Questions and Answers on the SAGE new design for the Bronze to Silver Pathway

Questions consolidated from all SAGE webinars held on 2 – 5 June 2020

Scope of SAGE

1. Will SAGE extend beyond STEMM? When will the scope of SAGE Athena SWAN awards be broadened beyond STEMM?
    a. As advised in the recent SAGE communication "Transition from Pilot Study to National Roll Out", SAGE Ltd is enabling flexible, holistic and whole of institution approach. The SAGE Design for bronze to Silver Awards re-iterates this and provides institutions the flexibility to address holistic, large-scale and priority strategic actions. In addition, intersectional approaches are embedded into the design to support this.
    b. Furthermore, the flexibility of the SAGE new design serves different types of institutions in terms of structure & governance, size and complexity.
    c. The SAGE Ltd board will be further articulating the SAGE vision and mission once it is appointed and assumes its role (anticipated in August – September 2020).

Timeframes to Silver and Bronze Renewals

2. What is the timeframe to apply for Silver and about Bronze Renewal? What if the institution is not ready to apply for Silver? How does this new process interact with maintaining Bronze accreditation (should Silver not be achieved); for example, is achieving Cygnets in three out of five Key Priority Areas equal to maintaining Bronze? And Given that COVID-19 will have prolonged impacts, if organisations don't want to pursue Silver yet, what is the process for maintaining Bronze, particularly for Cohort 1 organisations?

    a. Applications for Silver awards will be required to be made at the end of the five-years Bronze validity period (Bronze award validity commences from the date of conferral of the award). For example, the first Bronze awardees received their awards on 5 December 2018. Allowing five-years, applications for silver award will be due to be submitted in March 2024.
    b. SAGE will continue to support institutions to enable their journey and readiness to apply for Silver awards by the end of the Bronze five-year validity period; the new SAGE design aims to help institutions to be well placed to assess their readiness over the course of Progress and Impact reports and SAGE Cygnet awards.
    c. Where it is evident that progress and impact are not sufficient, the process has inbuilt flexibilities – such as extending timeframes, providing additional support, or offering a grace period (at Bronze level) of up to 12 months. In any case, renewal of Bronze requires demonstration of progress – evidence that some actions have been implemented and some change has been achieved – renewal is not the same as ground zero application.

3. It is this design being implemented too late for Cohort 1 (and 2) institutions? Does their implementation work have to stop? Will the remaining period of the award validity be sufficient?
    a. Institutions that have started and progressed implementation are quite likely already acting on priority areas and no doubt will be monitoring and collecting data on these. As such, material may already be prepared for use in a report. SAGE will

roll out guidance and training around September 2020 – we would welcome the opportunity to work with institutions that have been progressing their implementation to test the guidance and templates for Cygnet reports.

    b. By no longer pursuing departmental awards, we have improved the utility of the validity period.

4. Will SAGE have a phased call for Silver that institutions apply for?

    a. No. Institutional Bronze Awardees can apply when they have completed Progress and Impact Reports for five Key Priority Areas and have achieved 5 SAGE Cygnet Awards. (within the 5-year bronze award validity period).

Athena SWAN Departmental Awards and SAGE Cygnet Awards

5. Will institutions be able to apply for Departmental Awards and When will the Departmental Award guidance be released?

    a. SAGE new design removes Departmental applications and awards. That is; these awards will not be available under the SAGE approach.

    b. SAGE design introduces a new approach for the bronze to silver awards that creates flexibility for institutional Bronze awardees to customise their own journey to an Institutional Silver Award through both organisation-wide AND local area actions (which may reflect the UK's Department structures).

6. Does a Cygnet count as a Departmental Award? Will members need a Departmental Award to be eligible to apply for Silver?

    a. No. The SAGE Cygnet Awards are not Departmental awards and do not count as such. As noted at Q3 above, new design removes Departmental applications and awards and as such they do not apply as part of the eligibility to apply for Institutional Silver.

