

Statement reaffirming commitment to Athena Swan.

At Queen Mary we are committed to creating a truly inclusive environment and one of our tools for achieving this is the [Athena Swan framework](#), a gender equality charter mark widely recognised across Higher Education.

Many colleagues may have already learnt that following the Government's publication of [Reducing bureaucratic burden in research, innovation and higher education](#) in September, the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) announced that they will [no longer require academic partners to hold a Silver Award of the Athena Swan Charter](#). NIHR acknowledged that "after nine years, the positive impact of Athena Swan is clear, and we believe that use of the charter has led to the greater embedding of gender equality practice" and that moving forward they would be focusing on "ensuring applicants provide evidence of their broader commitment to the principles of gender equality rather than on compliance with a specific standard."

This change predominantly affects colleagues in SMD, who have already reaffirmed their commitment to continue to advance their Athena Swan work.

'I recognise how vital it is that we forge ahead with the essential objectives that underpin the Faculty's Athena Swan action plan. We will do our utmost to deliver on all the commitments that we have undertaken to ensure that we renew our Athena Swan Silver charter mark for both Medicine and Dentistry' - Steve Thornton, Vice-Principal (Health)

The majority of our award holding Schools and none of those currently working on first time applications are not subject to Athena Swan requirements for funding eligibility.

As a University we want to reiterate our support and commitment to engaging with Athena Swan and [its principles](#), not because it may provide access to funding but because it is the right thing to do. It is also a mechanism that can be employed to help us achieve our aim of being the most inclusive university of its kind, anywhere ([2030 Strategy](#)).

At an institutional level the Gender Equality Self-Assessment Team (GESAT) and its working groups continue to address gender inequalities and are currently working towards our institutional silver renewal application, due in November 2021. At local levels we will continue to support School Athena Swan and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) work through colleagues in the EDI team.

This said, we strongly support Advance HE's developmental work to transform the Charter following an [independent review in 2019](#), particularly in relation to making the process simpler and less burdensome, as well as more transparent and consistent. As a University we are engaging with the transformation process through attending Advance HE Athena Swan events (e.g. Enhancing Practice Events), responding to the consultation survey (July 2020), and through the Russell Group Athena Swan Practitioner Working Group which our EDI Manager (Gender) co-chairs.

Significant progress has been made since signing up to the Charter. However, since we signed up to the Charter much work has already undertaken but until we have embedded intersectional gender equality across Queen Mary, our Athena Swan work is not complete.

Sheila Gupta, Chair of the Gender Equality Self-Assessment Team, and the Gender Equality Self-Assessment Team

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