



## Statement of Principles and Actions Promoting the Equality and Status of Women in Research

### Principles

Continued global diversity in research excellence requires that all citizens have opportunities to participate in and contribute to achieving the full potential of research and innovation activities. Participants in the Global Research Council (GRC) consider that supporting gender equality is a key component of harnessing this diversity of talent, while recognising that the equality and status of women in research should be considered together with broader equality and diversity issues.

The 2014 GRC *“Statement of Principles and Actions for Shaping the Future: Supporting the Next Generation of Researchers”* includes the principle of *“Attracting and retaining the best talents in all their diversity”* and the action that *“GRC participants should advance equal opportunity in research, and develop mechanisms that encourage people from all backgrounds to pursue scholarly and scientific careers, contributing to research excellence.”*

The national environments in which GRC participants operate increasingly include expectations or requirements in relation to equality and diversity. On a national scale, policies are often focused on ensuring fair and open access for all groups in a society. In a research context this concept may be expressed as the ability to attract and retain the best talent into research.

To address the equality and the status of women in research and, in turn, change and improve systems, two aspects need to be considered:

1. The participation and promotion of women in the research workforce. This includes the longstanding dominance of certain demographics in academic culture and historical obstacles to their participation within particular disciplines and fields of research.
2. The integration of the gender dimension in research design and in the analysis of research outcomes.

GRC participants have the opportunity to lead within their own jurisdictions, remits, and in wider policy and cultural contexts. They should expect and encourage improved equality and diversity policies and practices in the research activities that they support. Through our combined commitment to research excellence and effective stewardship of public funds, GRC participants share a responsibility to encourage and support research with the greatest academic, economic and societal impact. This is achieved through the deployment of the best available talent.

These principles and actions represent the perspectives of participants in the Global Research Council 2016 Annual Meeting on how, through the development and sharing of our policies and practices, we can promote a research environment which more fully supports the equality and status of women in research. This is a living document and will evolve over time as circumstances change.

## **Actions**

The following actions are presented as a suite of potential activities, with the intent of providing GRC participants with the opportunity to implement those actions most suitable and beneficial for their organisation and national research system. Implementation may depend not only on current policies and practices but also on national considerations.

In order for progress to be made, GRC participants may seek to:

1. **Engage in national discussions of policy frameworks regarding equality, diversity and the status of women to ensure recognition of these issues.** While many organisations have clear and publicly available policies, the public availability of this information varies considerably. Policy frameworks provide the context within which evidence can be gathered and compared both nationally and with international partners and are important in evaluating the success of policy implementation<sup>1</sup>.
2. **Collect and make available data (against consistent parameters) for comparative analysis, potentially under the auspices of the GRC<sup>2</sup>.** The availability of disaggregated data on participation in research by different groups (for example by gender, by age, by discipline) would facilitate both benchmarking and a better understanding of the needs of different research systems. Currently data are often not available at a sufficiently disaggregated level.
3. **Incorporate the evaluation of progress towards gender-based goals.** GRC participants, together with the broader research enterprise, can share progress using both qualitative and quantitative data and evidence (for example, the percentage of female principal investigators at different career stages). Tracking systems can enable a deeper understanding of the impact of specific interventions.
4. **Shift the focus from the researcher “track record” to “research opportunity”.** The traditional approach to track record can penalise researchers who have a career gap – often related to care giving responsibilities – in their record. Shifting the focus from “track record” to “research opportunity” may ensure that career development and progression are not affected adversely by significant or extends periods of, for example, career interruptions, parental leave or part-time work. “Research opportunity” in this context considers how a researcher’s productivity and contribution throughout their career corresponds to the opportunities that have been available to them.
5. **Provide training on equality and diversity policies, including the recognition of unconscious bias and how it can be addressed.** All those involved in research funding decision-making, including those who manage research funding and those involved in the peer review process, should encourage access to training to raise awareness of sources of bias. In particular, training on unconscious bias is encouraged. Membership of review panels should be sufficiently diverse

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<sup>1</sup> This Statement should be read in conjunction with the *Survey Report on the Equality and Status of Women in Research*, commissioned by the co-hosts of the 2016 Annual Meeting, which provides further information and reflection on GRC participant policies at this point in time.

<sup>2</sup> GRC participants will establish a working group to look at mechanisms for collecting and displaying relevant data on the GRC website, including success stories.

and those that sit on panels should receive appropriate training to ensure that the most promising research ideas are supported.

6. **Explore pathways for women to succeed in research and to rise in leadership in policy and decision making bodies.** Programmes that address cultural complexity and work towards addressing systemic and institutional barriers are critical to achieving progress towards gender equality. The approaches taken will vary but could include, for example, support for mentorship opportunities, or means to increase participation by women in governing or senior bodies. The GRC also recognises that gender inequalities are rooted in earlier stages of the education system and encourages research funders to work with other stakeholders to address this issue.
7. **Consider dedicated or strategic programmes, where appropriate, with the specific purpose of encouraging gender equality.** Specific national contexts may indicate that separate schemes to stimulate greater participation of women in the research enterprise may be worth considering. Such schemes should be implemented in conjunction with broader policies promoting equality and carefully evaluated to assess their long-term impact on strategic policies.
8. **Promote family friendly policies and practices in relation to caregiving obligations.** There are a range of possible actions which could be introduced to support those who have an obligation to provide care for family members. These actions could be incorporated into personnel and institutional policies or grant conditions. Examples may include providing adequate support for:
  - Parental leave (both maternity and paternity);
  - Return to work after an absence related to caring obligations;
  - Options for part-time work or job shares;
  - Access to childcare;
  - Facilitation of international mobility.
9. **Periodically review this Principles and Actions document.** In order to stimulate and encourage ongoing efforts to improve, develop and/or implement relevant actions to foster an environment which supports equality for women in research, information on actions taken and progress achieved will be shared at appropriate intervals via GRC networks and through updates at future GRC meetings<sup>3</sup>.
10. **Recognise the advantages of considering the gender dimension in research** and encourage the development of this.

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<sup>3</sup> The *Survey Report on the Equality and Status of Women in Research*, commissioned by the co-hosts of the 2016 Annual Meeting, will provide the initial set of actions that GRC members have taken and that can be supplemented in the future.