IMPORTANT ITEMS TO NOTE WHEN PREPARING YOUR AS APPLICATION

1. **Ownership by the leaders.**

   It is important that E&D issues are owned at the highest level in the department. A clear strong statement from the Head is needed, demonstrating personal interest and commitment. The Head of Department should also be a member of the SAT. And please don't forget the basics – the guidelines ask for a statement asserting the correctness of the presented information, so don't omit this!

   Ownership by the department

   There also needs to be clear evidence of ownership throughout the department, both formally (through the balance of representation on the SAT, frequency of its meetings, and formal reporting arrangements) and informally (through descriptions of the departmental culture and any informal arrangements).

2. **Letter of Application** – You letter of application should clearly set out in addition to the HoD's commitment and involvement in the process etc. some of the key actions that are going to be implemented as a result of the process and how these are linked into your overall faculty/department strategy.

3. **You assessment Teams:**
   Include how the composition of the Self-Assessment Team represents the demographic of your department/School
   Mention how AS ties into your overall Department strategy
   Include how your Action Plan will be supported e.g. allocation of resources, personnel, financial etc.

   Ongoing life of SAT

   The section describing the future formal plans for the SAT are often weak. Thought needs to be given to succession planning (especially of student representatives), what the constitution of the SAT (or whatever committee it evolves into) becomes, and how this group will implement the action plan, infiltrate all levels of the departmental structure, and provide ongoing oversight of the delivery of the plan

4. **Focus Groups**
   If you have held student focus groups make sure to give the detail on numbers by gender

5. **Presentation of data**

Data needs to be presented clearly and consistently. This really should not have to be said to academics from numerate disciplines, but some data presentations are shocking. First, get the basics right – if they ask for three years of data, then please provide this.

And be consistent – don't choose one three year period for one thing and another period for something else. Make sure graphs and tables are labeled clearly so its obvious what is being shown. Some variety in presentation between diagrams and tables can break up the monotony, as long as this is done clearly. Have someone check for consistency between data – it sometimes happens that the numbers that occur in the written text are not consistent with those in the tables. Make sure you provide benchmark data and use it to provide a context for your departmental issues.

6. **Dealing with issues**

For each data set presented, ask yourself what is the most obvious thing you can conclude from it. Are the numbers of female students on one programme significantly smaller than on another? Has the percentage of female professors gone down over the period measured? Is the proportion of women applying for promotion smaller than for men? Whatever you can see, the panel will be able to see, and you need to bring this out in the text.

Having drawn the obvious conclusion from the data, you then need to provide a diagnosis (or at least a hypothesis) as to why this is the case. Perhaps the entry requirements for programmes are different, or one programme can be taken in part-time mode. Perhaps there is no active training provided on how to apply for promotion. And so on.

Finally, having made the observation and diagnosis, propose an action that will (or ought to) address the issue. You won't believe the number of times that proposed actions have almost nothing to do with the issue that is blatantly staring you in the f

7. **Not having evidence**

   A number of applications include actions to gather further evidence. This could be for one of several reasons:

- there is a particularly strange or inexplicable issue for which there are several conflicting hypotheses, and more data is needed before an appropriate remedy can be proposed.
- The applicants can't think of anything to do, so they just suggest continuing to collect data, despite the fact that the issue is already obvious from existing data.
- The applicants have not done enough preliminary data collection to warrant submitting the application.

The first of these three reasons, if used sparingly and for specific issues would be OK. Unfortunately, you tend to see a lot more of the other two reasons, which are definitely not OK.

8. **Hiding behind institutional policies**

   There are a number of sections, such as flexible working and maternity leave cover, where your institution almost certainly has a policy. You should demonstrate how you support, monitor and enact such university-wide policies. However, while this is good in itself, don't hide behind it. Some applications just copy and paste the institution policy and leave it at that! You need to explain explicitly what your department is going to do additionally, and in a way that is sensitive to the issues in your department. The panel knows that institutions have certain legal obligations – don't think these are anything like enough.

9. **Circulation of final submission for input –** A good idea to ensure that you have involved not only your AS Self-Assessment Team but also perhaps a selection of Post Grad Students other department members in reading the application.

10. **Under each of the sections on Induction, PDRs**, etc. make sure to include staff feedback on these processes by gender

11. **Promotions Process –** highlight if you put any measures/supports in place to encourage female staff within the department to apply for promotions. Make sure to mention that the Reviewer Process is available for Progression and that staff considering promotion are encouraged to avail of the opportunity to have their applications assessed prior to submitting their applications formally. Ensure you explain the promotions process and set out that there is a process in place for Job Evaluation for Technical & Support Staff.

12. **Attitudinal Survey -** Ensure you include across each section the feedback you have received through the Staff and Student Survey. Ensure to include early on in the application the response rate by gender and within each section include the responses by gender also.

13. **Action Plan** – Prioritise your actions under each of the key headings. Number the actions under each of the headings e.g. Section 4 Career Development – Actions under this section should all commence with 4. Ensure to spread the responsibilities for actions across the department as well as across members of the AS self-Assessment Committee. Ensure the success measures you put in place are realistic i.e. don't set a target for example for the increase in female students at a level that is totally unachievable.

    Weak/vague actions

    Actions are supposed to produce measurable results, and over a staged time period of the award. Remember to apply the SMART methodology – the panel will be disappointed if too many of the actions are of the form "Monitor this", "Try to do that", "Improve the other". Also don't just have a bunch of actions to do immediately – you should have a progression that takes you through the period of the award, so you will be in a position to apply for Silver at that point. Weak action plans are often the downfall of proposals.

14. **Using small numbers as an excuse**

    It is particularly the case in certain disciplines (computer science and some engineering) that the numbers of female staff and students are so low, it makes certain kinds of action very challenging. For example, if you only have 3 female academic staff, it seems unfair to expect them to be on every single committee and appointment panel.

    The assessment panel know this. Don't use it as an excuse not to do anything. Try to come up with creative alternative plans. For example, invite people from other departments to help with the gender balance on appointment panels; for each major committee make sure there is one member that explicitly is tasked with raising E&D issues. As long as you are trying to do what you can, in a positive way, the panel will be sympathetic.

15. **Forgetting the purpose of application**

Bizarrely, towards the end of the application, some applicants seem to forget the purpose of the application. Thus you can get long discussions of workload allocation models, for example, without any reference whatsoever as to how it impacts on gender equality issues. These sections are there because they describe areas where there is potential to make changes and make a difference – think about how you can do this.

Above all – give yourself time to write the report, sense check it, and go through an internal moderation process before submission. Many of the above issues would be caught if a sensible moderated process was adhered to. Unfortunately, some applications look like they were rushed at the last minute with little or no basic checking and proof-reading. This just wastes everyone's time.