

Rhodes University: Gender considerations within the Research Environment

1. The Joint Research Committee composition

In a meeting with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research and Development and representatives of GENACT in April 2010, it was proposed that the JRC expand its membership to include someone who could present women's interests and represent women researchers. While this would not be a GENACT representative, GENACT in consultation with other women's groups would be asked to make a recommendation of who this individual may be. For 2010 this is Dr D Seddon of the Department of English.

Note: of the 22 members of the JRC for 2010 (including ex-officio members), 9 were women.

2. Age related to VC's research awards:

- a. Emerging researcher award: for 40 years and younger
- b. Distinguished researcher award: for 40 years and older

DVC indicated that the issue of linking these awards to age was being re-looked at e.g. that possibly time after achievement of PhD could be used as a cut-off e.g. emerging research would be someone who has completed PhD in last 5 years. It was agreed that GENACT could make a submission in this regard.

Note: The Research Office identifies worthy candidates for the award and asks HODs or Deans to approach these candidates. Candidates can be nominated or they may apply.

3. JRC funding to include financial support for those needing to travel with very young children

It was proposed that if this was to be introduced, the funding should be kept entirely separate from JRC funding. Already there was sufficient pressure on this budget and the DVC indicated a reluctance to see money being used to support those travelling with children at the cost of other academics being able to go to conferences.

If a separate budget was to be introduced, this would need to be tabled at the Budget Committee and would need to compete with other demands on the budget. The DVC indicated that at this point in time given the limited resources, this was a low priority.

Proposal was that WASA should work together with the institution with regards to providing this support. This would allow the institution to ascertain the demand for such support and the likely impact on other funds. WASA has agreed to this.

In the meeting, the DVC also referred to other existing programmes and initiatives:

4. Funds to release women from teaching responsibilities (additional academic leave)

Funds raised from the Mellon Foundation (for the Humanities) and Claude Leon Foundation (for the Sciences) exist to support staff with preference given to women and Black staff. These funds help to finance relief teaching assistance which in turn allow the staff member to access additional academic leave. These funds are typically used to assist the academic in completing a PhD, finishing the write-up of papers etc.

5. Support for women to work at home

There are instances where the Research office has purchased a laptop for women needing to work at home because of young children.

6. Data analysis

The DVC indicated that the number of women getting their PhD was showing a steeper increase than men within the institution. An analysis on the research outputs for women versus men was also requested.

7. Day Care centre and child care support for University after hours events

The University made a contribution to the running of the Day Care Centre which the DVC indicated appeared to be fairly unique compared to other HE institutions. In most other HE environments where a Day care centre is available, this has to be a self-sufficient cost centre. The DVC also indicated that child care support for the University's after hours events also appeared to be fairly unique in the HE sector.