INCREASING THE DIVERSITY OF AUSTRALIA'S RESEARCH WORKFORCE
DECEMBER 2019

The [Australian Academy of the Humanities](#) (AAH) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Australian Research Council (ARC) consultation on *Increasing the Diversity of Australia's Research Workforce: A Pathway to Gender Equality in ARC Grant Funding Processes*.

The Academy is the peak body for the humanities in Australia. Our 640-strong [Fellowship](#) are recognised experts in the [humanities disciplines](#) spanning culture, arts, history, languages, linguistics, literature, media and communications, philosophy and ethics, religion, archaeology and heritage.

The issue of gender equity and workforce diversity is at the forefront of our strategic agenda. A key goal of our current ARC-funded study on the [Future Humanities Workforce](#) is to address the adverse effect that gender inequity has on the health and capability of the humanities workforce. As part of this project we have looked closely at initiatives in other sectors, and in the sciences.

Our research indicates that gender-based initiatives have a positive impact and that a range of interventions beyond 'pipeline' solutions are required. These include efforts to create positive environments in order to retain women in the system; a focus on recruitment strategies; representation in leadership and on decision-making committees; informing policy development and advisory structures; introducing gender equity criteria and weighting in grant programs; and proactive outreach and engagement strategies.

In Australia, gender equity has been identified as a priority for the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields. As a consequence, there are a number of policy and institutional initiatives seeking to address imbalance in these fields, such as the 'Science in Australia Gender Equity' (SAGE) program, and the government-funded Women in STEM Decadal Plan, cited in the ARC's Discussion Paper (Science in Australia Gender Equality, *Gender Equity in STEMM*, 2016; Australian Academy of Science, *Women in STEM Decadal Plan,* 2019).

Many STEM disciplines (particularly in the allied health domain) share a common gender profile with HASS fields, with over-representation of women in the workforce overall and particularly in the undergraduate, postgraduate, and early to mid-career range, and stark under-representation in leadership positions. There is parity at Levels A and B, but at level C the picture starts to change, and in Levels D and E gender disparity is pronounced across the board. Likewise, HASS fields such as philosophy and economics exhibit pronounced gender disparity from the start of the 'pipeline' right through to senior levels. Among other things, this has ongoing consequences for the gender pay gap (see, for example, Mate and Ulm, 2016).

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The ARC's *Gender and the Research Workforce Report* (2019) indicates that parity exists in humanities and creative arts (HCA) fields at two-digit level until Level D. At Level E, 37 per cent of professors are women, while in fields such as philosophy this figure drops as low as 22 per cent. The Academy's 2014 study, *Mapping the Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences in Australia* (Turner and Brass, 2014), found evidence of gendered employment patterns in the humanities, with significantly more 'teaching only' staff being female.

As part of our research, we have examined in detail the implementation of the SAGE initiative in Australia and specifically whether it could be applied across all fields of research – as is the case in the UK and in Canada. If anything, the HASS experience provides a lesson to STEM that simply addressing pipeline – getting more women in the system – may not bring about the desired long-term structural change.

The ARC is right to take a whole-of-sector approach; it would be counter-productive to do otherwise. The risk, however, is that specific issues which may be affecting career advancement in particular parts of the sector will be overlooked. A one-size-fits-all approach may not be the appropriate solution.

1. **Proposal 1: Introducing a target of at least 50 per cent of applications per institution from women for the Discovery Early Career Researcher (DECRA) scheme by 2023.**

Q1: Should the ARC introduce a requirement to have 50 per cent of DECRA applications from women?

Yes.

In undertaking our own consultation conducted for the Future Humanities Workforce project, we found evidence for the effectiveness of quotas, as well as an appetite to introduce this measure in recruitment, committee, leadership and grant making processes. Quotas are an effective method for generating meaningful change. Initiatives that focus on aspirational targets tend to place the onus on women to affect the necessary change, and fail to address the status of dominant groups or demand any accountability for their lack of diversity. In this context, introducing quotas sends a clear signal and would help to ensure that inequalities are addressed more rapidly.

