

National Colloquium of Senior Women Executives in Higher Education

The Great Barrier Myth: an investigation of promotions policy and practice in Australian universities

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***The Great Barrier Myth: an investigation of promotions policy and practice
in Australian universities***

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Executive summary

This research was conducted in response to the commitment of the Australian Vice-Chancellors Committee (AVCC) to promote gender equity in Australian universities by developing strategies that are based on research. The undertaking was expressed in the *Action Plan for Women Employed in Australian Universities 1999 - 2003* endorsed in July 1999 and in the *AVCC Policy Statement on Gender Equity in Australian Universities* issued in July 2002. The later document recognised that while women were already well represented in Australian universities as students – at all levels and across all fields except in engineering and some areas of science – they still had not achieved equity as members of staff ‘to the extent or at the rate expected’. The investigation of promotion policies and practices within Australian universities that is the subject of this report was sponsored by the AVCC in accordance with its continued commitment to gender equity.

The research project consisted of three major parts:

1. The promotion policies and practices of 34 universities were reviewed against 16 criteria or components. These characteristics were considered to be ones most likely to affect the promotion applications of women.
2. Interviews of key staff from 17 universities were conducted to see how the policies and processes worked in practice and to discuss specific issues, as well as to collect information about strategies that universities have in place to support the promotion of academic women.
3. Statistics relating to the promotion of women in 16 of the 17 universities were collected and analysed to evaluate progress toward gender equity and the success rates of women applicants for promotion.

The research was based on the hypothesis that the under-representation of women in academia reflects barriers in the promotion process. These have been described in the literature which suggests that women are less likely to apply for promotion, are more reticent in putting themselves forward and are less successful in applying for promotions generally than men. Men are considered to be advantaged by a gendered conception of merit which values a full time, uninterrupted career trajectory and research success. Women are more likely to experience career interruptions for family reasons and are over represented in teaching positions and in disciplines such as nursing and the humanities which do not attract large research grants. Policies that do not take into account career interruption or which focus primarily on research as a criterion for promotion would disadvantage women. Such policies would in effect be barriers to their promotion.

The analysis of policy documents reveals that there are no major barriers within policies and practice in general. Yet, it also shows that there is not uniform achievement of what is considered good practice in policy. For example, of the 34 policies surveyed, 16 (47%) do not include a statement on Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) principles within their promotions policy or associated guidelines. This is a significant omission. It indicates that although there is overall satisfactory policy and practice, there remains room for improvement to achieve good practice. Identifying the critical elements of promotions policies and areas where practice is weak is a significant outcome of this research.

The unevenness of policy and practice in addressing points relevant to the promotion of women was also evident from the interviews. Staff interviewed expressed a general belief in the quality and fairness of policies in place at their universities when considered from the point of view of women academic staff and gender equity. They attested to the existence of a wide range of strategies in place that are directly aimed at improving gender equity in employment through promotions. Although several university interviewees stated their institution was 'not doing enough for women', only one university reported the absence of initiatives specifically for women. Yet, there is not a clear picture of a thoroughly focused or sustained effort to achieve best practice. This is evidenced by the fact that only 5 of the 17 (29%) universities in the group interviewed have a Key Performance Indicator (KPI) for gender in relation to senior academic positions. A recommendation of the Action Plan for Women was that all universities 'include gender equity performance measures in institutional plans and quality assurance processes'.

This broad-brush examination of policies and practices makes clear that the promotions policies in Australian universities generally reflect a commitment to fairness and equity and address in appropriate ways the significant issues identified in the literature. Opportunities for promotion by application are provided regularly and applications are considered on merit following known procedures and in accordance with policy. As a whole, the sector has achieved a commendable level of good practice. Yet, the analysis has shown that there is an opportunity to achieve more uniform good practice nationally by adjusting policy, where necessary, and by adopting strategies that address the issues in proactive ways.

Analysis of the statistics on promotion provided by selected universities also suggests that there are no significant barriers and, just as there are some instances of good practice in relation to policy, the statistics too reveal some good results. Academic women are applying for promotion and are successful in their applications. The data show high success rates for women who apply for promotion. Rates for women applicants in Level B to Level E promotions in a three year period (2000-2002) range from 45% (Level E 2000) to 81% (Level B 2000). For men the range extended from 46% (Level E 2002) to 74% (Level B 2001). Of the twelve comparative sets, only in three did women have a lower success rate than men (Level C 2002; Level D 2000; Level E 2000). Analysis of the data also shows that the number of women applying for promotion tends to be approximately equivalent to the eligible pool of women. These Australian data reveal results similar to results reported in the United Kingdom.

However, the promotion policies in place at Australian universities and the practical support for achievement of the Action Plan goal verified in the interviews have not yet significantly increased the representation of women at senior levels. Analysis of DEST data over an eight-year period from 1996 to 2004 shows that while there has been an almost uninterrupted increase each year in the percentage of women as a proportion of total staff at all academic levels, women continue to comprise less than 50% of the academic staff for all classifications except Level A. Despite the work being done across the sector and within individual universities, overall the national picture has not changed enough. Yet, the nature of the change has been significant. Of the increases in the percentage of women staff, the most marked increase has taken place at Level C (11% increase, from 24 to 35%) and Level D (9% increase, from 15 to 24%), while at Level B, small increments have led to a situation which is approaching equity (5% increase, from 42 to 47%). Slight as these changes may appear to be, they should not be disregarded, particularly given that in 1995, the achievement of Level C was identified as a real barrier for academic women (Castleman *et al*, 1995, p 112). This is not the case in 2005.

The conclusion of this research project is that promotions policies in place at Australian universities are adequate and have helped achieve the degree of change that the statistics demonstrate has occurred. Women are under-represented in academia, but this cannot be shown to result directly from the promotions policies and practice of Australian universities.

The following summary of recommendations lists them in the order in which they appear in the report.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1:

That all universities include in promotions policies and/or guidelines clear procedures and recording requirements for out-of-round promotions.

Recommendation 2:

That all universities include in promotions policies and/or guidelines opportunities for promotion to all levels, including Level E.

Recommendation 3:

That all universities consider instituting a simplified process for promotion from Level A to Level B.

Recommendation 4:

That all universities include in promotions policies and/or guidelines explicit mention of promotion opportunities for part-time staff and how their applications will be assessed.

Recommendation 5:

That all universities include in promotions policies and/or guidelines flexibility in promotions criteria, perhaps by use of a weighting system whereby a staff member may nominate weightings.

Recommendation 6:

That all universities include in promotions policies and/or guidelines directions for assessing non-traditional careers 'relative to opportunity'.

Recommendation 7:

That all universities include in promotions policies and/or guidelines a clear equity statement.

Recommendation 8:

That all universities include in promotions policies and/or guidelines a requirement that committee chairs and members complete training on gender equity prior to the first meeting of the committee.

Recommendation 9:

That all universities include in promotions policies and/or guidelines an appropriate ratio of gender representation on promotions committees.

Recommendation 10:

That all universities include in promotions policies and/or guidelines a requirement that an EEO representative or person with an equity brief be involved to monitor the process and the results to ensure that cultural and equity issues are addressed.

Recommendation 11:

That all universities adopt a KPI for women in senior positions.

Recommendation 12:

That all universities implement special initiatives to encourage and assist women applicants.

Section 1: Introduction

This investigation of promotion policies and practices within Australian universities was sponsored by the Australian Vice-Chancellors Committee (AVCC) in response to its commitment to promote gender equity in Australian universities by developing strategies that are based on research. The undertaking was expressed in the *Action Plan for Women Employed in Australian Universities 1999 – 2003* endorsed in July 1999 and in the *AVCC Policy Statement on Gender Equity in Australian Universities* issued in July 2002. The later document recognised that while women were already well represented in Australian universities as students – at all levels and across all fields except in engineering and some areas of science – they still had not achieved equity as members of staff ‘to the extent or at the rate expected’.

The project included a review of literature to establish the major issues relevant to gender and the promotion of women academics and research that consisted of three major parts:

1. The promotion policies and practices of 34 universities were reviewed against 16 criteria or components. These characteristics were considered to be ones most likely to affect the promotion applications of women.
2. Interviews of key staff from 17 universities were conducted to see how the policies and processes worked in practice and to discuss specific issues, as well as to collect information about strategies that universities have in place to support the promotion of academic women.
3. Statistics relating to the promotion of women in 16 of the 17 universities (one did not provide data) were collected and analysed to evaluate progress toward gender equity and the success rates of women applicants for promotion.

The research was based on the hypothesis that the under-representation of women in academia reflects barriers in the promotion process. These have been described in the literature which suggests that women are less likely to apply for promotion, are more reticent in putting themselves forward and are less successful in applying for promotions generally than men. Men are considered to be advantaged by a gendered conception of merit which values a full time, uninterrupted career trajectory and research success. Women are more likely to experience career interruptions for family reasons and are over-represented in teaching positions and in disciplines such as nursing and the humanities which do not attract large research grants. Policies that do not take into account career interruption or which focus primarily on research as a criterion for promotion would disadvantage women. Such policies would in effect constitute barriers to their promotion.

