

Impacts of current decision-making on Gender Equity and Diversity at ANU

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PRESERVING GENDER EQUITY AS A HIGHER EDUCATION PRIORITY DURING AND AFTER COVID-19

Australian Higher Education Joint Sector Position Statement, June 2020

1. Actively seek equal representation of women in COVID-19 response planning
2. Formally monitor and report on gender equity impacts of COVID-19 related decision making (including compounding intersectional factors) within our own institutions
3. Continue our participation in SAGE
4. Maintain gender equity/diversity programs and any KPI's
5. Preserve the gender equity progress which has been made to date

Gender Equality in Universities: Poised on a Precipice?

Title is ref to Jill A Gould and Carol Kulik, in *Broad Agenda*

1. **Unequal opportunities in crisis**
(Who is the expert? Who are the decision-makers? *Who has time?*)

2. **Unequal impacts of crisis**
(women over-represented in lower-paid and precarious work)

3. **Ongoing issues in living with pandemic**
(shifting work/home boundaries)

• “In some ways, the issues we face represent an exacerbation of the inequalities we have always had to manage. But what is surprising and demoralising is seeing the fault lines of sexism that define our unequal footing with men crack into gaping chasms under the pressure of the pandemic.”

• <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/blog/women-science-are-battling-both-covid-19-and-patriarchy>

1. Unequal opportunity - Increased domestic workloads for female academics have affected their research output

- Evidence has been coming out that women's publishing rates dropped after the pandemic shut schools, while on average, men's research output rose at same time.

<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/pandemic-lockdown-holding-back-female-academics-data-show>

- What has happened at ANU – data?
 - although female academics have been disadvantaged on average, this could hide all kinds of individual stories.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Resources targeted** to support opportunities for 'catch-up' on research
- **ROPE** must be better articulated and formalised in assessing performance
 - Recognise that anything 'time-sensitive' but optional – media engagement, grants with short-deadlines etc - has been affected by reduction in 'disposable time'
 - Value contributions to essentials highly: extra demands of teaching & pastoral care
- **Gather evidence** via databases and testimony via focus groups
 - Do not take the 'good' experience of productivity in 'iso' as normative for others.
 - How did 70% rule work in practice?

Testimony: Media reporting women's experiences

- female academics the THE spoke to said they felt “in limbo”, trying to stay on top of **administrative or teaching tasks** but unable to do much more – particularly research
- **pressing needs took priority**: “I had little time and concentration to dedicate to the writing of scientific articles. The house is not big, the baby was continuously knocking on my door. I felt guilty. Moreover, working meant basically teaching online. That was the priority,”
- **working hours were extreme**: “I worked 4am to midday then switched with my partner”; “I did my work only during my child's nap or during the night”
- **job insecurity has been heightened**: “I'm on a fixed-term contract. I was supposed to go back after maternity leave, but because of the pandemic I'm too worried to send my son to childcare. That will impact my career. I don't know when I'll be able to go back to work as normal”

2. Intersections of gender and precarious employment

- **Time-sensitivity of employment opportunity is greater for female ECA**
- **Early career is a major exit-point for equity groups *at the best of times***

“we fear that these experiences will lead to a haemorrhaging of women from academia in the aftermath of the pandemic – particularly junior women – even with assurances of tenure clock stoppages or other mitigating policies. The disillusionment and cynicism we hear in the voices of our colleagues and friends fill us with sadness. “After this is over, I’m done” is a refrain we have heard many times in the past few months, almost exclusively from women.”

<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/blog/women-science-are-battling-both-covid-19-and-patriarchy>

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Focus on ECA **retention strategies & mentors**
- Build and recognise ‘**stepping stones**’ and ‘**life-rafts**’
- **Recognise contribution ECA make to teams** and to ‘flexibility work’
- Make a **gender analysis of impacts** of cost-cutting – & of spending...
- **Don’t make savings just where its easiest** – eg. by ending fixed term and casual employment
- Need a **future-oriented analysis of workforce demographics**, viewed with an equity lens
- Mitigate impacts for most-affected staff *eg* reduce child care costs at ANU centres in the immediate future for lowest paid. *School holiday support?*

3. Living with the pandemic: FLEXIBILITY

Flexibility at ANU is welcome

Do we have support structures in place? Do people know how to do it?

- Flexibility can make people work more productively
- Support flexibility – how and when you work; in teams – how you work together
- Family friendly times, virtual platforms, ensuring everyone is included

BUT: -- Who is the 'flexibility donor'?

- Employer (offering a privilege, or help)
- Employee (precarious, part-time, juggling, filling gaps in delivery, offering flexibility as resource)

Complex costs and benefits

Working from home has positives and negatives for gender equity – as recent experience testifies. May increase productivity for some, not all.

- which people benefit → how far does it make new difficulties?
 - eg deprive people of influence? Remove them from organisational 'social-contracts' and distance them from 'core identity' of organisation.
 - **Are 'flexibility-workers' the most vulnerable to cuts?**
 - 'home' as a *more* gendered space than the office; consider violence, care-burdens, space-use etc.
- one concept covers polarised experiences

What does the 'equity and diversity' envelope look like?

Could it be just as important as financial constraints?

MONITOR:

Need more information on the anticipated gender impacts of the present processes of pay negotiations, voluntary severance and retirement.

- A Gender, Diversity and Precarity Impact Analysis should be conducted as each option is discussed
- Any gender pay gap or super gap must not be allowed to increase.
- Commitments to gender equity progress must be maintained.

SNAP FORWARD, don't SNAP BACK:

High risk of crisis reinforcing patterns of privilege and exclusion at ANU -- requires re-thinking approaches to measuring contributions and excellence.

Don't treat equity programs or female-dominated areas as easy targets; set new stronger targets *eg*

- ROPE needs to be more carefully applied
- Examine gender bias in determining essential/inessential work and workers
- Recognise crucial role played by ECRs and RAs in the successes of senior staff members: experiment with team-based model of research activity/ excellence - team-based objectives and measures give substance to the idea that the current situation is a shared one.