Increasing the presence of women across all levels of employment in academia is vital, as a lack of visible role models impacts the career advancement prospects for women, especially at senior levels. The Academy has formed this view after having consulted with Canada's granting agencies about their gender equity and workforce diversity strategies. These discussions have revealed a positive experience arising out of the introduction of a quota in the Canadian research context, specifically within the Canada Research Chairs program, which has seen a significant shift toward gender parity as a result of the quota (Government of Canada, Canada Research Chairs).

Q2: Please outline any impact or perverse outcomes you foresee resulting from the initiative.

The chief concern we have with the DECRA target is that it will be met quickly in certain disciplines and at an aggregate university level, and it will not address problems across other ARC schemes (and career stages) where the gender imbalances are more pronounced. The perverse outcome could be characterised as maintaining the 'status quo'.

The Academy has looked at the DECRA results in the humanities and creative arts (HCA) fields between 2016 and 2020 (i.e. the last five years), and even allowing for the fact that women have a higher success rate than men in the scheme, we are already at parity. In fact, the calculations we have done indicate that of 231 projects awarded in HCA disciplines over that period, 137 were female applicants (59 per cent).

If reporting is only to occur at an aggregate institutional level (as proposed in the Discussion Paper), over-representation of females in the HASS fields will make up for STEM shortfalls. A 50 per cent institution-wide quota may well exacerbate the well-documented 'ghetto' effect of siloing women in STEM rather than create a more even representation which needs the underlying structural issues to be addressed. At a minimum, we would recommend reporting at a more granular level, as there is real variability at a two-digit and particularly four-digit discipline level. Results could be contextualised relative to size of the workforce (FTE).

Our other concern is that the DECRA scheme does not provide an adequate pathway for affecting the necessary system change. Successful DECRA candidates are generally not guaranteed ongoing employment with their Administrating Organisation at the conclusion of their grant.

The ARC Discussion Paper itself specifies the imbalances in other schemes, particularly the major investment schemes where there is critical mass and opportunity for workforce development impacts: foremost, the Centres of Excellence and Industrial Transformation schemes. We would also single out Future Fellowships, which are a vitally important scheme at mid-career level for emerging institutional leaders. This is also a pool of applicants who are the career stage to be peer assessors and members of the College of Experts.

We recommend the implementation of quotas (in conjunction with other initiatives) for all of the ARC's programs, which could be a staged introduction year by year. This *includes* Laureates and Directors of Centres of Excellence.

Q3: Do you have alternative proposals for mechanisms open to the ARC to increase the support for women in early career research? Please include the argument for your proposal and suggestions for implementation.

In its suite of gender initiatives, we recommend that the ARC think more holistically about the DECRA scheme, beyond the basic numerical imbalance. We suggest two areas of immediate consideration:

1. **Changes to DECRA selection criteria and weighting**

Guidelines for the DE21 have recently changed, with the weighting of the 'DECRA candidate' category having increased from 40 to 50 per cent (ARC Discovery Program Grant Guidelines & Agreement Changes – 2019, p. 7). This shift is at odds with the recommendations of the 2018 parliamentary inquiry on Australian Government Funding Arrangement for non-NHMRC Research:

> "Recommendation 7: reweighting of criteria and metrics for EMCRs to reflect career stages of researchers, and favour the strength of the research proposal rather than track record." (Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training, *Australian Government Funding Arrangements for non-NHMRC Research*, 2018, p. xix).

The rationale for this recommendation is that:

> A focus on chief investigators and track record when assessing grant applications was identified as particularly problematic for EMCRs, as well as other research groups. This is because EMCRs tend to juggle teaching and administrative duties, which leaves them less time to conduct research. They are therefore not well positioned to build and demonstrate a track record which is needed to be competitive. (pp. 41-43).

The Academy's Future Humanities Workforce project reveals that a committed approach to achieving gender equity must consider not only numerical imbalance within the workforce, but a gendered academic culture more broadly. It is often the case that despite seemingly positive gender equity numbers in a particular discipline or at an institution, complex structural and cultural issues may continue to perpetuate inequities and contribute to women being "squeezed out" of the research system (Australian Academy of the Humanities, "Women in the Humanities Workshop Report," July 2019).

