

UK and India Equality Charters Partnership Framework

British Council, India

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1. Background

Advance HE owns and manages the Athena SWAN Charter, a systemic change initiative that was founded in 2005 to improve gender equality in higher education and research in the UK. The UK has over 160 Athena SWAN members holding over 800 awards (Bronze, Silver and Gold) between them.

A version of the Charter currently operates in the UK, Ireland, Australia, the USA and Canada. Advance HE works with several partners to support the delivery of these different adaptations of the Charter including SAGE (Science Australia Gender Equity), the AAAS (American Association for the Advancement of Science) and the NSERC (Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada).

Gender equality is a key programme priority for the British Council. In 2014, the British Council participated in a workshop with the Government of India's Department of Science and Technology and Department of Biotechnology (and other stakeholders) where the idea of having a gender equality framework, similar to the Athena SWAN Charter, was introduced. It was felt that this would help women in India overcome the challenges in moving up the academic and administrative ladder due to systemic and structural barriers; and enhance progression to leadership roles.

The British Council is partnering with the Department of Science and Technology (DST), Government of India, in a three-year pilot programme launched in 2020. GATI (Gender Advancement for Transforming Institutions) aims to advance gender equality in STEMM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Maths and Medicine) in higher education and research in India. Advance HE is supporting this initiative and details of GATI can be found at <https://dst.gov.in/scientific-programmes/scientific-engineering-research/women-scientists-programs>.

2. The GATI Pilot

The aim of the GATI project is to develop a charter, and self-assessment and accreditation framework to support gender equality in STEMM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Maths and Medicine) in India. The pilot programme will include 30 Indian Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and Science and Technology Research Institutions.

The British Council, in partnership with Advance HE wants to support the GATI Pilot launched by Department of Science and Technology, Government of India, using insights from Athena SWAN to build competencies for strengthening gender equality in the pilot institutions. This would entail UK Athena SWAN members sharing their experiences of the Athena SWAN Charter process and what gender equality interventions have worked in their institutions in the UK.

British Council will advertise a call for applications inviting UK Athena SWAN members to partner with GATI pilot institutions.

3. Equality Charters Partnership Overview

Advance HE and the British Council are looking for up to six Athena SWAN Charter members (including both UK Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and Research Institutes) who have been through at least one successful application round, have staff members who have been Athena SWAN panellists and currently hold an Athena SWAN award to partner with four to five GATI pilot institutions each for up to 18 months around the Equality Charters process.

The role of the UK Athena SWAN members will be to engage with the GATI pilot institutions as they work through the GATI Equality Charter process. This will entail sharing their own experience of the Athena SWAN process and their most recent application (redacted) of self-assessment, qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis, creating SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound) action plans and providing examples of good practice initiatives that have worked in their institution and how they enabled them to be sustainable.

There will be three half day group webinars for all the participating GATI pilot institutions, delivered by the Athena SWAN partners on:

- **The impact of Athena SWAN on my career:** case studies from academic staff whose careers have benefited from initiatives in their institution or department put in place as part of the Athena SWAN journey.
- **Thinking like a charter panellist:** UK panellists discussing their experiences of assessing an Athena SWAN application and providing hints and tips for GATI pilot participants.
- **Maintaining momentum regardless of award outcome:** UK Athena SWAN members discussing lessons learned, keeping momentum and turning an application around after an unsuccessful submission.

It is envisaged the partnership will go on for 18 months and the details of the framework are included in the following section. Each Athena SWAN partner institution will provide an EDI lead and a senior leader contact for the collaboration. In return for the support provided, each UK Athena SWAN partner institution will receive £25,000.

Advance HE will facilitate the use of Advance HE Connect as an online networking portal and as a depository of useful resources. Advance HE Connect is a free online networking tool at <https://connect.advance-he.ac.uk/>. A training session will be provided for all UK and Indian participants. The specific sessions detailed in the below framework plan will take place *via* zoom or teams between the Indian GATI pilot participants and the UK Athena SWAN partner institutions, set up consultatively by British Council and DST logistics team.

In addition to the Advance HE Connect training sessions, colleagues from the GATI pilot project will run a webinar for the UK Athena SWAN partners providing information on the

higher education and science research sector in India, its background and the fast-changing aspirational landscape. The presentation will include issues of leaky pipeline, challenges for gender equality initiatives and actions, prevalent policies, organisational structure and culture.

The partnership will encourage the sharing of good practice from both the Athena SWAN partner institutions and the GATI pilot institutions throughout the partnership programme.

4. Equality Charters Partnership Plan

Phase	Topic/support area	Key points to cover for the UK Athena SWAN partner	Time commitment and timeframe for the UK Athena SWAN partner
1	Starting out: how to approach your equality charter journey	<p>The important role of leadership to gender equality interventions in higher education and research and how to foster buy-in and create enabling environments throughout the institution and address any resistance.</p> <p>Why gender equality in higher education and research is important and how the charter process has had an impact in my organisation.</p> <p>The purpose and importance of conducting a thorough self-assessment of policies, practices, structures and cultures in an organisation.</p> <p>How to plan for self-assessment – what are the structures and supports to have in place prior to starting your equality charter process.</p>	<p>A 90-minute session between the leaders (e.g. VCs Presidents, Principals, CEOs) of the Athena SWAN partner organisations and the GATI pilot institutions to discuss the importance of strong leadership in implementing gender equality initiatives to take place within six months of the GATI pilot institutions being selected.</p> <p>A two-hour remote video session, including a presentation and Q&A session one month after the GATI pilot institutions being selected.</p> <p>Presentation material to be shared with GATI pilot institutions so they can share them internally to their organisation.</p> <p>Follow up discussions and questions to be answered via HE Connect portal.</p>
2	The self-assessment process	<p>How to form a self-assessment team (SAT), including the roles of team members and how to choose them and appropriate recognition for the work of the SAT.</p>	<p>A three-hour remote video session, including a presentation and Q&A session two months after the</p>

