

## Pleiades Award Application 2018

School of Physics and the Sydney Institute for Astronomy (SIfA), University of Sydney

### Philosophy

**P1.** Examined the conduct of the organisation in relation to equity and inclusion, and identified several specific areas in which there are opportunities to improve.

The Physics Education and Access Committee (PEAC) was established in 2014 as a SIfA initiative with a principal goal of improving the work culture and environment in the whole School of Physics, so that all staff and students can achieve their full potential without constraints related to discrimination around gender, ethnicity, age, disability or any other factors. The aim is to ensure our School promotes a safe and productive environment.

Our first step was to survey the School (late 2014) and its Alumni (late 2015) to identify the areas that need improvement. The School survey received 194 responses (~55% of possible respondents), and we had 120 responses from the Alumni survey. The quantitative data were analysed by an independent expert in the School of Psychology to preserve the anonymity of participants. Regression analyses were conducted to determine significant correlation of different characteristics such as age, gender, position and ethnicity, with themes including career progression satisfaction, perception of acceptance or discriminatory behaviours.

As a result, PEAC set itself goals to:

- Redress the gender balance of staff numbers, offering students a teaching and research profile that is more representative of the general population.
- Promote a more inclusive, family-friendly culture and awareness of diversity issues.
- Promote a more tolerant culture to redress conscious and unconscious biases.
- improve formal mentoring, especially for early career researchers and postgraduate students to ensure well-being and better preparation them for diverse career opportunities.

The University undertook a Culture Survey in late 2017 covering similar topics across the whole institution. We expect the release of results shortly. In October 2018, a survey targeting issues around bullying at the School of Physics was undertaken by PEAC. It received 139 responses and is currently being analysed. The goal was to follow-up on the original survey, identify issues and raise awareness and facilitate action by the School on this particular issue.

**P2.** Devised ways to measure the impact (or lack thereof) of planned initiatives within the organisation.

A selection of key PEAC initiatives is given in O3 below, while a more complete list can be found on the PEAC web pages. Impact is measured via variety of reporting channels.

- PEAC meets monthly to monitor progress and review programs.
- Equity Officers report to PEAC as a means of monitoring the 'climate' of the School.
- Self-reporting of issues via an anonymous reporting web form.

A major target of activity must be to address the gender imbalance in staff and student numbers (see Figure 1).

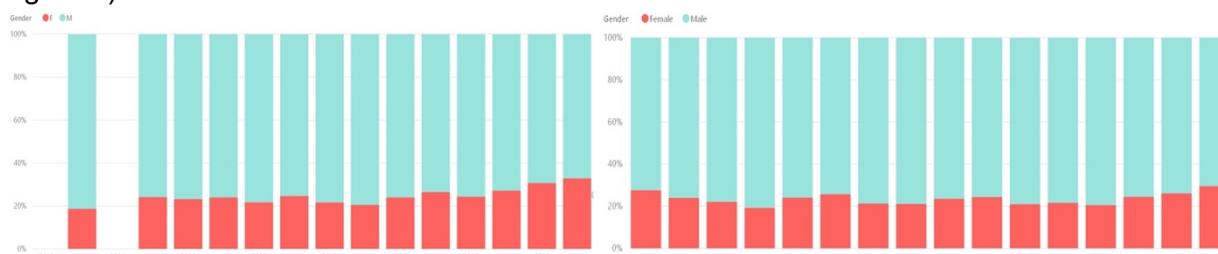


Figure 1 Historical gender proportions of (a) staff and (b) HDR students in the School of Physics.

Initiatives include offering all positions with a part-time/job share option and a flexible time basis. We have also adopted the university-wide gender targets of 40 per cent women at level E and 45 per cent at level D, with a target date of 2025, and the additional target of an average of at least 40 per cent women for new appointments to continuing academic positions. Achievements against these goals are monitored by HR staff in the school with regular reporting to PEAC and an annual report of gender statistics. We note that all 4 appointments to continuing positions in 2018 have been women, along with 7 out of 9 in the past 3 years!

We have also set gender and cultural and linguistical diversity (CALD) targets for shortlists and conference/workshops organisation. A request goes to all staff every 4-6 months to report on gender balance and cultural diversity in meetings or workshops they are involved in organising. Apart from the reporting, this prompts staff to take these issues to SOCs and LOCs they are involved with. A summary of 22 reports from 2016-17 has been prepared.

