

## Higher Education

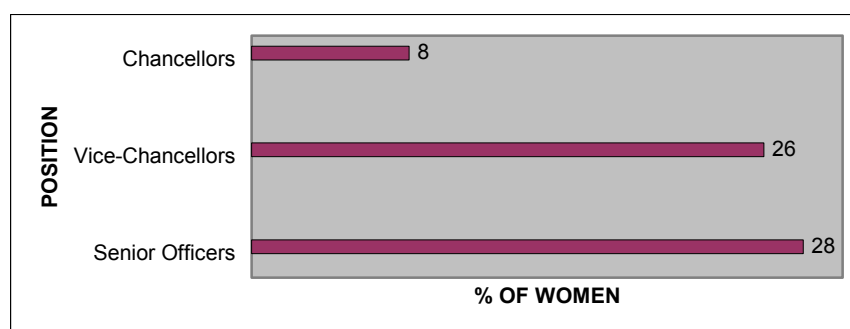
	HIGHER EDUCATION	ALL EDUCATIONAL ORGANISATIONS	ALL REPORTING ORGANISATIONS
NO. OF EOWA REPORTING ORGANISATIONS	41	350	2712
% OF EOWA EDUCATIONAL ORGANISATIONS	12%	100%	N/A
AVERAGE NO. OF EMPLOYEES	2895	722	922
% WOMEN VICE CHANCELLORS/CEOs	32%	28%	9%
% WOMEN EMPLOYEES	54%	58%	47x
% WOMEN MANAGERS	30%	43%	31%
% PART-TIME MANAGERS THAT ARE FEMALE	43%	68%	78%
% ORGS WITH PART-TIME MANAGERS	22%	17%	35%
AVERAGE NO. OF EMs ACTIONED PER ORG	6.4	5.0	4.7
% OF ORGS ACTIONING 4 OR MORE EMs	97%	79%	73%
% ORGS WAIVED FROM REPORTING IN 2004	29%	13%	7%

The higher education sector comprises a relatively small proportion (1.5%) of all EOWA's reporting organisations yet more than 120,000 people are employed in this sector. The institutions themselves are predominately large with 85% having more than 1000 staff. More than 70% of reporting organisations are located on the east coast.

Reporting organisations within the higher-education sector employ a higher proportion of women than average (54%), with 13 (32%) of the 41 Vice-Chancellor positions occupied by women in 2003-04. Equal opportunity reports indicate that women occupy a further 30% of university management positions, however this drops to 28% for corporate governance positions identified as senior officers.

Figure 7 below shows the distribution of women in leadership roles for the entire higher education sector, based on data from the Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee (AVCC).

**FIGURE 7: WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP POSITIONS IN HIGHER EDUCATION**



## Equal Opportunity Issues

- **Slow progression of women into management.** The increased participation of women in the tertiary sector has coincided with tighter resources, higher workloads and more competitive promotion processes. This has contributed to a slower career progression for individuals than was the case in the past and, when

compounded by family responsibilities, has meant that women are making slow progress through the ranks of senior academic staff.

- **Lack of part-time opportunities at managerial level.** Only a limited number of organisations offer part-time opportunities at managerial level (22% of reporting HE institutions), indicating slow acceptance of alternative forms of work organisation at senior levels. As a consequence, there are significantly lower numbers of part-time female managers within the sector than in reporting organisations generally, which may be preventing women requiring part-time hours from advancing into more senior positions.

‘Women are less able to access research grants and therefore promotions.’

HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION, QUEENSLAND

- **Male-oriented workplace culture.** Universities have traditionally maintained a culture of masculinity reflecting the values and norms of the educated, professional men who are most involved in the decision-making of these institutions. A workplace culture by definition is considered to reflect the values and norms of the majority involved in the organisation. Women’s different leadership and management styles, their commitment to family responsibilities and their lack of access to networks has been seen to disadvantage their progress in this environment. Men are also more likely to suggest that discrimination does not exist in universities, citing instead the ‘moving cohort’ thesis which proposes that change is happening in a generational sense.<sup>12</sup> This explanation however does not account for women’s continuing low representation at senior levels, nor the ongoing lack of career development for women previously denied access to opportunities.
- **Work intensification.** New developments within higher education relating to the increase in student numbers, altered funding arrangements, the internationalisation of the student cohort and the requirement for flexible delivery have meant extensive changes to teaching processes and administration systems. The result has been an increase in work load, productivity and individual accountability. Such change has placed greater pressure on the issue of work/life balance, particularly for women who often take on a greater share of family responsibilities. Without access to flexibility in work and job design, this work intensification is in some cases impacting on women’s advancement opportunities.
- **An ageing academic workforce.** The workforce in senior academia is ageing. Strategies to develop people in the lower and middle ranks, where the bulk of women are currently positioned, have become increasingly important. Changes in policy and regulation that encourage the retention, development and promotion of women have accordingly become a new imperative.
- **Lower retention of women.** While women are recruited to academic positions at a reasonably high rate overall, institutions report that women are not being retained in the same proportions. While allowance is made for women’s greater number of career breaks and earlier retirement, women are nonetheless more inclined to leave after spending longer periods of employment in lower and mid-level positions than men.

## Professional Staff

- **Concentration of women in lower classification levels.** Women are consistently overrepresented in lower classification levels of administration. In addition, they are consistently under-represented in higher classification levels and executive positions.
- **Casualisation.** Many institutions reported that both professional and academic women were disproportionately represented in casual positions, fractional employment and in part-time employment generally. Conversely, women remain under represented in fulltime on-going and tenured employment.
- **Pay equity for women.** Changes to pay structures have indicated a reduction in pay equity for women across the sector. In 2002, the average gross full-time earnings for women on general staff were 84% of male earnings. Despite the fact that the salary profile for women has improved relative to males in the HEW classifications, the gap between men and women's gross earnings has since increased by 4%.

## Academic Staff

- **Low tolerance for non-standard career paths.** The female academic path is traditionally different to that of men. Many women enter academia later in life, sometimes after child rearing, and are more likely than men to take a break during their career. The norm for men is to undertake their research and teaching early and establish their research through networks of senior men, leaving administrative roles until later in their careers. Women however tend to enter at lower levels than men and wait longer within those levels, and as a result are often expected to undertake administrative roles within their teaching and research positions.<sup>13</sup> Women's research profiles, without men's network access, can as a result be perceived by male peers and superiors as lacking a certain level of professional vibrancy. The apparent lack of a substantial research profile will then often limit women's opportunities for promotion. This 'leaky pipeline' or 'academic funnel effect' leaves women clustered in the lower academic levels below Associate Professor, with a 'glass ceiling' at the senior lecturer level that sees women make up only around 11% of full professorships in Australian universities.

'Career breaks can make it difficult to sustain the case for equivalency in cases where there is no PhD qualification.'

HE EQUITY & DIVERSITY MANAGER, QUEENSLAND

- **Qualification-based limitations on advancement.** The lower number of women with doctoral degree qualifications is a major limiting factor in their career development within the sector, as a doctoral degree is normally required for academic promotion to level C and beyond. The present academic model focuses on timely completions of doctorates, with the result that women who have family responsibilities and often large teaching loads, which is common at lower levels, are adversely affected. As a result, while women do complete, they are known to take longer, which has an impact on their professional status and career. There are a number of other influencing factors including access issues, career breaks

and the recency of doctoral programs in many disciplines that are female-dominated, such as nursing and pharmacy.

- **Employment in non-traditional areas.** Different disciplinary areas face dissimilar issues in relation to attracting and retaining women. Engineering, information technology and others have difficulties in attracting women, while the traditional areas of study for women such as nursing, teaching and the arts face issues with retention and ensuring access to equal opportunities in the development and promotion of women.

## Initiatives to Advance Women

- **Women in research.** Numerous higher education institutions acknowledge that, within many disciplines, women do not have the necessary networks, or research experience over time, that are required to obtain access to research grant money. Without substantial research profiles, access to grant money or promotion is unlikely. 'Women in Research' programs consisting of training and mentoring opportunities are being introduced to assist women to develop the necessary networks and research skills. Related initiatives include addressing gender imbalances on research committees and research teams, re-evaluating women's research and supporting early career researchers in their work.

