Gender Equality Plan 2023 - 2027

We believe in the fundamentals of inclusion which are to make everyone feel:

- Welcome
- Safe
- Valued
- Respected

Introduction

The ACU is committed to equity, inclusion, and access, which are critical to the future of higher education.

The ACU's focus on access and inclusion through grants and initiatives helps to drive systemic change and by working with universities to widen access and reduce inequality helps to tackle socioeconomic disparities and level the playing field.

In recognition of its importance to the success of the ACU, inclusion is one of our five core values.

We are committed to ensuring that the people in the ACU reflect the wider community. Bringing together a diverse range of people helps the ACU perform to its best to build a better world through higher education.

The ACU is proud of its inclusive culture and wants to be a place where everyone can be themselves at work. All the ACU's employees are recruited, trained and held to account on the basis that discrimination in any form is unacceptable.

Gender Equity and Equality

Higher education plays a critical role in advancing gender equity and equality.

For more than 30 years, the ACU has worked to address gender issues – such as championing women in leadership and combating sexual violence on campus – in partnership with our member universities.

In 1985 we initiated the ACU Women's Programme, developed with the Commonwealth Secretariat and UNESCO, to support and enhance the leadership of women in higher education. Workshops for women were run across the Commonwealth and, between 1998 and 2001, the ACU sponsored women from Ghana, Guyana, Kenya, Namibia, Nigeria, South Africa, Sri Lanka and Trinidad to undertake an MA in Women and Management in Higher Education.

In 2015 the ACU partnered with the University Grants Commission (UGC) of Sri Lanka to build capacity in state universities on gender equity and equality. To tackle ragging (abusive initiation rituals), the UGC established a taskforce and created an online complaints portal, emergency safety app, brochures and animations in three languages for new students. The ACU supported the project with workshops for senior management and staff.

The fight for gender equality has evolved over the last 30 years, and we continue to adapt our approach to meet the needs of our members. In 2020, Queen's University, Canada, received an ACU Gender Grant for an action research project – the first of its kind in Canada – that will explore how education programmes can support teacher candidates who are

transgender and gender non-conforming, whilst recognising that many LGBTQ+ teacher candidates also face barriers to joining the profession.

The ACU awards Gender Grants annually to member universities to support initiatives that will boost gender equity and equality on campus, including supporting women in leadership, raising awareness of sexual harassment and developing anti-sexual harassment initiatives, and mainstreaming gender equity into the curriculum.

Through The Martha Farrell Memorial Fellowship training is also offered in anti-sexual harassment to staff members of ACU member universities in Africa and Asia.

Gender Equality Plan

The ACU's Gender Equality Plan (GEP) supports the ACU's commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) and outlines objectives, measures, indicators and resources that will support the gender equality work at the ACU.

The GEP is fully supported by the ACU's Chief Executive Officer and the ACU's Director of People and Culture is accountable for its delivery. The GEP is a public document available on the ACU's website.

The ACU is developing a new Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion strategy in early 2024 which will include gender equality data, analysis, and priorities.

Dr Joanna Newman
Chief Executive and Secretary General

Dedicated Resources and Expertise

The ACU's Executive Team is accountable for EDI and the ACU's Leadership Group, which includes directorate leads, have devolved responsibility for EDI. In addition, the ACU's people and culture team support the development of an EDI culture.

The ACU has a Culture and Ways of Working employee group with EDI as part of its remit.

In the future, we plan to appoint a member of the Executive Team as a diversity champion to model behaviours, values and norms that foster an equitable and inclusive workplace. We also plan to develop a dedicated Equity Resource Group.

EDI training and awareness

The ACU has a broad range of EDI training and awareness raising initiatives for employees and the people we provide services to, including:

For employees:

- **Diversity in the workplace** training for all new joiners as part of the onboarding process covers: What is Diversity, Bias and Behaviours, Equality Legislation, An inclusive environment, and Cultural Awareness.
- **Equality, diversity and inclusion** training for managers as part of our management excellence programme.
- **Unconscious bias** training to support leadership, people managers, and employees to recognise, challenge, avoid discrimination and promote a culture of diversity in the workplace by reducing unconscious bias.
- **Safeguarding training** for all new joiners and employees, which includes the ACU's approach to protecting anyone who we provide services to or who provide those services from harm, including sexual harassment and bullying.
- **Recruitment training** for all people managers and recruiters which includes awareness of equality and diversity and the impact of unconscious bias.

