

UQ GUIDE TO Increasing under-represented staff through targeted recruitment and retention measures

Background

The University of Queensland (UQ) seeks to have a diverse and inclusive staff profile that is broadly representative of the wider Australian community. UQ's aspirations for diversity and inclusion are reflected in the following strategic UQ documents:

- Strategic Plan 2022–2025
- Operational Plan 2018–2021
- Workplace Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2020–2022
- Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- SAGE Athena Swan Action Plan 2019–2022
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy 2019–2022
- Disability Action Plan 2023–2025
- Ally Action Plan 2019–2022
- Cultural and Linguistic Diversity: Staff Inclusion Action Plan 2022–2024

Intent

The guide provides an overview of UQ-endorsed special measures which may be applied to improve UQ's staff diversity through targeted recruitment, selection and appointment activities. These measures are optional; implementation is at the discretion of hiring authorities and the Authorised Officer/Approving Authority for the particular activity.

The measures outlined in this guide are based on extensive consultation across the UQ community and predicated on academic research and current best practice approaches in Higher Education and other organisations.

While there are many under-represented groups of staff at the University, UQ has a particular focus on enhancing employment and development opportunities for:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples;
- people with disability;
- culturally and linguistically diverse people; and
- people with a gender identity which comprises less than 30 percent of a UQ cohort¹.

¹ A UQ 'cohort' may comprise a School, Faculty, Institute, academic level or other recognised grouping.

“Discrimination on the basis of certain attributes such as age, sex, race or disability is not always against the law.

The term ‘positive discrimination’ is sometimes used to refer to ‘positive measures’ or ‘special measures’. Special measures aim to foster greater equality by supporting groups of people who face, or have faced, entrenched discrimination so they can have similar access to opportunities as others in the community.”

Extract from the [Australian Human Rights Commission website](#).



Principles

The following principles underpin the content of this guide:



Enhanced diversity and inclusion are necessary to delivering a wide range of social, economic, innovative and community-building **benefits** at UQ.



Any special measures must be implemented in accordance with **legislative** requirements.



The measures in this guide are intended as **short-term** interventions that should be removed once UQ's desired diversity aims are achieved.



Different interventions must be **evaluated** for effectiveness and refined, removed or continued as relevant.



Evaluation outcomes are to be **shared** across UQ in a cohesive manner that enables all areas to learn from the experience.

Authority to implement

The measures contained in this guide are endorsed for use by senior UQ leadership. Local (Faculty/School/Institute/Portfolio) business rules may also apply.

The decision to implement the measure/s must be approved by the Authorised Officer, in writing, for the specific activity where the measure is being applied (for example, recruitment, retention, development, offer of continuing employment, pathway program etc.).

Staff seeking to apply a special measure must provide Human Resources with documentary evidence that:

- the criteria outlined in the 'Meeting Legislative Requirements' section of this guide has been met; and
- the Authorised Officer has approved the application of the measure.

Documentary evidence may comprise an email, memo, proposal paper or another form of written correspondence. This evidence should be uploaded onto UQ systems as a PDF document and retained for two years after the special measure has been removed.

Example



To apply a special measure to a recruitment activity, the Authorised Officer, for the purposes of that recruitment activity, must approve the application of that measure.



Meeting legislative requirements

Federal and State legislation allow for the implementation of ‘special measures’ for the purposes of achieving ‘substantive equality’, providing certain criteria/conditions are met. This section addresses legislative considerations applicable to applying special measures.

Federal

A number of Federal Acts provide for special measures and/or exemptions/exceptions to anti-discrimination legislation. While this may seem counter-intuitive, the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) notes:

“While special measures might appear to be discriminatory because they involve distinctions or differential treatment made on the basis of attributes such as sex, if an organisation or individual is taking action to achieve ‘substantive equality’ [the relevant legislation] provides that the action might be considered a special measure and therefore not unlawful discrimination.”

Extract from the Australian Human Rights Commission **Guidelines: Special measures under the Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth)** 2018

Relevant legislation



Section 7D of the **Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth) (SDA)**: ‘Special Measures Intended to Achieve Equality’

Division 4, Section 45 of the **Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)**: ‘Special Measures’

Section 8 of the **Racial Discrimination Act, 1975 (Cth)**: ‘Exceptions’

Division 4, Section 44 of the **Age Discrimination Act, 2004 (Cth)**: ‘Exemptions granted by Commission’

State

Queensland legislation provides comprehensive exemptions which enable the application of special measures for the purposes of equal opportunity. The Queensland Human Rights Commission provides a helpful **factsheet** about common exemptions to anti-discrimination legislation for the purpose of achieving equal opportunity. Part 5 of the **Queensland Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 (the Act)** outlines exemptions allowable under this Act, including:

Section 105 – General exemptions for discrimination which states:

1. A person may do an act to promote equal opportunity for a group of people with an attribute if the purpose of the act is not inconsistent with this Act.
2. Subsection (1) applies only until the purpose of equal opportunity has been achieved.