Internationally, there are a number of programs taking a more holistic approach to address gender inequities that we recommend to the ARC:

> The European Union's flagship Horizon 2020 scheme. In seeking to go beyond the numbers and think about gender equity across the research enterprise as a whole, the Horizon 2020 scheme requires the integration of gender equity in all aspects of its grant application. This extends to the **composition of advisory groups**, **research teams**, and **the content of projects**, with an expectation that proposed research takes account of possible differences between men and women (where applicable) (European Commission, *Fact sheet: Gender Equality in Horizon 2020*, 9 December 2013).

> In addition, Horizon 2020 includes "**gender training" among eligible project costs**, with the aim of helping researchers to further develop and share gender experience in relation to the funded project.

> In the UK the implementation of the **Athena SWAN program is tied to funding**, with granting agencies requiring evidence of progress in this area as a funding precondition (although this is not the case with arts and humanities departments in the UK) (Advance HE, "Athena SWAN Charter"; Woods and Harris, 2018). By 2020, Irish funding bodies will also require Athena SWAN accreditation for higher education institutions to be eligible for research funding (Science Foundation Ireland, "Irish Funding Bodies to Require Athena SWAN Gender Equality Accreditation for Higher Education Institutions to be Eligible for Research Funding"). The decision to tie advancement in gender equity with funding enhances accountability and advances gender equity in research. Potential gender-based Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) could be developed as part of the granting processes in Australia.

2. Expansion of existing ARC mentoring schemes

The ARC has already introduced a very successful mentoring scheme as part of its named Laureate Fellowships (Kathleen Fitzpatrick and Georgina Sweet) which itself has been a great success in rewarding top senior female scholars. A similar scheme should be considered at the ECR or Future Fellowship levels. There is room to expand on these schemes and to also provide for smaller satellite initiatives operated by the ARC.

2. Proposal 2: Introducing a target for the ARC College of Experts to be 50 per cent women by 2023 and for Selection Advisory Committees by 2025

Q4: Should the ARC increase the representation of women to 50 percent on the ARC College of Experts and Selection Advisory Committees by establishing a target?

Yes.

The ARC needs to better include the voices of women in decision-making processes. Such targets are already built into international schemes, such as Horizon 2020. See, for example, Bowman and Ulm (2009), which indicates a relationship between gender of the College of Experts and success rates for women. It does not matter if 50 per cent of the applications come from women if the structural issues are not addressed in the selection process.

Q5: Please outline any impact or perverse outcomes you foresee resulting from the initiative.

In actively recruiting more women to the College of Experts and Selection Advisory Committees, care needs to be taken to ensure that an undue burden does not fall on female representatives, particularly in disciplines where the numbers of senior men outstrip women.

Q6: Do you have alternative proposals for mechanisms open to the ARC to improve the representation of women in ARC assessment processes? Please include the argument for your proposal and suggestions for implementation.

The proposed initiative is sound as a means of increasing female representation. We would suggest, however, that it is the entire College of Experts – male and female – which bears a responsibility for addressing gender biases in the system. Another suggestion might be to have a quota of women from each university who register as ARC assessors.

3. Proposal 3: Releasing additional information on the ARC website about the proportion by institution of women including in applications for ARC grants.

Q7: Should the ARC publish data on institutional performance (applications by gender) on its website?

Yes.

Research conducted for the Future Humanities Workforce project reveals the critical role that access to transparent data has in initiating and sustaining change within an organisation. Quantitative evidence helps to heighten awareness of gender inequity and build a case for action.

Additional reporting by gender would be of value including data on career stage, and funding requested and awarded.

Q8: Please outline any impact or perverse outcomes you foresee resulting from the initiative.

If there is not sufficient disaggregation of data, then the institutional reporting will be effectively meaningless. The data needs to be reported at a two or four-digit level because the macro picture will mask entrenched inequities. Results could be contextualised relative to size and distribution of the workforce (FTE). Transparent reporting of this kind will give universities and faculties incentives to make real and meaningful changes to the way they operate.

Q9: Do you have alternative proposals for mechanisms open to the ARC to provide incentives to eligible institutions to promote themselves to women as employers of choice? Please include the argument for your proposal and suggestions for implementation.

4. Other suggestions

Q10: Please provide comments on any other aspects of the three initiatives.

The ARC's approach to gender equity needs to take account of the nature of academic excellence and specifically ways in which certain knowledges and research populations are under-recognised in current frameworks.