Following the analysis and interviews, the statistical data relating to women’s representation at all levels (A – E) for all universities were analysed in addition to data relating to promotions from a sample of 16 of the universities interviewed (one university had not supplied data). Thus, the study of policy and of the statistics followed a similar pattern – an examination of the national picture followed by a more detailed examination of a sample. This approach reflected the size of the project. It was a broad-brush approach to gain a view of the general characteristics of promotions policy and practice, supplemented by a more detailed examination of a representative sample of universities. Universities in the interview and promotions data sample were from all states and included

both metropolitan and regional universities as well as members of the major groups of universities. A list of the universities included in the sample is shown in Appendix A.

The questions that this report addresses in the course of reporting on the research include:

- What elements of policy affect the promotion of women?
- Do promotions policies contain provisions that act as barriers to the promotion of academic women?
- Is the under-representation of women in Australian universities a result of the policies?
- How can policies and practice be improved?

The report concludes with strategies and practices that could address gender equity in the academic promotion processes. Recommendations are incorporated throughout the report.

Section 2: Literature Review

In 2004 women comprised 39% of the total number of academics in Australian universities while they were just 16% of level E (see Figure 3 on page 28). The under-representation of women in academia, especially in senior academic positions, is a matter of concern in Australia and in many other countries. Considerable research has been undertaken to explore the factors which inhibit the achievement of gender equity in the employment and promotion of women academics.

THE CONTEXT OF WOMEN IN ACADEMIA IN AUSTRALIA

The current context of women in Australian academia was framed in the late 1980s. At this time, the Dawkins reforms to Australian higher education established the 'unified national system' and merged universities with colleges of education. These amalgamations involving large schools of nursing and education 'boosted the representation of women in the academic staff profile of Australian universities' (Carrington and Pratt, 2003, p. 5) in an enlarged university sector. At about the same time, academic positions were structured into five levels. Generally, an academic appointed on a continuing basis can progress through what is perceived as a transparent mechanism through competitive processes from A to E (although not all universities have promotion between D and E). Promotion applications are considered by peers alongside managerial performance appraisal. The promotion process is also dependent on proven performance of tasks which are largely under the control of the staff member, namely research, teaching and service to the profession, university and community (Probert *et al* 1998, p.19).

While equity policies and programs have been in existence for 20 years, the number of women in senior academic positions in universities has not increased sufficiently to achieve a critical mass. Carrington and Pratt (2003) emphasise that there are significant '*horizontal* gender differences as well as *vertical* gender differences' (p. 7): more than 50% of women at Level A reduce to just 16% at Level E; there is a concentration of women in the fields of teaching, nursing, arts, humanities and social sciences, and a corresponding under-representation of women in science-related disciplines.

INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH

The situation in Australia is similar to that overseas. Drawing upon extensive international data for academic institutions in twenty-six different countries between 1986 and 1992 Bain and Cummings (2000) found that in the ten university systems they studied, including Australia, less than one in ten full professors was a woman. Promotion processes to higher levels were not significantly different between countries.

There is an extensive literature on gender inequity at work and how this is exacerbated by women's ongoing commitments to family responsibilities and gendered expectations of the roles of women. There is also an extensive literature on the continued under-representation of women in academia. Studies of promotion systems have emphasised:

- masculinist organisational culture

- gendered conception of merit
- career breaks, lower qualifications and late entry to the profession
- reticence

Excellent summaries of this literature may be found in Probert (1998 and 2005), Castleman et al (1995), Burton (1997), White (2003a and 2003b), Chesterman et al (2003) and Carrington and Pratt (2003).

SUMMARY OF THEMES

Overall, the literature paints a negative picture of achievements in gender equity in the last twenty or so years in universities in Australia and in other countries. While there are policies and processes in place, and there is evidence of vision and commitment to bring about a critical mass of women in higher academic levels, progress in achieving gender equity does not appear to have matched the effort applied by universities. The discussion of the situation of women academics in the literature focuses on a number of themes:

- the universal existence of barriers or hurdles to the promotion of women professors or in the Australian context, to Level C and above, despite the existence of EEO and Affirmative Action initiatives, policies, policy implementation through action plans and promotion procedures
- the lack of critical mass of women in senior positions in universities that cannot be attributed to the ability of women to meet academic merit criteria for promotion and the difficulty of achieving critical mass without having more women to act as mentors and role models
- the emphasis on selection criteria that tend to disadvantage women
- the existence of underlying cultural impediments that prevent promotion of women academics, including the difficulty of combining family life and an academic career.

One of the possible reasons for lack of progress identified in the literature, and suggested by these themes, is the discriminatory effect of academic promotions policies. In the next section, promotions policy and practice will be examined to see whether they present obstacles in the path of achieving equity in employment for women academics.

Section 3: Policy analysis and interview findings

INTRODUCTION

The hypothesis for this research is that under-representation of women in academic staff reflects barriers in promotion processes. The research examined policies and procedures of Australian universities relating to promotions. Policy documents were collected from the web for review and analysis. In total the promotion policies of 34 of the 38 Australian universities were analysed. Policies were not available on the internet for the Australian Catholic, Bond or Victoria universities while information relating to Deakin University was incomplete. The latter university was excluded where a numerical breakdown of results is provided, but included where it provided an example relevant to the discussion.

A number of universities have produced other material that provides intending applicants with additional information including equity guidelines and references to other relevant policies that apply to aspects of the promotion process. For example, some universities have separate policies on gender representation on decision-making bodies that apply to promotion committees. All relevant, available material was included in the analysis.

In addition, interviews were conducted at 17 universities in 5 states and the ACT (Appendix A). The sample includes universities from the Group of 8, the Australian Technology Network (ATN), Innovative Research Universities (IRU), New Generation Universities (NGU), rural, small city, and outer urban universities. Interviews were conducted with staff who hold key positions in the promotions process such as chairs of promotions committees. Interviewees included Directors of Human Resources, Directors of Equity, Deputy Vice Chancellors, Pro Vice Chancellors, and a Vice Chancellor.

CRITERIA OF POLICY ANALYSIS

On the basis of information obtained from the literature review, researchers compiled a list of components or elements of promotions policy and procedures that are relevant to issues seen to affect the success of applications for promotion by women. The components or criteria identified were:

1. frequency of promotion process
2. levels to which promotion can be applied for
3. eligibility for promotion (including eligibility of part-time staff)
4. minimum service required prior to application for promotion
5. waiting period before eligible to re-apply
6. flexibility on doctoral qualification for promotion
7. criteria for promotion
8. promotion to level D and E available on criteria of teaching only
9. explicit mention of non traditional careers
10. clear equity statement within policy or guidelines
11. feedback
12. appeals
13. training for committee members
14. composition of committees
15. EEO or HR involvement in committee

16. process centralised or devolved.

An examination of the policies and procedures against these criteria would show whether policies contained barriers or inequitable hurdles for women. Some of the criteria might be considered more critical for women than others. For example, the composition of committees and equity training for committee members and the inclusion of statements on gender equity within the promotions policy would help alleviate gender and cultural bias. Involvement of EEO in promotions committees would be another element of good practice. An understanding of the relation between existing policies and the national statistics could emerge from the policy overview. The research did not examine in detail and does not report on the performance of individual universities except to identify a few by name in the course of discussion, particularly universities seen to be leaders in developing policies that assist women in the workforce.

THE INTERVIEWS

Each interview began and ended with open-ended questions inviting comment on the academic promotion process of the university. In response to this invitation, most interviewees expressed the view that their university had in place good policies which are seen as fair and which are reviewed regularly. In addition to questions about the university's policy, interviewees were asked whether the university had:

- special promotion processes not described in the policy documents, for example, procedures for promotion of individual applicants outside the promotion round
- provision for applicants to make a case for consideration in relation to experienced disadvantage based on gender, race or other relevant factor
- a KPI for the percentage of women in senior positions
- quotas for promotions by level
- special initiatives to encourage and assist women applicants.

The interviews were valuable for:

- verifying the analysis of promotions policies
- identifying strategies that could be more widely adopted by universities
- suggesting some areas where further study is necessary
- providing an opportunity to explore the range of issues that frequently fall under the heading of 'culture' to ascertain whether they continue to be regarded as significant in universities.

The interviews also provided an opportunity for researchers to learn the interviewees' personal impressions of the process, to gain anecdotal evidence and to gauge the currency of policy in relation to practice. They were intended to supplement, and correct where necessary, information gained from the policy analysis. The findings of the analysis are reported below with reference to the criteria or components of policy, and to information provided by the interviews.

1. Frequency of promotion process

Twenty-six of the 34 universities whose policies were examined undertake the promotion process annually. Three universities conduct the process every two years, while some universities undertake Level E promotions biennially. The University of Western Australia accepts applications for promotions at any time. Some universities permit 'exceptional out of cycle' applications.

The frequency of the promotion process does not appear to affect men and women disproportionately, except that women who take career breaks may have fewer opportunities to participate. Of particular interest is the scheduling of promotions committee meetings at the University of Western Australia (UWA). The committee meets monthly allowing staff to use the normal process as the need arises. The scheduling of meetings at UWA means that urgent applications can be dealt with through usual procedure. It was reported that women felt that this was helpful and that the regular meeting of the promotions committee assisted good process.