## Strategy

**S1.** Established a committee to identify, implement and monitor positive changes in equity and inclusion within the organisation... maintained over 4 years

PEAC was established in 2014 and meets each month to identify strategies, monitor progress and review programs. SifA and the School of Physics were leaders in the University:

*The Physics Equity and Access Committee continues to lead the way in best practice at the University of Sydney. This has been led prominently by Tim Bedding as Head of the School and includes a strong focus on genuine equity. Other faculties have looked to the PEAC when implementing their own Faculty based Committees as they continue to push the boundaries and not settle for current state.*

**Sarah Abbott**, Senior Manager, Diversity, Leadership and Inclusion, Human Resources

PEAC currently has a core group of 10, including the Head of School, and a 'consultative' group of almost 30. A member of the academic and professional staff serve as co-Chairs. Representation is currently 10 professional staff, 20 academic staff ranging from postdocs to professors, and 8 postgraduate students. All are volunteers and ~10 or more core and consultative members attend each meeting.

PEAC serves as a forum to engage with the University community on issues in diversity, equity and inclusion. We regularly invite key staff from other areas of the University to talk to PEAC, such as leaders of the SAGE working group and Chemistry colleagues setting up a similar committee.

**S2.** Demonstrated a credible commitment to implement a range of initiatives during the coming 2 years that will promote equity and inclusion and demonstrate best practice.

A key two-year commitment is a mentoring program for academic staff that complements existing performance management interviews and mentoring associated with CoEs. PEAC has taken considerable time to devise a program, as we regard effective mentoring to be a complex activity to include issues such as enabling inclusion, empowerment, career and personal development. This has been a catalyst for the formation of the PhysCREAM group (early and mid-career research group) that will help manage this initiative.

Other projects for the coming two years include:

- Addressing some of the issues raised in our surveys that revealed a small number of worrying incidents and opinions.
- Rebuilding and expanding our web profile after recent University web site changes.
- Expanding the diversity of web profiles of our alumni.
- Continuing and expanding activities already underway but constrained by recent staff

- reorganisations, such as active monitoring of recruitment data and processes.
- Posters on prominent women in science throughout the School. Our current posters display only historical male scientists!

**S3.** Ensured all staff are aware of the University's or institution's code of conduct as well as the process for reporting cases of misconduct.

The University's code of conduct and codes for the School of Physics are posted on the PEAC website. The site also provides information on reporting issues to the Head of School, the Equity Officers and via the anonymous reporting form. These are reinforced by regular emails to keep awareness levels high and to remind staff of opportunities and mechanisms for reporting issues.

**S4.** Provided safe avenues for staff to report issues or make suggestions without risk of repercussions.... All staff should be aware of how to make any report, what follow up occurs and whether anonymous reporting can occur.

One of PEAC's early initiatives was to establish three Equity Officers within the School – two academic staff and one professional staff with relevant training. In 2018 for example, there were 3 'serious' issues reported to PEAC by Equity Officers and largely managed by them. This initiative has been copied in the School of Chemistry and our equity officers meet with them to share experience and ideas.

We also have an anonymous reporting page, prompted by feedback in our initial survey of the School. Submissions are sent only to the PEAC co-Chairs and if necessary – to the Head of School to take immediate action. These initiatives offer a more comfortable approach for many staff who are reluctant to jump straight into formal procedures.

## Outcomes

**O1.** Announced a credible commitment from the head of the organisation to achieving equity and inclusion goals set out by the organisation.

The Head of School has been a key member of PEAC from the start. The previous Head, Tim Bedding, served in the role until early 2018 and was also a member of the Faculty Equity & Diversity Committee and the University's SAGE assessment panel - an integral part of the University's participation in the Athena SWAN pilot. The new Head, Celine Boehm, has already demonstrated a clear commitment to follow Tim's lead in PEAC and more widely. In July she was a keynote speaker at a meeting [Celebrating LGBTIQ People in STEMM](#), and she is a member of the University's ALLY Network which supports the inclusion of LGBTIQ members of our community. Celine has also reorganised her Executive with a female Deputy Head (Zdenka Kuncic) and 50% female representation in the Executive leadership group.

**O1.a.G** Demonstrated widespread 'buy-in' throughout the organisation, including universal uptake of appropriate training and vocal public leadership by senior managers over the past 4 years.

PEAC membership is drawn from all levels of SifA and School academic and professional staff and postgraduate students. For the 4 years of PEAC's life, SifA has represented some of the most active membership, with 4 of the core group and 1/3 of the consultative group.

Diversity and Inclusion training provided by the University has been completed by 10 of the PEAC members to date. A revised workshop program has recently begun and is being promoted by the School to all staff, concentrating initially on professional staff, but with a proposal to extend it to all staff over the next year. Some staff members have completed considerably more training in the diversity and inclusion space.

We have held several successful school-wide events, such as the morning tea that was hosted for

International Women's Day and well-attended with more than 100 staff members present. The event was jointly hosted by the School of Physics and Sydney Nano (a multi-disciplinary institute). The event poster celebrated Edna Dorothy Sayce, the University's first female Physics graduate.



