

# THE ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

## Approach to assessment

All SAGE subscribers are on individual journeys to achieve safe, equitable and inclusive workplaces for their staff and students (if applicable).

Institutions applying for SAGE Cygnet Awards have successfully achieved Athena Swan Bronze Award accreditation. In doing so, they have demonstrated an understanding of the structural, systemic and cultural barriers impeding attraction, retention and progression in their institutions, and have designed SMART actions to remove or reduce five Key Barriers.

The SAGE Cygnet Awards focus on the unique journey of each Athena Swan Bronze Awardee Institution towards achieving gender equity, diversity and inclusion. Taking this into account, the approach to assessment recognises differences in institutional type, size, strategy, resourcing and context.

## Assessment criteria

Reviewers should consider whether an Institution has provided sufficient evidence against **three assessment criteria (progress, outcomes and impact)**. Sufficiency is measured relative to the targets that the Institution set in their Athena Swan Bronze Award Action Plan<sup>11</sup>.

An Institution has provided sufficient evidence to meet the requirements for a SAGE Cygnet Award if:

- it has demonstrated progress in implementing SMART actions<sup>12</sup> designed to remove or reduce a Key Barrier to the attraction, retention or progression of underrepresented and/or marginalised groups of staff (and/or students if applicable) in the Institution; **AND**
- it shows that it has achieved its target(s)<sup>13</sup> for progress, outcomes and impact (as defined in its Athena Swan Bronze Award Action Plan); **OR**
- where it did not achieve its original target(s), it provides a rationale for the difference between the target(s) and its actual progress, outcomes and/or impact.

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<sup>11</sup> or following additional self-assessment undertaken post-Award

<sup>12</sup> from the Athena Swan Bronze Award action plan or developed post-Award through innovation, recognising and building on good practice in the sector, or initiated due to changing circumstances at an Institution, for example restructuring

<sup>13</sup> SAGE Athena Swan action plans contribute to an Institution's long-term strategy for gender equity, diversity and inclusion, so it is normal for them to contain a mixture of short-, medium- and long-term targets. For targets that extend beyond the Award validity period, Institutions should demonstrate sufficient progress/outcomes/impact by showing that they are on track to meet those targets (e.g. the Institution has achieved key milestones to date for a long-term project).

For every assessment criterion, Reviewers will consider and provide one of two possible assessments:

- **YES** – the Institution has satisfied the statement.
- **MORE INFORMATION IS REQUIRED** – the Institution needs to provide further evidence or information to satisfy the statement. If this is selected, Reviewers must also specify the type of evidence or information required.

Recognising the ongoing, iterative nature of organisational change, Reviewers should provide an overall comment against each criterion (progress, outcome, and impact) to assist Institutions in strengthening their approach post-Award.

Assessment Criterion	Statement	Assessment	Overall Comment
<b>Progress</b>	The Institution has implemented SMART actions appropriately designed to remove or reduce the Key Barrier.	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>YES</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>MORE INFORMATION REQUIRED</b> Please specify: _____	
	The Institution has implemented its planned actions for removing or reducing the Key Barrier <b>OR</b> the Institution has provided a rationale for why planned actions have been changed/discontinued/replaced before, during or after implementation.	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>YES</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>MORE INFORMATION REQUIRED</b> Please specify: _____	
<b>Outcomes</b>	The Institution has provided evidence of outcomes resulting from its actions.  <i>Evidence of outcomes will typically be in the form of a <b>measurable change to the Institution's baseline data.</b></i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>YES</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>MORE INFORMATION REQUIRED</b> Please specify: _____	
	The Institution has achieved its target outcomes <b>OR</b> the Institution has provided a rationale for any gaps between its target outcomes and actual outcomes.	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>YES</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>MORE INFORMATION REQUIRED</b> Please specify: _____	
<b>Impact</b>	The Institution has provided evidence of impact resulting from its actions.  <i>Evidence of impact will come from engagement with the intended beneficiaries of the action and be in the form of a <b>change to the self-reported lived experience of staff (and/or students)</b> as a result of removing or reducing a Barrier.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>YES</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>MORE INFORMATION REQUIRED</b> Please specify: _____	

Assessment Criterion	Statement	Assessment	Overall Comment
	The Institution has achieved its target impact <b>OR</b> the Institution has provided a rationale for any gaps between desired and actual impact.	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>YES</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>MORE INFORMATION REQUIRED</b> Please specify: _____	

### Considerations for assessing progress, outcomes and impact

Given organisational change is complex, and that a submission for a SAGE Cygnet Award occurs as part of an ongoing Institutional strategy, progress is unlikely to be constant and linear, and positive outcomes and impact cannot be assured. As such, Institutions should not be penalised where the desired outcomes and impact have not been achieved,<sup>14</sup> provided they have:

- implemented SMART actions, appropriately designed to remove or reduce the Key Barrier; **AND**
- honestly reflected on learnings from not achieving the desired outcomes and impact.

