

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. As a result, PEAC set itself initial goals to:

- Address 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 prepare them for diverse career opportunities.

These remain the broad areas of interest to PEAC, but in recent times mentoring has been a particular focus (see S2) along with *voluntary* training (2 of the top recommendations for evidence based interventions in [Why Diversity Programs Fail](#), Harvard Business Review, July–August 2016 pp.52–60). Discrimination based on Cultural and Linguistic Diversity (CALD) is also of increasing interest and in 2020 we expanded the PEAC membership to include undergraduate students, with a view to expanding PEAC’s remit to include undergraduate issues.

A second survey of the School was dropped in favour of a University Culture Survey (eventually delivered in late 2017) covering similar topics across the whole institution. In October 2018, a survey targeting issues around bullying at the School of Physics was undertaken by PEAC and revealed an underlying level of bullying that needs to be addressed. In December 2020 we released a new, more sophisticated general survey, designed with an independent expert and with an eye to wider use in the University. It is currently still open for responses. The goal is to follow-up on the earlier surveys, probe issues in the Covid era and highlight action that can be taken by the School.

P2. Devised ways to measure the impact (or lack thereof) of planned initiatives within the organisation. Ideally the implemented initiatives will be Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Timebound and should be monitored over time.

A selection of recent PEAC initiatives is given in section O3. Impact is measured via a variety of reporting channels:

- PEAC meets monthly to monitor progress and review programs and issues.
- Equity Officers report to PEAC as a means of monitoring and acting on issues as they arise.
- Self-reporting of issues via an [anonymous reporting web form](#).
- Monitoring of statistics such as gender balance, appointments, promotions etc.
- Surveys aim to monitor the ‘climate’ of the School.

Strategy

S1. Established a committee to identify, implement and monitor positive changes in equity and inclusion within the organisation. Planned for committee members to undertake relevant diversity training as soon as possible within the next 2 years.

S1.a. Maintained a committed team over the past 2 years (4 years for Gold) with a quorum meeting

regularly (at least four times a year) to identify, monitor and implement positive changes, and ensured that a majority of committee members have undertaken relevant diversity training.

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

During our work on the Science in Australia Gender Equity (SAGE) Program over the past 4 years, we have been consistently inspired and guided by the work and courage of PEAC. Their leadership, under Heads of School Professor Tim Bedding and then Professor Celine Boehm, has demonstrated the true benefits of aligning the principles of equity, diversity and inclusion with all practices, policies and activities. SAGE and the University community will continue to look to PEAC for support and examples of innovation as they lead by example and espouse the value of inclusion and diversity in their culture.

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PEAC currently has a core group of around 10, including the Head of School, and a 'consultative' group of over 30 who have expressed their interest in PEAC activities and represent all levels of SifA and School academic and professional staff and postgraduate students. SifA staff and students have always been some of the most active PEAC members. A member of the academic and professional staff serve as co-Chairs and new people moved into these positions in 2020.

In 2020 an invitation was extended to undergraduate students to join PEAC and 5 students took up the offer.

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 the University SAGE leaders and colleagues setting up similar committees in other departments.

All of the core PEAC members and several of the wider group have undertaken Diversity and Inclusion training provided by the University, often in several forms over a number of years as that training has evolved. In addition, some members of PEAC have undertaken specialised training on topics such as racism, dealing with students in distress, or supporting victims of domestic violence.

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 major target of PEAC activity must be to address the gender imbalance in staff and student numbers (see Figure 1). While early trends were encouraging over several recent years, the ratio stubbornly resists significant change.