Example of Equal Opportunity



Advertising ‘men only’ academic positions in a School of Nursing or Education to diversify the staff profile and provide male role models and mentors for under-represented male students.

Two other relevant exemptions allowable under this Act include:

Section 25 – Genuine occupational requirement exemption which states:

A person may impose genuine occupational requirements for a position.

Example of Genuine Occupational Requirement



Identifying positions as only being available to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples where lived experience, cultural understanding and connection to Community are necessary requirements of the role.

Section 104 – Welfare measure exemption which states:

A person may do an act to benefit the members of a group of people with an attribute for whose welfare the act was designed if the purpose of the act is not inconsistent with this Act.

Example of Welfare



Providing an educational or learning pathway program that is only open to people with disability.

Meeting legislative requirements (cont.)

Exemptions and defending the University against complaints of discrimination

Under Queensland legislation, it is **not necessary for organisations to ‘apply for an exemption’ prior to implementing a special measure**, but organisations must be able to defend the application of special measures in response to a complaint of discrimination.

The AHRC provides helpful guidance, examples and a template outlining the key considerations which must be addressed when planning any special measures to both achieve substantive equity and defend potential complaints of discrimination.

These key considerations can be summarised as:

- Identifying the specific inequality that the special measure/s is/are targeting
- Considering how the proposed special measure/s will achieve substantive equality
- Considering whether the proposed measure/s is/are proportionate and appropriately targeted
- Considering how the effectiveness of the proposed measure/s will be monitored
- Linking the special measures to a broader affirmative action plan.

Examples of business cases for special measures are included in the AHRC guide. UQ and other higher education examples are included in Appendix A and B.



Additional UQ Criteria to implement approved measures for gender equality

To further mitigate any complaints of unlawful discrimination, UQ has instated additional criteria for special measures to **improve gender equity**. These are not required for measures supporting equity for other under-represented groups.

UQ gender measures are only authorised at UQ where:

- the gender being targeted comprises less than 30 percent² of a particular cohort³; *and*
- there is a communication strategy which supports the implementation of the measures; *and*
- there is an operational justification to improve the diversity of a team/group (for example, a more diverse approach to problem solving, decision-making or to provide role models for students/more junior staff); **or**
- there is an external requirement to implement diversity measures (for example, a linkage grant or Centre of Excellence requirement); **or**
- to retain high calibre people of an under-represented gender who have indicated a genuine intention to leave UQ.

The considerations outlined in the **Meeting Legislative Requirements** section should be clearly addressed in any documentation (such as a business case) seeking the Authorised Officer’s approval to implement the measures.

² 30 percent is considered ‘under-represented’ in academic literature addressing gendered occupations/organisations; 30 percent is often cited as the ‘tipping point’ for positive change in studies of critical mass theory pertaining to gendered occupations

³ A UQ ‘cohort’ may comprise a school, Faculty, Institute, academic level or other recognised organisational grouping

Communication considerations

Before implementing any measures, the rationale for implementing the measures should be clearly communicated to staff who may be impacted by the decision to implement the measures, as relevant.

Communication should:

- Provide a clear explanation or justification regarding why the measures are being implemented (eg. to meet specific operational outcomes).
- Reference the legislation that enables equal opportunity measures to be implemented.
- Outline why the particular measure(s) has been selected and intended outcomes.
- Outline any previous efforts to diversify the team/group and the outcomes.
- The likely timeframe for implementing the measures (eg. as an enduring approach or 'one-off' for a particular role).
- Explain the process for any complaints regarding implementation of the measure.

Appendix C provides guidance on the development of talking points for communicating the use of targeted measures.



Approved recruitment / selection measures

UQ Leadership has pre-approved the implementation of the following recruitment and selection measures at UQ, on the grounds of equal opportunity and strictly when the criteria listed in the **Meeting Legislative Requirements** section has been met. The Authorised Officer for the recruitment activity must approve the implementation of any measures on a case-by-case basis. This section outlines a number of measures that may be applied to enhance diversity outcomes through recruitment and selection processes. Of note, all of the measures outlined in this section have already been applied and proven successful in different areas of UQ.

Identified positions (also known as ‘Targeted Recruitment’)

The AHRC describes Identified Positions (also known as ‘targeted recruitment’) as:

“...positions where an employer may identify that a position is to be filled only by a person with a particular attribute. This might mean an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander applicant, a person with a disability, a person of a particular sex or a person of a particular age”.

