School of Politics, Economics and International Relations Athena SWAN and Gender Equality Action Plan 2020-2026

University of Reading

November 2021

This plan represents an updated version of the Action Plan submitted as part of our Athena SWAN Bronze Award. Because the duration of the award exceeded our submitted plan by one year, this version includes amended or extended timelines for certain actions. Where changes were made, this was done in consultation with and by agreement of the SPEIR Diversity and Inclusion Committee.

A note on Prioritisation and timelines:

Prioritisation of the plan has considered the views of staff and students who were asked to assign priority to each action (1 = lowest, 5 = highest) via a Google form. A draft version was circulated to staff and students in early November 2020 with a request to rank actions in terms of priority (1-5, 5 being highest priority). Responses were received from 28 students (46% F, 36% M and 18% PNS) and 30 staff (33% F, 33% M, 33% PNS). Where there was clear consensus on high priority, these actions have been ranked as HIGH priority and will be completed soon as possible. Other actions with more mixed response may still be regarded as high priority but may be given longer timescales for completion. Actions where we need several years data to examine impact or explore the issue may be given MEDIUM or LOWER priority overall but started sooner. Actions which we believe are important but for resource or other reasons we do not believe are currently achievable in the short term may have been assigned LOWER priority for this reason. As other more urgent actions are completed, we anticipate freeing resource to move on to these actions.

Areas where **ongoing monitoring and scrutiny of data** are required are not included here – the Diversity and Inclusion Committee will oversee an annual programme of data review throughout the action plan period.

Athena SWAN and Gender Equality Action Plan 2020-2026								
Ref.	Planned action	Self-assessment section ref.	Rationale	Key milestones /outputs	Timescale	Lead responsibility and enablers	Success measure	PRIORITY
**Theme 1 Communication of gender equality aims, Athena SWAN principles and activities, policies and opportunities**								
C1	Create a School EDI website as a central place for information where policies and practices are easy to find, including information and guidance for staff and managers around maternity and parental leave practices	3(ii), throughout 5.3, 5.5iii, 5.5v	Inconsistency in awareness, understanding and local implementation of gender equality actions and related policies and guidance.	Project leader appointed

Campus Jobs worker recruited.

Website exists | January 2021 - September 2021 (allowing for Campus Jobs work over summer 2021) | **D&I Lead** to co-ordinate content provision to **project lead** who will be given time in the workload model to complete this work | Website in place and people are aware of where to find guidance when surveyed in 2022 and 2024.

More staff and students are aware of a range | HIGH |

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						and a **Campus Jobs** worker to build the site. **Executive Administration Manager** to update.	of gender equality policies (60% in 2022 and 80% in 2024 surveys)	
C2	Use a range of online communications (e.g. dedicated emails from HoS, HOD, inclusion in regular newsletters, websites, staff meetings etc) of gender equality policies and SAT activities and evaluate effectiveness where possible	3(ii), 5.3(iv)	Less than 30% of students and female staff and less than 42% of male staff feel they are sometimes or always kept informed on gender equality matters	Results of awareness of / engagement with different measures such as blogs, emails, webinars, etc Regular series of communications	November 2020 and ongoing thereafter	**School Executive Admin** to monitor. **Diversity and Inclusion Committee** to oversee and plan any comms campaigns	80% of staff and students feel that they are sometimes or always kept informed on gender equality matters by 2024 survey (60% in 2022)	MEDIUM
C3	Ensure achievements and completion of items from the action plan are communicated and celebrated via Department and whole School communication channels.	3(ii), 5.3(iv)	As above	Achievements are recorded in emails and staff meeting minutes and a list of action items kept on the EDI website	November 2020 and ongoing thereafter	**HoS/HOD** for celebration emails – as informed by Diversity and Inclusion Committee	Staff and students outside the D&I committee are able to articulate Athena SWAN achievements in focus groups in 2024	LOWER
C4	i) Communication of pastoral care services for PGR students on website ii) One-off session at the start of the Autumn Term for PGRs new to UoR similar to that offered to UGs	5.1iv	PGR students feel that pastoral care is focussed on UGs. They recall being given information about support at registration but	Links to support for PGR students both at School and University level clearly on website. Dates for PGR meetings in place,	Website as above C1 Meetings annually starting March 2021	**PGR Director** / website builder **Executive Support Officer**	More than 75% of PGR students are aware that they can find out about support through the EDI website when surveyed in 2022 and 2024.	HIGH