### Leading Practice Case Study:

#### Advancing Women in Academia

In a university with limited women in senior levels and no women at all in level E, a comprehensive program was put in place that increased the number of women in professorial positions (levels D and E) from less than 15% to over 30% within three years.

In addition to identifying issues and publicising their own goals in this area, the university benchmarked their targets against other universities and the national average as part of their quality assurance program. Recruitment strategies included the requirement for 33% of short-listed applicants for all advertised senior positions above level C and HEW level 9 to be female. This strategy was also incorporated into training programs in recruitment and selection.

Further specific strategies included a review of the Women in Leadership program to include secondment opportunities for women in leadership roles. The Women in Leadership Program also established the Academic Staff Women's Promotion Support Group, which works towards encouraging women to apply for promotion and to network with others in preparing effective applications.

Finally, as part of developing a comprehensive program for women's advancement, a requirement for a review of equity outcomes was introduced into senior managers' performance management plans.

- **Women in leadership programs** are being implemented to assist women to plan their professional development and gain skills and experience in leadership and to provide a vehicle of support for women – ultimately to assist in changing the senior staff gender ratios. Many programs include mentoring opportunities and networks in addition to skill training elements. For example, five Australian Technology Network universities are jointly supporting a Women's Executive

Development Program for senior staff as well as one on women in leadership. These programs are available for both professional and academic staff, and appear to be having results. In 2004, the CEO of the Australian Vice-Chancellors Committee reported that the number of senior women, both in academic and general non-academic classifications, had increased throughout the sector by approximately 16%.

- **Flexible working arrangements.** Increasing emphasis on developing family-friendly, flexible work practices, flexible start/finish times and job sharing is enabling institutions to improve female retention rates, particularly in administrative roles. While academic staff in many institutions have long had opportunities to work from home due to the nature of their work, family-friendly practice is often difficult to combine with the rigidity of timetabling, flexible delivery practices, including multi-campus offerings and the expansion of teaching times into evening and weekend classes, and work intensification including internet offerings.
- Twelve weeks **paid maternity leave** is now the standard in higher education. A significant number of institutions provide up to 26 weeks paid leave, and some provide 12 months. For many universities, the provision recognises that gender pay equity has yet to be achieved in the higher education sector. The reasons for the pay gap between men and women include the under representation of women in senior positions. The limited promotion of women to senior positions is attributable to the career path gaps resulting from pregnancy and child care, which create barriers in career progression and reduce women's attachment to the labour force.<sup>14</sup> Improving paid maternity leave can ameliorate this problem by encouraging women to remain attached to the labour force and committed to their career advancement.

‘Maternity leave help(s) to ensure that  
there is no employer discrimination  
against women of childbearing age.’

VICE-CHANCELLOR, QUEENSLAND HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION

- **Promotion and career progression.** Training is offered by many institutions in the complexity of the academic promotion process and its requirements to ensure that women understand and work with the process. Others are responding to the limited numbers of women applying for promotion by reviewing and changing promotion procedures and offering training in portfolio development. Special initiatives have been used to encourage women to consider promotion opportunities strategically and to consider application. In addition to training for women, many institutions are also now developing policies for gender ratios on promotion committees, training in gender equity for committee members and appointing a monitor of the process to ensure cultural and equity issues are addressed.
- **Time release programs** provide an important means for many women to complete higher degrees or undertake programs of research. This is important where disciplines are vocationally oriented because women tend to be recruited into lower levels for their professional backgrounds rather than on the basis of qualifications and publications. This is particularly the case in new or smaller institutions and universities with a history of strong industry links. New to

academia, however, these women may then be at a disadvantage for promotion having not had a traditional academic career.