Extract from **Identified Positions | Australian Human Rights Commission website**

Where a position is identified under the Act, the advertisement for the role, program or other measure must clearly reference the applicable legislation under which the measure is being applied.



Suggested wording



Equal Opportunity Measure Program or Activity

This program is intended to redress the under-representation of men in nursing at UQ and is an equal opportunity measure under Section 105 of the Anti-Discrimination Act 1991. Applicants must be men.

Equal Opportunity Measure Recruitment

The filling of this position is intended to constitute an equal opportunity measure under Section 105 of the Anti-Discrimination Act 1991(Qld). The position is therefore only open to women/people with disability/gender diverse people.

Equal Opportunity Measure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment

The filling of this position is intended to constitute a special/equal opportunity measure under section 8(1) of the Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth) and s 105 of the Anti-Discrimination Act 1991(Qld). The position is therefore only open to Australian Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people.

Successful candidates are required to provide evidence to confirm that they are an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person’.

Genuine Occupational Requirement Measure Role to test the accessibility of UQ webpages for people with severe visual impairment

To perform this role it is essential that the person who holds the position has visual acuity of 20/200 or lower. It is therefore a genuine occupational requirement under section 25 of the Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 that the position is only open to people who have been declared legally blind.

Welfare measure

This program is intended as a welfare measure for people with disability under Section 104 of the Anti-Discrimination Act 1991. This program is therefore only open to applicants with disability.

Approved recruitment / selection measures (cont.)

Establishing targets for different stages of a recruitment process

Targets or quotas can be applied to any or all stages of a recruitment process (selecting candidates, short-listing for interviews etc.) to ensure the selection pool is inclusive of diverse candidates. Setting firm targets can encourage recruiters to make greater efforts to source and/or shortlist diverse candidates for particular roles.

The direction to meet specific targets can be provided to internal and/or external recruitment staff or agencies and/or staff responsible for advertising and shortlisting candidates for a position. Consider providing additional direction or caveats if the targets are not met.

Using specialist recruitment firms to attract diverse staff

Using specialist recruitment firms can enable access to a wider range of diverse candidate populations. The decision to engage a specialist agency should be discussed with and agreed by the relevant Human Resources staff prior to making any arrangements. The cost of using specialist recruitment firms will usually be met by the organisational unit responsible for hiring the staff member.

Examples



Appointable female/male candidates must comprise at least 30 per cent of the candidate pool and/or shortlist for X position.



The short list for X position must comprise at least 2 appointable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander candidates.

Examples of Possible Caveats



The position is to remain open until this requirement is met.



Recruitment activity can proceed if this requirement is not met within X weeks.



The position must be readvertised if the target is not met by the closing date.

Examples



Using a dedicated First Peoples recruitment agency to support recruitment for an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identified position.



Using a 'women in tech' agency to source women candidates for an IT position.



Approved recruitment / selection measures (cont.)



Affording 'diversity considerations' higher weighting during selection processes

In order to shift the demography of their organisation or work area and capitalise on the benefits of improved diversity, some UQ leaders have afforded 'diversity considerations' a higher priority during recruitment selection processes.

Higher priority can be achieved through three mechanisms

1

Identify the specific inequality that you are targeting

Ensuring diversity considerations are included as 'essential' criteria for the position, as reflected in the Position Description and job advertisement.

2

Identify the specific inequality that you are targeting

Formally adding more weighting to diversity considerations in the selection/interview assessment guide for the position.

3

Identify the specific inequality that you are targeting

Grouping interview candidates into either 'appointable' or 'not appointable' and selecting, from the appointable group, a person who reflects the under-represented demography.



Rewarding successful proactive / direct approaches to candidates (referral reward)

Existing academic and professional networks can be the greatest source of future talent. Where resources allow, UQ leaders have the option to encourage or incentivise current staff within a Faculty, School or Institute, to apply direct approaches to attract high calibre, under-represented candidates to a UQ role.

Incentives may encourage current staff to invest greater time and energy in building and accessing their professional networks.

UQ supports the following incentives



Publicly highlighting / showcasing successful recruitment activities by current staff.



Providing additional development or training opportunities.



Providing additional funding or other support for research / teaching / publication endeavours.

Best practice measures for all recruitment activities

Beyond the application of special measures, there are a number of current UQ recruitment practices which may prevent diverse candidates from applying for positions, being shortlisted for a role and/or excelling through selection and interview processes. Authorised Officers and hiring managers can challenge and test extant practice, to assess the impact of different approaches to recruitment/selection outcomes. Following is a list of best-practice measures in place at other organisations, which can be readily adapted for the UQ context.

