



TAOT call for evidence: Advance HE response

Section 1: *In brief*

Q1

- Yes

Q2

1. Political emphasis and leadership from universities and colleges as well as Scottish Government, First Minister, and Scottish Funding Council, leading to prioritisation and resourcing of gender equality initiatives, such as HE Code of Good Governance, Gender Action Plans, and Athena SWAN.
2. Membership, uptake and success of HEI Athena SWAN activities, leading to improved policies and practices in departments and institutions, more equal environments, increased rates of promotion, and higher proportions of female professors and senior staff in Scotland. The Athena SWAN framework has been designed to draw attention to identify and address gendered issues that may hinder career progression and prevent an inclusive culture for all staff. By examining data and key transition points for staff and promotion fair and transparent policies for support, institutions and departments can take a holistic approach to addressing pipeline barriers. This has supported targeted, evidence based interventions to address staff pipeline issues (including proactive recruitment and promotion initiatives). Athena SWAN has also led to improved understanding and recognition of intersectionality and trans equality.
3. Offering more flexible career pathways, which recognise the value of teaching and learning, professional and technical careers with the same weight as research, provides equality of opportunity and career support for all staff. This includes improved career break support for staff (including maternity, paternity and shared parental leave). The gendered implications of this is that traditionally women have held more teaching and learning responsibilities and men have held more research roles. Promoting maternity leave entitlements and improving support for women pre, during and post leave is crucial to addressing job security concerns, retention and staff experience. Promoting paternity and shared parental leave and encouraging uptake for men also works to promote dual-career families and address the stigma that parental leave is a women's responsibility. Both of these mechanisms have an impact on improving women's careers and experience within the workplace, and while there is still a ways to go in this area, the progress made so far has had an impact.

Q3

1. Continued inflexibility in job design and inconsistencies in the offer and take-up of flexible working arrangements, which has a disproportionate impact on women. Where policies and

opportunities exist, the lack of acceptance of their uptake is also a barrier. Persistent presenteeism in the sector hinders role-sharing, creative job design and the uptake of flexible working. Addressing workload expectations for academic staff in STEM should be a priority, particularly given the focus on research. While workload models are increasingly being introduced, there are often gaps and inconsistencies regarding what is recognised within the workload, relative to 'informal' expectations. Often there are expectations that research work must be undertaken regardless of the impact on personal lives or caring responsibilities, or indeed other work-related duties including: teaching and administration, citizenship initiatives and pastoral care – all of which have historically been disproportionately assigned to women. Caring responsibilities (which also fall disproportionately to women) impact upon matters such as networking, attendance at conferences, and day-to-day engagement in academic life.

2. Gendered roles within institutions also serves as a barrier to progress. The 'funnelling' of women away from research activity (e.g. towards teaching and pastoral roles) places them at a disadvantage in progression. There are real and/or perceived hierarchies of promotion criteria, where research outputs have the highest values and individual success here is emphasised over team achievement. Where it is possible to be promoted on teaching pathways, these are associated with glass ceilings and lesser status. This is exacerbated by the prevalence and lack of understanding of unconscious bias and why it is important among staff in institutions, including the lack of evaluation and understanding of the efficacy and impact of unconscious bias training at an institutional level.
3. Lack of mainstreaming/widespread adoption and buy-in to gender initiatives, particularly amongst men and across senior management teams. Barriers to involvement include a lack of value being placed on equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) roles within institutions and departments, a lack of formally defined responsibilities for EDI for staff in senior roles, and a lack of male engagement throughout institutions and departments. There is also a cultural barrier in the legacy of Athena SWAN being seen as 'for women' and a gendered expectation within institutions that women will undertake related work, rather than men. There is a need for more senior leaders, particularly men, who actively champion EDI and role model this activity.

Q4

1. HEIs attain Athena SWAN silver awards. (*Note: the strength and value of this recommendation has changed. Since 2012, Athena SWAN awards cover professional and support staff, as well as humanities and arts subjects in institutions, so is much closer to a 'whole institution' award, and requires consideration of trans equality and intersectionality in relation to race.)
2. For UK Government, Employment law to reflect the equal responsibilities of both parents.
3. For Scottish Government, Improve provision of high quality, accessible childcare.

Q5

1. Mainstreaming the responsibility for EDI. There are multiple ways to ensure that equality and diversity becomes mainstreamed, some examples that have proven successful are building EDI as a key responsibility within job descriptions. Institutions such as the University of Edinburgh, University of York and University College London have done this with senior roles. Encouraging shared responsibility for the work is essential to ensuring EDI is not considered an 'add on' but rather a priority that is embedded within institutional culture. For

instance, HEI governing bodies, which now have 45% women on average, and senior management teams should take active role in advancing gender equality across organisations, and specifically in career progression in STEM subjects. In particular, institutional governance structures should ensure a joined up and coherent organisational approach to gender equality across the multiple important reporting structures, including: Outcome Agreements (OAs), Gender Action Plans (GAPs), public sector equality duty (PSED) and related Scottish Specific Duties, and Athena SWAN.

