have not kept up the sustained culture change despite having ticked many of the Action Plan boxes.”

The length of an award can mean that priorities within a department have changed since the last application, which could cause a lack of progress on the action plan, but not necessarily that progress in other areas has not developed. There was support for only downgrading a renewal application if regression is shown. Similarly, changes in culture can occur as a direct result of a change in management, so that a department can be a very different place at renewal than it was four or five years previously.

“I see no issues with downgrading, if there are reasons for it. For instance, at department level, all it takes is a change of Head of Department for practices around the Athena Swan accreditation to cease to be followed, never mind progressed... Universities need to demonstrate that they are deserving of the award as though every time was the first time”

The undecided group voiced the same concerns as the agree and disagree groups, citing panel judgement consistency, moving goalposts, and changing priorities of a department due to staffing changes or external environment factors affecting progress on the action plan; these should not be considered as reasons for downgrading. A large number of respondents in the undecided group stated they weren’t familiar with silver or gold renewals and so felt unable to comment on this issue.

2.16. Other comments

552 responses were received on this open question, many spanning all questions in the survey. Several institutional/departmental responses were noted.
The overwhelmingly recurrent theme identified in the answers to this open question is the burdensome and cumbersome nature of the application process, particularly in relation to the negative effect this can have on the careers of Athena SWAN leads. There is continued reference to how the workload associated with Athena SWAN falls mainly to women, and moreover to junior women, and is at the expense of other, more traditional career-enhancing activities such as grant writing (for academics). Work-life balances are negatively affected and time spent with family or on outside-of-work activities is reduced as a direct result. The irony associated with Athena SWAN or EDI work causing a negative impact on career progression, or delay of progression of those it is supposed to assist, is frequently emphasised. The effort involved in creating a high-quality application can lead to little time or energy being left to carry out the action plan.

“**Athena SWAN is incredibly rewarding and valuable, and has undoubtedly driven progress in gender equality in HE. But this has come at a cost, mostly to the women we are trying to promote and make more visible.**”

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**Figure 2-26: Q30** Please use this box for any comments you would like to add about any of the questions, statements or suggestions included in this questionnaire – themes are represented proportionately.
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It is felt that the institutions themselves do not appreciate the effort involved, do not give appropriate recognition for the work created, and do not provide appropriate resource and support to leads. Smaller institutions are adversely affected by not being able to devote time and resource to Athena SWAN work, compared to larger institutions who may have dedicated Athena SWAN or EDI teams and/or employ consultants. The expectation to apply at both institutional and at departmental level creates a workload which is unmanageable for smaller institutions, and the risk of those institutions disengaging with the Charter is very real.

Many respondents have found that the positivity associated with gaining an award is a motivating experience, but those who have experienced failure, and particularly multiple failures, find it hugely de-motivating and demoralising and subsequently struggle to engage staff in further activity, leading to a significant drop in EDI work. Reaction to failure is described as ‘soul destroying’ and there are many accounts of individuals in hindsight wishing they had spent their time and efforts elsewhere, which may have been of career benefit.

“As a woman scientist, as a women head of my department, and as a very active member on the SAT and AS within my university (and equality issues within my discipline), I have never been more discouraged and frustrated with a initiative that claims to improve equality. It simply creates an additional, ENORMOUS workload, primarily for women staff, with award expectations that are completely incompatible with the already full workload and time/financial constraints that academic/PS staff are already under”

Suggestions for improvements regarding the associated workload and the negative effect this can have on individuals involve streamlining of the application process and application form itself, reduction of the administrative burden, and removal of much of the data requirements at least at entry level (particularly those that are difficult to collect and are considered to be of limited use, such as outreach data or the gender balance of seminar speakers). Calls for full scrutiny of the application form and identification of questions which lead to meaningful change (and those which do not) were numerous. The need for Advance HE to more clearly identify and publicise initiatives which have demonstrated clear impact was voiced.