New information arose in interviews, with two interviewees describing formal procedures that allow a promotion to be considered outside the usual process. They cited retention of valued staff offered a higher position at another university as a reason for acting outside a promotions round. One interviewee reported having no mechanism to address this issue. In relation to decisions made outside of the usual promotions round, one interviewee reported that:

Not one woman has been promoted out-of-round, where someone who has got an offer of a chair elsewhere can go to their Dean and say I have an offer from a high ranking international university and I'm going to leave and the Dean says we can't lose you, I'll ask the VC if you can be promoted out of round. We will have a quick meeting of our promotion panels, a couple of people turn up and agree, they go to the VC and the VC would normally, but not in every circumstance, rubber stamp the Dean's decision. There is no competition involved, there are no specifications as to what sort of offer is acceptable. This doesn't happen very often, perhaps two or three a year but it adds up over time. It is quite a proportion of additional men. The reason is not new – women will not play the game – no woman I have ever spoken to is prepared when they have an offer to go and ask for an out-of-round promotion, they just don't like to do it.

Two universities have counteroffer policies, and some have provision for appointment 'by invitation'. The existence of a counteroffer policy is evidence that a university has taken steps to ensure transparency of all promotions decision-making. All universities need to address the issue in policy and procedure. This is an area that the anecdotal evidence cited above suggests might warrant further examination.

Recommendation 1:

That all universities include in promotions policies and/or guidelines clear procedures and recording requirements for out-of-round promotions.

2. *Levels to which promotion can be applied for*

Most policies cover promotion to levels B, C, D, and E with some variation. Four universities specify promotion to the next level; two state that promotion is normally to the level above; and three define 'accelerated' promotion and/or progression. Level E is not universally included in promotion opportunities. Five universities have separate processes for Level E and one university has an additional Level 'D Plus' in a separate category. Two universities do not specify the levels of promotion in their policies.

The provision of opportunities for promotion at all levels is an important component of policy for academic staff. That promotion to Level E is not universally available is a factor that would affect opportunities for women staff. Maximising opportunities for women to be promoted, particularly to professorial positions, should be a goal of all Australian universities and promotion to Level E should be available. 'Accelerated' promotion may provide an opportunity for a university to address gender related issues in an affirmative way. It would allow a university to be flexible and strategic in promoting gender equity. Given the issues relating to late start and interruptions to careers of women, the availability of opportunities for promotion to all levels including Level E and of accelerated promotion to Level E would appear to be significant positive features of promotions policies for universities committed to equity.

In the interviews, some universities indicated changes taking place at the lower levels. For example, the University of Technology Sydney (UTS) negotiated a new, less onerous form of progression through enterprise bargaining. It has introduced progression from associate lecturer to lecturer through a decentralised, broad-band process that allows individuals to move across the classification with no formal committee process and a simplified application linked to performance review. Investigation had shown that almost all applicants at this level had been promoted. Such a provision would assist both men and women.

Recommendation 2:

That all universities include in promotions policies and/or guidelines opportunities for promotion to all levels, including Level E.

Recommendation 3:

That all universities consider instituting a simplified process for promotion from Level A to Level B.

3. *Eligibility for promotion*

While 25 of the 34 universities accept applications for promotion from full-time and fractional-time employees, there are some qualifications such as restrictions on fixed term employees. Some policies specifically state previous periods of employment or the length of contract remaining as a basis for eligibility for promotion. Employees who are funded by outside bodies may be ineligible to apply for promotion. Eight universities state that promotion is possible from the top of the previous level. One specifically excludes staff on leave without salary for twelve months or more, who have resigned or whose most recent Academic Staff Review was unsatisfactory. Several universities specified 0.5 employment status as the minimum for applying for promotion. One of the universities, the University of

Adelaide, allows a special case to be made for staff employed at less than 0.5 fraction of time to reduce the number of promotion criteria. Three university policies do not state eligibility, while one refers to a quota system.

The interviews sought information about the use of quotas. Of the universities in the interview group, none have them in place and none see this happening in the future. Whatever the current statistics reveal about representation of women in the academic staff of Australian universities, they do not result from use of quotas.

Allowing part-time staff to apply for promotion would affect the promotion of academic women. That only 74% of universities provide for this indicates an area where there is room for improvement. Some universities do allow promotion for part-timers, but do not state this explicitly in their policies. Good practice nationally would be for all Australian universities to make part-time staff eligible to apply for promotion and this should be encouraged.

Most interviewees stated that part-time members of staff are assessed in the same way as other applicants, but on a pro rata basis. One interviewee reported that the achievements of part-time applicants are assessed 'relative to opportunity'. The right of part-time staff to apply for promotion was seen as a mechanism for ensuring equal access to promotion for women. However, one Deputy Vice Chancellor seemed to question the effectiveness of this provision:

Performance in relation to opportunity – if a half timer is nonetheless able to get half as many papers but with the same impact, or half as many good external research grants that is fine, but it may well be it is difficult to get the research grants because again they might be perceived as not having done enough as opposed to stuff of sufficient quality.

Recommendation 4:

That all universities include in promotions policies and/or guidelines explicit mention of promotion opportunities for part-time staff and how their applications will be assessed.

4. Minimum service required prior to application for promotion

The minimum period of service required prior to application for promotion (when stated) was one year. Three universities specify a minimum of three years service before promotion. Thirteen policies (38%) did not state a minimum. A service requirement is reasonable, particularly in view of the need to demonstrate outcomes since appointment or since promotion to the previous position or level. However, longer service requirements could reduce the number of women in the pool of applicants as a result of family-related interruptions to careers of women or a late career start.

5. Waiting period before being eligible to re-apply

Several universities require waiting periods of one or two years before unsuccessful applicants can re-apply. Fourteen universities specify two years. Of the four that specify one year, Monash stipulates applicants must write a statement that addresses new achievements and Murdoch nominates a waiting period of one year if the applicant is unsuccessful in two consecutive years. Fourteen universities make no mention of the waiting period. Queensland University of Technology (QUT) specifies that an application

cannot be made in the following year although a lesser waiting period can be granted if it is the first application or there are grounds for a special exemption. Flinders specifies four years between applications for levels D Plus and E.

Requiring staff to wait before re-applying for promotion would not appear to be a component of policy that affects women applicants disproportionately, except where career interruption would combine to unduly prolong the waiting period and thereby reduce opportunity.

At Newcastle, notwithstanding a two-year waiting period for re-application, applicants who miss out only narrowly may re-apply after one year and are offered counselling to assist with the process. This approach would appear to be beneficial for individual staff and could be appropriate to help achieve relevant staffing goals or targets of the university. It would be important to ensure that the approach is applied consistently and transparently. Provision for making any exception to policy or practice should be clearly stated in university documents.

6. *Flexibility on doctoral qualification for promotion*

Flexibility regarding the requirement of a doctorate was stated or implied by 17 of the 34 universities (50%). Six universities were willing to promote applicants without doctorates at Level B. At higher levels promotion without a doctorate appears quite difficult. In this circumstance, demonstration of equivalent experience is usually required, although the University of Queensland specifies flexibility at Level C. Many universities are flexible on doctorates if they are not the discipline norm.

The interviews confirmed that universities are willing to be flexible. One university indicated that candidates without a doctorate must demonstrate a research profile or equivalent experience as a counterbalance. At levels D or E, the lack of a doctorate was reported to make promotion quite difficult, and demonstration of alternative experience was required unless the qualification is not the discipline norm, for example in Creative Arts and Law. One interviewee pointed out that younger legal academics are now more likely to have doctorates and that supervisors play a critical role in ensuring that the committee understands discipline norms.

7. *Criteria for promotion*

The criteria for promotion in all universities include:

- teaching or teaching and learning
- research
- leadership
- service
- qualifications.

There are some variations in the grouping of activities within these criteria, for example consultancy may be included in the research or service category. The criterion, 'service' is variously defined. Eight policies refer to leadership and management and administration; eight specify contribution to planning and governance, while nine simply state 'service' without further definition. Nine policies make no mention of service while ten refer to service in the context of the discipline or profession. Thirteen universities include a

combination of contributions both to the profession and to the wider community. One policy states that professional service to the wider community is an optional criterion.

A policy with criteria that incorporate a wider perspective of the role of the academic can be to the advantage of women. Policies that support diversity have a wider range of activities including teaching, curriculum design, student support, professional contributions and service in various forms. They make promotion more attainable by women staff.

In eleven universities different weightings are allocated to criteria for different levels and minimum standards are stated. Emphasis in seven universities is clearly on teaching and research: two universities nominate at least 30% for either teaching or research. In five universities weightings could be specified by the applicant.

In light of what the literature has said about women in academia – their concentration in disciplines that do not attract significant research grants, their interrupted career paths, tendency to take on heavier teaching loads and pastoral care and their less single-minded or less aggressive (Probert, 2005) approach to the development of their careers through research when compared to men – the ways in which individual universities weight promotions criteria is a real issue for women. It is particularly important in circumstances where women have become locked into a form of academic work earlier in their careers that inhibits their research and prevents them from fulfilling the standard criterion for promotion. Allowing staff to nominate the weightings within limits, as some policies do, would appear to be a useful mechanism for dealing with the inequity often perceived and noted in the literature.