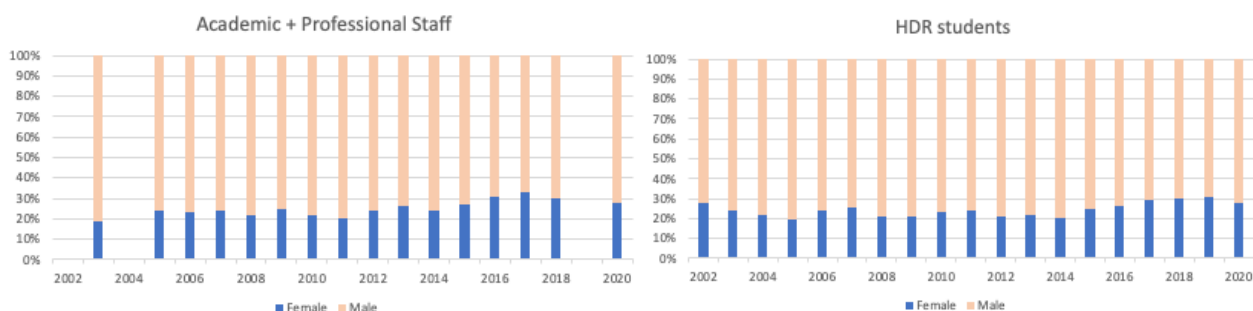


Figure 1 Historical gender proportions of (a) staff and (b) HDR students in the School of Physics.

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% women at level E and 45% at level D, with a target date of 2025, and the additional target of an average of at least 40% women for new appointments to continuing academic positions. In 2015, we obtained permission from the NSW Anti-Discrimination Board to offer the prestigious Professor Harry Messel Research Fellowship to women only (also with a part-time option). This position was filled for 2 years by [Dr Andrea Blanco Redondo](#). It was readvertised mid-2019, but a new appointment has been delayed by Covid-19.

The most senior recent appointment to the School was [Professor Anita Ho-Baillie](#) in late 2019 to the prestigious Hooke Chair after an extended search.

We have also set gender and CALD targets for shortlists and conference/workshops organisation. A request was going to all staff every 4-6 months to report on gender balance and cultural diversity in meetings or workshops they are involved in organising. However, this has not happened in 2020 with Covid delaying many meetings until relatively recently. Apart from reporting, this prompts staff to take these issues to SOCs and LOCs with which they are involved.

A major initiative of the past year that will continue in the coming 2 year period is a mentoring program for HDR students and ECR academics. This emerged from several years of PEAC discussion and feedback sessions to ask them what they needed from the School. The clear answer was mentoring. This led to a pilot program in 2019, with seed funding from a small University grant, the School of Physics and Faculty of Science. It involved the Schools of Physics and Chemistry, but an expanded pilot is running in 2020, reaching more widely in the faculty and involving industry and alumni representatives. Funding has been secured to continue the program in 2021 despite the difficult financial situation. The PEAC consultation was also the catalyst for the formation of the PhysCREAM group (early and mid-career research group) within Physics.

Other projects for the coming two years include:

- Addressing issues raised in current School survey.
- Rebuilding the public and internal PEAC pages to improve the quality and completeness of online information.
- Continuing and expanding activities already underway but constrained by recent staff reorganisations, such as active monitoring of recruitment data and processes.
- Adding a CALD target for representation on committees, especially for appointments.
- Expanding the relevance of PEAC activities to undergraduate students with the help of an expanded undergraduate representation.
- Workshop developed with the University Culture team on *Developing an Inclusive Environment*. Tutors are a key target as the frontline face of the School to the students.

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 is posted on the [public PEAC web site](#). The site also provides information on reporting issues to the Head of School, the Equity Officers and via the anonymous reporting form. It includes links such as the university site on *Bullying, harassment and discrimination prevention*. PEAC information is also available on an internal-facing web site, while information is 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, typically outside of formal reporting options provided through organisational Human Resources channels. All staff should be aware of how to make any report, what happens to that report once it is made and whether it is possible to make a report anonymously.*

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. This initiative has been copied in the School of Chemistry and our equity officers have met with theirs to share experience and ideas. In 2020, three Equity Officers have been added to increase the visible diversity of the group.

We also have an anonymous reporting page, with submissions 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 those who are reluctant to jump straight into formal University procedures.

Outcomes

O1. *Announced a credible commitment from the head of the organisation to achieving equity and*

inclusion goals set out by the organisation.

01.a Demonstrated effective commitment from the head of the organisation to achieving equity and inclusion goals set out by the organisation over the past 2 years.