## Group Training

	GROUP TRAINING	ALL EDUCATIONAL ORGANISATIONS	ALL REPORTING ORGANISATIONS
NO. OF EOWA REPORTING ORGANISATIONS	58	350	2712
% OF EOWA EDUCATIONAL ORGANISATIONS	17%	100%	N/A
TOTAL NO. OF EMPLOYEES	68,839	270,100	2,493,900
% WOMEN EMPLOYEES	28%	58%	47%
% WOMEN MANAGERS	47%	43%	31%
% ORGS WITH PART-TIME MANAGERS	15%	17%	35%
AVERAGE NO. OF EMs ACTIONED PER ORG	3.4	5.0	4.7
% OF ORGS ACTIONING 4 OR MORE EMs	40%	79%	73%
% ORGS WAIVED FROM REPORTING IN 2004	5.2%	13.1%	6.5%

Group training companies are independent, not-for-profit organisations that are separately incorporated and run along commercial business lines. Their core business is the attraction, placement, development and support of apprentices and trainees for employment within a wide range of businesses around Australia. These organisations also have professional and administrative staff within their own workforce to provide placement, counselling and troubleshooting for apprentices and trainees and their host employers.

The national network of group training companies around Australia now employs almost 40,000 apprentices and trainees. Over 35,000 businesses use group training for their apprentices and trainees. Fifty-eight group training companies with more than 100 employees report regularly to EOWA.

The sector employs only a small number of women in comparison to reporting organizations generally, due to the limited number of women in apprenticeships or traineeships, particularly in non-traditional areas. There is however a high percentage of female managers employed within the sector (47%).

## Equal Opportunity Issues

- **Increasing imperative for equal opportunity.** The new demographics of the workforce, including greater diversity, an ageing population and skill shortages, are increasing the need for equal opportunity practices to ensure that appointments are made on merit and objective criteria rather than non-relevant factors that may exclude women. This has become particularly necessary in non-traditional areas for women, where the common practice of employing only men is exacerbating the skills shortage.
- **Fewer women with qualifications.** Ensuring women have the opportunity to gain qualifications in specific trade areas is important in enabling them to progress from administrative roles to field officer roles and/or more senior or managerial positions within group training. For female apprentices, providing opportunities for their continuing development as tradespersons is an important means of supporting their commitment and retention as well as advancement.

- **Need for flexible work options.** Flexible work opportunities for apprentices, trainees and group training staff are increasingly in demand to address the conflict between work and life commitments. The return to work of women after childbirth, and the retention of women during the years of raising young children, are likely to become essential to ensuring the sustainability of organisations in the longer term as the population ages and skill shortages become more pronounced.

‘One of our field officers regularly  
took her toddler on work trips so she  
could continue breastfeeding.’

GROUP TRAINING COMPANY, WESTERN AUSTRALIA

- **Limited assistance around pregnancy and maternity leave.** Support for apprentices and employees through pregnancy, and the identification of host organisations prepared to support women through maternity leave programs and provide flexible work options upon return to work, is not well established within the group training sector. This contributes to the under-representation of women in trades as well as the labour shortage in trades generally.

### Apprentices and Trainees

- **Limited number of female applicants.** Some industries are finding it difficult to attract new apprentices of either gender. The younger generation is increasingly viewing apprenticeships and traineeships as a ‘second choice’ to gaining university entrance, which group training companies acknowledge is in part due to the limited pay structures for apprentices. The recruitment of female apprentices to some nontraditional areas is further hampered by the perception of these jobs as dirty, unpleasant or physically hard.
- **Sex-based harassment.** Preventing sexual harassment is an important risk management strategy for group training companies where apprentices and trainees are working for host organisations. Also, in non-traditional areas for women, a ‘blokey’ culture can be limiting for women and discourage their full participation and retention.
- **Resistance to the appointment of female apprentices.** Small family businesses can be reluctant to appoint women into apprenticeship positions because wives of the business owner or trainer prefer their husbands to work with and train a man rather than a woman. Some host organisations also prefer not to employ mature-age women for fear of the impact that the woman’s family may have on their commitment to the job.

### Professional and Administrative Staff

- **Recruitment of women to core roles.** The recruitment and retention of women into field officer roles remains a challenge for the sector, particularly where a trade qualification is a requirement. The degree of flexibility offered can also be a determining factor for employees with child care commitments as travel is often a job requirement.
- **Limited career advancement.** The lack of career opportunities for professional and administrative staff is reported to be having a negative impact on women’s

retention, with some group training companies citing a lack of adequate staff training and development.