7. Does the new design mean that individual faculties/schools do not have to go through the intensive data collection process required for a [UK-style] Departmental Award?

    a. The removal of Departmental Awards removes the UK-style approach and application process.

    b. The SAGE new design introduces a fit-for-purpose approach whereby Progress and Impact reports will be prepared by institutional Bronze awardees when sufficient evidence can be demonstrated for each of five Key Priority Areas defined from the institutional Bronze award application.

    c. Data and evidence will be collected on actions grouped within each of the 5 Key Priority Areas. Under this approach, Key Priority Areas may be decided that address organisational sub-units with specific challenges. These may be considered as reflecting the UK style Department but may also be defined differently based on the institution's structure and needs as. Data and evidence gathering will centre on actions that aim to drive local change within a particular Key Priority.

8. Is the UK getting rid of Departmental Awards too?

   a. Advance HE is in the process of detailing its approach to acting on the recommendations arising from the review of Athena SWAN. An overarching response to the review's recommendation can be viewed at [https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/charters/athena-swan-charter/advance-he-response-recommendations-independent-review-athena-swan].

   b. A number of the review's recommendations propose reforms to the Departmental Awards in the UK, including removing the requirement for majority of departments to have achieved a departmental award before an institution could apply for institutional silver.

9. Is there a risk that Advance HE will not endorse SAGE's Silver pathway model? What will happen if they refuse to let SAGE associate the Athena SWAN brand with the proposed pathway? Will SAGE separate from Advance HE and create its own brand for these awards?

   a. SAGE has and continues to work closely and collaborate with Advance HE consistent with its licence agreement and the broader collaboration to support the objectives of the Athena SWAN Charter and its international recognition.

   b. The new SAGE design has been carefully developed to reduce the burden of the process whilst also maintaining and upholding the rigour and reputation of Athena SWAN.

   c. SAGE has briefed and shared the new design with Advance HE and will formalise this in keeping with the partnership and collaboration. It is noted that SAGE has indeed introduced variations and improvements to the Athena SWAN process during the Pilot phase and that were well supported by Advance HE.

   d. In publishing their response to the Athena SWAN review recommendations, the CEO of Advance HE, Ms. Alison Johns, confirmed that the review of the UK's Athena SWAN has no compulsion for change by other nations that have adopted and adapted Athena SWAN.

10. What is the difference between a Cygnet Award and a Departmental Award?

    a. Athena SWAN in the UK has awards for both Institutions and Departments (that are part of the institutions). The approach in the UK requires an institution to achieve an institutional Bronze award prior to its Departments being able to apply for Departmental Awards.

    b. The application and process for both types of awards are similar with a few differences including that Departmental award application introduce greater granularity for data; data are focused on the specific disciplines/staff/students comprising the department; and examine the implementation of institutional policies.

    c. The UK's Departmental awards also require up to two years to prepare an application, which culminates in an Action Plan specific for the Department.

    d. The SAGE Cygnet Awards are based on Progress and Impact Reports prepared from Key Priority Areas defined from the Institutional Bronze Award Action Plan. As such, they build on and complement holistic, large-scale and priority strategic actions across the institution.

Key Priority Areas

11. Do Key Priority Areas need to be pre-approved by SAGE, or is it up to the institutions? Can someone review my priority areas before implementing them to know that what I have developed is enough?
    a. Key Priority Areas do not require pre-approval by SAGE. Institutions are best informed on their priorities and have sole discretion to decided these.
    b. SAGE will assist with advice and guidance and will also identify 'critical friends' to help.

12. Can you give us a sense of how you define a sub-unit, or is that up to us?

    a. Institutions have flexibility to define their sub-unit. These could be akin to a department/faculty or school, a specific discipline within one of these structures, or groups of staff/students that may be particularly impacted by challenges and/or barriers to gender equity, diversity and inclusion. In some cases, these may also be areas of best practice in gender equity, diversity and inclusion.

    b. Institutions will be able to seek advice from SAGE to inform their approach.

13. Are the Key Priority Areas going to be sub-sets of actions from the Bronze action plan, or could actions that were **not** part of the Bronze action plan, but emerged later, be included in a Progress and Impact Report?

    a. Yes. A key principle of the SAGE new design is the opportunity to recognise:

        i. critical evaluation and learning from actions that did not achieve desired outcomes; and

        ii. developments beyond those described in the action plan that may arise from local innovation; are recognised and built on good practice in the sector; or were initiated locally due to changing circumstances (eg restructuring).