The (lack of) consistency in panel judgement is mentioned with high frequency. The credibility of the process has been damaged due to the inconsistency and non-expert nature of panellists, with contradictory or inconsistent feedback, and multiple failures quoted as evidence of this. Smaller institutions or departments without a heavy audit culture felt penalised by panels for not providing all of the requested data. Moderators are sometimes considered ineffective and inexperienced. Site visits are requested to ‘back up’ claims made in applications; some references were made regarding the perception that some institutions or departments wrote very strong applications but that this strength was not borne out in reality. A drop in the standard of panellists (particularly in relation to their ability to critique the representation of quantitative data) has been noted in recent years by panel members and observers, and there is a perception of bias; these have been quoted as reasons to support the professionalization of panel members. The threshold for success is regarded as creeping up and some respondents felt that the success of their application was dependent on luck. A scoring system for panellists is suggested, as well as increased and face-to-face training, and improved transparency. A ‘revise and resubmit’ process is suggested as an alternative to downgrading or failure, accompanied by improved feedback which separates the essential and the desirable improvements to the application expected for success.
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Some requests are made for panels to be held outside of London (and in all areas of the UK), and for all ethnicities and genders to be fully represented. Several calls are made to maintain the invitation to observe panels, but virtual panels are not generally supported, as they would limit valuable discussion.

With regards to the data requested in AS applications, the comments are frequent and varied. Little support is given for the notion that the data requested should be only that provided by HESA. There is wide understanding that the current HESA data does not provide sufficient coverage of some areas (regarding staff) such as progression and promotion, but that for students the HESA data should be sufficient. If such a move was made, applicants should be allowed to supplement this data with other, relevant data, where appropriate. There is however, support for a standard template or an on-line form for data to be completed by applicants, to aid reduction in workload in compiling applications. There are several references to the fact that some of the quantitative data requested is difficult to collect, is not necessarily important to reflect on, and does not provide useful insight.

“Further on Action Plans - they are a necessary part of AS submissions, of course, but we need to bear it in mind that not everything measurable is valuable, and not everything valuable is measurable... AS must get better at dealing with these much more nuanced issues and get away from simplistic counting”

Several respondents expressed disquiet at the need to attempt to demonstrate impact and/or change using data that is statistically insignificant; this could be improved by having longer awards and by providing training on data analysis; many SAT members are not data experts (and neither are panel members). The word count is considered insufficient to discuss the data in appropriate detail. Several respondents note the dependency on quantitative data and the resources involved in the collation of that data to be disproportionate to the outcomes.

3. Conclusions and recommendations

The Athena SWAN Charter Review is welcomed as a timely and appropriate action. The merits of participating in the Charter are acknowledged and applauded, and a continued and sustained interest in participating in the Charter is apparent.

The HE sector feels there is value in a form of gender equality monitoring with accreditation. There is a desire to see fairer working conditions for women across all disciplines within Higher Education and Research Institutions. The principles of Athena SWAN are applauded. However, a proportion of the sector now feel that the ‘scales are tipping’ and the shortcomings of the current Athena SWAN process are beginning to outweigh the benefits of holding an award. Response to the formal consultation was positive, indicating that a large number of people are invested in the future of Athena SWAN and believe the Charter can, and should, be improved.

Change is needed. The sector is unclear about pivotal factors such as what constitutes impact, what the criteria are for each level of award, and how renewal relates to a first-time award. The application process is lengthy and burdensome, with claims that it contravenes the principles of the Charter by disadvantaging the very women it aims to bolster. There is low confidence in award outcomes and distrust in the consistency of judgement of assessment panels. It is important for Advance HE to regain trust from the sector and to build confidence which, in turn, will strengthen the Athena SWAN brand.
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**Recommendation 1:** The Steering Group should consider the merits of providing a separate pathway for central PTO staff groups such as HR to apply for awards

**Recommendation 2:** The SG should consider providing an online application form for Athena SWAN applications, with data templates for quantitative data representation

**Recommendation 3:** The SG should consider the professionalisation (and payment) of panel members, encourage institutions to recognise this panel membership as a significant contribution to external work, and provide full and increased training to panel members

**Recommendation 4:** The SG should consider developing more guidance for panellists and generate feedback forms commensurate with the effort demonstrated by departments and institutions in completing an Athena SWAN application

**Recommendation 5:** The SG should consider making panels available and accessible to those in all areas of the UK, either by holding some panels outside of London or via a virtual platform

**Recommendation 6:** The SG should consider the role of the moderator in panels, and clearly communicate the duties of the moderator to the sector

**Recommendation 7:** The SG should consider providing clearer and static criteria to achieve each Athena SWAN award level, without compromising the ability of each applicant to tailor their focus to the local need

**Recommendation 8:** The SG should consider providing a clearer definition of what constitutes impact, how this is assessed, and how this is scored in relation to progress and effort

