Transformed Athena Swan applications – collated section 1.4 extracts

Table of Contents
University-level application ........................................................................................................1
Department-level application (Social Sciences) ........................................................................2
Department-level application (Sciences) ..................................................................................3

The extracts below are from recent transformed Charter applications. They have been reproduced verbatim and anonymised so that they are not identifiable. The extracts are illustrative of different approaches, at University and departmental levels, to developing, evaluating and revising policies.

University-level application

1.4 Development, evaluation, and effectiveness of policies

Please describe the processes in place for developing, evaluating and revising university policies.

We have a suite of policies to promote good management, equality and family friendly ways of working.

In 2017 an EIA (Equality Impact Assessment) toolkit was developed and subsequently applied to key processes and policies, which where necessary, were adapted as a result. A consultative approach with EIAs at the heart is now formally embedded in our overarching institutional Policy Management Framework as a way of strengthening our policies to support an inclusive culture. All new or updated policies go to MC for approval.

To support policy development and the evaluation of their effectiveness, staff and student networks are routinely consulted. To enable the wider LSTM community to contribute their views, a dedicated intranet page lists open consultations, committee positions and other opportunities to get involved in policy development/evaluation and monthly SSF meetings (remote or in-person with recording shared) enable anonymous/named Q&A.

To review the impact of policies on specific equality groups, data (such as staff composition, recruitment and progression) is analysed and published via our annual equality report. The staff survey and pulse surveys also support the monitoring of policies (analysed by gender and other protected characteristics, career stage and job-family). HR casework and feedback from line managers is also taken into consideration.

Other mechanisms to help evaluate policies and their impact include specific working groups and committees, such as:
• the SAT plays a key role in assessing the gendered (and intersectional) impact of key policies as part of the reporting and action planning process;
• bullying, harassment, and discrimination policies are assessed by the Strategic Safeguarding Committee which considers aggregated/anonymised data from the Freedom-to-Speak-Up portal the recently established Race Equality Advisory Panel will also play a role in evaluating policy impact.

There is also ongoing engagement with staff/students via: Town Hall meetings; Staff Forum; Academic Forum; and Professional Staff Forum; Departmental meetings. Where lived experience consultation is challenging (for example, to develop policies that support trans or non-binary staff and students), external expertise will be utilised.

**Department-level application (Social Sciences)**

1.4 Development, evaluation, and effectiveness of policies

*Please provide the processes in place for developing, evaluating and revising departmental policies (where relevant), and for evaluating the implementation of institutional policies.*

Departmental policy originates primarily from Department staff and committees, the Faculty or wider University.

Departmentally, policy can be developed by individual staff, committees, the Departmental Manager (DM) or Head of Department (HoD). Most commonly, policy originates within committee structures, whereby committee members identify policy gaps. Usually the relevant Director will take the lead in developing proposals, and consulting with committee members. Once approved at committee level, proposals are tabled at Executive Committee (EC), with either the relevant Director, or the responsible staff member leading discussion. At this stage the Director of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) provides specific feedback in relation to EDI priorities, but there is a shared responsibility amongst EC members for raising concerns. These discussions can result either in a request for further revisions to the new policy (with the possible requirement that it needs to be re-tabled to the EC), or sign-off. The EC decides whether to table the paper at the Departmental meeting as an item for discussion (with a view to allowing further amendments) or as a point of information (for awareness raising with staff). At this point any actions to facilitate implementation are identified, and responsibility is given to the appropriate staff member to enact the new policy. Any new practice or policy is then reported to the wider University through Faculty and University level committees, or by the HoD or DM, helping to share best practice.

At the Faculty and University level, policies can originate from committees, directors or senior leaders beyond the Department. Policies formulated at this level are disseminated through different routes. First, policies can be promoted through Faculty Committee structures - whereby Departmental Directors are informed about new policies and procedures. Second, new policies can be communicated to the DM or HoD and either implemented or cascaded to staff by email or at Departmental meetings. Finally, new
policy can be directly communicated to staff - often through a weekly all staff email. Faculty and University policies are often developed via University committee structures, or following programmes of open consultation and staff and trade union engagement.

A number of key policies, in areas such as Workload Allocation Management (WAM), study leave and health and safety, are reviewed annually to ensure procedures and practices are up to date and in line with University guidance. Key consultation exercises - such as the annual staff survey - are used to identify areas of concern and can lead to policy review. Similarly, committees help identify concerns with existing policies and can trigger review. These practices notwithstanding, the Department has no systematic and embedded review process through which to evaluate the success of all its policies. In part this is because, whilst the majority of policies are stored centrally on the Department’s shared drive, this resource is not comprehensive. There is accordingly a need to consolidate a record of all Departmental policies and to more clearly task Directors or other appropriate staff to conduct regular review of policies to ensure they are fit for purpose (Action point 3).

Feedback on University level policies is done by the HoD who sits on Faculty Executive Board (FEB) and provides insight into the implementation of policies. Other avenues for feedback are afforded by standing or ad-hoc University committees where staff can raise concerns and offer feedback. Occasionally feedback is provided via direct contact between Departmental and University staff. For example, our Student Inclusion Committee chair recently contacted the University’s Director of Student Support Services to provide feedback on student record procedures - raising the need to accommodate trans students in changing their name on their student record.

**Department-level application (Sciences)**

**1.4 Development, evaluation, and effectiveness of policies**

*Please provide the processes in place for developing, evaluating and revising departmental policies (where relevant), and for evaluating the implementation of institutional policies.*

Within the Department the EDI Committee sends out an annual culture survey. This is used to inform the Operations Committees of staff concerns or ideas on how the environment or policies within the Department could be improved and if new approaches should be implemented. The Head of Department runs a Departmental meeting every 2 months with the entire staff body to engage in open conversation as to success, challenges, progress and anything else to do with Departmental life. In these meetings new policies would also be discussed in an open dialog with input from all levels and job families sought. Additional to this, the EDI Committee has developed a confidential reporting mechanism which allows staff who do not feel comfortable to share their opinions, which will then be passed onto the relevant decision maker for consideration.

In terms of decisions which affect the student body, the Department has three separate Student Staff Liaison Committees (SSLCs) which are forums to allow the student body to
have their say via their Class Representatives and give input into any aspect of student life from course evaluation and assessment schedule to student engagement and social events. These three SSLCs cover undergraduate, postgraduate taught and postgraduate research students. SSLC used to run once per term, but since the pandemic these have become more regular with monthly meetings. There is no plan to reduce this frequency once in person learning fully resumes. Aside from SSLC, any new (or change in) policy which relates to students or teaching is also scrutinised at Teaching Committee.

At University level, staff are requested to fill in an annual confidential survey aligning with the University’s values. Here staff have the option to raise any ideas, concerns or suggestions to help update or implement changes throughout the Institution. Where new policies are being developed, staff are invited to numerous “Town Hall” meetings for input and invited to give feedback once policies have been implemented.