14. If I change an action or milestone in my Bronze action plan (e.g. if we found a more effective solution), do I have to provide a rationale for doing so, and where should I do this?

    a. Yes. Institutions can change actions or milestones (see answer to question 13) from the institutional Bronze Award Action Plan. Incorporating explanation to this effect is important in the context of assessing the current state of gender equity, diversity and inclusion and be made as part of the silver application (Retrospective element 2, Part B of the SAGE new design).

15. How big does a Key Priority Area need to be? How many actions from the Bronze application should it cover? What happens to the actions from my pre-Cygnet Bronze action plan that aren't included in any of my 5 Key Priority Areas? Do I drop them?

    a. When shaping action plans into Key Priority Areas, institutions need to consider their strategic priorities and the timeframes they have set to achieve actions. They also need to consider how actions fit and interlink within a priority area.

b. It is understandable that not all actions may be addressed through the five Key Priority Areas and in the timeframe between Bronze and Silver. The UK's Athena SWAN experience shows this to be the case under the UK's process.

c. Actions from the institutional Bronze Award Action Plan that do not get incorporated into any of the five Key Priority Areas will be considered and addressed as part of the silver application assessment (Retrospective element 2, Part B of the SAGE new design). In this process, institutions will be able to consider how their five Key Priority Areas and Cygnet Awards have shaped the gender equity, diversity and inclusion and assess the continued relevance of and any changes that may be required for those other actions that remain on the Bronze Action plan.

d. The Silver application will contain guidance, to be developed in consultation with SAGE members, to assist in this.

16. Can a priority area be comprised of one action?
    a. There may be a few or large number of actions that fit under one key question within you action plan (eg. can be collated into a priority area or framework approach)– you may have already identified this when your action plan was developed, or you may indeed further refine this now as part of identifying key priority areas. The key approach is to consider what they are, how they interlink, etc. Again, SAGE will guide and advise on the approach.
    b. If it is one action, provide evidence for that and rationale for what make one action a key priority.

17. Is the SAT going to be a core part of the Silver application pathway again, like it was for Bronze?

    a. The Silver application form and guidance is being refined to reflect SAGE members' feedback on the Bronze application and embed learning from the Pilot period. We have captured good experiences and insights on the SAT process and make up, some of which highlighted models to avoid and these learnings will be addressed in the Silver application (and the Bronze).

    b. SAGE is aware that institutional Bronze awardees are also now reforming or disbanding the SAT as they progress with implementation of action plans – this change responds to a number of factors including difference in the task, the responsibilities and accountabilities and the respective roles across institutions.

    c. The key requirements in approaches such as SAT or alternative structures relate to the need to:

        i. demonstrate effective engagement and consultation across the institution and to evidence that staff (and students) have been afforded the opportunity to be involved in and contributed to the change journey;

        ii. effective governance and accountabilities to support and resource actions and assure effective implementation.

d. SAGE will introduce improvements to the Silver application that deliver flexibility and suit institutional existing structures, which will be informed by consultation with SAGE members.

18. How will the new application form integrate sections such as Intersectionality and Indigenous staff/students to create a smoother narrative?

    a. As noted in the answer to the preceding question (16), SAGE will progress refinements to the SAGE application in consultation with the SAG members. Both elements are critical and have been given close attention to embed improvements from SAGE Pilot learnings.

19. How do I complete current state of gender equity, diversity and inclusion?
    a. The Silver award application form will be similar to the bronze application; as such, you will be required to complete the application guided by a series of questions and/or data sets to be reported on. Some of these would already be addressed in your 5 Cygnet awards – if so, do not repeat or re-write, you can simply cite the report. For others, you may want to provide an overarching summary of highlights from your Cygnet reports and/or explain the situation; that is, where is your institution now, why and where to from there? Eg. Any changes in priority areas will be addressed in this part - what may have been a priority pre-COVID may no longer be after? Capture the learnings and explain the change. Focus on the key areas that will make the most change. Any and all actions will naturally be addressed as part of your current state.