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	iii) Yearly meetings with PGR Director		struggle to recall or access it later	attendance monitored.		**PGR Director**	PGR focus groups in 2024 discuss feeling supported in terms of career and pastoral development.	
				Theme 2 Key Career Points				
K1	i) Work with central HR to use positive action wording of adverts where appropriate to encourage applications from women and unrepresented groups. ii) Use gender neutral language, include information on flexible working and Athena SWAN activities in further particulars and reduce the number of essential criteria in order to encourage more applications from women.	5.1(i)	We get too few applications for academic positions from women. Only 38% of staff in PIR feel we do enough to encourage all genders to apply for posts	Agreement reached with HR SPEIR template available for adverts and further particulars emphasising flexible working, parental leave arrangements and Athena SWAN activities.	Start with applications in 2021 as they arise. Data on applications checked in 2022 and 2024.	**School Executive Administrator / HoS**	Increase in applications from women for academic posts to 40% by 2025 (baseline ~23%) Increase in staff survey of those who feel we do enough to 80% by 2024 survey (baseline 38% PIR, 72% ECON)	MEDIUM
K2	i) Write up "SPEIR recruitment practice" that is currently verbally handed down from HoDs and HoSs and ensure that it includes reference to gender diversity and considerations around selection panels and short-lists, necessary recruitment and selection training including unconscious bias training.	5.1(i)	See K1 above. Women lost from the system at listing and appointment stage in some years. Mixed views on the consistency, transparency and	Recruitment guidance exists and is being circulated. Recruitment update is sent after next recruitment round.	March 2021 On recruitment cycles	**HoS** School Executive Administrator HR Partner D&I Lead Chairs of recruitment panels.	Women are appointed consistently at rates appropriate to their representation in applications.	MEDIUM

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	This to then be circulated ahead of each recruitment round. ii) After each recruitment round, a "recruitment update" will be sent to staff giving information on gender of applicants, those long and short-listed, and the panel members.		fairness of long-shortlisting etc from staff survey and focus group.					
K3	i) Introduce discussion of research as part of the School's new staff induction day in September (include role of mentors) ii) Introduce role of mentors iii) Explain benefits of attending university induction	5.1(ii)	Current School induction is unbalanced with little emphasis on research. Staff feel relatively unsupported in general around research grant development etc	Research workshop / session introduced to induction schedule for academics	From September 2021 and ongoing	**Research Directors** and Division leads School Administrative Support	100% of new staff attend research induction and give feedback that they understand research environment when session is evaluated. Contributes to an increase in response to question "dept provides sufficient support and encouragement for grant applications (from baseline 49% to 75% in 2024 survey – note this support isn't	LOWER

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							relevant to TI staff, hence 75% target)		
K4	Provide an additional trained member of senior staff to accept personal circumstances disclosures affecting promotion [possibly School D&I Lead] – local enhancement to University Process.	5.1(iii)	Staff expressed concern over personal titles treatment in promotion – hesitating to declare to HoS who ordinarily is their line manager	Role description completed. Position filled	January 2021 promotion submissions	**Head of School**	Staff express feeling confident and secure when declaring personal circumstances is necessary in focus groups held by next SAT		MEDIUM
K5	Enhance existing promotion mentoring by encouraging recently promoted staff to provide cross-School mentorship for junior staff considering applying for promotion. New mentors will be provided with training and support by existing mentors, and mentoring activity will be recorded with a view to including it in the workload model when it is next reviewed	5.1(iii)	Good success for women in promotion in PIR, less success in ECON. Existing senior mentors do not always have most relevant experience e.g. being promoted after career breaks etc.	Mentoring pairs exist.	From 2021/22 promotion cycle	**School Promotions Committee**	Continued (PIR) and enhanced (ECON) success in promotion for women. 80% success rate for men and women across the School averaged across the 5 years of the action plan.		LOWER
K6	Encourage uptake of training, particularly by men and particularly EDI training, by adding conversations into induction and mentoring guidance documents and introduce statement of	5.3(i)	Uptake of training is low and gendered with women engaging with more sessions.	Guidance for conversations about training in probation and PDR situations exists on the website and is circulated to reviewers and HoDs	From October 2021	**HoD** for introduction into PDRs	Increase in men taking EDI training such that overall representation matches departmental academic representation.		MEDIUM