		<p>How to build your self-assessment team activity – including the responsibilities of the team.</p> <p>Consultation, communication and engagement with staff and students – including discussion around what’s appropriate consultation, how frequent should you consult, effective ways of communicating the work that you are doing and why it is important, how to get staff and students to engage and respond.</p> <p>How to future plan and future proof equality charter work so that it becomes embedded in the organisations systems and structures.</p>	<p>GATI pilot institutions being selected.</p> <p>Presentation material to be shared with GATI pilot institutions so they can share them internally to their organisation.</p> <p>Follow up discussions and questions to be answered <i>via</i> HE Connect portal.</p>
3	Data collection and analysis:	<p>The importance of collecting quantitative data and knowing your baselines, how to find the data you need in your institution, where are the data gaps likely to be and what can be done to plug them and setting up quantitative data collection systems for the future.</p> <p>Benchmarking data, why it’s important and where can you find it.</p> <p>Using qualitative data to unpick your quantitative data and inform analysis and action.</p> <p>Assessing your data and writing it up, balancing descriptive and analytical narrative.</p> <p>The importance of clear data presentation including hints and tips for data presentation.</p>	<p>A three-hour remote video session, including a presentation and Q&A session three months after the GATI pilot institutions being selected.</p> <p>Presentation material to be shared with GATI pilot institutions so they can share them internally to their organisation.</p> <p>Follow up discussions and questions to be answered <i>via</i> HE Connect portal.</p>
4	Action planning for success	<p>What is a SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound) action plan and what is the best process to develop</p>	<p>A two-hour remote video session, including a presentation and Q&A session four months after the</p>

		<p>one – including the importance of baseline data to set specific actions and measurable targets, the importance of outcome focused actions and targets over output focused ones, dividing up accountability and responsibility and setting realistic clear timelines and milestones.</p> <p>The UK Athena SWAN partners will present on how they are implementing their institutional action plans and what happens if an action doesn't work or the success target isn't reached.</p>	<p>GATI pilot participants being selected.</p> <p>Presentation material to be shared with GATI pilot institutions so they can share them internally to their organisation.</p> <p>Follow up discussions and questions to be answered <i>via</i> HE Connect portal.</p>
5	Lessons learned and good practice examples	<p>The Athena SWAN partners will present on their lessons learned and good practice initiatives that have been developed as part of the Equality Charters process and have had a measurable positive impact. Key discussion areas will include (but will not be limited to): EDI policies, satisfaction surveys, organisation and culture, enabling career progression, staff guidance and leadership development.</p>	<p>A 90-minute remote video session, including a presentation and Q&A session four months after the GATI pilot institutions being selected.</p> <p>Presentation material to be shared with GATI pilot institutions so they can share them internally to their organisation.</p> <p>Follow up discussions and questions to be answered <i>via</i> HE Connect portal.</p>
6	Sharing Athena SWAN material	<p>Athena SWAN partners to share their (redacted) AS submissions, action plans, and assessor panel feedback with GATI pilot institutions.</p>	<p>The submission, action plan and feedback will be shared two months after the GATI pilot institutions are selected. This will be followed up two months later by a 60-minute remote video discussion on the shared documents including a Q&A session.</p> <p>Follow up discussions and questions to be answered <i>via</i> HE Connect portal.</p>

7	Wider workshop participation	<p>Participate in the three half day group workshops supporting break out group facilitation and providing at least one speaker for the workshops below:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Impact of Athena SWAN on my career: a session including case studies from academic staff. 2. Thinking like a charter panellist: UK panellists discussing their experiences of assessing Athena SWAN applications. 3. Maintaining momentum regardless of award outcome: UK Athena SWAN members discussing lessons learned after an unsuccessful submission 	<p>Three half day workshops to be spread out across the duration of the pilot. Dates to be agreed.</p>
8	Discussant Role	<p>The Athena SWAN UK partners will provide the GATI pilot institutions with support, including answering specific questions, around their self-assessment application process.</p>	<p>All participating Athena SWAN institutions will be expected to have familiarised themselves with the GATI project self-assessment criteria, handbook and application form. This will take up to 3 hours of reading time.</p> <p>In addition, each Athena SWAN partnering institution will be expected to watch the video of the GATI assessor panellist training, to future familiarise themselves with the process. This will take up to 90 minutes.</p> <p>An online talk through session answering specific queries of the GATI pilot institution on its self-assessment application</p>

			<p>process would take about 90-minutes.</p> <p>On completion of the process, follow up discussions and questions to be answered <i>via</i> HE Connect portal.</p>
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Any follow up discussions and questions from the GATI pilot partner institutions will be asked and answered *via* HE Connect portal. The agreed response timeframe for Athena SWAN partner institutions will be that any questions from their GATI pilot partners are acknowledged by them within 3 (working) days and responded to within 5 (working) days.

There will be a signed agreement between the Athena SWAN and GATI partner institutions that all materials shared during this scheme will only be for internal use within the participating organisations and cannot be shared externally.

Both the Athena SWAN partner and the GATI pilot partner institutions will be responsible for assigning two points of contact for the partnership framework.

This framework proposal is based on all interaction taking place remotely, however if international travel becomes possible within the lifetime of the project, the Athena SWAN partner institutions may be asked to host a visit from the GATI pilot institutions.



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