

Document for Department of Government and International  
Relations July 2012 Board Meeting  
**Women in Political Science**

*Women's Advancement in Australian Political Science* by Mhairi Cowden, Kirsty McLaren, Alison Plumb and Marian Sawyer represents the findings from discussions, presentations and recommendations arising from a 2011 APSA workshop of the same title. The authors concluded "despite advancements" of female political scientists in Australia, "women continue to be underrepresented in the discipline." Tables below are from Cowden et al (2012). The third table presents updated data on our Department.

**Table 1: Profile of Australian political scientists by position and gender**

	Professor & Assoc. Professor			Senior Lecturer/Senior Fellow/Reader			Lecturer/Fellow/Post-Doc		
	Women	Men	Total	Women	Men	Total	Women	Men	Total
<b>Pol. Sci.</b>	25.68% (38)	74.32% (110)	100% (148)	24.24% (24)	75.76% (75)	100% (99)	33.56% (50)	66.44% (99)	100% (149)
<b>All disciplines</b>	26.51% (2618)	73.49% (7257)	100% (9875)	39.92% (3656)	60.08% (5503)	100% (9159)	51.19% (10203)	48.81% (9727)	100% (19930)

Source: DEEWR & survey of department websites

**Table 2: Group of Eight Departments Ranked by Percentage of Female Academics**

Rank	Department	Women (%)
1.	Political Science, School of Social and Political Sciences, University of Melbourne	47.37
2.	School of Political Science and International Studies, University of Queensland	39.39
3.	Politics and International Relations, University of New South Wales	37.50
4.	Political Science and International Relations, The University of Western Australia	36.36
5.	Politics Discipline, School of History and Politics, University of Adelaide	35.71
6.	Government and International Relations, University of Sydney	34.62
7.	<b>School of Politics and International Relations, Australian National University</b>	<b>21.74</b>
8.	<b>Politics and International Relations, Monash University</b>	<b>17.65</b>

Bold denotes below average percentage of women in the discipline

**Updated Figures for GOVT and IR in 2012:  
Women are now only 30% of all staff - or 11 of 37<sup>1</sup>**

	Level E & D			Level C			Level B & A		
	women	men	Total	women	men	Total	women	Men	Total
#	3	12	15	5	6	11	3	8	11
%	20%	80%		45%	55%		27%	73%	

The Report includes important data on women in the profession and identifies “issue areas that help explain the continued underrepresentation of women in within Australian political science, despite the high number of PhD candidates.”

Building on insights and data from the Cowden et al (2012) Report, there are six factors inhibiting the employment, retention and career development of women in political science.

**1. From PhD to continuing position**

Research shows that women make up nearly half of all Australian PhD students (Cowden et al 2012, p. 16) (and this is consistent with most Western countries) yet they only make up 34% of Level A and B positions nationally, and in our Department 27%. This means that:

- i. women are choosing not to work within academia after their PhD at a higher rate than men;
- ii. departments are not attracting and hiring junior women (or a combination of both)

**2. Family Considerations**

While academia is often considered an ideal and flexible career for those with families, the Cowden et al (2012) report indicated that ‘ideal’ academic careers are still considered linear or ‘pipeline’ ones, with little or no time away. This ideal, combined with pressures to travel and increased work hours associated with performance-based measurement systems makes it difficult for any parent. Since women are often primary carers research indicates that women in academia are more likely than academic men to choose not to have children, or may be more likely to leave their career after becoming a parent (see also Wolfinger et al 2008).

**3. Promotions and Mentoring**

Research has found that women apply for promotion later than men, and less often. There is also discussion that women have less access to both informal and formal professional networks (including journal editorial boards, and conference or professional committees) that mentor them into the profession. This is sometimes also referred to as the gender differentiated ‘research visibility of academics’.

**4. Defining a ‘Good’ Political Scientist**

The Report noted that what is often considered legitimate political science excludes interdisciplinary work, as well as research that uses non-traditional research methods. Under the ERA system women seem to be at a disadvantage, with gender and feminist journals rarely ranking highly, and with women underrepresented as

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<sup>1</sup> Note this total includes two people at Level E and B who have accepted jobs but not arrived yet.

chief investigators on ARC grant applications- only 12% of CIs on ARCs in the last 3 years (Cowden et al 2012, p. 21).

### **5. Service and Workload**

The APSA report indicated that women are more likely to agree to take on more teaching and pastoral duties, which impacts on their capacity to conduct research.

### **6. Chilly Climate**

This refers to cultural factors associated with individual departments, as well as broader professional settings such as conferences. Women may be more likely to be overlooked, disregarded, and left out of important informal discussions. In terms of teaching, female scholars are underrepresented on course reading lists, and gender and feminist scholarship is often marginalized or left to 'gender experts' in the Department.

## **AT THE DEPARTMENT LEVEL:**

### **Gender and Departmental Recruitment Data**

In the last 3 years the Department of Government and International Relations and the Center for International Security Studies have hired 13 new continuing academic staff, through a competitive advertised process. While excellent women were recruited, a closer look at the data shows that our hiring trends keep us below average in terms of equitable gender representation.

Positions recruited for: 13 (4 level E, 1 Level C, 8 Level B)

Total Candidates Interviewed: 22

Male staff interviewed: 16

Female staff interviewed: 6

**Male staff hired: 10**

**Female staff hired: 3**

*Gender ratio for interviewees: 72% men; 27% women*

*Gender ratio for recruitments: 77% men; 23% women*

## Action Points/Possible Solutions to Discuss

### **1. Mentoring**

-More focused attention to gender during PM&D processes, including discussions of workload, timing of promotion, and networking.

-Strong mentorship of our female PhD students. Possibly holding workshops to discuss career paths, networking, and family/career balance.

### **2. Revising recruitment committees**

It is University HR policy that at least 30% of all recruitment panels should be women. Thus for a panel of 5 people, at least 2 should be women. In order to promote gender equity in the Department, our recruitment committees should always consist of at least 2 women, rather than the current 'one woman' practice.

### **3. Departmental discussion about 'what makes a good political scientist/IR scholar.'**

This includes a pluralistic but frank and realistic discussion about ERA pressures, publication expectations, and research visibility for *all* members of the Department.

### **4. Preventing a chilly climate**

Reading lists and course content should try to include scholarship by women and gender-focused scholarship.

More attention should be paid to gender equity in networking, including during the creation of conference panels and in choices for edited books.

### **Any More Suggestions??**

### **Additional reference**

Wolfinger et al (2008) Problems in the Pipeline: Gender, Marriage, and Fertility in the Ivory Tower *The Journal of Higher Education*, Volume 79, Number 4, July/August, pp. 388-405

*Megan Mackenzie and Ariadne Vromen, 23 July 2012*