*International Women's Day Morning Tea, Physics courtyard, 8 March 2018, Photo credit: C Spencer*

**O2.** Established the number of reported cases of misconduct, the number resolved and the average time to resolution over the past year.

**O2.a.** Published, where institutional and legal constraints permit, the number of reported cases of misconduct, the number resolved and the average time to resolution over the past 2 years (4 years for Gold) in a public document (e.g., an annual report). The location of the document should be specified in the application.

Official cases of misconduct are relatively uncommon, since issues are often reported to individual staff or an Equity Officer and resolved at that level, before ever invoking official university procedures. However, the School has had several cases of bullying reported in the last year to the Head of School, School Manager, Equity Officers and Teaching Year Coordinators. Particular details of these cases cannot be released due to privacy reasons and several are ongoing investigations. School staff followed the *Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination Resolution Prevention Policy* and corresponding *Procedures* when reviewing these cases. For the less serious cases, the *Procedures* dictate that the parties met to resolve the situation informally, and the situation was resolved without being escalated to Workplace Relations. Another case was escalated to Workplace Relations with successful resolution at that stage. More serious cases have been escalated to senior staff within Human Resources and Workplace Relations.

PEAC committee minutes serve as the public record to report on how the School deals with incidences and is working to reduce them and increase awareness of appropriate behaviour.

**O2.b.** Demonstrated support for complainants in misconduct cases, including, where institutional and legal constraints permit, the freedom to publicly speak about such cases. Demonstrated unequivocal strong support of complainants when retaliation for a complaint has occurred.

Equity Officers and the Head of School have offered direct support to complainants in a number of instances, although most of these never proceeded to a formal complaint process. Some junior staff have reported intimidation and concern about repercussions. This was a major driver for the recent bullying survey.

**O3.** Publicised the commitment to work towards best practice by circulating specific plans to all staff and students within the organisation including sharing this application with all staff and students for their comment at least 2 weeks prior to submission.

The publicised commitment of SIfA and the School to equity and diversity issues lies firstly in the information on PEAC activities and plans on the PEAC web page, highlighted as a link on the School and SIfA home pages. Also, although PEAC activities are focussed on staff and postgraduate students, PEAC and Equity Officers have some visibility with the undergraduate students via an Equity, Access and Diversity statement inserted in all undergraduate unit outlines.

**O3.a.** Monitored the conduct of the organisation in relation to equity and inclusion over a sustained period of at least 2 years (4 years for Gold).

Conduct of SifA and the School is measured via variety of reporting channels.

- Equity Officers report to PEAC as a means of monitoring the 'climate' of the School.
- Self-reporting of issues is provided via an anonymous reporting web form.
- PEAC meets monthly to monitor progress and review programs.
- Gender balance of staff and student cohorts is compiled annually.
- Gender/diversity data is monitored in the recruitment process and in conferences and workshops associated with our staff.

We planned to repeat the 2014 staff-student survey, but this was deferred as the University-wide Culture Survey was run in late 2017. We intend to look at the Physics-specific data from that survey to see what changes it reveals compared to our survey. We did decide to run a smaller bullying survey to focus on those specific aspects as a driver for immediate action on that issue.

**O3.b.** Demonstrated regular communication of goals and progress reports to all staff and students within the organisation.

The PEAC web pages serve to highlight the committee's activities and provide links to relevant policies and reporting channels. Very recent changes to the [School's public web pages](#) have significantly affected PEAC's on-line information and need to be restored promptly, but PEAC remains a highlighted feature on the Physics home page.

PEAC activities and other University and external opportunities (e.g International Women's Day, [Wear it Purple Day](#)) are promoted via email to keep PEAC and diversity issues in front of all members of the School. In addition, the Autumn 2016 issue of *Physics News* was dedicated to women in Physics and describing the various initiatives in place to move towards gender equity.

More formal reporting to SifA and the School has consisted of reports on our various surveys, staff and student historical gender ratios, conference/workshop gender/diversity statistics and mentoring feedback sessions. These reports are usually circulated to all School members by email when completed and then publicly available on the PEAC web site. They are also circulated to other interested parties. The PEAC staff-student survey 2014 in particular has been widely distributed in the university and to some Australian astronomical institutions as a model, following requests for the survey questions and the report.

**O3.b.G** Demonstrated a regular public commitment to sharing best practice and achievements inside as well as outside the organisation, encouraging others to implement positive change.

The School of Physics and PEAC continue to be seen as a leader in the University in the gender equity and diversity space, despite rapidly increasing activity driven by the SAGE initiative. As a result of this profile, we have been asked to write articles and are regular contributors at university events. For example, we featured strongly in the University's 2016 International Women's day [Accelerating Gender Parity](#) event and in 2018 at [Celebrating LGBTIQ People in STEMM](#). Most recently, PEAC member Maryanne Large has written an article for the NTEU *Advocate*, commenting on the recent well publicised claim by Professor Alessandro Strumia, of the University of Pisa at a CERN workshop, that Physics was "built by men", but there was no gender discrimination, and indeed that women were *favoured* by hiring practices!