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	learning from training into PDRS						(baseline only 25% of those doing EDI training are men)	
K7	Introduce a formal mentoring scheme and broader mentoring culture by: - Expanding mentoring availability to all staff; -Using specialist and peer mentors from SPEIR and elsewhere for e.g. maternity leave returners; -Introducing discussion of mentoring into PDRs, and development reviewers around parental leave; -Provide support and guidance to mentors around expectations for research mentoring (via external coaching/mentoring training if necessary)	5.3(ii-iii)	Focus group feels mentorship is lacking for mid-career roles and around taking on admin or leadership tasks. PDR uptake and effectiveness is only partial.	Scheme designed, mentors trained. Mentoring scheme in place with guidance documents available for mentors and mentees. Mentorship being discussed in PDRs and appraisals. Partnerships operating.	Scheme to be in place in 2022/23 academic year.	**HoS and HoDs** w/ School Executive Administrator	Scale and effectiveness of mentoring is being captured. Evaluation survey of mentoring partnerships provides case studies of benef Increased applications and enthusiasm for administrative roles.	HIGH
K8	Monitor SPEIR PDR completion and track effect of recent changes through staff surveys	5.3(ii)	Current survey question doesn't allow us to establish the main issues with PDRs	Questions that allow us to establish this	2022 and 2024	School Executive Assistant SAT	Records of PDR take-up consistently available. 100% take up of PDRs and more than 80% of all staff view them as being useful (no gender difference) by 2024	LOWER

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K9	i) Develop and introduce role descriptions for ALL administrative roles to improve recruitment, handover and allocation in workload model. (Some already exist in SPIER for School roles, module convenor and programme director – others exist in other Schools within UoR) ii) Openly advertise School roles such as HoD, SDTL, Diversity and Inclusion Champion	5.3(iii), 5.6(iii)	Staff report lack of handover means roles more onerous than necessary. HoDs in particular feel lack of support. Some staff in focus groups feel opportunities that would be valuable for personal development and promotion are not allocated fairly and that certain roles always go to staff of one gender.	Role descriptions exist for those roles where they are currently missing. Workload allocation model is updated to include improved assessments of time commitment for each role. Opportunities advertised. Process becomes part of business as usual	By October 2021 By October 2021 From October 2021 From October 2022	**HoDs** oversight with support from **School Executive Administrator**. All staff with administrative roles to help draft the descriptions and estimate times.	Role descriptions being used in transparent process for allocating roles. Range of staff apply for roles (compared to current situation where either no-one applies, or people are not aware of opportunities). Gender balance in role holders over time, and diversity in gender holding each type of role (teaching, research, other). Focus groups report feeling supported in these roles and that they are less time intensive.	HIGH
K10	Celebrate research grant successes, particularly those of women.	5.3(v)	Need to raise profile of research and researchers in the School.	Emails, social media, website updates, research newsletter	Already begun – research division newsletter in autumn	HoS, HoDs, RDs	Increase in response to question "dept provides sufficient support and encouragement	LOWER

