

Athena Swan Australia Advisory Committee

Meeting 3 Minutes

Date and time	Monday 14th October 2024 2:00-3:30pm AEDT 1:30-2:30pm ACDT 1:00-1:30pm AEST 11:00am-12:30pm AWST	
Venue	Virtual – MS Teams	
Attendees	<p>Catherine Elliott (Chair) The Kids Research Institute</p> <p>Andrew Deeks Murdoch University</p> <p>Cobie Rudd Edith Cowan University</p> <p>Edwin Hawkins WEHI</p> <p>Gail Crimmins University of the Sunshine Coast</p> <p>Janin Bredehoeft SAGE CEO</p>	<p>Jessica Buck The Kids Research Institute</p> <p>Kay Latham RMIT</p> <p>Kumi de Silva UTS</p> <p>Mel Fuller Defence Science Technology Group</p> <p>Zlatko Skrbis Australian Catholic University</p> <p>Tamzen Armer (Secretariat) SAGE Athena Swan Lead</p>
Apologies	<p>Andrew Heap Geoscience Australia</p> <p>Fiona Stapleton UNSW</p> <p>Kate Huppatz Western Sydney University</p>	

Item	Notes
Welcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Chair welcomed committee members to the meeting, acknowledged Country and introduced new committee member, Dr Jessica Buck, Senior Research Fellow studying childhood brain cancer in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children at The Kids Institute. The minutes of the previous meeting were endorsed by Zlatko Skrbis and Cobie Rudd.
SAGE updates	<p>Janin covered SAGE updates, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The first two Silver Athena Swan Awards in Australia were awarded to Edith Cowan University and the University of Newcastle in early September. Both organisations have received good local media for their achievements, and it's been particularly rewarding to hear from the 'people on the ground' in both organisations who've benefited from the work that has been done. Newcastle held an event in late September at which they were presented with the award; ECU will do so later this month. As a result of the review of the Silver applications, SAGE has developed an Expectations Framework to more clearly define the requirements for progress from the Bronze to Gold award. SAGE has engaged the Global Institute for Women's Leadership to undertake an independent evaluation of the SAGE Athena Swan program.

Item	Notes
	<p>The evaluation project started last month with discovery and a literature review, particularly around the effectiveness, benefits and constraints of participation in the program, from both an Australian perspective and internationally. The research team will be conducting 10-15 interviews and a number of focus groups with Australian institutions, as well as circulating a survey to subscribers to gather broader input and feedback. Analysis and reports will be finalised in March 2025.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SAGE has received \$7 million in funding over 5 years from DISR to expand into the VET sector and bring more Medical Research Institutes on board. We will be developing tailored programs to meet these sectors' needs, as well as developing tools and resources to support all subscribers. We'll also be further developing the leadership program we piloted in May. This funding has been awarded as part of DISR's response to the independent Pathway to Diversity in STEMM Review, which recommended increasing support for SAGE due to the organisation's whole-of-system approach to change, and track record in improving STEMM workplace diversity. • SAGE has formed a new 'Grants Working Group' with the aim of working to encourage the funding bodies to be more educated in GEDI and to increase diversity and inclusion in their funding requirements. We have met with the ARC's Chief Research Officer, who is keen to work with us to increase assessor's GEDI capabilities. <p><i>Questions/Comments:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will the program for the VET sector be like the current Athena Swan program? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Unclear. The funding is to co-design a program with the sector to meet its needs. However, it will follow the same framework in terms of being evidence-driven and requiring analysis of data, action planning, implementation and evaluating outcomes. • It seems like the training that is being developed for leaders would also be relevant to the funding bodies and their assessors. There is an opportunity to align rather than duplicate work.
Intersectionality	<p>Tamzen presented on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What the data (from the Victorian Commission for Gender Equity in the Public Service) tells us about intersectional experiences of inequity • What data from the SAGE Cygnets tells us about organisations' ability to undertake intersectional analysis • What support SAGE has provided to date to support organisations to take an intersectional approach to their GEDI work <p><i>Questions/Comments:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The presentation didn't reference regionality as an aspect of intersectionality, but it definitely plays a role. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ We often hear about how important regionality is in the Australian context and for the Australian HER sector. The image of diversity dimensions included in the presentation was a reference to the DCA resource on collecting diversity data that we are seeking permission to share.