Most universities included in the interviews reported that in theory teaching and community service are valued equally with research and are highly regarded, pointing to internal awards for teaching as evidence. However, many also reported that the culture varies across disciplines with research being valued more highly in some areas. It was also reported that in some academic promotion committee meetings there is more discussion about research than teaching. Similar views are reported in the literature. One interviewee suggested that such views are not based on fact but are largely myth: there is a 'general myth that research is valued more' but that the impression arises simply because research performance is easier to measure and verify.

Other views on the criteria expressed in the interviews were that:

- Contributions to the community – writing a textbook, influencing the curriculum outside of your own institution – are harder to document and harder to measure.
- Women who have excellent teaching performance assessments from students or even from their peers may find it very difficult to be promoted.
- Some forms of service to the university were valued more highly than others to the advantage of men academics who were potentially more likely to contribute to entrepreneurial activities and to certain local community activities, while women's pastoral care roles might not be similarly valued. One HR representative suggested that the pastoral role is 'the female academic's role rather than the male's and I guess that does take a lot of their time and perhaps they don't get adequate recognition for that'.

A Pro Vice Chancellor who was interviewed commented on the difficulty of ensuring that women staff have an equal opportunity to gain experience in the category of university service:

An issue for women staff members may be that it is difficult to present your history of contributions to the University if nobody puts you on committees or the Dean doesn't appoint you as head of school, it is harder to demonstrate those things. It is very difficult sometimes to distinguish where the responsibilities lie there, because it is known that people demonstrate in all kinds of ways their willingness to undertake these kind of tasks and some people don't demonstrate that but then you also need the other half of the equation which is the people who hold back in their gift to give you that opportunity.

This anecdotal evidence indicates that whatever the real picture is within a given institution, there remain perceptions that are the same as those reported in the literature and identified by Probert et al (1998). The degree to which the perceptions are accurate or are myths was not the subject of this research, but it is important to note that the interviews showed the existence of the views in late 2004.

Recommendation 5:

That all universities include in promotions policies and/or guidelines flexibility in promotions criteria, perhaps by use of a weighting system whereby a staff member may nominate weightings.

8. Promotion to level D and E available on criteria of teaching only

The majority of universities do not allow promotion to Level D/D+ or E based on teaching attainment only. The University of Tasmania, however, states it is University policy 'to work towards increasing the number of promotions that are primarily based on teaching'.

For women, whom the literature describes as tending to be allocated and to take on more teaching (research involving a survey of University of NSW staff has questioned the validity of this – see Probert, 2005), this policy requirement may be in effect a mechanism for preventing their promotion. One interviewee pointed out that without a national acceptance of merit based on teaching-only criteria, academic staff who focus on teaching will be limited in their career options and will be unable to move from one university to another. The issue of teaching-based promotion may become more significant given current Federal Government initiatives in relation to teaching performance and teaching-only universities.

One university includes in the promotions results published on its website information about the basis for the promotion. In this way, the University demonstrates how promotions result from the application of the different criteria.

9. Explicit mention of non-traditional career paths (gaps or interruptions)

The policy documents of less than half the 34 universities examined explicitly mention non-traditional career paths which frequently include career gaps or interruptions. This is another area in which one would expect an employer who has gender equity as a corporate goal to make specific provision for women staff. Five universities that do not nominate non-traditional careers in their policies allow for consideration of this aspect within other related documents such as EEO guidelines. The number of policies that do not address this is large in light of what we know. Acknowledgement of the issue must

include providing ways for dealing with non-traditional careers in the promotions process. The concept used to assess achievement 'relative to opportunity' that is used for part-time applicants may be useful here.

Most interviewees confirmed that their universities have in place mechanisms to take into account career gaps and transferability of skills from non-traditional career paths set out in either policy, accompanying guidelines or in the training provided to committee members. Only one interviewee stated that no attention had been paid to this issue. At some universities, applicants can provide information in their application to explain career gaps. However, some interviewees reported that few women take advantage of the opportunity within the application, preferring to provide the information confidentially to the Chair, particularly where gaps are related to family responsibilities. The opportunity should be universally available to all applicants in a way that ensures the issue is routinely addressed in the promotions decision-making process.

The discussion about non-traditional career paths was related to a question interviewees asked about how promotions committees dealt with candidates who had experienced disadvantage. In response to this question, most universities stated that applicants can make a case for consideration in relation to experienced disadvantage which most frequently takes the form of the career 'gap'.

Recommendation 6:

That all universities include in promotions policies and/or guidelines directions for assessing non-traditional careers 'relative to opportunity'.

10. Clear equity statement within policy or guidelines

Statements regarding equity range from obligatory statements (one sentence to one paragraph) to strong statements referring to EEO principles throughout the policies. Several universities have developed separate guidelines on EEO. Nearly half of the universities (16) have no statement on equity policy within their academic promotion policies or associated guidelines. Examples of what are considered to be strong equity statements are found in the policies of six universities. Other universities have strong equity statements incorporated into guidelines or other documents such as 'information for applicants'.

The following is a summary of the results.

47% (16)	have a clear equity statement in the policy
6% (2)	have a clear statement in separate EEO documents
47% (16)	have no statement.

In light of their membership of the AVCC and support of the AVCC Action Plan and Policy Statement, that almost half of the universities whose policies and supporting documents were reviewed do not address the issue of gender equity is a major failing. This is a component of promotions policy that should be present and clearly visible in the policies of all universities.

The result measured through interviews was that 10 of the 17 universities (59%) have a clear statement about equity and/or equal opportunity either in the policy or accompanying guidelines. It is common practice in this group for the chair to explain to committee

members their responsibility in relation to equity. This is also covered in training for committee members. The University of Western Australia policy includes the statement that, 'As women are currently under-represented in promotion applications, it is expected that Heads of Schools will encourage applications from women and provide them with the appropriate guidance and encouragement'.

The significance of having a statement within the promotions policy was underlined by one interviewee who stated:

If the statement is not there it is not apparently applicable to promotions. People disconnect from it. If you have it in your policy what it means is that people discuss it. Other people take ownership of it because it is their policy. They can refer back and it enables people to have that conversation and to ask about it and talk about it and how do we do it.

Some universities rely on a strong separate statement of commitment to equity in their strategic plan.

Recommendation 7:

That all universities include in promotions policies and/or guidelines a clear equity statement.

11. Feedback

Three of the 34 universities included in the policy analysis did not state whether feedback is provided to unsuccessful applicants. Feedback is usually provided in written form and some universities offer counselling or invite unsuccessful applicants to meet with the chair of the committee. One university makes available a copy of the minutes of the meeting in which the decision was made. The policies showed that the range of practice is quite wide from the provision of feedback only on request, to written feedback supported by interview and discussion and counselling. There would appear to be an opportunity for more uniform good practice, particularly for providing an interview/discussion opportunity to unsuccessful applicants. This would be particularly appropriate where unsuccessful candidates belong to groups the university wishes to encourage to apply and to retain in academia or that it has targeted for equity or other purposes.

12. Appeals

Thirty-two of the 34 universities (94%) allow appeal processes on procedural grounds. Appeals processes vary, with time allowed for appeals ranging from seven days to three months; the most common timeframe specified in five policies, is fourteen days. Charles Sturt University permits appeals on grounds that include discrimination as defined by the EEO policy. RMIT does not allow any appeals, and Curtin will permit an appeal only at the Vice Chancellor's discretion if an applicant considers there has been non-compliance which affects the assessment of merit.

This is an area where there is almost uniform practice. Appeals are primarily allowed on procedural grounds. The capacity to appeal is evidence of the confidence of staff and institutions in the integrity of their promotions procedures.

13. *Training for committee members*

The review of 34 policies found that 7 universities provide training or briefing sessions for promotions committee members. One university explicitly assigns to the chair responsibility for ensuring members understand EEO and diversity principles. Twenty-three of the universities (68%) make no mention of training in policy documents.

Given all that the literature has stated about the pervasive masculine culture of academia, the definition of merit and the nexus between research and promotion, it is important to be proactive in removing as many impediments to the promotion of women as possible. Training of committee members, in particular of chairs, and requiring the chair to address equity as a routine part of the process, would be a relatively simple mechanism to overcome 'direct and indirect discrimination' that women report block them from progressing to higher levels (White, 2003b, p. 49). It is important that the training occur before the first meeting of the promotions committee rather than at the first meeting. By that time, members have already read the applications and have formed a view on them.

All universities included in the interview group have some form of training for committees, but only three provide annual formal training for all committee members and chairs. Several universities agreed that "training the committee is an area that needs to be improved". The percentage (18%) of universities in the sample interviewed that have mandatory annual formal training for persons making decisions about promotions is low. The figure supports the finding of the policy analysis that there is room for significant improvement in practice across the sector.