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 first SAGE Self Assessment. His successor as Head, Celine Boehm, took on all of these roles and brought her own focus on mental health awareness and LGBTIQ issues to the task. She is also a member of the University’s ALLY Network which supports the inclusion of LGBTIQ members of our community. The position of Deputy Head has been filled by two people since Celine arrived – both women.

Among the areas where the Head of School has visibly supported PEAC initiatives are:

- The mentoring program (described in S2) has been sustained by the financial support of the School, which is especially noteworthy in 2020 with the funding challenges due to Covid-19.
- We have held several successful school-wide events, but especially challenging was a Morning Tea in Support of Cultural and Religious Diversity, held in June 2019. Setting the right tone for this was important, but it proved to be a wonderfully successful event. Prompted in part by events in New Zealand in 2019, it was timed to recognise Eid al-Fitr, marking the end of Ramadan and featured a Muslim staff member offering his perspective.

01.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.

In July 2019, PEAC sponsored an *Inclusion in Action* workshop specific to Physics from Serendis, who provide such training in the University, with 20 people attending. The aim is to provide sufficient local sessions to supplement regular university sessions and thereby make it easy for anyone interested to attend, without making it mandatory. We note that evidence shows that mandatory training is not effective and can be counter-productive. Further workshop sessions in 2020 were postponed due to Covid-19. The next step is a new workshop developed with the University Culture team on Developing an Inclusive Environment, scheduled to be held early in 2021.

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

02.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 some cases that might be broadly classed as ‘misconduct’ reported in 2019-2020 to various staff. Some of these are between undergraduate students and, interestingly, some involve staff outside the School, but Physics offers a known reporting pathway.

Nature of report	Potential ‘Misconduct’?	School	External involvement in resolution?	Resolved	Time to resolve
Staff-student	yes		no	Not yet fully	quick initial response
Student-student	no – between undergraduates		no	yes	Within days
Staff-student	Yes but outside Physics		yes	yes	1 month
Student-student	no – between undergraduates		yes	yes	1 month
Staff-student	Yes but outside Physics		yes	yes	1 month
Staff contract	yes		yes	yes	3 months
Staff-student	yes		yes	yes	1 month
Staff-staff	yes		yes	yes	Dismissed <1 month

School staff followed University Policies and Procedures when reviewing these cases. These include SIfA-Physics University of Sydney

strict confidentiality limits on reporting outcomes, or even that a complaint has been made, so there has been no public summary of cases. For the less serious cases, Procedures dictate that the parties meet to resolve the situation informally, and the situation is usually resolved without being escalated to Workplace Relations.

The question of response time deserves some extra comment. It is perhaps a function of 3 stages:

1. Reporting can be slow because of trust and fear.
2. Protection must be quick to ensure the person feels protected.
3. Investigation and response requires procedural fairness and must be careful and rigorous. It also often requires involvement external to the School.

The result is that timing is a poor metric provided step 2 is timely. Ultimately PEAC's role is more about changes in culture than individual instances.

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 2018 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 is most visible in the information on PEAC activities and plans on the PEAC public and internal-facing web pages. Also, although PEAC activities have been focussed on staff and postgraduate students, this has recently begun to expand to include undergraduate students. However, PEAC and Equity Officers have already had 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).

As noted in section P2, conduct of SIfA and the School is monitored via a variety of channels:

- PEAC meets monthly to monitor progress and review programs and issues.
- 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.
- Surveys aim to monitor the 'climate' of the School (as described in section O3.e)
- Gender balance of staff and student cohorts is compiled annually, while gender/diversity data is monitored in recruitment and in conferences and workshops associated with our staff.

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, although changes to control of public university pages have impacted our ability to control content. A project for the coming year will be revisiting the public and internal PEAC pages to improve the quality and completeness of online information.

PEAC maintains a calendar of activities and other University and external opportunities (e.g. International Women's Day, Wear it Purple Day,...) and these are promoted via email to keep PEAC and diversity issues in front of all members of the School.

More formal reporting to SIfA and the School has recently consisted of reports on our various surveys and reporting at whole-School meetings. 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 external to the School.