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			Provide role models to students		2020, email to ECON from HoD.		for grant applications (baseline 49% to 60% in 2024).	
K11	Clarify and openly discuss the use of: -existing formal schemes (automatic 1 "light term" in every 9 in PIR) that provide teaching and admin relief to facilitate preparation of grant applications and completion of projects; -requests for flexibility in admin and teaching that are granted by HoDs e.g. concentrating teaching in 1-term etc.	5.3(v)	Support for research grant preparation is inconsistent and a mixture of formal and informal schemes which can result in perceived (or real) bias.	Schemes and mechanisms publicised in research meetings and handbooks.	Early 2021	**Research Directors** and HoDs	Increase in response to question "dept provides sufficient support and encouragement for grant applications (from baseline 49% to 75% in 2024).	MEDIUM
K12	Research Director or senior staff member with appropriate expertise to meet with all those who have unsuccessful grant applications to offer feedback and plan next steps	5.1(v)	Staff feel unsupported when they have unsuccessful applications	Meetings documented as happening.	From Jan 2021	**Research Director**	Increase in response around useful feedback on unsuccessful applications (baseline 35% ECON, 24% PIR to 60% in each by 2024)	LOWER
Theme 3 Securing the talent pipeline								
P1	Outreach to girls in schools (in person or face-to-face) by ECON staff and students emphasises policy and applied topics	4.1(iii)	Need to increase number of applications from girls to study ECON – PGT topics	Range of outreach activities delivered with policy and applied topics emphasis.	Ongoing	**Admissions Tutor**	Increase in interest in subject and study of economics by girls as a result of	LOWER (due to Covid-restriction s)

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			in these areas attract women	Evaluation of change in interest in ECON			intervention measured by before and after survey.	
P2	Analyse recruitment data and gender gap in an intersectional framework including ethnicity and socio-economic background and develop actions to remove inequalities found	4.1(iii)	Gender differences in studying economics depend on socio-economic background and ethnicity. We also want to support the discipline in general to increase the diversity of those studying economics. Links also to widening participation and access objectives and race equality review work.	Report on data analysis and recommendations for actions to BoS and DIC Action plan in place	Determination of baseline as soon as appropriate data becomes available from central university. Action plan to be in place no later than 2025	**Diversity and Inclusion Committee** and Boards of Studies.	Determination of baseline gender and ethnicity gaps as a function of socio-economic background. Subsequently a reduction in gaps OR dependence on Socio-economic background	HIGH
P3	i) Ensure women role models showcased on PIR open days ii) Learn from ECON in terms of conversion (possibly using pre-recorded mini-lectures to avoid overburdening female staff)	4.1(iii)	Drop in representation of women from applications to acceptance and enrolment in PIR	Women feature in open day events. Record of learning interactions between ECON and PIR recruitment teams and guidance produced around best practice.	From 2021 From 2021	**PIR admission tutors** ECON admissions tutors	Guidance for UG recruitment exists. Female applicants to PIR programmes (and ECON programmes) receive offers, accept and enrol	MEDIUM

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				Analysis of data alongside interventions	2024	SAT for next Athena application	in proportion to (or in excess of) F representation in applicants)	
P4	i) Continue with and monitor engagement by gender with and impact of formal sessions introducing UGs to PG study ii) Complete a survey of undergraduates around motivation to study at PG level at Reading and elsewhere.	5.3(iv)	More male UGs stay at Reading for PGR study than women.	Annual programme of interventions including: Group and individual emails, Introductory and taster sessions, Q&A Understanding of why different students choose to study at Reading or elsewhere for PGT and PGR.	2020 2023-2024 (in a post Covid world)	**PGT Directors** and Part 3 Module conveners	Eradication of gender gap between undergraduates staying on to PGT and PGR courses at Reading.	MEDIUM
P5	Add discussion of contribution to outreach aimed at improving pipeline and raising profile of SPEIR to staff PDR suggested topics of conversation (local enhancement to central process). Record outreach activity participation.	5.6(viii)	Focus group feel that outreach and similar "voluntary" tasks tend to fall to the same people all the time. These tasks count towards citizenship for promotion.	Outreach being discussed in PDRs.	2021	**HoDs**	Wider range of people involved in outreach activities including to schools and open days as well as media. Citizenship cases for promotion stronger.	LOWER
P6	Develop possible options for increasing applications from women to PGR programmes considering relative success	4.1(iv)	When women apply to PGR programmes they are successful, but	Plan for increasing female application exists	July 2023	**PGR Director**	Increase in female applications to 40% for SPEIR overall	MEDIUM