Despite the training that is occurring, some universities suggested that gender stereotyping of women still existed in some areas. One senior interviewee identified as an impediment:

the attitude committee members bring to the table through their own conception of stereotypes of men and women, because you don't have any control over that.

This is a weakness that mandatory training for promotions committee members would help to alleviate.

Recommendation 8:

That all universities include in promotions policies and/or guidelines a requirement that committee chairs and members complete training on gender equity prior to the first meeting of the committee.

14. *Composition of promotion committees*

Twenty-nine of the 34 policies (85%) include some reference to gender composition of the promotions committee. Committee compositions tend to be given according to *ex officio* formulae that do not make clear the proportion of men and women. Those that do specify composition by gender range from requiring 'at least one of the elected members to be female unless a faculty has less than four female academic staff' to prescribing a specific gender balance. For example, one university nominates a minimum of 20% representation of both genders; two universities specify at least 30%. Four universities refer to separate policies that define gender and/or diversity balance in committee membership. These

policies have not been reviewed in detail in this research. Six universities make no mention of gender in relation to the composition of panels. One of the three does allow for the nomination of 'one additional academic ... to allow for equity and/or discipline balance'. Discipline balance is a significant characteristic of University of Western Australia practice where 'care is taken to achieve an art/science balance' (de Vries, 2005, p 47).

Gender balance of promotions committees is an aspect of policy that could be easily altered by universities. The same reasons that suggest that chairs and committee members should be trained and should be required to address gender equity, apply here. To overcome the predominant male culture that surrounds promotions and the perception of promotions, universities should ensure that all promotions committees include both men and women in appropriate proportions. Of the various ratios specified in policies, the current benchmark appears to be between 30 – 40%. There is no reason for not instituting this practice universally, other than the very practical reason that one must have sufficient women peers to meet the benchmark and one must not unreasonably burden women, who are fewer in number, with a disproportionate amount of administrative work. Universities that have difficulty meeting this minimum need to put in place strategies for rectifying the situation, for example targets for gender equity (see the discussion of KPI on page 22), or to call upon external women to be committee members. They also need to find ways for recognising and compensating women who are called to perform this service more frequently than their male colleagues.

The interviews showed that in most cases there is strong commitment to gender equity of promotions committees and every effort is made to seek a gender balance on them. One interviewee felt that gender balance was difficult to achieve because there are relatively few women in senior positions and they are overworked, a point addressed above.

Recommendation 9:

That all universities include in promotions policies and/or guidelines an appropriate ratio of gender representation on promotions committees.

15. EEO or HR involvement in committee

Twenty policies (59%) mention the invited or mandatory presence of either an EEO or HR representative. Of the committees which have EEO or HR designated members, at least twelve do not allow voting rights for the EEO or HR representative. Two universities nominate both an EEO and an NTEU representative as observers. Fourteen policies (41%) make no mention of EEO or HR representation in relation to selection panels.

Most of the universities in the interview group include in promotions committees members from university council, or staff and student unions or from outside the university. Thirteen of the 17 universities interviewed include equity representatives. None of the representatives have voting rights on the academic promotion committees. The inclusion of EEO or HR representatives was seen by many universities as a demonstration of commitment to EEO principles. For example, one interviewee stated:

I see our role being about fairness for everybody and about equitable and transparent application of the policies and the promotion criteria ... we are there ... to reach a good determination of merit ... we see systemic issues as well as individual issues.

Another remarked that not following this practice meant 'there is no opportunity to monitor the process to find out if the feelings that women have that the process is biased can actually be tested'.

One particular example of good practice came from the University of Melbourne which has EEO observers for all panels. At the start of a promotions round, the equity office runs sessions for nominated academics who are to be involved in the process. The EEO observers are invited to speak on perceived processes or irregularities or to alert members to situations that suggest there may be unfair or discriminatory practice. The Director of Equity described this as a brilliant system from three points of view:

... it increases the knowledge and understanding of how the panels work amongst the staff in the faculties and departments. Every year we turn around another group of 30 or 40 observers and they go back and they tell everyone else how to do it and that is incredibly important. Hopefully that gives them confidence, most of the reports are excellent, and people are amazed how good the panels are. Secondly it educates the panels just having the people there. Thirdly it gives the office feedback on how the processes work, what are the problems with the processes so we can feed them into an ongoing review.

This is an important example of good practice.

The involvement of HR staff in promotions does not guarantee that gender equity is addressed for they may simply act to assist the administrative process. What is needed is a representative with a responsibility for monitoring equity issues, reviewing the process annually and reporting the results in a way that ensures cultural issues, as well as equity issues, are addressed.

Recommendation 10:

That all universities include in promotions policies and/or guidelines a requirement that an EEO representative or person with an equity brief be involved to monitor the process and the results to ensure that cultural and equity issues are addressed.

17. Process centralised or devolved

The promotions process is fully centralised at twelve universities; two of these universities nominate that there is a 'faculty filter'. The others have both faculty and/or centralised committees. The arrangements for devolved processes at seven universities are applicable to levels B and C. Two universities have centralised arrangements for Level C and above; two specify this for Level D, and one for Level E. The most common structure is a faculty committee or an academic level committee which reports to a centralised committee.

Analysis of the 34 policies showed:

9% (3)	devolved
59% (20)	centralised (includes where faculty recommends to a central committee)
32% (11)	centralised and devolved (with some levels of promotions determined at the faculty level and others higher levels decided at the university level).

The significance of the decision-making process in relation to gender equity was discussed by Burton (1997, pp 35-42). There does not appear to have been a definitive study of how managerial and collegial systems affect gender equity. However, Burton

states that 'In several Equity Review reports, it is made clear that EEO/affirmative action and more general employment equity accountabilities have not accompanied the general devolution of decision-making authority; little guidance is provided as to how EEO/affirmative action responsibilities might be carried out' (Burton, 1997, p. 41). This underlines the critical nature of other policy components examined in this report, specifically the presence of EEO principles within the promotions policy, the training of committee chairs and the requirement that they address gender equity in the course of committee deliberations.

KPI FOR THE PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN IN SENIOR POSITIONS

The interviews included a question on the existence of indicators for gender equity. Although all universities included in the interview group agreed that the percentage of women in senior positions within the higher education sector is low, only five of the seventeen universities in the interview group (29%) have a corporate KPI for women in senior positions and there were differences about the establishment of targets or KPIs. This is an obvious weakness in practice. The AVCC Action Plan recommended that 'all universities include gender equity performance measures in institutional plans and quality assurance processes'. That less than a third of the universities interviewed have gender equity indicators and that targets are not universal suggest that practice nationally should be examined. In the meantime, universities that have not established targets should be encouraged to do so, particularly in relation to the senior level positions and the levels where statistical evidence suggests there is a ceiling.

The interviews revealed that some universities have a search plan for women but this practice is perhaps applied more to recruitment and appointment than promotions. In relation to promotions it was reported that some Deans make very strong efforts to find women either for appointment or promotion; others do not. It was reported that one of the proposals that a Level E review committee is going to explore is the introduction of tougher gender-equity KPIs for Deans linked to the strategic and the operational plan, including gender equity in senior positions. The UWA practice reported earlier is commendable.

Recommendation 11:

That all universities adopt a KPI for women in senior positions.

SPECIAL INITIATIVES TO ENCOURAGE AND ASSIST WOMEN APPLICANTS

An important aspect of the interviews was to collect examples of special initiatives. Interviewers asked staff to describe the way their university encourages and assists applications by women. Although several university interviewees stated their institution was 'not doing enough for women', only one university reported the absence of initiatives specifically for women.

The range of initiatives described included more general career planning initiatives, specialised recruitment initiatives and strategies that focus on practice, such as:

- career planning

- workshops for women, assistance with applications, mock interviews, examples of good applications and case studies of previous applicants
- executive leadership strategies including:
 - senior management writing to Heads of School asking them to encourage women to apply for promotion
 - PVC to identify women who should be encouraged, nurtured, and mentored and invite all eligible women to apply for promotion to Level E
 - DVC to communicate to Heads of Schools to encourage improvement of gender profile and linking outcomes to annual performance review
 - special sessions for women applicants hosted by the Vice Chancellor
- committee on barriers to promotion for women applying for Level E
- academic staff portfolios as part of the performance management process

One Vice Chancellor has led a program that focuses on encouraging women and an 'active culture'. This proactive approach to gender equity has involved special programs such as a presentation for applicants and another to the wider university given by external senior scholars on the findings of their research on equity in relation to promotions.

This list of special initiatives is useful for suggesting specific mechanisms that universities might adopt more widely. In particular, universities should be encouraged to take initiatives that demonstrate institutional commitment and senior leadership, and responsibility for achieving results. Executive leadership strategies designed to bring about cultural change and to improve results for women academics are particularly significant. The progress already made in Australian universities is undoubtedly related to proactive approaches evidenced by these strategies.

Recommendation 12:

That all universities implement special initiatives to encourage and assist women applicants.

SEVEN ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF POLICY

While each university has similar procedures and specifies similar criteria for promotion of academic staff, an examination of policy shows that there are different emphases in different universities. Sometimes there are different definitions. This research has focused on providing an overview of promotions policy to identify the critical elements that affect gender equity and areas for improvement, rather than on describing the differences between universities in detail.