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 elsewhere driven by the SAGE initiative. We have 'mentored' other Schools in the Science Faculty in establishing equity committees, notably Chemistry, Geosciences, Psychology and Mathematics. Most recently, we have been approached by undergraduate students and staff from Mechanical Engineering to help drive the formation of a similar group in that School.

In 2016 the School of Physics adopted a variety of 'Local provisions', most notably actions on employment issues (see S2). The context has moved on, but these provisions remain relevant and are now under discussion for broader adoption across the Faculty.

For some time we have taken every opportunity to comment on the lack of adequate childcare facilities at the University. This is a university responsibility beyond the School's control, but PEAC made submissions to a University survey and had some prominence in the debate. The result is a new University policy and we will maintain our interest in how that is implemented.

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. Also identified several specific areas in which there are still opportunities to improve, and made plans to address those over the coming 2 years.

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.

Previous reports have described earlier PEAC activities, and many current activities are described elsewhere in this application, but some not already mentioned include:

- Support for *Deadly Science* - collection of books for distribution to remote indigenous communities.
- Support for a university-wide faith network aiming to acknowledge the problem of faith discrimination in academia and normalise religion as part of identity.
- Women in science posters have been mounted in the main stairwell (example at right). Our previous posters displayed only historical male scientists!
- Physics videos on screens in the corridors featuring female and CALD members of the school. Also a research story in 'cartoon' form featuring a female member of staff.
- Indigenous astronomy initiatives include adding content into some undergraduate units and an indigenous theme to future Hunstead Lecture series offered by SifA.



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.

PEAC has certainly raised the profile of diversity issues in the School in the last 6 years and played a significant role in the Faculty of Science and University. PEAC has a voice in the Faculty EDI committee and representation in other University staff groups such as the Pride (LGBTIQ), Mosaic (cultural diversity) and DAWN (disability) networks. It also has influence by way of representation by individual PEAC members in the University Student Life committee and even the Senate.

PEAC's role has changed as part of a larger EDI emphasis across the University, driven by SAGE.

Two PEAC members were part of the Self Assessment Team (SAT) for the first SAGE application that led to Bronze accreditation for the University. A former PEAC chair is now part of the new SAT for the next SAGE stage.

Measurable impact of our efforts within SIfA and the School will become apparent over time in changing gender ratios, although we must do better on this. Some recent discussions have centred on cultural, language or ethnic diversity (CALD) where the School and University do not do so well. Results of the current School survey should inform this discussion and allow comparison our initial 2014 School survey, the 2017 University Culture Survey and our own 2018 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 first 'climate survey' was a major survey of the School in late 2014, followed by a smaller Alumni survey in late 2015, both our first attempt to identify the areas needing improvement. 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.

A second general School survey was deferred in favor of the University-wide Culture Survey. Among the main issues this identified were staff familiarity with promotion criteria and hence access to promotions, diversity in management and staff having an understanding of how to report inappropriate behaviours. Many resulting actions have been at University level, but some School actions (e.g. reporting) obviously address issues raised.

In October 2018, a survey targeting issues around bullying at the School of Physics was undertaken by PEAC. The goals of this survey were to:

- identify the extent of any bullying behaviour within the School
- determine who was being impacted by bullying behaviour and the severity of this impact
- examine how different cohorts within the School have experienced bullying behaviour
- define new strategies to prevent bullying behaviour and...
- ...take action where necessary and possible.

The quantitative and qualitative data from the survey were analysed by an independent expert. Using the methodology adopted (and debated!), in the 139 responses to the survey there were 21 bullying experiences. However, it is likely that some of the instances reported would not have been found to involve bullying were they to have been investigated. 43% of respondents suggested that the main School response should be increased enforcement of current policies. One of the key outcomes was support and data for the Head of School to act on known occurrences of bullying.

Results from these surveys were reported to the School and distributed more widely in the university and (on request) even further afield. They are available on the PEAC internal-facing web site.

Our December 2020 survey is a return to a general survey, but in a new, more sophisticated form. It has been designed with an independent expert and with an eye to wider use in the University. It is currently still open for responses. It will be analysed in the first half of 2021 and a report presented to the School community.