## Initiatives to Advance Women

- **Promoting trade careers for women.** Initiatives to increase female awareness of career paths in trades and promote non-traditional areas of employment are resulting in small but encouraging increases in the number of women seeking apprenticeships. Actions have included specific promotion at schools and career expos, and the training of field staff in anti-discrimination legislation to ensure parents are accurately informed of opportunities for women and girls. Some organisations are working with VET teachers to overcome a lack of knowledge in work opportunities, while another has provided pre-vocational training for people disadvantaged in the job market.
- **Breaking down gender stereotypes within the industry.** In addition to encouraging careers in trades with schools, parents, women and girls, many group trainers are actively promoting awareness and discussion of the issues for women with host employers and potential employers. Extensive field officer training is providing the means to ensure host organisations are well informed, managed and trained in issues and initiatives to assist women to succeed in non-traditional roles in their organisations.

‘The greatest barriers for women  
returning to work are a lack of confidence  
and outdated skills... traineeships provide  
an ideal way to return to work.’

GROUP TRAINING ORGANISATION, REGIONAL QUEENSLAND

- **Apprenticeships through pregnancy and beyond.** A number of organizations identified the difficulty in finding host organisations willing to develop comprehensive plans for the management of maternity leave and return to work arrangements after childbirth. Those host organisations that challenged the norm found substantial benefits including increased skills development and staff retention, as well as a greater commitment within the employer-employee relationship. Several organizations assigned pregnant apprentices to undertake further development courses as an option for flexibility during pregnancy, while others used such options to ease the return to work. All noted that communication was the key to a successful transition.
- **Flexibility at work** has become an important issue in addressing the projected shortage of workers in the future. Flexible and family-friendly structures of work and business are increasingly being utilised within the industry, and host organisations are now demonstrating greater appreciation for the value of flexibility in promoting worker motivation and commitment. Several training companies identified that many industries are whole-heartedly embracing flexible hours and job share arrangements. One group training organisation initiated a child-care centre for the use of staff, trainees and apprentices, while another assisted a field officer in redesigning her job to allow a baby and carer to travel into the field.



- **Creating gender-inclusive workplaces.** Addressing the ‘blokey’, masculine culture of traditionally male-dominated workplaces to encourage greater inclusiveness towards women has become an important part of providing a harassment-free and supportive workplace for women at work, particularly where the absence of such support has been associated with poor retention. Managing the risk of discrimination and harassment has developed into a strategic priority for group training companies, requiring them to work together with host organisations, trainees, apprentices and field staff to develop and implement a range of practices including training, mentoring, networking and regular review processes on a case-management basis.
- **Encouraging the development** of staff and apprentices within group training companies and their host organisations has become recognised as an important means of increasing skills and retaining and progressing all staff, including women. Some group trainers provide extra development opportunities for apprentices outside their host organisations, while others work with the host organisations through field officers to provide development opportunities both on-site and off-site, as well as speaking and promotional opportunities. One organisation redefined merit selection when a female staff member started as an administrative trainee and, through development and promotion, became a field officer without the previously required industry qualification. Her knowledge and interest in the area, communication skills and past successes were considered more important as a case manager than the lack of a formal trade qualification.

#### **Leading Practice Case Study:**

##### **Working through pregnancy and beyond**

One group training organisation in South Australia found that a re-evaluation of work organisation and training schedules helped to broaden opportunities for pregnant apprentices and trainees in the hospitality arena.

With six apprentices on maternity leave they established off-the-job training as a viable alternative to remaining in the kitchen during the pregnancy, particularly the latter stages. Off-the-job training is conducted within standard hours only. In addition, the apprentice is not required to stand all day, as there is an afternoon theory session. A number of apprentices also attended off-the-job training after finishing maternity leave as it provided a softer return to work than commencing in a kitchen and gave them the opportunity to find their feet and gain some skills and confidence.

From: *Industry Verticals EDUCATION*, Australian Government publication from the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency, 2005; pp. 30-38