Newcastle University’s Gender Equality Plan for Horizon Europe funding

For Horizon Europe calls for proposals with deadlines in 2022 and beyond, applying higher education institutions from EU Member States and associated countries must have a Gender Equality Plan (GEP) or equivalent strategy in place to be eligible for funding. See further here: Horizon Europe guidance on gender equality plans - Publications Office of the EU (europa.eu)

Newcastle University’s University Athena Swan Action Plan in combination with the work we have set out to meet our Equality Objectives meet the requirements for a GEP. Below we set out how they do so and cross-reference to relevant sections of these documents.

Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) are central to Newcastle University’s vision, strategy and values. The University has been involved with Advance HE’s Athena Swan Charter since 2010, which is a UK equality charter mark framework and accreditation scheme that recognises and celebrates good practice in higher education and research institutions towards the advancement of gender equality in terms of representation, progression and success. The University currently holds an Institutional Silver Athena Swan Award (until 2025) (one of 20 institutions holding silver out of 164 nationally) which indicates both our commitment to and the positive impact of changes in support of gender equality. Additionally, the University holds 14 departmental Athena Swan awards across our Faculties and Schools.

How we meet the mandatory requirements for GEPs

Public document

‘The GEP must be a formal document published on the institution’s website, signed by the top management and actively communicated within the institution. It should demonstrate a commitment to gender equality, set clear goals and detailed actions and measures to achieve them.’

Our institutional Athena Swan Silver application and action plan are publicly available at this web link: Athena SWAN Awards - Athena SWAN - Newcastle University (ncl.ac.uk). Our Equality Objectives are set out along with recent progress and future plans in our Annual EDI Report published here: Public Sector Equality Duty - Who we Are - Newcastle University (ncl.ac.uk).

Our Athena Swan application contains a letter of endorsement from our Vice-Chancellor, Professor Chris Day. Our Annual EDI Report contains an introduction from our Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Provost, Professor Julie Sanders, and our Dean of EDI, Professor Judith Rankin. Both documents continue to be actively communicated within the University.

Our Athena Swan application sets out our three institutional priority areas to support gender equality (page 15):

1) closing the gender pay gap;
2) increasing the proportion of women in leadership roles;
3) diversifying our recruitment processes and approaches.
Additionally, our action plan sets out a range of goals and associated actions along with measures of success, including:

- for 35% of our professoriate to be female, against which we have already made progress having reached 31% in 2021, up from 29% in 2019 (see actions in section 2 and 3)
- for 47% of our academics to be female, which we are steadily approaching having reached 45% in 2021, up from 42% in 2019 (see actions in section 2 and 3)
- to increase the representation of women in mid-career and senior Professional Service roles (see actions in sections 2 and 5)
- to address the under-representation of men in Professional Service roles (see actions in section 3)
- to take an intersectional approach to gender and ethnicity to support our women colleagues from minoritised groups (see actions in section 4)
- to support our colleagues who are parents and carers (see actions in section 6)
- to support our colleagues who are trans or non-binary (see actions in section 7)

Dedicated Resources

‘A GEP must have dedicated resources and expertise in gender equality to implement the plan. Organisations should consider what type and volume of resources are required to support an ongoing process of sustainable organisational change.’

Our dedicated resources for EDI including gender equality are detailed in our Annual EDI Report, pages 12-15.

Newcastle University has invested in dedicated staff resource to support EDI, including an EDI Team with central and faculty remits. All are actively involved in delivery of our University Athena Swan action plan and Faculty and School Athena Swan action plans. We also have clear leadership and governance structures for EDI, including gender equality.

Data collection and monitoring

‘Organisations must collect sex/gender disaggregated data on personnel (and students, for the establishments concerned) with annual reporting based on indicators. Organisations should consider how to select the most relevant indicators, how to collect and analyse the data, including resources to do so, and should ensure that data is published and monitored on an annual basis. This data should inform the GEP’s objectives and targets, indicators, and ongoing evaluation of progress.’

Our annual EDI reporting process involves analysis and reporting of data on colleagues by protected characteristic, including by sex, in relation to representation within our workforce, at different grades/levels, and in different job families. It also involves analysis of our Gender Pay Gap overall, and within different job families, as well as how occupation segregation contributes to our gender pay gaps. The annual report is published externally as well as being disseminated and discussed at University Council, University Executive Board, and EDI related committees and groups. This data informs evolution of actions within the Athena Swan action plan as well as wider EDI plans.

Data on sex are also analysed at University, School and Faculty levels by EDI Committees or Athena Swan self-assessment teams (SATs) as part of ongoing Athena Swan review and evaluation processes. Reports on staff profile, recruitment, promotions, and leavers are provided at University,
Faculty and School level. These are disaggregated by sex and where appropriate by other protected characteristics.