**Recommendation 9:** The SG should consider providing increased bespoke support for institutions and/or departments pre- and post-application, and particularly if award length is to be increased

**Recommendation 10:** The SG should consider the need for increased online written guidance for applicants from Advance HE

**Recommendation 11:** The SG should consider the need for applications for Bronze awards to be shorter, and less labour intensive

**Recommendation 12:** The SG should consider the need for the renewal process to be faster, less labour intensive than for a full application, more transparent, and to focus on progress on the action plan, particularly for Bronze renewals

**Recommendation 13:** The SG should consider the need to reduce downgrading of higher awards unless there is no evidence of progress on the action plan, and take into account internal and external factors affecting progress

**Recommendation 14:** The SG should consider the need to clearly define the scope of the Charter, including an updated definition or use of the word ‘gender’

**Recommendation 15:** The SG should consider the expansion of the Charter to include additional protected characteristics, and approve only if this is possible without increasing the workload associated with an Athena SWAN application, and avoiding GDPR related issues
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4. Appendix 1: Quantitative data

The quantitative data for each question is represented in section 4. The percentage of respondents who answered that question is shown in the chart, and the table (adjacent to each chart) shows the actual number of respondents to each question.

Figure 4-1: Have you ever worked on an Athena SWAN application?

Q2. Have you worked on an Athena SWAN application?

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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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</table>

Figure 4-2: 'Was your experience of working on an Athena SWAN application..?'

Q2. a. Was your experience of working on an Athena SWAN application:

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<tr>
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<td>1300</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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Figure 4-3: ‘Applicants should be allowed more scope to focus their application on the issues of particular concern to their department/institute/institution.’

Q3. Applicants should be allowed more scope to focus their application on the issues of particular concern to their department/institute/institution

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<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>482</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>771</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1552</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4-4: ‘Action plans should be more focused on the institution’s/institute’s/department’s key priorities.’

Q4. Action plans should be more focused on the institution’s/institute’s/department’s key priorities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>374</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>724</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1550</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 3 Formal consultation survey report from the University of Huddersfield

Figure 4-5: ‘Policies should be addressed in institutional level applications only, with departments only required to demonstrate that they adhere to their institution’s policies or have good reason to diverge.’

Q5. Policies should be addressed in institutional level applications only, with departments only required to demonstrate that they adhere to their institution’s policies or have good reason to diverge.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Count</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>523</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>478</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>265</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1554</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4-6: ‘The initial application process for Bronze Awards should: require fewer data.’

Q6.1 The initial application process for Bronze Awards should: Require fewer data.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>494</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>430</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>311</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1521</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 4-7: ‘The initial application process for Bronze Awards should: have a shorter application form.’

Q6.2 The initial application process for Bronze Awards should: Have a shorter application form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>535</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>527</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1528</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4-8: ‘The initial application process for Bronze Awards should: be a faster process.’

Q6.3 The initial application process for Bronze Awards should: Be a faster process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>568</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>561</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1526</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 4-9: ‘Bronze application panels should be virtual.’

Q7. Bronze application panels should be virtual

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>352</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>641</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1539</strong></td>
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</table>

Figure 4-10: ‘Institutional and departmental cultures are critical and under-represented in the current application process. It has been suggested that there should be a common questionnaire on culture completed by every applicant, and included in their application, to recognise and demonstrate culture and culture change. How do you feel about the possibility of this inclusion?’

Q8. Institutional and departmental cultures are critical and are under-represented in the current application process. It has been suggested that there should be a common questionnaire on culture completed by every applicant, and included in their application, to recognise and demonstrate culture and culture change. How do you feel about the possibility of this inclusion?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Support</td>
<td>383</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td>746</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>263</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do Not Support</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly do not support</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1555</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 3 Formal consultation survey report from the University of Huddersfield

Figure 4-11: ‘Athena SWAN applications should only require data which can be downloaded from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA).’

Q9. Athena SWAN applications should only require data which can be downloaded from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>277</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>537</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1551</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4-12: ‘Applicants should have more support from Advance HE before they submit their application.’

Q10. Applicants should have more support from Advance HE before they submit their application

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>376</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>594</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1549</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 3 Formal consultation survey report from the University of Huddersfield

Figure 4-13: ‘The criteria for each level of award should be more clearly defined.’

Q11. The criteria for each level of award should be more clearly defined

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>476</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>423</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>503</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1551</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4-14: ‘Too much emphasis is placed on demonstrating impact at Silver and Gold level.’