- **Reduce the number and specificity of ‘essential criteria’.** Women are less likely to apply for a role where they feel unlikely to be selected due to not meeting essential criteria. Consider reducing essential criteria to 6–8 key requirements to encourage a higher applicant pool⁴.
- **Invite non-traditional applicants.** A statement that applicants who may not meet all selection criteria should still apply may encourage unsure candidates to proceed with an application. Acknowledging divergent/different and non-traditional career pathways and possible resume gaps can be very encouraging to candidates who may have experienced career interruptions due to caring responsibilities or for other reasons.
- **Highlight UQ’s commitment to building diverse teams.** Emphasising UQ’s desire to attract diverse staff in a job advertisement may also be helpful to widening the candidate pool for particular roles.
- **Offer flexible working arrangements.** Proactively listing different flexibility options in the job advertisement can be hugely encouraging to applicants with caring and/or other responsibilities/commitments⁵.
- **Create a welcoming interview experience.** Consider if the standard approach used to interview and select candidates may be a deterrent to some candidates. Options for creating a more welcoming experience include (but are not limited to):
 - **Campus visits:** Campus visits by prospective staff can be encouraging for staff who may be undecided about moving their career (and family) to UQ/Brisbane. Campus visits are an additional expense, but this should be considered an investment for attracting high-calibre staff to UQ. A well-constructed visit could include tours of UQ facilities, meeting key staff (including potential team members or Faculty/Institute leaders), a social activity with future teams and an overview of the different lifestyle and professional benefits associated with working at UQ.
 - **Phased interviews:** Rather than assembling a large and possibly intimidating selection panel (which may also be more difficult to coordinate due to competing staff schedules), consider offering a phased selection approach, where an initial interview is conducted with fewer staff, followed by another interview with more senior staff (either one-on-one or as a group).
- **Consider assessments or work tests:** For professional staff, one of the most effective mechanisms for impartially assessing a candidate’s ability to perform a specific role is for them to demonstrate their skills through a work-test, which replicates likely tasks in the advertised role. Options for work tests might include:
 - delivering a presentation addressing key selection criteria;
 - undertaking a written assessment to assess written communication skills;
 - analysing the key considerations in a written document;
 - undertaking a practical leadership activity or task; and/or
 - another type of task specific to the advertised role.
- **Removing non-inclusive or gendered language from job advertisements⁶:** Katmatfield offers a free online gender-decoder tool⁷ which can be used to assess the appeal of language in job advertisements for different audiences⁸.

Suggested wording



To invite candidates who may not meet all selection criteria

UQ is committed to a fair, equitable and inclusive selection process, which recognises that some applicants may face additional barriers and challenges which have impacted and/or continue to impact their career trajectory. Candidates who may not meet all of the essential criteria are strongly encouraged to apply for and demonstrate their potential in the role, even if certain selection criteria can’t be met. Candidates may also wish to proactively outline any barriers/challenges which have impacted their career. The selection panel will consider both your potential and any performance relative to opportunity considerations when assessing your suitability for this role.

Flexibility statement

A number of workplace flexibility options can be accessed in this role, including: part-time hours; flexible start and finish times; compressed working hours; job-sharing; working remotely; and additional purchased leave. Candidates are invited to discuss their flexibility requirements at any stage of the selection and hiring process.

4 **Why Women Don’t Apply for Jobs Unless They’re 100% Qualified** by Tara Sophia Mohr, Harvard Business Review

5 **How flexible work arrangements can address recruiting challenges**, Monster

6 **Evidence That Gendered Wording in Job Advertisements Exists and Sustains Gender Inequality**, Danielle Gaucher and Justin Friesen, University of Waterloo; Aaron C. Kay, Duke University

7 **Gender Decoder**

8 At the time of publication, UQ is also exploring the purchase of more advanced language analysis software.

Measures to retain high calibre, under-represented academic staff

High calibre staff from under-represented groups are often targeted for recruitment by other Universities and organisations who are also seeking to capitalise on the benefits of a more diverse workforce.

A positive workplace culture and feeling valued and supported are key drivers for staff retention and loyalty. Supervisors are directly responsible for creating and retaining a positive workplace culture and ensuring staff feel valued is their primary responsibility.

However, in circumstances where high calibre academic staff from the groups listed in Section 2 present a genuine risk of leaving (for example, after receipt of a legitimate offer of employment from another university) every effort should be made to retain that staff member. In these cases, the following targeted retention measures, which **must be approved by the Authorised Officer** via a clear business case, could include:

- salary or benefits renegotiation;
- professional development activities requiring fiscal support;
- enhanced access to resources/funding/staff to support professional objectives
- conversion to continuing employment.

