



Terms of Reference

For UK Athena Swan Review Panels

1. Purpose

- 1.1. To review Athena Swan award applications, agree outcomes and provide feedback to applicants in line with the criteria and processes of the UK Athena Swan Charter.

2. Convening

- 2.1. Athena Swan review panels will be convened dependent on applications received.
- 2.2. Panel members will be required to undertake individual assessment of applications, followed by attendance at a panel meeting. Panel meetings will normally be held virtually.
- 2.3. If, at the initial panel meeting, the panel identifies conditions or revisions for resubmission, revised applications will be reviewed through a process of Chair's action.

3. Composition

- 3.1. Panels are normally comprised of six individuals: five Reviewers and a Chair. Panel meetings will be quorate if four Reviewers and the Chair are present.
- 3.2. Panels are supported by an Advance HE staff member who does not take part in nor influence the panel's decision-making.
- 3.3. Panels reviewing applications from science, technology, engineering, mathematics and medicine (STEMM) or arts, humanities, social science, business and law (AHSSBL) disciplines include at least one Reviewer with STEMM or AHSSBL expertise as appropriate. Panels reviewing applications from professional, technical and operational (PTO) directorates include at least one Reviewer with PTO expertise.
- 3.4. Panels consist of at least one panel member with strong statistical analysis skills.
- 3.5. Panels are gender-balanced insofar as is possible.
- 3.6. Subject to approval by the Chair, observers may be permitted to attend panels but will not be invited to contribute to the discussion or allowed to influence the outcomes.

4. Panel roles

- 4.1. Panel members will be required to take part in a minimum of four Athena Swan review panels per year.¹

¹ The parameters of panel workload and allocation will be defined in 2021, once further progress has been made with the transformation of other Athena Swan processes.

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- 4.2. Panel members will be appointed by the Athena Swan Governance Committee for a fixed term of three years.²
- 4.3. All panel members will be subject to data protection agreements and will be required to respect the confidentiality of applications and panel discussions.
- 4.4. All panel members will be required to attend formal training upon appointment, and to attend yearly standardisation training to enable consistency of approach and decision-making.
- 4.5. The Panel Chair is responsible for:
 - 4.5.1. Working with the Advance HE staff member to agree the agenda for the panel meeting and to nominate two Reviewers to lead the discussion of each application.
 - 4.5.2. Reviewing the independent assessments of the Reviewers prior to the panel meeting to identify any outliers.
 - 4.5.3. Chairing the panel meeting, working with the Advance HE staff member to ensure effective management of the meeting and review discussions in order to facilitate collective decision-making.
 - 4.5.4. Orchestrate the discussion of each application at the meeting, inviting the leads to make their comments and ensuring that all panel members have the opportunity to express their views openly before a decision is made.
 - 4.5.5. Ensuring that outcomes are consistent with the Athena Swan award criteria.
 - 4.5.6. Ensuring that outcomes and key points of feedback are agreed and recorded for each application, identifying any conditions or minor revisions for re-submission.
 - 4.5.7. Working with the Advance HE staff member to record and communicate panel outcomes within 10 working days, ensuring that feedback is clear, appropriately framed and aligned with criteria.
 - 4.5.8. Escalating to Advance HE any concerns or issues with consistency, Reviewer behaviour or panel processes.
- 4.6. An honorarium payment of £200 per panel is available to Panel Chairs.
- 4.7. Panel Chairs will be required to attend a yearly meeting to share good practice, receive updates on procedures and processes, and identify any emerging issues for consideration by the Athena Swan Governance Committee (ASGC).

² In 2021, some appointments may be made to a two- or four-year term to allow a staggered rotation of the first group of panel members.

4.8. Reviewers are responsible for:

- 4.8.1. Reviewing all applications which have been assigned to the panel in line with the criteria and processes of the Athena Swan Charter.
- 4.8.2. Returning individual feedback on each application to Advance HE in advance of the panel meeting.
- 4.8.3. Leading the discussion on a sub-set of applications as directed by the Panel Chair, and contributing to the discussion of other applications with the goal of reaching collective decisions.
- 4.8.4. Advising the Panel Chair and Advance HE staff member on appropriate feedback to applicants, including key conditions or minor revisions for resubmission as necessary.
- 4.8.5. Escalating to the Panel Chair any concerns or issues with consistency, Reviewer behaviour or panel processes.

4.9. An honorarium payment of £150 per panel is available to Reviewers.

5. Person specifications

Panel Chairs will be able to demonstrate:

- + Experience of chairing decision-making panels or committees within the institution or externally (e.g. funding bodies, professional bodies, school governing bodies, third sector etc.).
- + Understanding of gender equality in the context of the higher education and research sector.
- + Understanding of the context and structures of higher education institutions and/or research institutes, including (but not limited to) how it relates to culture, policy-making and implementation, and career development and progression structures for academic and/or PTO staff.
- + Experience of EDI work in a department, school/faculty or professional directorate, or at institutional level.
- + Experience of the Athena Swan cycle is desirable.
- + Strong analytical skills and the ability to lead considered, evidence-based debate.
- + Strong verbal and written communication skills.
- + Strong interpersonal skills and the highest level of professional integrity.

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Reviewers will be able to demonstrate:

- + Understanding of gender equality in the context of the higher education and research sector.
- + Understanding of the context and structures of higher education institutions and research institutes, including (but not limited to) how it relates to culture, policy-making and implementation, and career development and progression structures for academic and/or PTO staff.
- + Experience of EDI work in a department, school/faculty or professional directorate, or at institutional level.
- + Experience of contributing to a successful Athena Swan institutional or departmental application.
- + Experience of participating in decision-making panels or committees.
- + Strong analytical skills and ability to engage in considered, evidence-based debate.
- + Statistical analysis skills and experience are desirable.
- + Strong verbal and written communication skills.
- + Highest level of professional integrity.

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