Q12. Too much emphasis is placed on demonstrating impact at Silver and Gold level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>271</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>599</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>429</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1538</strong></td>
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</table>
Appendix 3 Formal consultation survey report from the University of Huddersfield

Figure 4-15: ‘Awards should be held for longer than the current four years.’

Figure 4-16: ‘How long should awards last?’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>436</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>339</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>470</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1540</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>322</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>192</td>
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<tr>
<td>7 years</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>642</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 3 Formal consultation survey report from the University of Huddersfield

**Figure 4.17:** ‘The length of the award should increase with the level of the award: Bronze 4 years, Silver 5-6 years and Gold 7 years.’

Q14. The length of the Award should increase with the level of the Award: Bronze 4 years, Silver 5-6 years, Gold 7 years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>402</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>547</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1549</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 4.18:** ‘If the length of Awards is extended there should be some form of mid-award monitoring of progress on the Action Plan.’

Q15. If the length of Awards is extended there should be some form of mid-award monitoring of progress on the Action Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>413</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>697</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1552</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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Figure 4-19. Survey question 16: ‘The Athena SWAN Charter should be expanded to include additional characteristics.’

Q16. The Athena SWAN Charter should be expanded to include additional characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>383</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>410</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>454</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1550</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4-20: ‘This (inclusion of PTO staff to Silver and Gold applications) has been a successful addition to the Charter.’

Q17. This has been a successful addition to the Charter

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>347</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>607</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>421</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
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<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>50</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1542</strong></td>
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</table>
Appendix 3 Formal consultation survey report from the University of Huddersfield

Figure 4-21: ‘If PTO staff are included there should be different criteria for them.’

Q18. If PTO staff are included there should be different criteria for them

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>542</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>438</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1546</td>
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</table>

Figure 4-22: ‘The Charter should include a pathway for central professional and support units to apply for departmental level awards.’

Q19. The Charter should include a pathway for central professional and support units to apply for departmental level awards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>301</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>572</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>438</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1548</td>
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</table>
Appendix 3 Formal consultation survey report from the University of Huddersfield

Figure 4-23: ‘Concerns have been raised about the consistency of judgements by panels. If you have submitted an application how confident are you in the consistency of the assessment process?’

Q20. Concerns have been raised about the consistency of judgements by panels. If you have submitted an application how confident are you in the consistency of the assessment process?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Confident</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confident</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>353</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Confident</td>
<td>379</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all Confident</td>
<td>359</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Applicable</td>
<td>230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1548</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4-24: ‘The Bronze, Silver, Gold system should be replaced with a score for each section and an overall Grade Point Average.’

Q23. The Bronze, Silver, Gold system should be replaced with a score for each section and an overall Grade Point Average

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>331</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>499</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>431</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1545</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Figure 4-25: ‘Panel Membership should be professionalised by having a smaller pool of experts rather than relying on a wider pool of volunteers.’

Q24. Panel membership should be professionalised by having a smaller pool of experts rather than relying on a wider pool of volunteers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>257</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>586</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>352</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>271</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1535</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4-26: ‘Panellists should be:’ The chart represents the percentage of respondents choosing one of the options, and the table indicates the actual number of respondents for each option.

Q25. Panellists should be:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discipline experts only</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equality experts only</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both Discipline and Equality experts</td>
<td>1366</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1536</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 3 Formal consultation survey report from the University of Huddersfield

Figure 4-27: ‘If panel membership is professionalised membership should be for affixed term as with REF, Research Councils and equivalent panels.’

Q26. If panel membership is professionalised membership should be for a fixed term as with REF, Research Council, and equivalent panels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>352</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>814</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>288</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1533</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4-28: ‘Panel membership should be recognised by institutions as equivalent to work on, for example, REF panels, Research council or professional body committees.’

Q27. Panel membership should be recognised by institutions as equivalent to work on, for example, REF panels, Research Council or professional body committees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>747</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>651</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>23</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1546</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 3 Formal consultation survey report from the University of Huddersfield

Figure 4-29: ‘Award renewal is viewed as too cumbersome. The process should be streamlined to focus on progress on the Action Plan and proposals for future Actions.’

Q28. Award renewal is viewed as too cumbersome. The process should be streamlined to focus on progress on the Action Plan and proposals for future Actions.