We have strongly influenced other Schools in the Science Faculty, notably Chemistry and Geosciences, in establishing similar committees. We have also reached out to our diversity counterparts in Physics at Macquarie University, exchanging material and ideas. As noted earlier, our surveys have been widely distributed within the university and elsewhere in Australia and informed many other groups in designing their own surveys.

A plan to revise our tutor training program was escalated to the Faculty level where the co-Chair led SifA-Physics University of Sydney

the inclusion of equity and diversity issues into the Faculty tutor training program.

For some time we have taken every opportunity to comment on the lack of adequate childcare facilities at the University. Most recently, this had led one of our members to a prominent role in a debate about childcare provisions in the university's Enterprise Agreement that will hopefully make the economic and social case to justify more generous arrangements.

**O3.c.** Demonstrated the implementation of a range of initiatives during the past 2 years including best practices and initiatives with high potential in promoting equity and inclusion.

**O3.c.G** Demonstrated sustained best practice across a broad range of measures for at least the past 4 years and implemented novel and/or high-profile initiatives that have a broad reach and have significantly progressed equity and inclusion in the organisation over the past 4 years.

4 years of work has resulted in a large range of initiatives, many of which are listed on the PEAC web pages. Among the more innovative PEAC initiatives not already mentioned are:

- In 2015, we obtained permission to offer the Harry Messel Research Fellowship to women only as a positive effort to address the gender imbalance in the School. This controversial approach has now been taken at some other Australian institutions.
- Submissions in 2015 for ARC CoEs included commitments to offer associated academic positions leading to continuing positions as female-only appointments.
- An ECR Staff Development Funding program was established to contribute funds towards attendance by ECRs at external (non-research) workshops or short courses related to development of leadership skills, with preference for women or minority groups
- SIfA instituted the Hunstead Merit Award, providing \$5k top-up funds for up to two PhD students, with one reserved for women and other under-represented groups.
- A parenting/first aid room was opened and is widely used by School staff and students and open to other members of the University.
- PhysCREAM, our EMCR group, was set up and funded by the School and now lead initiatives including networking events and talks on student issues.
- Some SIfA staff, along with the University's Diversity, Leadership and Inclusion office, have initiated a university-wide faith network aiming to acknowledge the problem of faith discrimination in academia and normalise religion as part of people's identity.
- The School participated in the *Stepping Into* program, a national initiative where we provide a university student with a disability the opportunity to gain work experience.

**O3.d.** Measured the impact (or lack thereof) of initiatives within the organisation over the past 2 years or more.

**O3.d.G** Demonstrated the tangible positive impact of initiatives within the organisation over the past 2 years or more.

We have certainly raised the profile of diversity issues in the School in the last 4 years and played a significant role in the Faculty of Science and University. This role will evolve as part of a larger emphasis across the University, driven in part by the SAGE initiative nationally.

Measurable impact of our efforts within SIfA and the School will become apparent over time in changing gender ratios, reduced reporting of issues to the Head of School or Equity Officers, etc. Recent appointments have made a significant step to addressing gender imbalance. Also, an opportunity has now arisen to compare feedback from our initial 2014 School survey with new data from the University Culture Survey and our own bullying survey.

**O3.e.** Performed an (anonymous) climate survey to identify equity and inclusion issues within the organisation and developed an action plan to address those issues. Consulted with, and actively sought feedback from, staff and students regarding those results and action plan.

**O3.e.G** Executed the action plan to address issues uncovered by climate survey within 2 years of climate survey findings.

Our surveys have been described previously. The main areas for action revealed in those surveys included gender equity, particularly in senior academic ranks, family friendly policies, promotion of a more tolerant culture, and improved mentoring, especially for early career researchers and postgraduate students. Our actions have raised the visibility of all of these issues and gone some way to addressing them.

Mentoring has proved to be especially difficult because of the intersection with existing university processes and similar efforts by various COEs with a presence in the School, notably CAASTRO. As part of our planning we ran two Mentoring feedback sessions in late 2017 that served to let ECRs and postgraduate students discuss what they wanted in mentoring. The aim has to be to improve the situation without “reinventing the wheel” or implementing burdensome policy and procedures. We continue to pursue this through the PhysCREAM group of early and mid-career research staff and students.

The bullying survey reveals 11% of respondents have personally experienced bullying in the School in the last 12 months, so we have clear work to do on that issue

Other PEAC priorities for the future include extending inclusion training to all staff, making existing initiatives work in a new staffing environment, arranging and sponsoring more ‘events’, advocating for improved childcare/carer support and facilities, and improved employment processes and induction of new staff.