While all of the sixteen components examined impact upon staff and therefore affect women who apply for promotion, on the basis of the issues raised in the literature, seven appear to be particularly relevant to women and can be considered as essential components of a promotions policy designed to advance the AVCC Action Plan. These have been identified as:

1. Eligibility for part-time staff to apply for promotion (Recommendation 4)

2. Flexibility in criteria for promotion (Recommendation 5)
3. Explicit mention of non-traditional careers (Recommendation 6)
4. Clear equity statement within the policy or guidelines (Recommendation 7)
5. Training for committee members (Recommendation 8)
6. Specified gender representation in the composition of the promotions committee (Recommendation 9)
7. Monitoring, reviewing and reporting by EEO or HR representatives with an equity brief (Recommendation 10).

Of these desirable elements of promotions policies, perhaps the most fundamental is the inclusion of a statement on gender equity within the policy document. Universities which do not have clear equity statements within their promotion policies raise potential barriers to the promotion of women. Other barriers may arise from the absence of EEO representation and an EEO role in promotions process, as well as from lack of training for committee members, particularly chairs. Training and EEO involvement may help dismantle pervasive cultural barriers to women's promotion.

This broad-brush examination of policies and practices makes clear that the promotions policies in Australian universities generally reflect a commitment to fairness and equity and address in appropriate ways the significant issues identified in the literature. Opportunities for promotion are provided regularly by application and are considered on merit according to known procedures in accordance with policy. As a whole, the sector has achieved a commendable level of good practice. Yet, the analysis has shown that there is an opportunity to achieve more uniform good practice nationally by adjusting policy where necessary and by adopting strategies that address the issues in proactive ways.

OTHER ISSUES

Many interviewees acknowledged that although there had been much success in improving women's promotion rates, deep cultural and systemic issues still needed to be confronted. The issues that emerged in the interviews are highly relevant to any discussion of how Australian universities can improve their performance against the targets set by the AVCC in relation to gender equity.

Reticence and critical mass

An important finding of the interviews was that there remains a generally held belief that women do not apply for promotion as readily as men.

We have promotion through to level E. We have had a few women in recent years go from D to E, a handful. But on each occasion those women who have been successful would self identify as being 'a bit out of the box'. Not only have they been outstanding, relative to their peers, (which is often the case for women, of course, having to be twice as good), but also they are women who either have the necessary support structures behind them to progress to that more senior level, or who are able to exclusively prioritise their career aspirations. But we have a cohort of women at level C who are just not moving through to level D. They are not applying.

One HR representative suggested that there was still a lot of work to be done in relation to:

measures and goalposts and making sure those goalposts aren't ones that just suit traditional male career paths and male opportunities and male work patterns. But then there are a lot of other things in the academic culture and environment that we do need to change as well. ... things like women being part-time and not having the opportunities to do research, women who haven't got time to finish their PhDs and therefore aren't going to be eligible to be chief investigator on a grant application, all those knock-on effects that we have to take into account and decide through guidelines how to construct an academic culture that will allow everybody to succeed.

Furthermore, it was reported that in male-dominated faculties it is still hard for women to find strong mentors and to participate in networks.

The question of how effective one university is in addressing the fact that women do not apply for promotion in the same proportion as men, was raised by one interviewee:

the path we are on at the moment will help women be more competitive – a deficit model. We will help women be more competitive but we won't recognise that there are organisational barriers or we won't do too much about the organisational barriers that are there, and certainly not in any way that is going to make an immediate and significant change in the representation of women. It is very much add women and don't stir.

Blocks at particular levels and reticence are two issues that could be addressed through adoption of the leadership strategies that some universities already practice. Extending these initiatives widely, if not universally, across the sector should be an immediate goal of the AVCC to stir its members to steepen the curve.

The next section will examine the data collected to see the state of affairs in relation to the proportion of academic women staff at each level nationally and the promotion statistics for sixteen of the universities interviewed.

Section 4: Gender statistics and promotion outcomes

INTRODUCTION

The hypothesis for this study is that under-representation of women academics in Australian universities is a result of barriers or impediments to promotion in university policies. Analysis has revealed that while the body of policies presents no major barriers, there appears to be an opportunity for more uniform good practice. The data were examined to determine:

- whether women are under-represented in academic staff and, if so, to identify where the under-representation occurs
- whether under-representation is attributable to either poor success rates of women applicants or to failure of women to apply for promotion

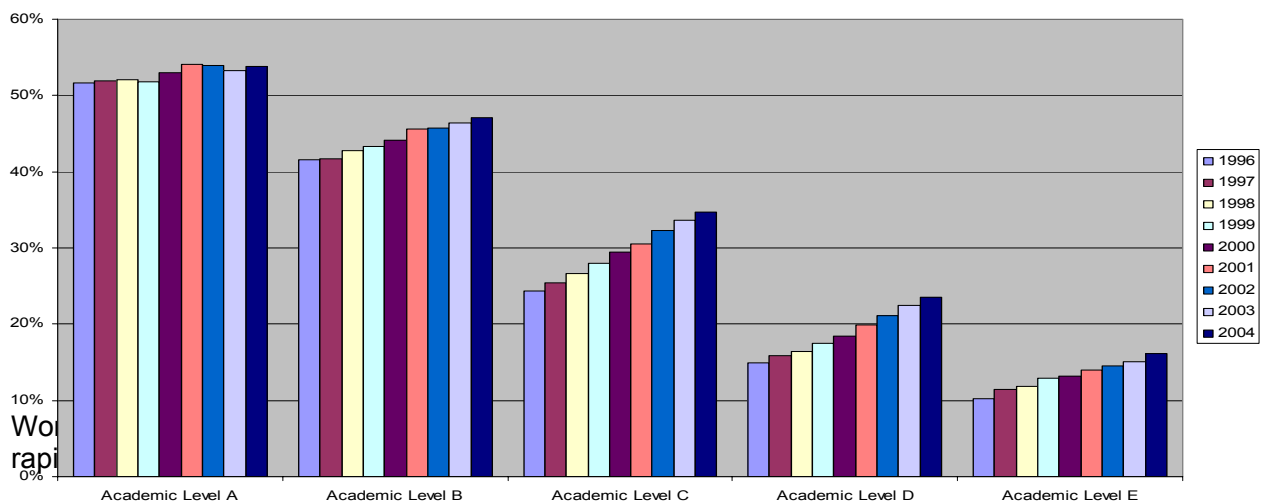
Statistical data were obtained from the Department of Education Science and Training (DEST) staff datasets 1996-2004. They show the numbers of full-time and fractional full-time women in academic and non-academic positions in Australian universities. (See Figure 3, from AVCC University Staff Profile: Female staff %: Full-time and Fractional Full-time by Classification, 1996-2004 on page 28.)

Other data analysed consisted of promotion statistics provided by 16 of the 17 universities that were interviewed. From this information, reports were produced in relation to success rates for women and the pool of available women.

WOMEN ACADEMIC STAFF AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL ACADEMIC STAFF

An examination of the DEST data for each classification level shows there has been an increase in the percentage of women academic staff as a percentage of total staff in every year between 1996 and 2004. This is represented in the following graph.

Figure 1 - %Female full time and fractional full time staff as % total staff by Current Duties Classification 1996 -2004



women at level C and above. The increase has been consistent for each category and for every year, except for Level A classifications where some minor fluctuations have interrupted what was otherwise a steady rate of increase. Throughout the whole period, women have comprised more than 50 percent of Level A appointments. In 2004, 54% of Level A academics were female; an increase of 2% since 1996.

A more positive perspective is revealed in the figures for women who are at Level C where there has been an increase of between one and two percent each year. Overall there has been an increase of 11% in the number of women in Level C positions from 24% in 1996 to 35% in 2004. The figures for Level D demonstrate that there has also been a steady, albeit smaller increase in the proportion of women at this level. An increase of 9% to a total of 24% in 2004 is evidence of women achieving more seniority. Similarly, at Level E, there has been movement from 10% in 1996 to 16% in 2004. However, 16% is a small proportion of the professoriate which remains heavily male-dominated. These results are equivalent to or a little better than international results.

While there has been a lack of substantial progress towards gender equity in the numbers of academic women in senior positions, there has been a continuation of the upward trend at all levels in line with the 1994-1997 trend line. This is shown in Figure 2 below. However, the AVCC target was to progress the ratio faster than the 1994-1997 trend line. The ratio of the percentage of Level D and above to all female academic staff has increased from 38% to 51% per cent; the ideal of 100% has not been achieved, but the increase is significant. (See Appendix B.)