A Student Diversity Dashboard created by the central Planning Team provides student data by sex in relation to admissions, retention and programme outcomes. Business Warehouse provides further opportunity to interrogate anonymised student data according to protected characteristics.

We currently have a ‘data workstream’ of key individuals across our EDI portfolio which is seeking to improve the functionality of the University’s data systems in terms of data that are collected and reported (see Annual EDI Report page 30).

Training

‘The GEP must also include awareness-raising and training actions on gender equality. These activities should engage the whole organisation and be an evidence-based, ongoing and long-term process. Activities should cover unconscious gender biases training aimed at staff and decision-makers and can also include communication activities and gender equality training that focuses on specific topics or addresses specific groups.’

The University offers a number of online EDI courses through its Learning Management System including an overview of EDI and unconscious bias training. The latter are integrated into probation requirements for new colleagues and are also recommended for colleagues involved in recruitment. We also have in-person training by a dedicated EDI trainer.

The University’s Athena Swan action plan includes various training initiatives, including in relation to gender equality and language inclusivity (see actions 1.5 and 1.6). Our Annual EDI Report sets out progress with EDI-related training and our future plans on page 20.

How we meet the recommended requirements for GEPs

Work-life balance and organisational culture

‘GEPs aim to promote gender equality through the sustainable transformation of organisational culture. Organisations should implement necessary policies to ensure an open and inclusive working environment, the visibility of women in the organisation and externally, and that the contribution of women is properly valued. Inclusive work-life balance policies and practices can also be considered in a GEP, including parental leave policies, flexible working time arrangements and support for caring responsibilities.’

Our University Athena Swan action plan contains multiple actions to improve work-life balance and organisational culture, including:

- Visibility of women – see actions in section 5.
- Family friendly policies and working practices - see actions in section 6.
- Supporting unpaid carers – see actions in section 6.

We also have an Equality Objective to ‘become a family friendly organisation’, with progress and future actions detailed in our Annual EDI Report page 28.
Additionally, fairness and inclusion form part of our new research culture road map, for which an action plan is in development. This aims to:

- build psychologically safe environments where diverse skillsets, perspectives and ideas are welcomed, respected and valued and help advance research;
- tackle and prevent bullying and harassment, discrimination and bias in all its forms, and promote wellbeing across the diverse research community;
- ensure internal research processes, practices and structures give people equal opportunity to succeed, and make everyone feel like they belong.

Gender balance in leadership and decision making

‘Increasing the number and share of women in leadership and decision-making positions touches upon all aspects in the GEP. Measures to ensure that women can take on and stay in leadership positions can include providing decision-makers with targeted gender training, adapting processes for selection and appointment of staff on committees, ensuring gender balance through gender quotas, and making committee membership more transparent.’

Increasing the proportion of women in leadership positions is one of our three priority areas in our University Athena Swan action plan. See sections 2 and 5 for actions relating to this.

Gender equality in recruitment and career progression

‘Critically reviewing selection procedures and remedying any biases can ensure that women and men get equal chances to develop and advance their careers. Establishing recruitment codes of conduct, involving gender equality officers in recruitment and promotion committees, proactively identifying women in underrepresented fields and considering organisation-wide workload planning models can be important measures to consider in a GEP.’

Diversifying our recruitment processes and approaches and supporting career progression are two priority areas in our University Athena Swan action plan. See sections 2 and 4 for actions relating to these areas.

Measures against gender-based violence, including sexual harassment

‘Organisations establishing a GEP should consider taking steps to ensure they have clear institutional policies on sexual harassment and other forms of gender-based violence. Policies should establish and codify the expected behaviour of employees, outline how members of the organisation can report instances of gender-based violence and how any such instances will be investigated and sanctions applied. They should also consider how information and support is provided to victims or witnesses and how the whole organisation can be mobilised to establish a culture of zero tolerance toward sexual harassment and violence.’

We have an Equality Objective to ‘further develop an inclusive culture, and one which does not tolerate hate crime, discrimination, victimisation or harassment’. Our Annual EDI Report sets out our progress to date and future plans to prevent gender-based violence and sexual harassment (see pages 17-20).
The University has a dedicated casework email address and ‘Report and Support’ tool which enables anyone (colleagues and students) to report concerns e.g. relating to sexual violence, hate incidents or hate crime, discrimination, harassment or misconduct, and receive support. Hate related misconduct, discrimination, sexual misconduct, or harassment are explicitly included in our colleague disciplinary policy, which outlines how any such instances will be investigated and addressed.

There is a range of support in place for students and colleagues who are recipients or witnesses of such behaviours, including a Hate Crime and Sexual Violence Prevention Lead and Sexual Violence Liaison Officers. In addition, the University has a dedicated, Changing the Culture Group, which oversees our work around tackling hate related behaviours and sexual misconduct.