Figure 4-30: ‘The earlier consultation exercise expressed disquiet at the downgrading of Silver and Gold departments at renewal. Downgrading should only occur if there is no evidence of progress on the Action plan.’

Q29. The earlier consultation exercise expressed disquiet at the downgrading of Silver and Gold departments at renewal. Downgrading should only occur if there is no evidence of progress on the Action Plan.
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Figure 4-31: ‘Please select which region your institution is based in’

Q32. Please select which region your institution is based in

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td>1208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scotland</td>
<td>221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wales</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Ireland</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1546</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4-32: ‘Are you (select your main role’

Q33. Are you (select your main role):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic Staff</td>
<td>886</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Staff</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDI Professional</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Professional, Technical or Operational Staff</td>
<td>377</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1551</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Option | Count |
-------|-------|
Academic Staff | 886   |
Research Staff | 92    |
EDI Professional | 158   |
Other Professional, Technical or Operational Staff | 377   |
Other | 38    |
**Total** | **1551** |
Appendix 3 Formal consultation survey report from the University of Huddersfield

**Figure 4.33: ‘What is your gender?’**

Q35. What is your gender?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>613</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-binary</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer not to say</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>817</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 4.34: ‘Please select your age’**

Q36. Please select your age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18-24 years old</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34 years old</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-44 years old</td>
<td>470</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-54 years old</td>
<td>535</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-64 years old</td>
<td>276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65-74 years old</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75 years or older</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer not to say</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1554</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix 3 Formal consultation survey report from the University of Huddersfield

**Figure 4-35: ‘Please select your ethnicity’**

Q37. Please select your Ethnicity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>1306</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian / Asian British</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed / Multiple ethnic groups</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other ethnic group</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer not to say</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1543</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Option count summary:

- **White**: 1306
- **Mixed / Multiple ethnic groups**: 43
- **Asian / Asian British**: 57
- **Black / African / Caribbean / Black British**: 16
- **Other ethnic group**: 25
- **Prefer not to say**: 96
- **Total**: 1543
Appendix 3 Formal consultation survey report from the University of Huddersfield

5. Appendix 2: Qualitative data

Within the representation of qualitative data, only themes with support from over 1% of the total survey population (15 comments) have been included in the main body of this report. Additional themes with fewer than 15 comments in support are represented here.

Q10ai: Other types of support from Advance HE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Workshops face to face</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Site visit or mid-term review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good practice sharing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External consultants</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q11a: What would you like more clearly defined (about the assessment criteria)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bronze targets should be met before progression to Silver</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Examples of reasons for failure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rewrite handbooks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demotivating to fail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take into account differences in resource for AS between different institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criteria aren’t understood by HEIs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q12a: Too much emphasis is placed on demonstrating impact at Silver and Gold level; please give reasons for your answer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Causation of impact difficult to prove</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Smaller institutions experience bias because it is harder to demonstrate impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inconsistency in panel judgement on impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panel consistency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of award too short to demonstrate impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No alternative to impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact at renewal is different</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small sample sizes make this impossible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site visits to assess impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarity/definition of impact</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 3 Formal consultation survey report from the University of Huddersfield

Q15ai: Other types of mid-term monitoring (if the length of awards is extended)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action plan update</th>
<th>Written report</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verbal and remote discussion</td>
<td>Staff survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No further assessment, just support</td>
<td>Online report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optional and feedback</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q16ai: The Athena SWAN Charter should be expanded to include additional characteristics; please give reasons for your answer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes, because males are neglected</th>
<th>Change from gender as binary concept</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Athena SWAN is only for white women</td>
<td>Yes, but only for higher awards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender equality not a problem in some departments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q19a: The Charter should include a pathway for central professional and support units to apply for departmental level awards; please give reasons for your answer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PTO staff invest in AS principles</th>
<th>Lessens current burden on Academic AS teams</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In-house metric already in use</td>
<td>Currently favours bigger HEIs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make institutional app shorter where PTO do fit in Dept app</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q21: How can the assessment process be improved?

General:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institutional support</th>
<th>Revise and resubmit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Simplify bronze</td>
<td>Appeal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simplify</td>
<td>Award length</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexible submission opportunities</td>
<td>General</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stop peer review</td>
<td>Lighter touch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low success rate</td>
<td>Award level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simplified renewal</td>
<td>Survey</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 3 Formal consultation survey report from the University of Huddersfield

Panels:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual review</th>
<th>Number of panellists</th>
<th>Communication with panel</th>
<th>More objectivity</th>
<th>Better moderation</th>
<th>Panellists</th>
<th>More consistency</th>
<th>Training and guidance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Application form:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>More structure</th>
<th>Honesty</th>
<th>General</th>
<th>Less prescriptive</th>
<th>Simplify</th>
<th>Addition</th>
<th>Separate form for award</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Q22: What would you most like to change about the assessment process?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Athena SWAN overhaul</th>
<th>Lower standard for Bronze</th>
<th>Positive experience</th>
<th>Appeal</th>
<th>Accountability</th>
<th>Less evaluative more supportive</th>
<th>More light touch</th>
<th>Alternative assessment</th>
<th>Flexible submission opportunities</th>
<th>Resubmit section by section</th>
<th>Progress against previous applications</th>
<th>Encourage collaboration</th>
<th>Integration into funding</th>
<th>Less risk</th>
<th>Not all based on submission</th>
<th>Shorter renewal process</th>
<th>Too easy</th>
<th>Ensure documents circulated in enough time</th>
<th>Make AS mandatory</th>
<th>Meetings</th>
<th>No consultation with Falmouth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Appendix 3 Formal consultation survey report from the University of Huddersfield

Q28a: Award renewal is viewed as too cumbersome. The process should be streamlined to focus on progress on the action plan and proposals for future actions; please give reasons for your answer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Must encourage progress not complacency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Include culture survey and/or more information on culture change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes in staffing affect work on Action plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Streamlining of renewals could re-engage the disengaged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site visits needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Streamlining renewals would make panels more consistent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limit number of renewals to one, then full application</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No motivation for renewal after downgrade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stop gaming the system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It won’t work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutions need to understand commitment needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Downgrading will be reduced if renewal process streamlined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only streamline if award length is not increased</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What about culture?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workload reduction welcomed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q29a: The earlier consultation exercise expressed disquiet at the downgrading of Silver and Gold departments at renewal. Downgrading should only occur if there is no evidence of progress on the action plan; please give reasons for your answer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staffing changes over 5 year period can be detrimental to work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progress isn’t necessary; staying static is ok</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No alternative to impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need clearer assessment criteria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clearer criteria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progress can be affected by institution or things outside control of department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard has increased</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No light touch renewal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Downgrading if clearly disengaged or complacent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renewal should be as high quality as first time application</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panel consistency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demoralising to SAT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact needed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 3 Formal consultation survey report from the University of Huddersfield

Q30: Please use this box for any comments you would like to add about any of the questions, statements or suggestions included in this questionnaire

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appreciation for the review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demoralising to fail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not centred to Research Institutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of awards (both for and against increases)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tailored support from Advance HE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site visits (to support applications and for mid-term reviews)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contradictory Feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transgender (question in survey, and generally)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Links to funding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too STEM focussed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word-count too restrictive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not value for money</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Light touch renewal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males taking on workload (could this be rewarded/encouraged?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outreach; is this useful/necessary?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expand to other sectors e.g. NHS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow up interviews (with the sector following this questionnaire)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timelines for changes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. Appendix 3: Guide to question themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General</td>
<td>Q2, Q2a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scope of the application</td>
<td>Q3, Q4, Q5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bronze awards</td>
<td>Q6.1, Q6.2, Q6.3, Q7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>Q8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data</td>
<td>Q9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Q10, Q10a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment criteria</td>
<td>Q11, Q11a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrating impact</td>
<td>Q12, Q12a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Award length</td>
<td>Q13, Q13a, Q14, Q15, Q15a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scope of the Charter</td>
<td>Q16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PTO staff</td>
<td>Q17, Q18, Q19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panels</td>
<td>Q20, Q24, Q25, Q26, Q27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td>Q21, Q22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Award System</td>
<td>Q23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Award renewal</td>
<td>Q28, Q29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other comments</td>
<td>Q30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 4: Formal Consultation Questionnaire

Athena SWAN Review survey

Introduction

The aim of this survey is to collect views from the sector on proposed changes to the Athena SWAN award, review, and application process. Findings from this survey will contribute towards a larger review of the Athena SWAN Charter. The survey will take between 15-20 minutes to complete depending on how much information you choose to give.

Your participation is voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time.

Any information given by you may be included in the research and subsequent reports, but personal information will not be included and you will not be identifiable.

Individual answers will not be shared with your/any institution participating in the survey.