The question of how best to nurture women in academia cannot be dissociated from the current framework of university rankings, which rests on a definition of academic excellence that rewards conventional, linear models of achievement (see Dodds and Goddard, 2013; Jenkins and Hutchison, 2013).

Gender equity in academia should not be interrogated only from the perspective of the composition of the workforce, but also in terms of what knowledge is produced, and how it is valued and recognised (Curthoys, 2014; Pearse, Hitchcock, and Keane, 2019).

Better rewarding and recognising diverse forms of excellence is part of the solution. We would point to the ways in which Royal Society Te Apārangi has introduced new awards for ECRs to recognise innovative Māori research with a promising trajectory, and awards for leadership and co-created research.

It is noticeable that progressing gender equity in the ARC's proposals is interpreted as increasing female representation, but there is more to the problem than that, and improving the opportunities for women could well be at the expense of the third category or non-binary gender. We would also observe that lessons from the Athena SWAN program in the UK and Australia indicate that we need to be thinking about gender equity _and_ gender diversity in Australia. We acknowledge that the ARC's ERA data collection includes reporting of staff beyond a male/female binary, which is an important first step.

Q11: Do you have alternative proposals for mechanisms available to the ARC to increase women's participation and retention in the research workforce? Please include the argument for your proposal and suggestions for implementation.

1. Lessons from Athena SWAN/SAGE and National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC)

There are a range of innovative models and exemplars at an institutional level in Australia that could be drawn upon to inform the future direction and strengthen existing provisions within the ARC's grant processes. It is worth noting that Western Sydney University was ranked first in the world in the inaugural Times Higher Education University Impact Rankings (April 2019) for its work to address gender equality.

In terms of strategies for supporting women in academia, there is great focus on recruitment (a strategy of requiring a 50:50 breakdown within the applicant pool, referred to across SAGE applications and in the NHMRC documents as the "50:50 – if not, why not?" approach); strengthening induction practices to help women develop networks; providing assistance and encouragement for women to apply for promotion; changing focus in certain institutional

practices (promoting women's achievements, promoting inclusivity in marketing and other communications, changing scheduling time for meetings); introducing male champions of change etc.

Some universities are looking into developing (or have already put in place) specific grant schemes to assist "academic returners" (La Trobe SAGE application, p. 51; Macquarie University SAGE application, p. 87; CSIRO SAGE application, p. 128) with provisions for teaching relief, research assistance, research grant as well as targeted support for female research (mostly in the form of workshops) with the aim of increasing the number of female investigators in grant applications.

Both Macquarie and the Australian National University (ANU) have primary carers' support funds for research and conference attendance (Macquarie University SAGE application, p. 87; ANU SAGE application, p. 44). Macquarie also now lists childcare as an allowable budget item for travel costs on all internal grants (Macquarie University SAGE application, p. 87). As we understand it, carer costs (such as taking dependents overseas, or allowing for the care of dependents while a carer is overseas) are allowable in ARC grants, but are seldom taken up, so this is an area that could be promoted more overtly.

The ANU has a suite of grants, most of which seem to require 50:50 allocation (ANU Futures Program for EMCRs and ANU Grand Challenges for large scale transformative research projects); the university also has the ANU Translational Fellows program that provides opportunities for EMCRs to pursue diverse career pathways.

There is also emphasis on establishing mentoring programs, although some senior women report reluctance to act as mentors because of the number of junior women needing assistance (La Trobe SAGE application, p. 44).

La Trobe is also working to embed Athena SWAN principles into HDR, MCR and ECR programs (La Trobe SAGE application, p. 48).

The NHMRC initiatives to support gender equality include, for example, introducing gender equality policy requirements for all NHMRC Administering Institutions; improving gender balance on peer review panels; introducing the Elizabeth Blackburn Fellowship to recognise outstanding female research fellows; and the annual publication on the NHMRC's website of funded rates by gender for all funding schemes to provide transparency to the research sector.

The agency also awards additional Project Grants with female Chief Investigators to reduce the difference in funded rates between male and female lead investigators.

In 2019 it also introduced significant changes through its New Grant Program, which includes Investigator Grants, Synergy Grants, and Ideas Grants. All grants aim to support diversity in research, with Ideas Grants of particular interest as the assessment for this grant does not consider track record but focuses instead on the quality of proposed research, which allows researchers with non-traditional or disrupted track record to move back into research (NHMRC, "NHMRC's Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2021," 2018, p. 8).

