



EQUITY & DIVERSITY POLICY



Australasian Cognitive Neuroscience Society

ACNS Equity and diversity policy

Approved (v.1 (2016))

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Broader context:

Across scientific fields of research, there is extensive evidence that women are under-represented, which means we are missing potential talent and innovation, as well as having a marked inequity in opportunities for science careers. There is also a need to extend the diversity of our society by supporting researchers from different ethnic, cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds, and those who need support for other reasons (e.g., disability).

ACNS is a young society. We have the opportunity to set ourselves up in an equitable and innovative way and to track the effects of our initiatives.

We aim to identify and address factors that prevent women and other groups that represent diversity from progressing in cognitive neuroscience. The specific aims of this policy are to:

- Combat bias in decision making by having explicit guidelines for selection
 - o E.g., for keynote lectures, prestigious roles, awards
- Improve the opportunities for parents to engage with ACNS by having supportive options for conferences and other events.
- Promote the role of both men and women in initiating and supporting equity within ACNS and beyond.

Aim of this policy:

¹ The aim of this policy is to provide guidelines for ACNS that promote gender¹ equity within our Society, and to offer a basis for future diversity initiatives.

Desired outcomes:

1. Gender balance in ACNS committee and conference positions that reflects the ACNS membership.
2. Increased opportunities for parents to engage with ACNS.
3. Increased awareness in our membership of the obstacles to gender equity, and the importance of addressing these obstacles.
4. Increased awareness in our membership of strategies to address gender inequity in science.
5. Initiatives to increase membership and conference attendance by researchers from underrepresented Australasian regions (e.g., South East Asia).

More broadly, this policy will help ACNS to:

- a. Be an influence for positive change in academic institutions and society more broadly.
- b. Link with the Australian Academy of Science's *Science in Australia Gender Equity (SAGE)* initiative and various university-level initiatives.
- c. Lead to a higher profile of ACNS in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond.

Implementation plan:

This policy was developed by the working group and reviewed by the ACNS Executive Committee for feedback, and then approval. It was used to guide decisions at the conference in Shoal Bay hosted by the University of Newcastle, which provided a pilot test. The working group also revised the Young Investigator Award in line with this policy; this revision was approved by the ACNS Executive Committee and was used for the 2016 round.

The effectiveness and appropriateness of the policy should be reviewed each year, with a rolling average calculation that takes into account the previous 3 year period to check overall balance. Cumulative data may form the basis of a 5 year report (2020).

¹ Note that throughout this document we use gender rather than sex to allow for self-identification.

Goals & suggested methods:

1. Develop guidelines for conference organisers and the ACNS committee/membership to engage in promotion of gender equity for:

- (a) Keynote speakers
- (b) Young investigator award
- (c) Recipients of other awards
 - travel awards
 - poster awards
 - talk awards
- (d) Session chairs and workshop panellists
- (e) Committee membership and leadership

(a) Keynotes:

Goal: Equal numbers of men and women keynote speakers (not including the Young Investigator Award speaker slot). As we generally have 2 keynote speakers, this would be one man and one woman at each conference. A rolling 3 year average will be calculated each year to ensure we are achieving gender balance.

Suggested method: Generate separate lists of potential speakers for each gender. Select the top person from each list.

Notes: Data show women more often decline speaking invitations than men. To ensure the topic of the keynotes is appropriate, conference organisers should prioritise the early recruitment of women speakers, then invite an appropriate speaker from the list of men to give balance across topic areas.

(b) Young Investigator Award:

Goal: Cumulative evidence that our award goes to excellent researchers in a gender equitable manner.

Suggested method: Actively promote the award to women to encourage self-nomination, ensure explicit and objective criteria for awards, ensure transparent guidelines are used to create the short-list, and train award selection panels to factor in career disruptions, etc. Assess historical context to ensure equity is maintained over 3-5 year periods.

The guidelines and eligibility criteria have been revised to emphasise: (1) that eligibility beyond 10 years is considered for career interruptions; and (2) that achievements will be assessed relative to opportunity.

Notes:

- Take into account track record relative to opportunity, particularly with regard to metrics that have been shown to favour men over women.
- Actively encourage women to apply if gender balance is not seen in the short-list of top applicants.