Figure 2 : Ratio of Female Academic Staff (Level D and Above) to All Female Academic Staff 1996-2004

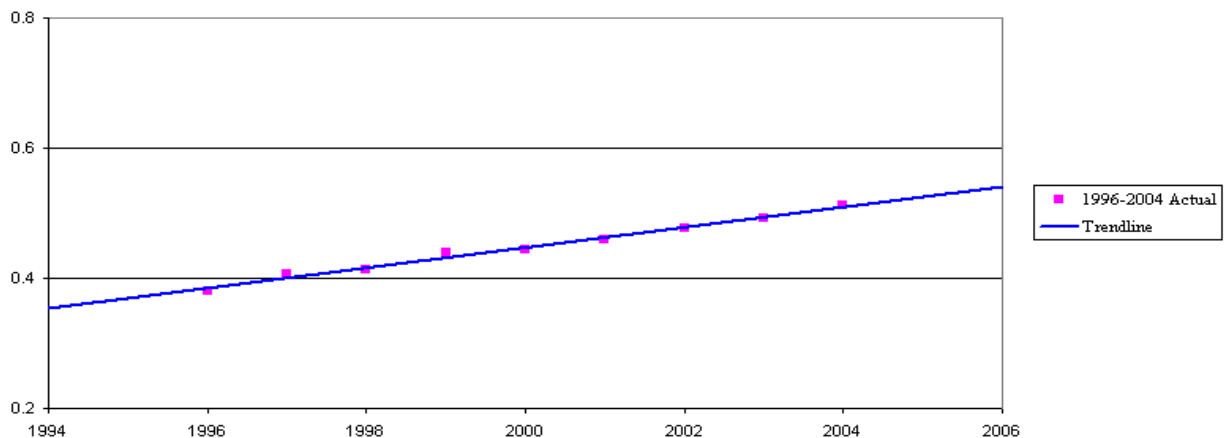


Figure 3 : from Australian Vice-Chancellors Committee: University Staff Profile Table 4

Table 4. Female Staff: % Full-time and Fractional Full-time by Classification, 1996-2004

		1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Academic	Vice-Chancellor	5%	10%	14%	17%	18%	23%	24%	27%	30%
	Deputy Vice-Chancellor	19%	22%	18%	19%	19%	17%	18%	21%	26%
	Academic Level E	10%	11%	12%	13%	13%	14%	15%	15%	16%
	Academic Level D	15%	16%	16%	18%	18%	20%	21%	22%	24%
	Academic Level C	24%	25%	27%	28%	29%	31%	32%	34%	35%
	Academic Level B	42%	42%	43%	43%	44%	46%	46%	46%	47%
	Academic Level A	52%	52%	52%	52%	53%	54%	54%	53%	54%
	Academic females as a % of all academic staff	34%	34%	35%	35%	36%	37%	38%	39%	39%
	Female Academic Subtotal	11,374	11,442	11,463	11,491	12,027	12,535	13,162	13,863	14,758
Non-academic	HEW - Above Level 10	26%	29%	29%	31%	32%	32%	36%	36%	39%
	HEW - Level 10	34%	34%	37%	39%	41%	42%	42%	43%	41%
	HEW - Level 9	40%	42%	44%	43%	41%	43%	44%	45%	47%
	HEW - Level 8	41%	44%	44%	46%	47%	47%	48%	49%	50%
	HEW - Level 7	46%	46%	48%	50%	51%	52%	53%	54%	55%
	HEW - Level 6	52%	53%	55%	56%	56%	58%	59%	60%	60%
	HEW - Level 5	60%	61%	63%	64%	65%	66%	67%	68%	69%
	HEW - Level 4	72%	72%	74%	74%	74%	75%	76%	76%	76%
	HEW - Level 3	73%	73%	72%	71%	71%	70%	70%	69%	68%
	HEW - Level 2	52%	51%	52%	52%	52%	52%	51%	51%	51%
	HEW - Level 1	68%	69%	69%	69%	71%	71%	72%	72%	73%
	HEW - below Level 1	37%	38%	35%	49%	56%	55%	61%	57%	65%
	Non-academic females as a % of all non-academic staff	59%	60%	61%	61%	61%	61%	62%	62%	63%
Female Non-Academic Subtotal	27,011	26,422	26,388	26,567	26,798	27,538	28,815	30,207	31,426	
Total Female Staff	38,385	37,864	37,851	38,058	38,825	40,073	41,977	44,070	46,184	

Source: AVCC - Table 3. Female Staff Full-time and Fractional Full-time by Classification, 1996-2004

Note: percentage of females in the respective classification.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE NATIONAL DATA

When the national data are considered in association with AVCC reported data on age groups and gender, there appears to be a real opportunity in the near future for women academics to improve their position as significant numbers of men retire. This emerging opportunity makes clear how important it will be to continue to support women and to encourage them to apply for promotions and for positions that become available due to retirement. In 2005, as in 2002, one might well repeat the statement made in the AVCC Policy Statement that gender equity has not been achieved 'to the extent or at the rate expected'. However, the data demonstrates that there has been progress and that there will be opportunity for women to further increase their representation.

In 1995, one of the barriers identified for the promotion of academic women was to achieve Level C and above (Castleman et al, 1995, p. 112). The Castleman report, commissioned by the NTEU, found that women were represented in larger numbers at levels A and B and that it was much more difficult to build a career at these levels. Since the mid-1990s, the proportion of women at levels A and B has continued to increase slightly, while women have made much more rapid progress to level C. The hurdle appears to be moving to the higher levels of D and E. With continued effort and greater success in promoting women at these levels in the short term, women will be very well placed to take up positions vacated through retirement.

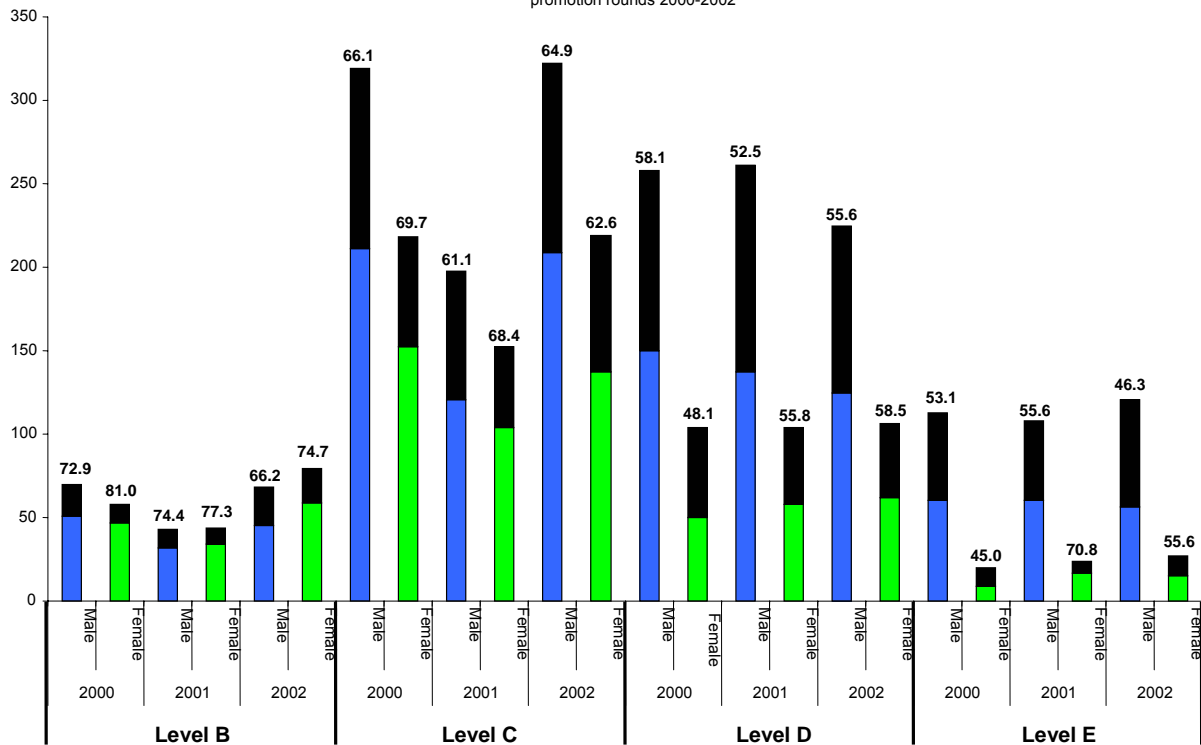
DATA FROM PROMOTION ROUNDS IN SELECTED UNIVERSITIES

Four sets of graphs have been presented in a single figure (Figure 4) on the following page. It shows the applications numbers and success rates for female applicants in 16 universities for each of the levels (B, C, D and E) in the three years, 2000 -2002. The promotions data was used to ascertain the application and success rate of women. Low application rates would suggest that women were inhibited in some way and would suggest that elements of policy that restrict or discourage women from applying should be considered possible causes. Reticence of women would also be a contributing factor. Similarly, low success rates for women would suggest that policy and practice should be scrutinised.

Of the twelve comparative sets, only in three did women have a lower success rate than men (Level C 2002; Level D 2000; Level E 2000). At Level A to B, application numbers are low which reflects the small number of appointments at Level A. Application numbers are comparable for men and women and success rates are high for women in every year. The high success rates for application to Level B across sixteen universities supports the streamlined approach adopted by the University of Technology Sydney, a basis for Recommendation 4 above.

