

Report on GEAR Forums - November 2022

GEAR Forums provide an opportunity for the GEAR team to update women in the JCU community on JCU's actions towards gender equity, and to provide a space where women are welcome to raise and discuss equity issues that are important to them, and share their views and experiences. Forums are scheduled quarterly during 2022. GEAR Forums are confidential, with the GEAR Coordinators producing a de-identified report that summarises the kinds of issues discussed across the Forums. GEAR Forum reports are used to inform the ongoing work of JCU in achieving gender equity.

On the 15th and 17th November 2022, approximately 40 JCU women joined two GEAR Forums. Each forum began with an update on JCU's Gender Equity Action Plan. There was then space for open discussion to talk through whatever issues women wanted to raise. Below we give a brief summary of the discussion at the Forum.

Update to GEAR Forum from Coordinators

- The overview began by acknowledging the change in context, particularly since the Action Plan was endorsed – for example the Headline Restructure that has meant changes in some Action Owners.
- Some actions have been delayed due to the University's current focus on the Professional Services Change.
- Other actions have been delayed to ensure they are part of more systematic changes.
 - For example, the eRecruitment system due for roll-out in early 2023 will address some data-related actions, and related policies and training programs will be delayed to incorporate the new system.
- Two actions related to a University-wide Professional Development strategy (for Academic and for P&T staff) have been started early as they fall within the scope of the Employee Lifecycle project.
- Workforce planning is being more systematically implemented, with each College expected to produce multi-year workforce plans (including gender equity considerations) following a template in development by the Academy.
- Some actions are being incorporated into business-as-usual, such as annual reporting on equity & diversity data by HR, and gendered considerations of academic workloads, especially regarding outreach work.

Forum Discussion Summary

Recruitment

- It was suggested the template for Academic job advertisements, particularly for more entry-level jobs include fewer essential criteria (currently max 6) and a greater number of desirable criteria (currently max 2). This may increase the representation of women in applicant pools given research showing women who do not meet all essential criteria are less likely to apply than men in the same position.
- Similarly, there was discussion of the need for careful consideration in selection criteria so they are tailored to a specific position, to avoid the inclusion of criteria that are not actually requirements of the position.
- There was also a question about the gender breakdown of interview panels at JCU given bias against women in recruitment (and other domains). The SBS Gender training, available to selection panel members, covers topics related to this but the topic also requires in-depth conversations amongst interview panels.

Leavers

- There was discussion of exit processes for staff leaving, some women told of colleagues leaving without any, or due, recognition of their contributions. There was also discussion of opportunities for continued engagement when staff separate from the university (e.g. Adjunct Academic staff, and through the Alumni networks).

Academic Workloads

- Academic women asked for a more transparent and user-friendly workload calculator. In particular, the tool that calculates teaching hours is not available for staff to access so planning ahead becomes a difficult exercise. Given research that women tend to do more coordination of large first-year subjects, this transparency is important. A recent [publication](#) exploring dynamics relating to workload allocation was shared.

Institutional culture and leadership

- Women interested in undertaking culture surveys in their own work area asked if a University-wide staff survey is being considered that would include equity & diversity considerations.
- There was discussion across both sessions of examples where inequity was addressed at an individual level, and the need to ensure that broader structural changes are made so that it is not up to individuals each time having to advocate.
 - For example, reducing barriers for women attending professional events/ conferences who require time allowances when travelling to respond to flexible care arrangements for children.
- There was discussion of sponsorship for childcare at a Marine Science conference in Cairns that made a positive difference to a number of people, both men and women.
- There were also examples of increased awareness and flexibility, for example willingness to shift meetings to enable staff with caring responsibilities to participate. Women in the session offered to support colleagues who may be less comfortable or able to request such changes for themselves.
- There was some discussion of system challenges for staff changing names, for example transgender staff (and students). In particular, the issue noted was the multiple systems that need to be updated separately and the complexities of navigating that process.
- There was discussion of imagery and representation visible in social media and publications in JCU STEM areas in engineering and IT that feature entirely male panels, work teams, and honours lists.

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