Advice and assistance



Your local Human Resources specialists can assist with the implementation of any of the measures outlined this guide. Other avenues of assistance include:

UQ recruitment
recruitment@uq.edu.au

Workplace Diversity and Inclusion
ideals@uq.edu.au

UQ's Indigenous Employment Team
indigenous_employment@uq.edu.au

AskHR
Who will direct your inquiry to the appropriate place.



Appendix A – Example Business Case 1

Level B/C Continuing Teaching & Research (Applied Mathematics) (women-only recruitment)

The School has a current vacancy for a continuing Teaching & Research role in applied mathematics as a result of XXX departure from UQ. In order to improve our gender equity in mathematics, we propose to fill this position at Level B/C through an external recruitment process that only accepts applications from women candidates. Furthermore, we must be prepared to offer an internationally competitive package, and to match and exceed competing offers from other institutions, as strong women candidates are in high demand around the world. We have advocated for and received support from our staff for a women-only strategic recruitment process in the School, not only to increase the number of women on staff, but also to demonstrate, both internally and externally, our commitment to improving gender equity.

Strategic case for women-only recruitment

The disciplines of mathematics and physics tend to display a disappointingly low proportion of women staff across Australia and indeed worldwide. The School of Mathematics and Physics follows the discipline trends, with poor representation of women at every academic level, and particularly in continuing academic positions (12 out of 63). In our student cohort, we also have more men than women among our undergraduate, PGCW, and HDR students in all programs areas. Poor gender equity in our disciplines is both a reputational risk for the university and a morale issue for our staff, which in turn impacts our ability to recruit talented academics and students and produce the best possible research and teaching outcomes regardless of gender.

We have recently improved our representation of women in our physics area by successfully retaining two exceptional women into continuing positions from fixed-term roles. However, we have not been able to apply the same strategy in mathematics (6 out of 37 continuing positions in maths are held by women), as we have not been able to attract strong women candidates into fixed term roles due to the strong employment market at the moment for women in mathematics.

Furthermore, we have been actively seeking women applicants for our openly advertised positions, and have followed best practice in the recruiting process to ensure women applicants have every chance. While we have made offers to women candidates in the last few years, a number of these candidates have taken competing offers from other institutions. This incremental rebalancing using an open-pool recruitment strategy is an inadequate way to address the immediate issue of gender imbalance in our staffing profile on any but a very long time-scale. Indeed, this is the experience across the sector.

This proposal aligns strongly with UQ's strategic focus on activities that attract, support and retain a diverse and inclusive community of high achieving staff and students. With this proposal, we seek to help UQ make progress toward our goal of addressing the barriers facing women in academia, particularly in areas of under-representation, through a commitment to the SAGE Pilot of Athena SWAN.

This proposal also takes positive steps toward reaching our Faculty objective of attracting and retaining outstanding staff through equity, diversity and inclusion, by "identify[ing] opportunities and implement[ing] strategies to enable equity, diversity and inclusion in all categories and levels of staff".

Legal and reputational considerations

Reputational risk

The proposal carries potential reputational risk to the university, as the initiative may be perceived as discriminatory, as evidenced by some of the press that resulted from similar processes at U Adelaide and U Melbourne in past years. However, we believe the reputational risk is low, in part because the positive reputation opportunity of improving women in STEM is so high. In addition, the greater reputational risk for the university is in failing to act on improving gender equity in STEM. It should also be noted that, although elements of the press coverage were negative, there was also significant positive press coverage as well, more so as these hirings became more commonplace. UQ has successfully advertised two postdoctoral positions in the UQ-led ARC Centre of Excellence for Engineered Quantum Systems (EQUS) in 2019, and no negative press whatsoever was received.

Several Australian universities have advertised women-only positions in Mathematics. The first in Australia of which we are aware was the School of Mathematics and Statistics at the University of Melbourne, in 2016. While there was some initial negative coverage in the press, anecdotal reports from colleagues indicate this was more than outweighed by the quality of applications received and the quality of the hires made, the positive impact on the culture, T&R performance and public image of the School, and the overall reputational gain for the School, Faculty and University, as well as subsequent positive press. Such hiring processes for continuing positions have proved successful at a number of other Go8 universities, as indicated in the following table, and have become more commonplace, with Adelaide, Monash, Melbourne, ANU and more recently (in early 2020) Curtin advertising such positions. UQ has successfully advertised

Appendix A – Example Business Case 1 (cont.)

Level B/C Continuing Teaching & Research (Applied Mathematics) (women-only recruitment)

postdoctoral position in UQ’s Centre of Excellence for Engineered Quantum Systems (EQUS) in 2019.