(c) Travel awards, poster and talk awards:

Goal: Numbers of awards to reflect the gender distribution of the membership/attendees.

Suggested method: Conference registration and award submissions will collect information regarding gender. Student lists for travel awards, posters, and talks can therefore be separated by gender. Ideally, there will be either equal allocation of awards or allocation proportional to conference attendance.

Notes: Although this will result in selection of the top people from each list, we do not propose the award be announced by gender. This is simply a method to reduce the effects of unconscious bias.

(d) Session chairs, workshop panellists, conference opening and closing addresses:

Goal: Equal numbers of women and men undertaking important, visible roles at the conference.

Suggested method: At the senior level, consider gender when inviting session chairs, panellists, and keynote speakers. At the junior level, make a conscious effort to recruit men to participate in Early Career activities to redress the disproportionate numbers of women who traditionally take on these responsibilities.

Notes: Use the list of ACNS women members to identify session chairs, etc.

(e) Leadership and committee membership:

Goals: Equitable leadership and committee membership.

- Aim for at least one woman serving as President, President-elect, or Past-President each year (requires promotion of this goal to ensure adequate numbers of candidates).
- Aim for organisational work (e.g., secretary, treasurer) to be shared between men and women.

Suggested method: Actively promote the need for gender equity on the committee and leadership in the months prior to the AGM.

- Provide details of positions and requirements well in advance of the AGM.
- If insufficient nominations of either gender, use targeted approaches (i.e., head hunting).
- Ensure conference organisers are aware of gender equity and seek to have similar guidelines in place for their local organising committee.

2. Develop guidelines for conference organisers and members to increase engagement of researchers with carer commitments in conferences and other ACNS events. Increase the opportunities for geographically remote members to engage with ACNS (e.g., via web links, potential financial support).

(a) Family-friendly and diverse conferences

Goal: Increase participation of parents/carers in ACNS conferences and increase the opportunities for members who cannot travel to the meeting to attend some talks via web links.

Suggested method:

- Family room to stream main room talks
 - o Allow people with children to watch at least main room talks from another room at the venue.
- Scheduling of keynote and networking events
 - o Consider scheduling some of these events at times other than evenings so carers have better opportunities to attend.
- Parenting facilities at conference venues
 - o Adequate feeding (breast feeding or other) and changing rooms at the venue.
- Provision of relevant information about childcare options
 - o List of local nanny/babysitting services
 - o On site/local day-care facility
- Consider some family-friendly social activities.
- Consider web links for members who cannot attend (e.g., for main talks).

(b) Develop guidelines for a scheme to support parents (irrespective of gender) to attend conferences and engage with society activities. Develop a similar scheme to support attendance at the meeting by members from remote areas and surrounding regions (e.g., Southeast Asia).

(Note: this will be implemented when it is financially feasible; development will need to include clear assessment and selection criteria)

- Parent-support bursary:
 - o Childcare subsidy for conference-site facilities
 - o Travel costs for partner/carer to travel to meeting.
- Diversity scheme:
 - o Conference registration and travel cost support for presenting members from regions outside Australia and New Zealand who do not have access to funding (or consider co-funding scheme).

3. Data collection and analysis on gender and diversity distribution of participation and the membership over time

Goals:

- Gender representation at all levels that reflects the membership.
- Members to be informed and (optionally) actively promoting gender equality in their own activities.

Suggested method:

- Collect data (annually) on the gender of members through both conference registration and payment of membership fees so we know what 'representative of the membership' means.
 - o Use these data to explore the factors that might prevent members from attending conferences/engaging with the society.
- Collate conference data on gender of those undertaking key roles and recipients of awards, as outlined above, and include in conference report.
 - o Use these data to assess the efficacy of our approach and success in achieving equity.
- Explore need for other measures to support diversity including support for members with disabilities, members from poorer regions, etc.

4. Develop a members-only section of the website with resources designed to help promote gender equity:

- a. Explore recording of keynotes/Young Investigator Award lecture for those unable to attend the conference or relevant session.
- b. List of members with relevant expertise to help generate potential speaker lists that are gender balanced.
 - e.g., keynotes, colloquium speakers, reviewers, examiners, ECR workshop speakers
- c. Parent and future parent support resources