Discussion on the future focus of the SAGE Athena Swan framework

The Chair and Janin clarified the advice the Board are seeking from the ASAAC, namely guidance to inform the focus of SAGE going forward (e.g. Should this be broader than gender equity? To what extent should an intersectional approach be required?). This comes in light of Advance HE's current project to develop a [holistic charter](#) (to be delivered in the UK in addition to Athena Swan and the Race Equality Charter).

Key points from the discussion were:

- An intersectional approach to gender equity has always been a requirement of SAGE Athena Swan. It is embedded in the principles to which senior leaders commit on joining SAGE and has been a part of the Bronze application since the pilot stage. Recognising that organisations often have limited capacity and capability to collect and analyse diversity data, and to ensure that data collection isn't a deterrent to joining SAGE, increasing organisational capacity and ability to take an intersectional approach has always been an expectation at progressively higher award levels. SAGE needs to continue to educate people and support institutions to apply an intersectional lens to their GEDI work.
- While we've undoubtedly seen progress in increasing women's representation, not all women are experiencing the same gains. Representation in senior leadership roles does not mirror the workforce, and women who are still being excluded are concerned that not all women are benefiting from the gains made. Engaging with intersectionality would support the inclusion of all people.
- Universities make and shape broader culture, so while intersectional GEDI work is undoubtedly complex, it's also necessary. Intersectionality is important to younger people, who are looking for role models who are more like them (e.g. Aboriginal women are looking for Aboriginal women role models, not just women role models). Universities can and should be cultural leaders in best practice GEDI.
- Gender equity is a key measure for many organisations. On the one hand, despite progress, we still haven't reached gender balance and so need to stay focused on that. On the other, the fact we haven't reached gender balance yet suggests that what we've been doing isn't working. If we try something different, e.g. taking an intersectional approach and including all women, we may see further progress.
- If SAGE Athena Swan takes a holistic approach, encompassing all diversity, it may lose its effectiveness. There is a case for siloed approaches, led by people with relevant lived experience, being the most effective course of action, with SAGE Athena Swan staying focused on gender. However, intersectionality shows us that people don't live in single siloes, and this approach may increase burden for people who inhabit multiple siloes and result in duplication of efforts and a wasting of resources. The data also show that we miss important insights if we separate work into siloes.
- If we SAGE does take an intersectional approach to gender equity, it's important to be clear on what intersections should be addressed. Trying to look at everything can result in us breaking data down into smaller and smaller groups, to point of single individuals, which raises issues of privacy. Gail's research on the effectiveness of Athena Swan in the UK revealed that context is important for determining which intersections should be explored. Her work revealed that religion was salient in the Northern Irish context in a way that it wasn't in England, Scotland or Wales, with Catholics in NI experiencing significant disadvantage. This

	<p>suggests that organisations need to have the scope to collect and analyse data to determine what is salient in their context and focus accordingly.</p> <p>Next steps: A paper will be drafted to go to the Board next year on the risks and benefits of SAGE maintaining a focus on intersectional gender equity. The findings of the evaluation of the SAGE Athena Swan program will also feed into this. The Athena Swan Australia Advisory Committee will have the opportunity to review and comment on the paper before it goes to the Board.</p> <p>Action 1: Please send Cath, Janin or Tamzen any further thoughts for inclusion in the paper.</p> <p>Action 2: SAGE to circulate paper to ASAAC before tabling to the Board.</p>
Next meeting	<p>March 2024 (Date TBC)</p> <p>Action 3: All ASAAC members to complete Doodle poll to determine date/time of next meeting.</p>

Actions arising

No.	What	Who	When
1	Please send Cath, Janin or Tamzen any further thoughts for inclusion in the paper.	All	By end November 2024
2	SAGE to circulate paper to ASAAC before tabling to the Board.	SAGE	Early 2025
3	Complete Doodle poll to determine date/time of next meeting.	All	By end October 2024