Another potential risk is the possibility of internal discontent amongst SMP or UQ staff, if the measure is perceived to be discriminatory or unfair. In SMP, we have canvassed widely to ensure staff are supportive of the measure. It has been discussed in several School meetings, and staff have been given the opportunity to provide feedback in person or via email. We have had numerous positive comments from staff (men and women), and very little negative feedback.

Governance, legal and compliance risk

The proposal carries some governance, legal and compliance risk to the university as we need to ensure we are compliant with the Equal Opportunity Act. Based on the precedents at other Go8 universities, the precedent of the EQUS postdoctoral positions described above, and advice from UQ’s Workplace Diversity and Inclusion, we think this risk can be managed.

We understand that both Federal and State discrimination legislation allow ‘special measures’ for the purposes of achieving ‘substantive equality’. Section 7D of the Federal Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth), and the Queensland Anti-Discrimination Act 1991, Part 5 ‘General Exemptions’ Section 105, provide for such special measures to promote equal opportunity. In summary, we understand that it is not necessary to ‘apply for an exemption’, but that organisations may need to justify the application of special measures should somebody submit a complaint. We understand that UQ already applies similar special measures to other initiatives, for example ‘women only’ scholarships in Engineering and Aboriginal Pathways Schemes etc., as do other universities across Australia.

In order to document such a case, we provide a summary table (right) that aligns with the Australian Human Rights Commission’s key considerations in justifying the application of special measures.

AHRC key considerations to justify the application of special measures

1

Identify the specific inequality that you are targeting

Targeting women’s significant historical and enduring underrepresentation in the field of mathematics, including at UQ.

2

Consider how the proposed special measure will achieve substantive equality

By only permitting women applicants, we will both ensure that a woman is appointed to the role, while also signalling to the sector and the general community that UQ is committed to real change towards gender balance in this area.

By only accepting applications from women, we hope that more women will be encouraged to apply than in a standard recruitment process, and that ultimately this will lead to more substantive gender balance in our staff (and indirectly student) cohorts.

3

Consider whether the proposed special measures are proportionate and appropriately targeted

As we are only proposing a single position, given the very low number of women compared to men in our mathematics staffing profile, we assess this as ‘proportional’. It is appropriately targeted because only 6 out of 37 continuing positions in maths are held by women at UQ.

4

Consider how you will monitor the effectiveness of the proposed special measures

If the recruitment process attracts a reasonable number of high calibre women candidates, and the School is able to appoint a high quality candidate to meet or exceed all selection criteria, the proposed special measure will have been effective. In addition, we will seek feedback from colleagues within and outside UQ to gauge how the activity has impacted UQ’s and SMP’s reputation, positively or negatively.

We also hope to receive feedback from students that an increased number of woman academics in classroom and supervisory setting is noticed and welcome. Increased retention of our women students and a greater proportion of women in the cohort would be reasonably interpreted as further evidence of a potentially positive culture shift.

5

Link the special measures to a broader affirmative action plan

This criteria is met through Australia’s participation in SAGE Athena SWAN framework and UQ’s own Action Plan to increase women’s representation in all STEMM fields. On a National level, the measure aligns with the Australian Government’s Strategy for Women in STEM.

Appendix B – Example Business Case 2

Special Measure – Single Gender Recruitment for the EQUUS Deborah Jin Fellowship in Physics

AHRC key considerations to justify the application of special measures

1

Identify the specific inequality that you are targeting

Targeting women's significant historical and enduring under-representation in the field of Physics. It is estimated that women comprise only around 21 percent of Faculty Physics positions and 17.5 percent of Australian physicists overall⁹. This is a clear case of historical under-representation.

2

Consider how the proposed special measure will achieve substantive equality

Women-only recruitment measures are designed to:

- encourage women to apply for these prestigious Fellowships;
- retain high-potential researchers within the field of Physics;
- enable the selected women physicists to bolster their research output and associated career trajectory; and
- enhance women's commitment to an enduring Physics research career.

3

Consider whether the proposed special measures are proportionate and appropriately targeted

The Deborah Jin fellowships are very small in number and scope and meet the criteria for 'proportionality'; especially when compared to measures currently in place within other organisations and industries (eg. Queensland Police Force has firm 50/50 recruitment quotas for all recruitment).

The measures are appropriately targeted towards the desired outcome of encouraging higher numbers of women to succeed in Physics research careers.

4

Consider how you will monitor the effectiveness of the proposed special measures

EQUUS intends to evaluate the success of 'women only' recruitment as part of the evaluation process for the Fellowships. If the Fellowships attract a reasonable number of high calibre women candidates and they are retained for the duration of the Fellowship, the measures can be deemed successful in meeting their intent as outlined in Step 2.