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	in PIR compared to ECON, mapping the support offered to individual students for e.g. obtaining funding and exploring external networks and opportunities.		women are still under-represented in applications, particularly in ECON	First initiatives introduced Effect monitored via case studies and quantitative data	Oct 2023 Oct 2024 onwards			
P7	Understand reasons that PGR students either withdraw or fail to complete within 4 years using annual focus groups to monitor conditions for PGR students and surveys for those who withdraw	4.1(iv)	Only 36% of female and 50% of male PGR students complete within 48 months	Annual "temperature check" of factors affecting completion for PGR students. Case studies of a variety of student experiences exist for discussion with staff and existing PGR students	October 2021 onwards	**PGR Director**	Increase in % of all students completing within 48 months, and reduction of gender gap.	HIGH
P8	Explore options with central careers and Henley Business School Careers services to provide more tailored career support for PGR students	5.1(iv)	Most careers advice is targeted to undergraduates. Most SPEIR career development activities for PGRs are targeted towards academic careers and this is unbalanced	Mechanism in place for non-academic careers advice for PGR students. Students using advice and reporting effectiveness when asked for feedback	2022	**PGR Director**	50% of PGR students using the service and feeling supported in their decision making when surveyed in 2024	LOWER
Theme 4 Working Environment and Culture								
W1	Work with managers to ensure they are adequately informed of risk assessments and responsibilities towards pregnant colleagues	5.5(i)	Previous inconsistency of approach to risk assessment and	Guidance, policy and good practice recommendation on SPEIR EDI website Training sessions held.	Ongoing	**D&I Lead** School Executive Administrator,	100% of Managers and pregnant staff report that it is easy to find information.	HIGH

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	(including the journey to maternity, IVF, miscarriage, etc.)		therefore negative experiences	"Returner survey" used to record experience.		Managers, HR advisor	Pregnant staff consistently report feeling supported at this time.	
W2	Formalise indicative provisions surrounding support before, during and after leave and publicise to staff	5.5(i)	Inconsistency of approach leads to a range of positive and negative experiences	Formalised response agreed. Guidance provided on website. Returner survey used to record experience.	By summer 2021	**Diversity and inclusion committee** HR partner Website team	100% of managers report awareness of possibilities. Pregnant staff report positive experiences and feel supported throughout and on return from leave when surveyed / focus groups.	MEDIUM
W3	Ensure HoDs and others are aware of how to access financial support from the University and that this is used how it is intended, with 25% being ringfenced for use on return by: - including this in handover process for HoD role - staff reminded at induction and annually by drawing attention to policies on website	5.5(ii), 5.5(iii)	Central funding not consistently being applied for or used as intended to support returning staff.	Arrange refresher information session from HR partner Checklist around this produced for line managers and HoDs Returners survey documents requests made and granted. Case studies advertised on SPEIR EDI website.	From now as the situation arises.	**HoS** and School Executive Admin	Line managers and HoDs feel confident in making these requests. Requests made to university. Records of discussion and decision on use of 25% of funds on return. Staff returning feel supported. Full list from HR partner of past arrangements (anonymised) to	HIGH

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							D&I lead in order to ensure consistency.	
W4	Active provision of examples of acceptable behaviour around language and imagery; reinforcement of expectations.	5.6(i)	Only 64% of students believe it is made clear that unsupportive language and behaviour is unacceptable. 79% of male students but only 64% of female students believe school has made it clear gender stereotypes are unacceptable.	Reinforcement of standards of desirable behaviour around gender equality in HoDs emails.	2020 onwards	**Diversity and Inclusion Committee** - in consultation with all staff and students	Students aware of expectations. 80% of students feel it is made clear that these activities are unacceptable in 2022 and 2024 surveys, reduction in gender gap around gender stereotypes in 2022 and 2024 surveys to < 5%.	HIGH
W5	Review all reading lists to actively consider inclusion, where appropriate of range of perspectives and influences, particularly in terms of gender and race. Incorporate research on gender biased assessment methods into consideration of assessment for modules	5.6(i)	60% of students believed that module convenors did not, or only sometimes included gender perspectives into lectures and seminars.	Guidance on gender bias in assessment methods produced by colleagues with expertise Module reading lists checked and reviewed from a gender and race perspective by module convenors, or preferably reviewed in partnership with students.	Start – 2023 End-2026	Assessment - subject expert(s) within School to produce initial guidance **DDTL / BoS** to oversee module reading list reviews.	All modules have reviewed their reading lists and these contain items from a diverse range of perspectives as appropriate for the module. Staff are aware of any implications of their chosen assessment method for differential impact on women or	MEDIUM