For the people we provide services to:

- **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training** for scholars which raises awareness and improves knowledge of the 2010 UK Equalities Act. It also outlines behavioural expectations for scholars during their time in the UK, including with regard to safeguarding.
- The ACU managed Partnerships of Enhanced and Blended Learning (PEBL) in West Africa and East Africa have been both providing training modules to participating academic staff focused on inclusion in blended learning delivery.

Data collection and monitoring

The ACU monitors and reports EDI data, including gender diversity, for its employees, our scholarship and fellowship selection panels and people we provide services to, including scholars and recipients of grants.

- The annual report provides employee numbers broken down by gender with all employees compared to leadership/ senior management and gender pay gap data.
- People and Culture reports for the ACU's Council provides employee numbers broken down by gender with all employees compared to leadership/ senior management.
- For the people we provide services to, gender reporting is provided to funders and bodies the ACU's work with and gender reporting is undertaken regularly for other ACU services, e.g. scholarship and grants.

In the future, we committed to further disaggregating gender reporting, for example across different grades and directorates, and will be reporting on the new EDI strategy.

Our current data shows that the percentage of females in leadership/senior management roles slightly reduces when compared to females across the organisation (78% to 67%). This contrasts with the percentage of males which slightly increases in leadership/senior management roles when compared to males across the organisation (33% to 22%). It should be noted that female representation in leaderships and senior management roles is still strong.

Regarding the gender pay gap reporting, the ACU employs fewer than 250 staff and is therefore not required by law to publish an annual gender pay gap report. However, the ACU voluntarily provides this information. Most recently, the ACU mean and median hourly pay gap was 0.2% and 5.4% respectively with females earning more than males on both measures.

Gender equality plan: actions

The ACU is committed to actions across the five recommended areas:
- work-life balance and organisational culture
- gender balance in leadership and decision-making
- gender equality in recruitment and career progression
- integration of the gender dimension into research and teaching content
- measures against gender-based violence including sexual harassment

Monitoring and reporting on progress and change achieved through these actions will be undertaken as part of the monitoring and evaluation of our EDI strategy.

Thematic Area	Action	Measure
Work-life balance and organisational culture	Complete the development of the new EDI strategy	EDI strategy developed by January 2024
	Improve data collection and reporting for EDI and gender	Expanded EDI reporting in 2024
	Continue to offer hybrid working	Following a review, confirm hybrid working will continue in August 2023
	Appoint a diversity champion from the executive team	Diversity champion appointed in 2024
	Create an Equity resource group (or Equality network group)	Equity resource group set up in 2024
Gender balance in leadership and decision-making	Create a formal mentoring programme to boost leadership and managerial representation of under-represented groups	Formal mentoring programme implemented in 2024/ 25

Thematic Area	Action	Measure
Gender equality in recruitment and career progression	Create a formal mentoring programme to boost leadership and managerial representation of under-represented groups	Formal mentoring programme implemented in 2024/ 25
	Improve recruitment practices by widening the search to include diverse groups	Improved representation of under-represented groups
	Support the recruitment of male representation across the organisation and females at leadership level	Improved representation of under-represented groups
Integration of the gender dimension into research and teaching content	Ensure training on gender and gender-responsive pedagogy in relation to teaching and learning in higher education institutions is provided by all ACU run Education Capacity Strengthening programmes	Gender responsive pedagogy training module is delivered by each ACU run education capacity strengthening programme
	Include gender dimension as part of quality assurance processes of new teaching programmes developed during ACU funded Education Capacity Strengthening Programmes.	Gender dimension aspects will be integral to the Quality Assurance processes in future ACU Education Capacity Strengthening Programming
	Integration of sex and gender analysis in the ACU's research capacity strengthening programming	Encourage sex and gender analysis and gender impact assessments as part of research projects funded by ACU run research capacity strengthening programmes
		Provision of support and training to ACU funded fellows to promote sex and gender analysis into research design.
	Incorporating expertise into peer-review processes and panels selecting ACU funded research projects as part of its research capacity strengthening programming.	Peer-review panels include at least one panel or peer-review member with gender expertise for relevant subject area

Thematic Area	Action	Measure
Measures against gender-based violence including sexual harassment	Continue to offer Gender Grants to member universities to support initiatives that will boost gender equity and equality on campus	Gender grants awarded annually