5

Link the special measures to a broader affirmative action plan

This criteria is met through Australia's participation in SAGE Athena SWAN framework and UQ's own Action Plan to increase women's representation in all STEMM fields. On a National level, the measure aligns with the Women in Physics (WIP) Action Plan and the Australian Government's Strategy for Women in STEM.

⁹ Foley, C.P. (2103) The Status of Women in Physics Australia, AIP Conference Proceedings 1517, 72 .

Appendix C – Case Studies



The University of Melbourne School of Mathematics and Statistics

In 2016, the School of Mathematics and Statistics at the University of Melbourne advertised two senior full-time positions for women-only applicants in an effort to redress the gender imbalance in the school. At the time, only two of the twenty-one Professors in the School where women and the School had a poor track record of attracting women, with few female applicants in open recruitment rounds.

Outcome

- The women-only recruitment round received a large number of high-quality applicants.
- There were so many high-quality applicants the School hired 4 women instead of 2 women as originally intended.
- Women applied in this recruitment round as they thought the School was obviously women and family-friendly if they were advertising for women-only positions and that was the kind of workplace they were looking for – indicating reputational change.
- In subsequent open recruitment rounds, the School has received significantly more applications from women than they have in the past.
- Representation of women in the School has increased from 9 women in 2016 to 17 women in 2020.



ARC Centre of Excellence Astro 3D

The ARC Centre of Excellence – Astro 3D, advertised three women-only positions in 2018. The Astronomy departments at the University of Melbourne, University of Western Australia, Australian National University and the University of Sydney and had a poor previous track record recruiting women, with few women applying in open recruitment rounds.

Astro 3D made the positions prestigious by offering an initial term as a fellowship with no teaching responsibilities, in which the successful candidates were expected to conduct research, publish papers and attract students. After this initial period, the positions reverted to continuing teaching and research positions which offered ongoing job-security.

Outcome

- The recruitment round attracted a large number of high-quality women applicants.
- The Centre hired 4 outstanding applicants instead of the intended 3.
- The Centre has received more applications from women in subsequent open recruitment rounds than they did before the women-only recruitment round.

Appendix D – Guidance on developing key talking points for internal communications

Why the measures are being implemented

Before implementing special measures, leaders should develop a clear communication narrative regarding why the measures are being implemented. Where possible, include data (quantitative and/or qualitative) or other evidence to support the case for targeted action. The ‘because equality is the right thing to do’ argument is unlikely to prove as compelling as an argument which directly supports the organisational area’s operational and strategic goals.

Examples of reasons for implementing special measures within a higher education context may include (but are not limited to):

- improved team diversity and associated decision making capability (multiple studies confirm this correlation);
- ensuring under-represented staff are not over-burdened with representational/Service commitments;
- providing students and junior staff with diverse role models, which is particularly important in occupations/ disciplines or organisational levels which have over-representation by a particular gender or limited representation by diverse staff (for example, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples);
- providing a richer University and learning experience for all students, not only those from diverse groups;
- to mitigate any reputational or image issues where UQ may have low under-representation of a particular group as compared to other populations/benchmarks (for example, in the Go8, broader tertiary sector or population more generally);
- to support national or state diversity and inclusion imperatives and UQ’s strategic goals;
- discipline or organisational unit-specific initiatives to develop more inclusive workplaces, curriculum or engagement activities;
- to enable improved connections and relationships with local, national and global partners, clients, collaborators, communities and networks in support of UQ’s strategic goals.

Relevant legislation



Examples of text which might be used for the purposes of internal communications regarding the implementation of special measures under legislation:

- ‘Both State and Federal anti-discrimination legislation allows for the implementation of ‘special measures’ for the purposes of achieving equal opportunity, welfare outcomes and/or due to occupational requirements.
- The Queensland Human Rights Commission provides a helpful [factsheet](#) about common exemptions to anti-discrimination legislation for the purpose of achieving equal opportunity.
- The legislation most relevant to this measure is Part 5, Section 105 of the [Queensland Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 \(the Act\)](#) ‘General Exemptions for Discrimination’.



Appendix D – Guidance on developing key talking points for internal communications (cont.)

Why this measure has been selected and intended outcomes

Provide a clear explanation or justification regarding why the measures are being implemented. This can generally be extracted from the business case arguing the case for implementing the measure: For example:

The disciplines of XXXX display a disappointingly low proportion of XXX staff across Australia and indeed worldwide. The School of XXXX has very low representation of women at Levels C, D and E and UQ is sitting well below industry, tertiary sector and Group of 8 benchmarks in this discipline. This presents a very poor image of our School (and wider Faculty) as being a progressive, inclusive and welcoming workplace for all staff and students, but especially XXX.