Application numbers reach their peak at Level B to C, although with significant variation even when totalled over 16 universities. In each year there are more applications from men than women, but the success rates for women are generally higher (except in 2002). At levels D and E, the numbers of applications are smaller and applications from men greatly exceed those from women, a phenomenon also found in the UK and other countries. These data reveal that the success rates for women overall were better than for men.

Figure 4 : Comparison between the success rate of Female applicants against the success rate of Male applicants in Levels B - E promotion rounds 2000-2002



The variation in numbers of women and men applying for promotion may be attributed to their proportional representation in the potential pool of applicants at the lower level. So, for example, as women comprise over 50% of Level A academics, it would be expected that approximately that proportion of applicants to Level B should be women. It was not possible in this study to ascertain the exact proportions of academic staff by level and gender for the 16 universities for which promotions data was available. However, an indicative sector-wide proportion was readily available from the DEST data. An indicative comparison with sector-wide data for the eligible pool of applicants shows that application rates and success rates for women are at appropriate levels. See Figure 5 below. Although the data is indicative, it tends to show that reticence to apply is becoming less true (more of a myth) and may be more relevant to competitive application processes for senior positions (Chesterman *et al*, 2003) than for the more objective promotions process.

2000 – 2002	% Women in Eligible Pool	% Women Applicants	% Women Success Rates
Level E	20	17	19
Level D	31	30	29
Level C	45	41	42
Level B	53	50	52

Figure 5 : Applications in relation to the eligible pool (all universities) and success rate 2000-2002 (16 universities)

Analysis of the data also shows that the number of women applying for promotion tends to be equivalent to the eligible pool of women. This suggests that the national statistics for women academics as a proportion of total staff are not attributable to these factors. This analysis suggests that the under-representation of women at senior levels cannot be attributed to flaws and barriers in the promotions process. Although there are long standing myths about the process and there are areas for improvement in policy and practice, and under-representation of women at senior levels continues, overall the sector has done well in establishing a coherent, consistent and equitable promotions process.

SUMMARY

The statistical evidence demonstrates that once women apply for promotion, they are successful, and in some cases, particularly at senior levels, they are more successful than their male colleagues. The success rate demonstrates that the quality of applications by women is not the problem in the promotion processes in universities. Women are applying in approximately equivalent numbers to the eligible pool, and when they apply for promotion they are relatively successful. In contrast to the mid-1990s when promotion for women was constrained at level C, it seems that moving from level C to D is the new barrier to promotion for academic women. The matter of contention is the exceedingly slow rate of progress towards gender equity. Women are still significantly under-represented at senior levels in Australian universities. Promotions policies and processes in place do not explain the lack of progress overall. Other factors, including more diffuse cultural understandings, must be operating. Without overcoming these, using the existing rate of a five per cent increase in the number of women at level E in seven years, achieving equal numbers of women and men in the professoriate would take another 49 years.

Section 5: Conclusions

Many universities have undertaken considerable work on promotions in line with their commitment to the AVCC Action Plan and Policy Statement. However, the number of women in higher levels remains lower than sought. This is a phenomenon in Australia and in other countries that have promoted Equal Opportunity legislation for over 20 years, despite the implementation of policies, procedures and action plans designed to achieve a more equal representation of women in higher levels. The rate of progress in women's representation at senior levels has changed only incrementally since the early 1990s. This study of the promotions process shows, however, that there is good practice generally across the sector and that there are sound success rates for women who apply for promotion.

POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Most universities have developed policies that support and facilitate promotion for women. Such policies acknowledge that women often have different career trajectories from men or other groups. They include flexibility in criteria, acknowledgement of the validity of contributions of part-time staff, the existence of career breaks and non-traditional careers, and promotion to Level D/E. In addition, gender equity may be supported through the operations of the promotion committee by specifying gender representation in the composition of the committee, by including EEO or HR representatives with an equity brief in the process, and by providing training for committee members before applications are considered. Processes in place may appear to treat men and women applicants equally. Rubin (1997) argued, however, that this 'equity principle' ignores the fact that women academics frequently have a very different starting point and hence face discrimination from equal processes unless steps are put in place to ensure an absolutely level field.

STRATEGIES TO REDUCE BARRIERS TO PROMOTION

Universities that build a culture to support the promotion of women provide an environment for achieving gender equity that reduces the barriers for advancing the careers of women. This is achieved at three distinct levels.

- **Policy level**
Policies include components that provide for merit to be assessed within a broader framework. This includes the development of selection criteria that acknowledge different pathways that are taken in academic life (such as part-time employment and pastoral care), and innovative ways of undertaking leadership and developing teaching roles. Policies specify gender representation, involvement of EEO representatives and training in equal opportunity for committee members.
- **Support level**
Strategies are in place to increase the numbers of women who are promoted. Such strategies include: focused forums and discussion groups on leadership for women; career development and promotion workshops; and formal mentoring and nurturing networks and programs. In addition, a formal process of identifying and 'recruiting' potential leaders encourages women to take the steps to promotion.
- **Cultural/organisational level**
Strategies ameliorate cultural barriers that prevent women from achieving seniority in universities and help build a 'critical mass'. Specific measures include the establishment

of KPIs at the corporate level and strategies to achieve them through performance management of Deans and other senior managers. Mandated training for committee members and formal acknowledgement and discussion of 'glass ceiling' issues and gendered norms within universities also help bring about cultural change.

FURTHER WORK

Further work in a number of areas should be considered. This might include identification of the effect of career interruptions or periods of part-time work on careers, and differences in the length of time required for men and women to gain promotion, as well as the collection of data on their family circumstances, work histories and career views (Austen 2004, p. 15). Other areas related to the promotion process that could be investigated include: the effect of devolved and central decision-making; practice relating to 'counter offers' or other promotion approvals that occur outside of the usual promotion rounds; retention strategies; and part-time and family-friendly policy and practice. The data also suggest that representation of women at Level E and higher and in the position of Dean should be examined.

Finally, the research reported here was very broadly-based. There is room for examining individual university policy, practice and outcomes for women academic staff at a more detailed level to see whether the policy components and other practice identified as critical have produced good results for women academics in particular universities (See Appendix C). More detailed study of selected individual universities could be used to arrive at a nationally-recognised set of best practice. Information that results from audits by the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) and the Equal Opportunity for Women Agency (EOWA) Employer of Choice for Women list might also be examined to arrive at a comprehensive, definitive best practice checklist.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1:

That all universities include in promotions policies and/or guidelines clear procedures and recording requirements for out-of-round promotions.

Recommendation 2:

That all universities include in promotions policies and/or guidelines opportunities for promotion to all levels, including Level E.

Recommendation 3:

That all universities consider instituting a simplified process for promotion from Level A to Level B.

Recommendation 4:

That all universities include in promotions policies and/or guidelines explicit mention of promotion opportunities for part-time staff and how their applications will be assessed.

Recommendation 5:

That all universities include in promotions policies and/or guidelines flexibility in promotions criteria, perhaps by use of a weighting system whereby a staff member may nominate weightings.

Recommendation 6:

That all universities include in promotions policies and/or guidelines directions for assessing non-traditional careers 'relative to opportunity'.

Recommendation 7:

That all universities include in promotions policies and/or guidelines a clear equity statement.

Recommendation 8:

That all universities include in promotions policies and/or guidelines a requirement that committee chairs and members complete training on gender equity prior to the first meeting of the committee.

Recommendation 9:

That all universities include in promotions policies and/or guidelines an appropriate ratio of gender representation on promotions committees.

Recommendation 10:

That all universities include in promotions policies and/or guidelines a requirement that an EEO representative or person with an equity brief be involved to monitor the process and the results to ensure that cultural and equity issues are addressed.

Recommendation 11:

That all universities adopt a KPI for women in senior positions.

Recommendation 12:

That all universities implement special initiatives to encourage and assist women applicants.

Section 6: References

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APPENDIX A

Universities included in the project

NSW	The University of Newcastle The University of New England The University of New South Wales University of Technology Sydney University of Western Sydney
Victoria	The University of Melbourne RMIT University
Queensland	Griffith University Queensland University of Technology Central Queensland University
Western Australia	Curtin University of Technology Edith Cowan University The University of Western Australia
South Australia	The University of Adelaide Flinders University University of South Australia
ACT	University of Canberra

APPENDIX B

Table 7. AVCC Action Plan Performance Measures: Academic Staff 1994-2004

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
% of Academic Female Staff	34%	34%	35%	35%	36%	37%	38%	39%	39%
AVCC Women's Action Plan Performance Measures									
% of academic staff at level D and above									
Males	87%	86%	86%	84%	84%	83%	82%	81%	80%
Females	13%	14%	14%	16%	16%	17%	18%	19%	20%
Ratio of % academic staff at level D and above who are women to % all academic staff who are women *	38%	41%	41%	44%	44%	46%	48%	49%	51%

Source: AVCC, Tables 4 and 6

Note:

*The measure assesses not the total proportion of women but the likelihood of women being at any particular level.

When the ratio is 100% then female staff are as likely to be level D or above as any other level.

**APPENDIX C: Adapted from QUT cross-institution comparisons based on 2004 DEST data
 (See the equivalent information for 2003 at <http://www.equity.qut.edu.au/publications/publications/reports.jsp#other>)**