2. Embedding gender equality within core institutional and sector policies, similar to the approach taken with the HE Code of Good Governance, such as the Fair Access agenda, strategic plans, and research and teaching policies, etc. This approach would not only encourage prioritising and resourcing gender initiatives, but would also improve alignment across different reporting frameworks (such as OAs, GAPs, Athena SWAN, PSED, etc). If this supported more joined up, longitudinal approaches, it would foster sustainability, consistency, and evaluation, and contribute to the efficient delivery of gender equality.
3. Flexible working arrangements should be an expected norm across the sector, including meaningful steps to improve workloads and expectations on work life balance within academia.

Section 2: In detail

Women in STEM in Scotland 2018

Q6 We can draw some useful lessons from the experience of Advance HE in supporting universities to improve gender equality for staff in universities.

Athena SWAN has been judged one of the more effective approaches at delivering improved outcomes in gender equality for staff, when assessed across European nations

(<https://www.ecu.ac.uk/publications/gender-net-analysis-report-award-schemes-gender/>). In this context it's useful to evaluate to what extent the charter has been successful, whether it has worked as we expected, and where its impact has been constrained by internal or external factors.

How well has Athena SWAN worked?

Athena SWAN supports institutions to make clear commitments on gender equality, mainstream activity across key functions, gather and analyse relevant data, and develop and evaluate targeted, evidence based initiatives. Submissions are assessed and awards made on the development of SMART action plans and the subsequent delivery of improved outcomes.

In Scotland, Athena SWAN, supported by a positive sector approach to gender equality, has grown from 5 departmental awards in 2012 (3 silver) to 73 in 2018 (15 silver, 1 gold), across 14 universities (data excludes research institutes, where there are 5 members and 2 award holders).

The application success rate in Scotland generally exceeds the overall UK success rate. In the past three rounds, it has been 13 and 7 percentage points higher, and 2 percentage points lower. The success of the process is reflected in Scottish institutions' extensive and positive experience with the charter. ECU's 2017 sector survey findings in Scotland found that 90% of ECU's HEI survey respondents were involved in Athena SWAN and agreed (mean value 3.9 out of 5) that this had increased their institution's understanding of staff equality and that the knowledge from this activity had been applied in their HEI (mean value 4 out of 5).

The universities in Scotland that have renewed or upgraded their awards have increased their proportion of female professors. The data reported in recent submissions are:

- Aberdeen: 21% (2011) - 24% (2014)

- Edinburgh: 19% (2010) - 22% (2013)
- Glasgow: 20% (2010) - 24% (2015)
- Heriot-Watt: 12% (2011) - 19% (2015)
- Stirling: 25% (2011) - 33% (2016)

There is a strong link between the development of institutional practice, awards, and quantitative progress, which supports the findings of ECU's initial programme evaluation and other external evaluations (Ovsieko et al, 2017 <https://health-policy-systems.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12961-017-0177-9>; Caffrey et al, 2016 <http://bmjopen.bmj.com/content/6/9/e012090.short?rss=1>; ECU's commissioned external evaluation <https://www.ecu.ac.uk/equality-charters/charter-marks-explained/impact-equality-charters/>; an Advance HE evaluation of Athena SWAN, more focused on understanding impact and outcomes, is currently underway).

Constraints and barriers to progress

However, despite this clear evidence of impact, progress in gender equality has been constrained under Athena SWAN and other gender initiatives due to a range of factors. The Athena SWAN evaluations, as well as evaluations of other programmes, such as the Aurora leadership development programme (run by Advance HE), as well as Advance HE's experience and consultation with stakeholders in Scotland, would highlight the following factors that hinder further or more rapid progress:

- Lack of mainstreaming/widespread adoption and buy-in to gender initiatives, particularly amongst men and senior management.
- Lack of understanding of how institutions are gendered and how this restricts opportunities for development and progression for women.
- Sector and institutional norms, practices and policies that reduce opportunities for flexible approaches to production and work.
- Lack of leadership to prioritise and implement gender initiatives.
- Due to the focus of research within academia, workload issues are of significant concern for staff and often impact on career development and promotional opportunities. Consideration must also be provided to the significant pastoral care and administrative roles that women in STEM often undertake that is not formally recognised and impacts on the ability to conduct research.
- Societal factors, including gendered stereotypes and expectations in careers, family life and caring restrict opportunities for women. There is scope for positive action measures, such as Advance HE's Aurora programme, to support the progression and success of women.
- Lack of welfare state policies supporting more equal participation in unpaid family work.
- Layers of duplicate equality reporting (for example the PSED and related Scottish Specific Duties, outcome agreements, GAPs, Athena SWAN applications, etc.) can reduce time and resource spent on developing and implementing activities, particularly more complex and intensive longitudinal project activity for GAPs.
- Where there is also a lack of organisational coherence and oversight of EDI and gender activity in an institution, this can easily lead to both duplication and compliance (rather than outcome) focused activity.