Because a range of sub-issues are likely to contribute to each Key Barrier, a suite of SMART actions will usually be needed to remove or reduce each Barrier. Institutions are not required to link each individual action to an individual outcome/impact. Rather, they should demonstrate that they have implemented a group of SMART actions designed to remove or reduce a Key Barrier, and provide outcomes and impact data as evidence that the Key Barrier has been removed or reduced.<sup>15</sup>

When assessing SAGE Cygnet Award applications, Reviewers should be mindful of the constraints of the word limit (2500 words, excluding the institutional context and the Action Plan) and thus the depth of information which could reasonably be provided. Reviewers should also be cognisant of institutional context.

Some points for Reviewers to consider when assessing and providing feedback for each criterion are listed below. The aim of these is to guide and assist Reviewers in their review; they are **not intended as sub-criteria** or as **a list of requirements**.

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<sup>14</sup> for example because the Institution’s strategic direction changed, implementation was delayed, actions implemented were not enough to generate the desired outcomes/impact, actions resulted in unintended negative outcomes/impact, or there was a delay in achieving demonstrable outcomes/impact

<sup>15</sup> or reflect on learnings from any areas in which the desired outcomes and impact have not been achieved

Assessment criteria	Additional points for Reviewers to consider in developmental feedback
<b>Progress</b>	
The Institution has implemented SMART actions appropriately designed to remove or reduce the Key Barrier.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Did the actions take a systemic approach (rather than targeting individuals)?</li> <li>• Are data provided to evidence successful implementation of actions (e.g. completion rates for performance development conversations; download rates for newly developed resources)?</li> <li>• Are any challenges encountered in action implementation discussed?</li> <li>• Was an intersectional approach taken in the implementation of actions (or a rationale provided where this was not possible)?</li> </ul>
The Institution has implemented its planned actions for removing or reducing the Key Barrier <b>OR</b> The Institution has provided a rationale for why planned actions have been changed/discontinued/replaced before, during or after implementation.	
<b>Outcomes</b>	
The Institution has provided evidence of outcomes resulting from its actions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are the data presented effectively (e.g. appropriate figures/tables; numbers and percentages provided; proportion of eligible cohort where appropriate; disaggregation by gender (and other characteristics where possible))?</li> <li>• Was an intersectional approach taken in measuring outcomes (or a rationale provided where this was not possible)?</li> <li>• Are any learnings from not achieving the desired outcome critically evaluated and reflected upon?</li> <li>• Are further actions suggested to achieve or sustain the desired outcomes?</li> <li>• Is an intersectional approach considered in the design of such actions?</li> </ul>
The Institution has achieved its target outcomes <b>OR</b> The Institution has provided a rationale for any gaps between its target outcomes and actual outcomes.	
<b>Impact</b>	
The Institution has provided evidence of impact resulting from its actions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is evidence of engagement with the target group provided (e.g. number of focus groups held; number of participants; response rates (by gender and other characteristics where possible))?</li> <li>• Is there evidence of correlation/causation between the actions implemented and impact achieved?</li> <li>• Was an intersectional approach taken in measuring impact (or a rationale provided where this was not possible)?</li> <li>• Are any learnings from not achieving the desired impact critically evaluated and reflected upon?</li> <li>• Are further actions suggested to achieve or sustain the desired impact?</li> <li>• Is an intersectional approach considered in the design of such actions?</li> </ul>
The Institution has achieved its target impact <b>OR</b> The Institution has provided a rationale for any gaps between desired and actual impact.	

Reviewers should also be aware that some parts of the SAGE Cygnet Award Application provide context for assessment, but are not, in themselves, assessable since they are assessed elsewhere in the SAGE Athena Swan pathway (see below).

What is <u>not</u> assessable in SAGE Cygnet Award Application	Assessed at Bronze	Assessed at Silver	Notes
Institutional context			The Institutional context is not in itself assessable, but Reviewers will consider the information in this section in assessing the rationale(s) provided for any shifts or gaps between desired and actual progress/outcomes/impact.
Justification for the Barrier being a Key Barrier	✓		In exploring all the Barriers listed in the Bronze application form, Institutions must identify and provide justification for the five Key Barriers to be addressed in their Bronze Award action plan.  <i>For SAGE Pilot Institutions: Reviewers will assume that Institutions have completed this process through the selection of their five Key Barriers post-Bronze Award.</i>
Evidence of the Barrier	✓		Reviewers will assess <b>outcomes and impact</b> relative to the Institution's <b>Bronze data</b> (which may be provided in the "Evidence of Barrier" section of the SAGE Cygnet Award Application) and targets set at Bronze.  While the baseline data and description of the Barrier <i>enable</i> or provide context for assessment, they are not in themselves assessable.
Whether or not the actions in the Bronze Award Action Plan met SMART criteria	✓		For actions that were added or adapted post-Bronze, Reviewers may provide developmental feedback if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the target outcomes or impact were not achieved; and</li> <li>• this may be due to the action(s) not meeting SMART criteria; and</li> <li>• the Institution has not already described further SMART actions to address this in the SAGE Cygnet Award Application.</li> </ul>
Whether or not the targets in the Bronze Award Action Plan were sufficiently ambitious/realistic	✓		

Further actions or targets post-Cygnnet		✓	If the Barrier remains a Key Barrier for the Institution at the time of their Silver Award application, these will be assessed as part of their Athena Swan Silver Award Action Plan.
Formatting			Reviewers may provide constructive feedback on the way the SAGE Cygnet Award Application and the data were presented (clarity, accessibility, etc.), if they wish.