20. How is the Silver pathway going to intersect with the pathway to Gold?

    a. The SAGE new design is developed to continue to serve the journey to Gold award. By focusing on Key Priority Areas that are defined from action plans, the approach continues to support holistic, large-scale and strategic actions and prioritises outcome and impact.

    b. In addition, as is the case in the UK's definition of "Beacon" status as a requirement for Gold, the design enables promotes innovation in practice through collaboration between institutions. It also supports focus on sustainable impact, which is required for the level of change needed for Gold awards.

Progress and Impact Reports – SAGE Cygnet Awards

21. What is significant progress/impact?
    a. This is the evidence to demonstrate achievement of most/all of the success measures identified and explanation of rationale of why the institution has not reached all these measures.
    b. SAGE will be working closely with SAGE members, and informed by models of good practice, to finalise the guidance and technical specifications that inform the development of the Progress and Impact Reports and their assessment by expert reviewers.
    c. The SAGE Data framework will also be of relevance to this – it will require definition of sets of metrics to inform the assessment of progress and impact nationally. However, it is important to recognise that the Athena SWAN, and the new SAGE

design, are a flexible – as such, progress and impact are always assessed relative to the institution.

22. Do I have to pay for a Cygnet?
    a. No. the institutional subscription fee is all inclusive.

23. Can we choose a non-STEMM subunit as a Key Priority Area?
    a. Yes, if it is a strategic priority for your institution.

24. Can a Sub-unit initiate the SAGE Cygnet Award process?
    a. A subunit (eg. department or faculty, or part of) can discuss its gender equity, diversity and inclusion challenges with its parent institution and agree how to incorporate that as a Key Priority Area to be considered for a SAGE Cygnet award. However, only the subscribing institution is responsible for submitting the Progress and Impact Report for a Cygnet award. SAGE will not accept applications for Cygnet awards directly from organisational subunits.

25. Do Cygnets require a mix of organisational and sub-unit Key Priority Area examples?

    a. The Progress and Impact Reports for Cygnet Awards will be required for organisation-wide and organisational sub-unit Key Priority Areas. Institutions will be required to have a minimum of one for each but are free to decide the remaining from either domain.

    b. A mixed Key Priority Area, and a Progress and Impact, are not required under the SAGE design.

    c. However, SAGE will consult closely with MRIs and PFRA on the need to finetune this approach to ensure adapting the organsiational sub-unit to their respective organisational structures.

26. When do we submit our report for Cygnet? Is it up to the institutions when they submit these reports, or will SAGE issue guidelines for this?
    a. Progress and Impact Reports can be submitted anytime during the bronze award validity period. These Reports may be submitted individually or together. It is important that these reports demonstrate sufficient evidence of progress and impact when they are submitted.
    b. Institutions are empowered to determine when to do so, and they will be able to seek advice from SAGE to guide them in formulating their decision.

27. Is there a mandatory waiting period between receiving Bronze and submitting the first Progress and Impact Report? How will we ensure that these reports reflect sustained impact, and not one-off or short-term improvements in gender equity, diversity and inclusion?
    a. There is no mandatory waiting period to submit a Progress and Impact Report. Preparation and submission of these reports will be informed by demonstration of sufficient evidence for each Key Priority Area.
    b. Sustained impact is an important aspect of these reports, which will be detailed as part of the guidance and technical specifications to be developed for these reports.

This guidance will be developed in close consultation with SAGE members and expertise from across the sector.

28. What happens if I submit all five reports for Cygnets at the same time as application?
    a. You cannot – these reports must be submitted, and the certification and conferral of the Cygnet Award completed before the application for silver is made.
    b. The timing should consider the amount of time an institution will require to prepare the silver application (that is, the retrospective element 2 and prospective element) – both of which will be informed by the 5 Key Priority Areas and their respective reports.

29. What happens if I fail in one or more report for Cygnet? Can I resubmit? Is there a limit on how many times I can resubmit?
    a. SAGE appointed expert reviewers will provide feedback and SAGE will support applicants with advice/guidance to incorporate the feedback so as to ensure that their actions on the feedback achieve the Cygnet award. Guidance on the development of the Progress and Impact Report for a Cygnet award will be prepared in close consultation with the sector – it is envisaged that this process will be similar to the peer review process of research papers.
    b. SAGE will work to assure efficiency in process and to avoid iterative re-submissions of Progress and Impact Reports.
    c. As suggested by some of the SAGE members, change management principles regarding sustained impact will also be included in the guidance for these reports and the Silver award application.