Any data you provide is protected under GDPR and will be stored securely. Only researchers involved in the review will have access to the data.

By selecting 'I agree' you are confirming that:

- You have read and understood the information above.
- You are at least 18 years of age.
- You voluntarily agree to participate in this survey.

1. Do you agree to participate in this survey? *Required
   - I agree
   - I do not agree

Your involvement

2. Have you worked on an Athena SWAN application?
   - Yes
   - No
**Appendix 3 Formal consultation survey report from the University of Huddersfield**

**Scope of the application**

Please indicate how far you agree/disagree with the following statements

3. Applicants should be allowed more scope to focus on the issues of particular concern to their department/institute/institution
   - Strongly Agree
   - Agree
   - Undecided
   - Disagree
   - Strongly Disagree

4. Action plans should be more focused on the institution's/institute's/department's key priorities
   - Strongly Agree
   - Agree
   - Undecided
   - Disagree
   - Strongly Disagree

5. Policies should be addressed in institutional level applications only, with departments only required to demonstrate that they adhere to their institution’s policies or have good reason to diverge
   - Strongly Agree
   - Agree
   - Undecided
   - Disagree
   - Strongly Disagree

**Bronze Awards**

Please indicate how far you agree/disagree with the following statements

6. The initial application process for Bronze Awards should:

*Please don’t select more than 1 answer(s) per row.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Require fewer data</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have a shorter application form</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be a faster process</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 3 Formal consultation survey report from the University of Huddersfield

7. Bronze application panels should be virtual
   - Strongly Agree
   - Agree
   - Undecided
   - Disagree
   - Strongly Disagree

Culture

8. Institutional and departmental cultures are critical and are under-represented in the current application process. It has been suggested that there should be a common questionnaire on culture completed by every applicant, and included in their application, to recognise and demonstrate culture and culture change. How do you feel about the possibility of this inclusion?
   - Strongly Support
   - Support
   - Undecided
   - Do Not Support
   - Strongly Do Not Support

Data

Please indicate how far you agree/disagree with the following statement

9. Athena SWAN applications should only require data which can be downloaded from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)
   - Strongly Agree
   - Agree
   - Undecided
   - Disagree
   - Strongly Disagree

Support

Please indicate how far you agree/disagree with the following statement

10. Applicants should have more support from Advance HE before they submit their application
    - Strongly Agree
    - Agree
    - Undecided
    - Disagree
    - Strongly Disagree
**Appendix 3 Formal consultation survey report from the University of Huddersfield**

**Criteria**

Please indicate how far you agree/disagree with the following statement

11. The criteria for each level of award should be more clearly defined
   - Strongly Agree
   - Agree
   - Undecided
   - Disagree
   - Strongly Disagree

**Demonstrating impact**

Please indicate how far you agree/disagree with the following statement

12. Too much emphasis is placed on demonstrating impact at Silver and Gold level
   - Strongly Agree
   - Agree
   - Undecided
   - Disagree
   - Strongly Disagree
   a. Please give reasons for your answer

**Award length**

Please indicate how far you agree/disagree with the following statement

13. Awards should be held for longer than the current four years
   - Strongly Agree
   - Agree
   - Undecided
   - Disagree
   - Strongly Disagree

14. The length of the Award should increase with the level of the Award: Bronze 4 years, Silver 5-6 years, Gold 7 years
   - Strongly Agree
   - Agree
   - Undecided
   - Disagree
   - Strongly Disagree
Appendix 3 Formal consultation survey report from the University of Huddersfield

15. If the length of Awards is extended should there be some form of mid-award monitoring of progress on the Action Plan
   - Strongly Agree
   - Agree
   - Undecided
   - Disagree
   - Strongly Disagree

Scope of the Charter

Please indicate how far you agree/disagree with the following statement

16. The Athena SWAN Charter should be expanded to include additional characteristics
   - Strongly Agree
   - Agree
   - Undecided
   - Disagree
   - Strongly Disagree

   a. Please give reasons for your answer

PTO staff

At the moment the Charter includes some questions on professional, technical and operational (PTO) staff for Silver and Gold applications.

