

Brunel University, London, College of Health, Medicine, and Life sciences, Department of Life Sciences

Athena Swan Action Plan 2022

No	Rationale	Objective	Actions	Dates	Coordinator	Success Measure
1.0 Embed Athena Swan in our teaching activities and student life						
1.1	There is a need to enhance student awareness of the goals of Athena Swan across our interaction with students to promote opportunities available in STEMM to students of all genders.	To involve students in producing gender equality material as part of their training and education.	1.1. In consultation with teaching staff and students within the 4 Divisions, topics on gender equality in scientific and academic career and intersectionality to be embedded in the diagnostic essays, reflective coursework, study skills, qualitative research skills teaching, and portfolios for new students. Discuss lessons learned from student partnership.	Sep 2023 and annually thereafter	Department Director of Education	Ability to assess and promote student understanding and reflection on Athena Swan objectives as they apply to their discipline and experience at Brunel. Feedback from students in tutoring sessions indicates an increase in partnership of students and the number of students who find this useful. Incorporate new actions according to the feedback received.
1.2		To use technology and improve awareness of Students about EDI matters.	1.2. To host and promote materials on inclusive teaching and learning platform (Brightspace, virtual learning environment) to include information about incorporating Athena Swan.	Dec 2023-Mar 2024	Associate Dean for EDI	Trends in Brightspace visits over the next 3 years. Trends in partnership with students discussed with students.

1.3.	Low engagement of students with EDI activities.	To boost student active participation with Athena Swan.	1.3. Involve representatives from Student Union in presentations and organisation of IWD events annually.	Mar 2023 and annually thereafter	SAT public engagement team	Students contribute to organisation of IWD events held annually.
1.4		To raise profile of Athena Swan and gender equality agenda among students.	1.4. Cocreate with students a biannual Athena Swan Departmental online newsletter targeted to students.	April 2023 and biannually thereafter	Divisional Leads to appoint student and staff representative from their Divisions to contribute to the Newsletter team in SAT.	A Newsletter team formed including a student and member of staff from each of the 4 Divisions. Biannual Newsletter co-created.
2.0 Support staff to boost their research profile in response to long-term effect of COVID on research						
2.1.	Recent focus groups have shown that barriers exist for women in their research activities including caring responsibilities and self-confidence.	Support researchers to secure research income through mock interviews, and organising grant writing sessions for junior researcher, and postdocs.	2.1. Together with researchers, RSDO, and academics, co-create resources that are needed by staff to improve success of their funding and to support research and development on academic practice.	Jan 2024	SAT, RSDO	Resources co-created, workshops to be organised for research staff delivering the resources. Improved gender balance in research income. Research income of men and women to be within 5% range.
2.2.	Research proposals from female staff was reduced more than male staff and	To support staff with their research activity post-pandemic.	2.2. Implement proactive approaches within PDR sessions to identify staff whose research has been	Feb 2023	HoD, Divisional Leads	Eligible staff to be provided opportunity to use research breaks (e.g., for a duration of a term) where the staff member could

	research income of men was reduced more than women during the pandemic.		negatively affected more than others in the Department and are at high risk of generating a research gap in their CVs.			focus on research with reduced teaching and admin roles. Trail short intensive phases throughout the year in response to specific grant calls with limited deadlines. Staff to be excused from all duties apart from teaching to focus on the call.
2.3.	58% of staff (55% women and 66% men) who have a mentor as part of the mentoring scheme were satisfied with the mentorship.	To review our procedures for training and allocating mentors.	2.4. Improve effectiveness of mentorship scheme and further introduce a more specific mentorship scheme 'the research mentorship scheme' to all academic staff with research responsibilities.	Oct 2026	Department Director of Research	Research mentoring scheme established. Expectations in a mentor-mentee relationship clarified for both mentors and mentees. All mentors and mentees meet at least annually prior to PDR sessions. Discussions fed into PDR session by the mentee.
3.0. Gender balance career progression for all staff						
3.1.	Feedback received from academics on education route indicates that they need dedicated resources and opportunities to be able to complete a successful promotion application.	Provide route-specific support in promotion of academics on Academic Education route.	3.1. Organise workshops to inform staff about promotion requirements and learn from best practices.	Nov 2023 and annually thereafter	HR Business Partner/SAT Chair	Workshops held and staff queries addressed. Promotion of men and women in Academic Education route within 5% range.
3.2.	Slightly longer than average number of years to promotion	Improve equality in the number of years in waiting to	3.2. To put processes in place to identify (through the PDR process) the staff who	Feb 2023	HoD, Divisional Leads	At least two eligible staff identified per year. 1-to-1 extra sessions with in-house experts in areas of the promotion criteria that