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							minority ethnicity students and have put mitigation measures in place.	
W6	Set a target of 40% female seminar speakers in PIR research seminar	5.6(vii)	Students report relatively low level of women being used as role models, especially in PIR	Increase in numbers of female speakers at PIR research seminar.	Already begun	**PIR Research Seminar Organizer**	At least 40% of seminar speakers are female	LOWER
W7	i) Incorporate clear policy on bullying and harassment reporting both into our School induction processes and into our UG, PGT and PGR handbooks. i) Provide a named published contact each year for students and staff making such referrals. In the case of staff this may be the Diversity and Inclusion Lead	5.6(ii)	30% of female students and 39 % of male students said that the School has made it clear how to report gender discrimination or harassment. 100% of ECON staff believed that their manager would deal effectively with any complaints about harassment, bullying or offensive behaviour, compared to 19% of staff in PIR	Policy incorporated into induction Policy incorporated into UG/PGT and PGR handbooks	October 2021	**School Executive Support Officer** **DDTL** Diversity and Inclusion Lead	Increase to 60% of students saying it is clear how to report gender discrimination or harassment by 2022 survey and 80% by 2024 Increase to 100% of PIR staff believing that their manager would deal effectively with these incidents by 2024 survey. ECON maintain their 100%.	HIGH
Theme 5 Enabling								
E1	Appoint a new School SAT for next application which	3(iii)	To ensure ongoing implementation	SAT opportunities advertised openly	2024	**D&I Lead and HoS**	SAT is appointed and reflects	HIGH

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	has balance in terms of gender, career stage and experience, roles, and experience of intersectionality (including PSS staff, teaching fellows and students).		and monitoring of Action Plan and prepare for Athena renewal application.	SAT chair appointed SAT members appointed			variety of roles, contract types, genders and life experiences.	
E2	Monitor and evaluate workload models as well as assess reality of how time is spent. Consider impact of Covid when analysing and allocating first few years Review should include incorporation of mentoring time, outreach and committee roles.	5.6(v)	New workload model recently introduced in ECON. Focus groups report research is done in spare time. Staff report not all activities are valued and recognised. 53% men but only 32% of women feel additional voluntary work is allocated fairly 74% men but only 37% women feel admin tasks are allocated fairly)	Annual analysis by gender of workload allocations completed and shared at Department meetings. Time allocation for administrative tasks updated using role descriptions from action K7. Snapshots of actual time spent compared to workload allocation discussed in PDRs and with mentors. Revised Workload model including additional components	From 2022 (we are also aware of discussions about a university wide model so this will need to be taken into account)	**HoDs, supp**orted by ad-hoc workload review team	>80% of staff feel admin tasks are allocated fairly and the gender gap is less than 5% by 2024 survey. >75% of staff feel voluntary tasks are allocated fairly and gender gap is less than 5% by 2024 survey.	MEDIUM
E3	Post-Covid working conditions, continue to stream and record the	5.6(vi)	Ongoing change to working practices due to Covid,	Existing provision evaluated by a pulse survey e.g. do people	Summer 2021	**PIR Research Seminar Organizer**, other	Understanding of how people access	LOWER

	**Athena SWAN and Gender Equality Action Plan 2020-2026**
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	majority of research seminars ensure access for working away students and staff		increased teaching timetable pressure and increased use of flexible working for PGR students and staff means staff and students can miss out on seminars.	watch live or recorded. The majority of seminars continue to be streamed and recorded.	2021/22 academic year onwards	seminar organizers	seminars currently. Focus groups and survey in 2022/2024 show a range of people are accessing the seminars.	
E4	Carry out and analyse Culture surveys in 2022 and 2024. Communication and engagement plan needed, particularly on student side.	3(iii) and throughout	Our survey has informed many of the actions for this application and we need to measure progress and change	Survey questions finalised 2022 survey circulated, staff and student responses analysed by gender and department 2024 survey circulated, staff and student responses analysed by gender and department	2022 2022 2024	**D&I Lead**, new Athena SAT Leads	60% response rate for staff survey in both years 50% response rate for students	HIGH