



# Australasian Association of Philosophy

## **AAP Statement on Gender (2014)**

Philosophy has a poor track record with regard to gender balance, both in Australasia and internationally. Compared to other Humanities disciplines, Philosophy has a significantly smaller proportion of women in continuing positions (including, in particular, senior continuing positions). For instance in Australia in 2009, females comprised only 28% of full-time continuing Philosophy staff, and the largest group of female staff (~15) were employed at the lecturer B (Lecturer) level, while the largest group of male staff (~40) were employed at the lecturer D/E (Associate Professor/Professor) level (Bishop et al, in Hutchison and Jenkins (eds.) 2013, pp. 232-3). Moreover, compared to other disciplines, Philosophy has significantly higher attrition rates for women at all levels: end of first year; end of bachelor's degree; end of Honours year; end of higher degree by research; end of post-doctoral fellowship; and end of non-continuing position.

The AAP is concerned about this data, and is compiling a series of Notes designed to address different factors that may explain the drop off in women's participation at all levels of the profession.

## **AAP Note on Hiring (2015)**

As the low level of women's participation at all levels of employment in Philosophy has been identified as a problem, the AAP urgently recommends that gender should be prioritised as a consideration in recruitment, and especially that care be taken to eliminate implicit bias in hiring processes.

### History

In 1982 the AAP made a statement asking departments to implement the affirmative action policies developed by FAUSA. At that time the AAP's recommendations included:

- (a) actively seeking applications from suitably qualified female candidates for vacant positions;
- (b) taking up references and seeking written work from all female applicants;
- (c) making available, on request, to unsuccessful applicants the reasons for their lack of success.

In 2007 the ‘Improving the Participation of Women in the Philosophy Profession’ project was commissioned to collect data on the participation of women in Philosophy and to prepare a report based on collected information. The report acknowledged that more work needed to be done to facilitate structural change so that women are given fair consideration as job candidates. The report made a number of recommendations to improve recruitment of women, including:

- (a) that at least one senior female philosopher should be included as a member of every selection committee for continuing positions in philosophy;
- (b) that supervisors and mentors should provide more support to their women PhD students and graduates to prepare their suitability for academic positions;
- (c) that position descriptions should include administrative/governance, research and teaching components of the position and that candidates should be assessed in relation to all these aspects for appointments. By recognising the full range of academic activities, this action would ensure women’s contributions are more likely to be taken into consideration in appointment decisions;
- (d) that targets for hiring women be set;
- (e) that Philosophy staff and Heads should discuss with each other strategies that will enable Philosophy departments to meet those targets.

### Current recommendations

Over thirty years since FAUSA’s affirmative action recommendations were communicated to philosophers working in Australasia, there has been insufficient progress in representation of women in Philosophy employment. We need to take advantage of the significant recent research in this area. Particularly, evidence suggests that even people who view themselves as egalitarian and progressive may be affected by implicit gender bias: i.e., bias that is not necessarily undertaken consciously, but which nonetheless allows appointment committee members to be unduly swayed by stereotypes regarding women’s capacities, as well as expectations concerning how philosophers are supposed to look, their appropriate manner of presentation and discursive style, and the areas of philosophy that are considered to be serious and important (see Saul; Haslanger).

In addition to previous recommendations that there should be more women (and especially senior women) on hiring committees, and that departments should proactively recruit women and adopt gender targets, there are also strategies that should be used specifically to address *implicit* bias. The AAP strongly recommends that hiring committees work with University human resources departments to engage a checklist approach to managing and counteracting potential gender bias, including:

- Informing selection committee members about implicit bias and stereotype threat, and asking them to keep this in mind as a factor that may affect their decisions regarding their hiring needs (specialties, departmental ‘fit’) and decisions to exclude or prioritise particular candidates (see the resources below);
- Discussing with Human Resources the possibility of putting in place systems to alleviate the effects of implicit gender bias and stereotype threat — e.g.,

including a statement in the job advertisement explicitly encouraging women to apply, and requesting blinding of [first pass] application materials, to prevent committee members from being influenced by gendered names;

- Taking serious consideration of research track record *relative to opportunity*, especially where candidates have taken time out to care for others or have experienced insecure work;
- Developing *explicit, objective, and valid* criteria carefully before advertising the position, and with reference to the effects of gender schemas and implicit bias (see Valian, 318-19);
- Keeping in mind that privileging the building of a department's 'existing strengths' may serve to perpetuate that department's existing gender imbalance, committees should check that undue consideration is not given to feelings about whether or not female candidates will 'fit in' with the culture of the department;
- Checking expectations regarding what areas of philosophy are serious and which journals are considered 'good,' in consideration of the fact that such judgements may involve implicit biases against areas in which more women specialise;
- Framing hiring discussions generally according to 'all who would suit the position well' rather than what 'the ideal person' would be like.

Finally, note that not all positions are advertised (e.g. conversion from fixed-term to continuing employment; employment associated with the award of fellowships such as DECRA's; casual appointments including teaching by HDR students) and applying the above recommendations to non-advertised positions may not be possible. In light of this, departments should undertake regular reviews of their hiring patterns to non-advertised positions to check for patterns suggestive of gender bias, and take steps to address any biases identified.

### Resources

- AAP announcement of FAUSA's recommendations on affirmative action: <http://www.aap.org.au/page-1576322>
- Glenys Bishop with Helen Beebee, Eliza Goddard and Adriane Rini," in *Women in Philosophy: What Needs to Change*, Katrina Hutchison and Fiona Jenkins (eds) (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2013): 231-52.
- Eliza Goddard, *Improving the participation of Women in the Philosophy Profession*, on behalf of Susan Dodds, Lynda Burns, Mark Colyvan, Frank Jackson, Karen Jones and Catriona Mackenzie (IPWPP report, 2008): <http://aap.org.au/Womeninphilosophy>
- Workplace Gender Equality Agency advice on setting gender diversity targets: <https://www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/SETTING-GENDER-TARGETS-Online-accessible.pdf>
- Implicit bias in philosophy project: <http://www.biasproject.org/>
- Sally Haslanger, "Changing the Ideology and Culture of Philosophy: Not by Reason (Alone)," *Hypatia* 23[2] (2008): 210-23.
- Jennifer Saul, "Implicit Bias, Stereotype Threat and Women in Philosophy," in *Women in Philosophy: What Needs to Change*, Katrina Hutchison and Fiona Jenkins (eds) (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2013): 39-60.

- Virginia Valian, *Why So Slow?* (Boston, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1999), especially chapter 14, 'Remedies.'
- Shelly J. Correll et al, "Getting a Job: Is there a Motherhood Penalty?," *American Journal of Sociology* 112[5] (March 2007): 1297-1339:  
<http://gender.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/motherhoodpenalty.pdf>