2. International models

The Canada Research Chairs Program (CRCP) (Canada Research Charis, "Establishing Equity and Diversity Targets") publishes the results and findings of its target-setting exercise in the effort to promote greater transparency. Participating institutions also must publish their data, and a failure to participate in the target-setting exercise results in the suspension of grant payments.

Canada's three granting agencies also have guides for applicants to their programs on incorporating diversity and gender equity within proposals. For example, the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council has guidelines for integrating sex, diversity and gender equity considerations in research design, and equity and diversity among research personnel (Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council Canada "Strategic Partnership Grants")

A 2012 Council of Canadian Academies report on women in research, found that:

> Generally, Canadian women and men experience similar success rates in their Tri-Council grant applications. However, the propensity to apply for research grants differs as a function of gender and discipline. An illustrative practice in terms of encouraging gender equity in research grants includes the recent actions of the Canada Research Chairs Secretariat, in terms of target-setting and the 2011 recognition process (Council of Canadian Academies, *Strengthening Canada's Research Capacity: the Gender Dimension*, Ottawa: 2012, p. 81).

The report also makes note of the strategies to increase the competitiveness of individual women such as mentorship, scholarships, targeted grants, and outreach opportunities (pp. xiv-xv).

Regarding the Athena SWAN program, the UK has expanded its coverage to HASS fields and also to other equity groups (Woods and Harris, 2018). In Canada, an expanded scope and set of principles have been the focus from the outset: "The draft Charter addresses underrepresented groups in academic research-specifically Indigenous Peoples, women, racialized minorities, people with disabilities, and the LGBTQ2+ community-and all areas of research in post-secondary institutions" (Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, 2019).

Efforts to integrate gender equity within research teams, assessment teams, and within projects themselves are also highlighted in the programs of the European Commission (European Commission, Policy, "Gender Equality"):

Horizon 2020 requirements specifically outline implementation of these three key points:

> Gender balance in research teams at all levels: Applicants are asked to indicate the gender of the persons primarily responsible for carrying out the project's activities. The relative gender balance in teams is one of the factors used to rank proposals with the same evaluation scores. By signing their grant agreement, beneficiaries commit to promote equal opportunities and gender balance at all levels of personnel assigned to the action including at supervisory and managerial level.

> Gender balance in decision-making: the European Commission (EC) has set two targets: one of 40 per cent of the underrepresented sex in expert groups and evaluation panels, and one of 50 per cent of the underrepresented sex in advisory groups.

> Integrating the gender dimension in the content of research and innovation (R&I): Gender issues are mentioned in a number of topics of Horizon 2020 work program as well as in the general introduction of the Work Program. When drafting their proposal, under the chapter "Excellence", applicants are asked to "describe, where relevant, how sex and/or gender analysis is taken into account in the project's content". In the evaluation process, the gender dimension is mentioned in the briefing given to evaluators. Evaluators are advised to assess the inclusion of the gender dimension under the excellence criterion. Within the Grant Agreement (GA) the gender dimension can be

part of the Description of Action (DoA) and during reporting, gender issues are part of periodic reports.

The EC monitors the implementation of gender equity as a crosscutting issue through four KPIs:

> KPI 1: percentage of women participants in Horizon 2020 projects (total workforce);

> KPI 2: percentage of women project coordinators in Horizon 2020 projects, incl. Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) fellows, ERC principal investigators and scientific coordinators in other Horizon 2020 activities (corresponding to the Principal Contact Person at proposal level);

> KPI 3: percentage of women in EC advisory groups, expert groups, evaluation panels, individual experts, etc.; and

> KPI 4: percentage of projects taking into account the gender dimension in R&I content (European Commission, *Interim Evaluation: Gender equality as a Crosscutting Issue in Horizon 2020*, 2017).

KPI 4 is over-and-above what the ARC is currently proposing and worth examining in more detail.

The EU also publishes comparable pan-European statistics on the state of gender equity in research every three years (European Commission, *She Figures*, 2018).

Thank you for considering our response to the consultation process; this is an area that the Academy believes is clearly in need of carefully constructed reform. The Academy would be pleased to engage in further consultation on any of the matters raised in our response.

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