Lessons from gender representation in governance

Scotland has seen significant improvements as a sector in the representation of women on HEI governing bodies. Participation has improved from 28% in 2012 to 45% in 2017 (and 47% amongst appointed members). This progress has been facilitated by a sector level commitment through the iterative development of gender equality in the HE Code of Good Governance, the leadership and prioritisation of individual institutions, and political emphasis from Scottish Government. This has led to increased activity on gender equality and the development of targeted positive action measures across most institutions, and to improved gender representation. This experience has been replicated more broadly across the public sector, in public appointments (see e.g. the SG core skills framework for supporting positive action <http://www.appointed-for-scotland.org/how-to-apply/competency-based-applications/>). Positive action has led to women making up 43% of applicants and 59% of public appointments in Scotland in 2016 (from 31% and 39% in 2012, respectively).

While the pace of this change in governance and public appointments was made possible by the large number of qualified women available, the relative lack of 'pipeline' barriers, as well as the much shorter timescales involved in the terms of governing body members, the success should be heartening. Where political will, institutional capacity and evidence based approaches are combined, real progress can be made on gender equality.

Q7 Equality Challenge Unit (now Advance HE) held a consultation exercise in conjunction with the Young Academy Scotland, SFC and the Scottish Athena SWAN network in relation to the SFC's Gender Action Plan and staff equality and progression. The one key stakeholder identified not previously mentioned was the role of research councils/funders in influencing sector norms and expectations on gender equality, particularly in relation to normalising the offer and uptake of flexible working, job sharing and part time working.

Q8 Gender equality is increasingly being recognised as a priority in the sector, and initiatives are starting to make a difference. However, there is still inconsistency across the sector (some institutions have made much more progress than others) and within institutions (some departments/functions have seen more impact than others). While the pace of change and success is partially explained by resource (e.g. the clustering of a large number of Athena SWAN departmental awards within certain institutions), it illustrates the ongoing and longer term need to continue to focus on winning hearts and minds and continuing efforts to mainstream understanding and responsibility for gender equality across departments, institutions and the sector.

Education

Q9 While this is outside Advance HE's area of focus, it's important that any approach avoids a deficit model, where girls and young women are seen as lacking something, or the problem. A proactive, whole-school approach to developing STEM capital amongst all pupils would be welcome, alongside tackling sexism and stereotyping, including within the curriculum, language, policies, and school cultures.

Q10 A significant amount of investment, work and research has been undertaken in this area, specifically in relation to SFC's Gender Action Plan. It is important that recommendations and action build on and align with institutional activity here. This specific question has been explored in HEA's (now Advance HE) Whose Job is it Anyway report (<https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/whose-job-it-anyway>), which sets out 5 pillars for successful sector and institutional action

based on an analysis of institutional activity and relevant research. It includes a recommendation to move away from just looking at outreach and marketing activities, which we know aren't as effective as we'd like, to looking instead at the development of science capital and influencing the influencers. (See ASPIRES 2 research project

<https://www.kcl.ac.uk/sspp/departments/education/research/ASPIRES/Index.aspx>) The report highlights the importance not just of access initiatives, but also learning outcomes, retention, success and employability.

One notable recent example of good practice is UWS MSc in Career Guidance. They have focused on 'influencing the influencers' and redesigning the programme so that equality and diversity is at its heart, with a particular focus on gender equity. The programme leads are equipping future careers advisors with gender/EDI competence and with the skills to tackle gender inequity in their future careers (and the understanding that it *is* their job).

Cultural Change

Q11 Rising demand for a diverse workforce from employers would provide a strong incentive for HEIs and colleges to embed equality more holistically, and to develop not just diverse graduates, but graduates that value, expect and thrive in diverse contexts.

Q12 Based on the academic literature, evaluations and reviews of Athena SWAN and similar activities, and our experience supporting universities and colleges, gender equality for staff is effectively advanced in practice by the combination of:

- Meaningful engagement and commitment across institutions (mainstreaming) and particularly by leadership and senior management.
- Targeted initiatives, based on local evidence and tailored to a particular institutional or departmental context, assessed based on changes/improvements in outcomes such as representation, progression or success.
- The broad based adoption and uptake of flexible production and working arrangements and progression routes at a sector level.

Q13 It is imperative to require gender equality initiatives to impact and outcomes. Single quantitative indicators can lose meaning when used as sector or institutional level targets, and qualitative measures are important in understanding changes in gender equality. Advance HE's equality charters approach involves assessing outcomes in relation to the achievement of gender equality across a range of quantitative and qualitative priority measures, such as:

- Increased awareness of EDI initiatives within workplace.
- Increased participation within EDI initiatives.
- Increased satisfaction with workplace culture (including addressing gendered barriers)
- Improved rates of representation within decision making bodies including governance boards, committees and senior management teams.
- Increased rates of representation within senior academic posts such as Professor or Reader.
- Improved rates of progression throughout career pipeline.
- Improved pipeline trajectory at all grades.
- Reduced/improved pay gaps.

Crucially, these measures should represent how we expect culture change to happen, and what change will look like in the short, medium and longer term, so that we can assess if we are on track

to deliver longer term gender equality and that initiatives are working as expected (standardising the use of more formal evaluation tools and models, such as logic models or logframes, may be useful).