Standard measures to attract XXX candidates have proven unsuccessful, primarily due to the high demand for senior academic XXX in this discipline. We have previously made offers of employment to high-calibre XXX, however, they have cited the poor representation of XXX in the school (and associated workplace culture) as their primary reason for not wishing to work at UQ.

Attempts to increase representation through standard recruitment processes have not proven successful. This measure to limit applications to XXX is intended to send a strong message that UQ is serious about changing the demography of this discipline.

The experience of other Australian and international Universities has been that this method of recruitment has attracted a much greater pool of high-calibre XXX candidates both through the recruitment process and in future recruitment activities (which are open to all candidates). Evaluation of this type of recruitment process determined that XXX applied for the roles because the School appeared to be the kind of progressive, supportive and proactive workplace they were looking for – indicating reputational change.

Timeframe for this measure

Provide guidance as to whether the measure will be enduring, once off, or limited to another time-frame. For example:

Enduring

These positions will remain identified for XXX candidates, until the School reaches the desired representation of XXX.

Once off

This measure will be implemented as a 'one off' pilot activity and evaluated to ascertain whether it was successful in achieving the aim of identifying and appointing high-calibre XXX to the School of XXXX.

Limited time frame

It is intended that this measure remain in place for the next 12 months or until the School reaches the desired level of representation.

Complaints about the implementation of this measure

Always provide information about where staff members (or candidates) might lodge a complaint of unlawful discrimination. The Authorised Officer for the activity may (or may not) be willing to accept complaints internally, however, an external option should always be provided in the communications for the activity. For example:

- This measure has been approved for implementation by XXX after careful consideration to ensure the measure meets legislative requirements and is defensible should a complaint of discrimination be raised. As such, internal complaints about this measure will not be addressed or internal complaints can be made to XXXX .
- Staff are welcome to make a complaint about the implementation of this measure to the Queensland Human Rights Commission Complaints Portal. Before making a complaint, staff are strongly encouraged to review the exemptions which have been previously approved (and refused) by the QHRC, to ascertain whether the complaint is likely to be upheld.

Appendix D – Guidance on developing key talking points for internal communications (cont.)

Does this action undermine the principle of ‘merit’?

Merit and ‘fairness’ is often cited by critics of affirmative action or special measures. It may be helpful to proactively address the notion of merit within organisations and in recruitment practices, preferably drawing on context-relevant research and examples.

There is substantial academic research which demonstrates that the notion of ‘merit’ in organisations and recruitment processes can be influenced by a range of factors, including unconscious biases (especially affinity bias); existing relationships; stereotypes; beliefs about ‘the ideal worker’; a person’s race; a person’s privilege (for example, where a person went to school); whether a person has an Anglo-Saxon sounding name; timing; luck; a person’s physical disability; and/or other physical features.

Further, if a workplace is seeking to capitalise on the many benefits of having a more diverse workforce, the most meritorious candidate may be the person who brings diversity into the organisation or team.



More reading



The myth of merit

The Merit of Meritocracy. PsycNET (apa.org)

The Paradox of Meritocracy in Organizations Emilio J. Castilla, Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Stephen Benard 2010 (uq.edu.au)

Meritocracy a Myth? A Multilevel Perspective of how Social Inequality Accumulates Through Work. Hans van Dijk, Dorien Kooij, Maria Karanika-Murray, Ans De Vos, Bertolt Meyer, 2020 (uq.edu.au)

The Meritocracy Myth and the Illusion of Equal Employment Opportunity. Anne Lawton.

Affirmative action

Affirmative Meritocracy. Gregory M. Walton, Stanford University; Steven J. Spencer; University of Waterloo; Sam Erman, Harvard University (wiley.com)

Does affirmative action reduce gender discrimination and enhance efficiency? New experimental evidence. Guillaume Beauraina, David Mascleta (ScienceDirect)

Does Racial and Ethnic Discrimination Vary Across Minority Groups? Evidence from a Field Experiment. Alison Booth, Andrew Leigh, May 2010

Hierarchies, Jobs, Bodies: A Theory of Gendered Organisations. Joan Acker’s dated, but foundational research on gendered organisations: (sagepub.com)

Inequality Regimes: Gender, Class and Race Inequality in Organisations. Joan Acker (uq.edu.au)

Disability and recruitment/performance bias

How and When Stereotypes Relate to Inclusive Behavior Toward People With Disabilities. Philippe Nelissen, Ute Hulsheger, Gemma van Ruitenbeek, Fred Zijlstra, 2015 (uq.edu.au)

Obstacles to Success in the Workplace for People With Disabilities: A Review and Research Agenda. Mukta Kulkarni, Mark L. Lengnick-Hall, 2014 (uq.edu.au)