30. Will there be an award event for Cygnets?
    a. No, but SAGE will publish the reports and promote achievements via its social media and the SAGE website.

31. Will the Progress and Impact reports be published? Can institutions collaborate on Cygnet reports?
    a. Yes - SAGE will use them to promote nationally, internationally and particularly with DISER and to the Government.
    b. SAGE will encourage and support collaborations to create and build the evidence base for good and effective practices. Community support will also be taken into account as part of the Silver application. However, it is critical that institutions provide context specific evidence to support their Progress and Impact Reports.

32. Will there be examples of what a successful Progress and Impact Report should look like? Will that be part of the training?
    a. Yes. SAGE, in consultation with SAGE members, will develop guidance and technical specifications and will use these to create examples to share with the sector and for training purposes as well as to inform the expert review process.

33. Will the new Silver guidance be specific to different institution types, e.g. PFRAs and MRIs?
    a. Yes. The new design is developed with the view to enable flexibility to suit the different types of institutions. SAGE will continue to consult closely with SAGE members on the development of the guidance and technical specifications to

b. support effective implementation of the new design.

Expert and Peer Reviews

34. Will peer review be required for all Cygnets? How could you manage the organisation and timing of peer review for the Cygnets? Will this be onerous for the sector? Who will be on the expert panel?
    a. All Progress and Impact reports will be reviewed by independent expert reviewers for the SAGE certification of Cygnet Awards.
    b. It is anticipated that expert reviewers will be selected for subject areas and will be trained with guidance also available to support the review process. The process will be modelled on that applied by research journals; however, SAGE is looking at a number of models including that applied by the Australian Research Council for its Engagement and Impact framework.
    c. The process will be designed to be efficient for the sector and SAGE. SAGE will consult the sector on this process. Also, insights to be gained from the evaluation of the SAGE peer review process (to commence around 10 June) will also be taken into consideration.

General Questions

35. Has there been any work done to look at the intersection between SAGE Bronze/Silver awards and the Victorian GEA audit and requirements?
    a. Yes. SAGE has been held discussions and briefings with the Victorian Government and has shared materials on the SAGE approach and developments.
    b. SAGE will continue to engage with federal and state/territory governments to explore opportunities to reduce burden and leverage collaboration across initiatives aimed to advance gender equity, diversity and inclusion.

36. What is SAGE's advice for institutions who are struggling to maintain jobs (and thus meet gender targets) in the face of the pandemic?

    a. SAGE encourages institutions to stay the course and continue to apply a gender lense in their approaches to assessing and responding to the impacts of COVID-19, and as they progress in implementing actions from their Bronze action plans.

    b. The SAGE new design provides the required flexibility to enable institutions to reprioritise, where necessary, any of their actions to focus on changes priorities and to capture learnings and apply innovations in their approach to responding to COVID-19. The approach facilitates and supports collaborative approaches, from which institutions may be able to work more closely and cooperatively on sharing novel solutions to the challenges posed by COVID-19.

37. How can universities set out the context for other impacts from COVID-19 that (unlike number of staff) are beyond their direct control, e.g. changes to childcare responsibilities due to school closures?

    a. As noted at answer to question 35, SAGE will continue to engage with national and state/territory Governments to support gender equity, diversity and inclusion. SAGE has continued to attract the support of the Federal Government, and as such can act as a conduit to raising issues that could impact national outcomes. This advocacy

role will continue via the SAGE Ltd Board in due course. SAGE members and the sector are encouraged to bring forth such matters to SAGE, so that they could be progressed for further consideration by respective governments and national peal bodies.

38. Who do we send additional questions to?

   a. Please forward any questions and/comments on the SAGE new design for the Bronze to silver pathway to Dr. Wafa El-Adhami, SAGE Executive Director by email wafa.el-adhami@science.org.au.

39. What has the gender balance of attendees at the Silver pathway briefings been like?

   a. The SAGE briefings on the new design for Bronze to Silver pathway have been well-attended by SAGE member institutions, with a total of 63 participants including Heads of Institutions. More women attended these webinars, reflecting similar observations noted in various SAGE events and also information reported in Athena SWAN applications.