	for women was identified.	be promoted to the next level.	have spent more than the average number of years to be promoted.			require more activity held to support their performance in areas of the promotion criteria. Opportunities and support provided to reach the promotion criteria.
3.3	Assessment shows a higher proportion of men believe they receive opportunities to sit on external committees than women.	To proactively support staff to be given opportunities for external engagement and sitting on committees .	3.3. Organise workshops for staff and provide insight on ways to receive opportunities to sit on external committees.	April 2024 and annually thereafter as part of the College Education Day	SAT, HoD	Workshop organised and >70% of attendees have improved understanding of what they could do to increase their chances of sitting on external committees.
3.4.	There is a gender difference in satisfaction rate of the PDR processes.	Improve PDR processes to support staff in all levels and job categories.	3.4. Consult staff from all levels to identify methods that would effectively improve the PDR processes. Find out why women are less satisfied with the PDR process.	Dec 2023	SAT survey team	Staff consulted and the recommendations discussed at DMB and fed into the PDR process.
3.5	There have been changes in post-pandemic policies related to flexible working.	To monitor how the new policy works for professional staff.	3.5. Consult professional members of staff to find out if the new flexible working policies are equally implemented.	Dec 2024	SAT	Staff consulted. Any gender gap in the new flexible working policies reported to DMB for revision or developing policies towards gender balance.
3.6	PGR students highlighted childcare needs, high workload and low pay as a reason	To inspire PGR students to find reasons to stay in academia.	3.6. Twice a year invite PGR students to a discussion session with social event and lunch by a female role model who has combined	Mar 2025	Department Director of PGR	Discussion forum organised. Discussions recorded and analysed. In consultation with HoD, necessary actions incorporated into the action plan.

	to move out of academia.		caregiving responsibilities with academic work .			
4.0 Improving work and education prospect for staff and students with cross sectional differences						
4.1	During the pandemic, attainment difference between black and white students increased from 0.7% to 4.5% after a previous drop to 0.2% in 2019.	Address the rise in awarding gap between black and white students observed during COVID.	Consult with students and implement solutions within the Awarding Gap project for the factors involved. Given the timing of this change with the pandemic, is there an impact of COVID (health and wellbeing, bereavement, etc.)? Have black men and women's experiences been similar?	Jan 2025	Associate Dean EDI, SAT, Leader of the Awarding Gap Project	Consultation performed results fed into the Awarding Gap Project.
4.2	Improved representation of black women in SHES courses.	Identify and provide resources for black women in SHES might need to maintain similar attainment as other ethnic groups as there is awarding gap between black and white students.	Consult SHES female students to co-create marketing material that attracts female students in SHES.	Mar 2026	SHES Division Lead to appoint a member of staff	Consultation to be performed with SHES female SHES. Material to be co-created and tested for their attractiveness for SHES female students of all ethnic backgrounds. Students of all backgrounds find the material equally attractive (within a range of ±5%).

4.3	To use the opportunity of collaboration with the strong LGBT staff network at Brunel.	Continue to grow the relationship between Athena Swan and LGBT staff network.	To work on common grounds and identify ways to consult LGBT+ staff to improve their career perspective. Report the findings to senior management and incorporate recommendations into departmental action plan.	Jan 2026	SAT, Associate Dean EDI, HoD	Meetings with LGBT staff network established, and collaboration started – e.g. Pride in STEM day and attendance at Pride in London. Report presented to SAT and DMB, new actions developed and incorporated into the action plan.
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Acronyms

AP	Action Plan
AS	Athena Swan
ASAP	As soon as possible
ASRC	Athena Swan Review Committee
ASWP	Athena Swan Writing Panel
BEEC	Brunel Educational Excellence Centre
BME	Black and Minority Ethnic
CHMLS	College of Health, Medicine, and Life Sciences
CMB	College Management Board
DLS	Department of Life Sciences
DMB	Department Management Board
EDI	Equality and Diversity
EO&HR	Equal Opportunities & Human Resources
FT	Full-time
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
HELIX	Higher Education Linked Information Exchange
HELIX	Higher Education Linked Information Exchange
HoD	Head of Department
HR	Human Resources
HR BP	Policy and Projects
KIT	Keeping-in-touch days
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender
LS	Life Sciences
PDR	Personal Development Review
PGR	Post-graduate research
PGT	Post-graduate taught
PT	Part-time
RDA	Research Development Advisor
REAPs	Recruitment, Extension and Adjustment Process
RSDO	Research Support and Development Office
SAT	Self-Assessment Team
SHES	Sport, Health and Exercise Sciences
SL	Senior Lecturer

STEMM	Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, and Medicine
UG	Undergraduate