

Enhancing Gender in Research and Writing: Workshop for Graduate Students.

The Gender Institute generously provided funding for a workshop which was held on the 8th to 9th of August, 2013, from 10 am to 4 pm in the Large Meeting Room, Building 65 Balmain Crescent. The event was advertised across campus through the GI newsletter and GI institute members were also asked to promote it. The funding was used to provide lunch on both days. NCEPH provided the space and office support.

Gender is sometimes an under-developed component of graduate students' research topics. This workshop was designed for students who would like to enhance the gender aspects of their research and writing by discussing their work with 'gender experts' and with other students. Students were given 15 minutes to talk about their work and then 15 minutes was set aside for focussed discussion of relevant theories, books and articles. The experts who generously provided their time and advice were: Professors Dorothy Broom, Kathryn Robinson and Terry Hull, and Drs Helen Keane, Kathy Lepani, Iwu Utomo, Christine Phillips, and Fiona Jenkins.

Eighteen participants signed up for the workshop – eight were from CMBE, one from Law, one from the Crawford school, three from CAP, one from development studies, and two externals. Only one was male and there were no applicants from the physical sciences. Three students who had signed up to present did not do so; one later reported that she could not because the family dog died.

The Australian Parliament House planned to bring two Pacific women who were going to talk about their research into promoting women's participation in politics in their own countries. One unfortunately was unable to leave her home country; the other attended the workshop with her sponsor from APH and presented a very interesting paper. We also had two attendees from the Office for the Status of Women who participated in discussion but did not present papers. It was gratifying that there was interest from outside the ANU and there may be an external market among government departments for similar future workshops.

Outcomes:

Two and sometimes three experts were 'on duty' at each set of presentations. They provided advice and guidance on gender components of students' research, sometimes recommending texts or drawing attention to aspects of gendered language. In many cases, experts also provided considerable assistance to students concerning research methods and approaches. At least one student was planning to reshape her research following the workshop and to consult an expert privately. Through the attendance of people from outside the ANU we provided outreach on gender as well. The workshop encouraged cross-university linkages across the university although many but not all experts already knew each other. The students made contact with each other and found shared research interests. As all but one of the participants were women, it is unlikely that we improved gender equity across the campus. The workshop topic was unlikely to be of interest to students from the physical sciences.

However, the topic of gender in academic careers could be of interest in the future to physical science PhD students.

In conclusion, I thank the Gender Institute for its support of the workshop and also the eight experts who generously provided their time and wisdom to support the participants.

Cathy Banwell

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