Please indicate how far you agree/disagree with the following statement

17. This has been a successful addition to the Charter
   - Strongly Agree
   - Agree
   - Undecided
   - Disagree
   - Strongly Disagree

18. If PTO staff are included there should be different criteria for them
   - Strongly Agree
   - Agree
   - Undecided
   - Disagree
   - Strongly Disagree
19. The Charter should include a pathway for central professional and support units to apply for departmental level awards
   o Strongly Agree
   o Agree
   o Undecided
   o Disagree
   o Strongly Disagree
   
   a. Please give reasons for your answer

Panels

20. Concerns have been raised about the consistency of judgements by panels. If you have submitted an application how confident are you in the consistency of the assessment process?
   o Strongly Confident
   o Confident
   o Undecided
   o Not Confident
   o Not at all Confident
   o Not Applicable

The assessment process

21. How can the assessment process be improved?

22. What would you most like to change about the assessment process?

Award system

Please indicate how far you agree/disagree with the following statement

23. The Bronze, Silver, Gold system should be replaced with a score for each section and an overall Grade Point Average
   o Strongly Agree
   o Agree
   o Undecided
   o Disagree
   o Strongly Disagree
Panel membership

Please indicate how far you agree/disagree with the following statement

24. Panel membership should be professionalised by having a smaller pool of experts rather than relying on a wider pool of volunteers
   - Strongly Agree
   - Agree
   - Undecided
   - Disagree
   - Strongly Disagree

25. Panellists should be:
   - Discipline experts only
   - Equality experts only
   - Both Discipline and Equality experts

Please indicate how far you agree/disagree with the following statements

26. If Panel membership is professionalised membership should be for a fixed term as with REF, Research Council, and equivalent panels
   - Strongly Agree
   - Agree
   - Undecided
   - Disagree
   - Strongly Disagree

27. Panel membership should be recognised by institutions as equivalent to work on, for example, REF panels, Research Councils or professional body committees
   - Strongly Agree
   - Agree
   - Undecided
   - Disagree
   - Strongly Disagree
Appendix 3 Formal consultation survey report from the University of Huddersfield

Award renewal

Please indicate how far you agree/disagree with the following statement

28. Award renewal is viewed as too cumbersome. The process should be streamlined to focus on progress on the Action Plan and proposals for future Actions
   o Strongly Agree
   o Agree
   o Undecided
   o Disagree
   o Strongly Disagree

   a. Please give reasons for your answer

29. The earlier consultation exercise expressed disquiet at the downgrading of Silver and Gold departments at renewal. Downgrading should only occur if there is no evidence of progress on the Action plan
   o Strongly Agree
   o Agree
   o Undecided
   o Disagree
   o Strongly Disagree

   b. Please give reasons for your answer

Additional comments

30. Please use this box for any comments you would like to add about any of the questions, statements or suggestions included in this questionnaire
About your institution

31. Does your institution, institute or department currently hold, has previously held, or has ever applied for, an Athena SWAN Award?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
<th>N/A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Institution</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Research Institute</td>
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<td>Department</td>
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32. Please select which region your institution is based in:
   - Scotland
   - Wales
   - England
   - Northern Ireland
   - Other

33. Are you (select your main role):
   - Academic Staff
   - Research Staff
   - EDI Professional
   - Other Professional, Technical or Operational Staff
   - Other

34. What is your job title? * unique titles will be removed to prevent identification

About you

35. What is your gender? (select one)
   - Female
   - Male
   - Non-binary
   - Other
   - Prefer not to say

36. Please select your age
   - 18-24 years old
   - 25-34 years old
   - 35-44 years old
   - 45-54 years old
   - 55-64 years old
   - 65-74 years old
   - 75 years or older
   - Prefer not to say
Appendix 3 Forman consultation survey report from the University of Huddersfield

37. Please select your Ethnicity
   - White
     - a. English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British
     - b. Irish
     - c. Gypsy or Irish Traveller
     - d. Any other white background
     - e. Prefer not to say
   - Mixed / Multiple ethnic groups
     - a. White and Black Caribbean
     - b. White and Black African
     - c. White and Asian
     - d. Any other Mixed / Multiple ethnic background
     - e. Prefer not to say
   - Asian / Asian British
     - a. Indian
     - b. Pakistani
     - c. Bangladeshi
     - d. Chinese
     - e. Any other Asian background
     - f. Prefer not to say
   - Black / African / Caribbean / Black British
     - a. African
     - b. Caribbean
     - c. Any other Black / African / Caribbean background
     - d. Prefer not to say
   - Other ethnic group
     - a. Arab
     - b. Any other ethnic group
     - c. Prefer not to say
   - Prefer not to say