**Excellence and Gender Equality:**
*Critical Perspectives on Gender and Knowledge in the Humanities and Social Sciences*

**ANU GENDER INSTITUTE SIGNATURE EVENT 2019**

*Australian National University | 26-28 June 2019*

**Convenors: Fiona Jenkins, Helen Keane and Marian Sawer**

**CALL FOR PAPERS**

This conference explores the intersection of gender equality and academic evaluation of excellence, with a specific focus on the Humanities and Social Science (HASS) disciplines. It will investigate the increasingly accepted claim that genuine research excellence requires an equity component. As initiatives such as the UK’s Athena Swan programme start to bring change via research management strategies and incentives, the conference will assess the values and presuppositions that are shaping such interventions. How is the generic ‘business case’ for gender equality – which holds that diversity adds value – specifically related to a wider discursive construction of the social and economic importance of Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics and Medicine (STEMM) disciplines? Does an implicit focus on the nature and value of STEMM research come at the expense of attention to the difference and specificities of HASS disciplines, or their political character and history? How can the contribution of critical feminist scholarship within HASS disciplines be brought into relation with the new gender equality discourses?

While the connection between equality and excellence is becoming established in higher education, the specific issues faced by HASS disciplines have rarely been discussed. Do generic accounts of the positive relationship between excellence and the pursuit of gender equality avoid the significance of conflicted histories of gender relations in the formation of disciplinary knowledge and standards? Do new equality and diversity discourses in rapidly changing institutions work in perverse ways, as Sara Ahmed argues, to performatively cover over rather than address crucial issues of power and authority?

If the analysis of the relationship between inequality and distortion in knowledge is wrong or misleading, so too may be the proposed remedies. It is therefore urgent to develop a deeper theoretical, historical and sociological account of these issues, with a focus on HASS, and to consider which alternative feminist approaches to understanding andremedying gender inequality might deserve attention. Context for this discussion is provided by evidence of persistent gender inequality within certain HASS disciplines (see the website of the ARC funded project, Gendered Excellence in the Social Sciences (GESS) for further details). Such evidence raises issues often overlooked by policy-makers seeking improvements in STEMM areas. The gendering of disciplines or sub-disciplines deemed to be ‘soft’ science, or non-science, by comparison with ‘hard’ epistemic values, deserves especial consideration where a
‘business case’ is being presented for change to the academy. The evaluation of knowledge invites critical reflection on the terms in which excellence is understood, and the specific forms of its relationship with gender inequality.

We invite papers that address the following questions:

• How does gender inequality affect the construction of knowledge claims?
• How do conceptions of knowledge and authority in HASS disciplines, as well as disciplinary evaluation practices such as peer review, intersect with gender?
• What alternatives to the ‘business case’ for gender equity exist and could be promoted in universities?
• What is the performative function of equity and diversity discourses in the marketised and managerial university?
• How does standpoint or embodiment intersect or interfere with epistemic values, or with the reception and evaluation of work in HASS disciplines?
• How has feminist activism been generative of HASS scholarship and how does the impact of feminist scholarship register within new frames of ‘impact measurement’?
• How far is feminist scholarship acknowledged in gender equity work?
• Does the over-representation of women in some HASS disciplines and sub-fields allow for them to be supported under new gender equity management?
• What criteria should shape the direction and evaluation of gender diversity policy in universities?

Keynotes:

• Prof. Alison Wylie (University of British Columbia)
• Prof. Michèle Lamont (Harvard)
• Prof. Frank Dobbin (Harvard).
• Dr Claire Donovan (Brunel)
• Associate Prof. Yanni k Thiem (Villanova)

Proposals of up to 200 words (using up to 5 keywords) should be sent to the organizer Fiona Jenkins (Fiona.jenkins@anu.edu.au) with EXCELLENCE in the title line.

Timeline: Proposals are due by 6th March 2019
Acceptance will be advised by 22nd March 2019

Please visit our website for further details of the conference:

Gendered Excellence in the Social Sciences (GESS)

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