



ACEMS Mentoring Seminar

Let's talk about Equity, Diversity and Harassment

Summary of Discussion

The aim of this seminar was to open the conversation about these important topics amongst ACEMS members. The seminar focused on the ACEMS Equity and Diversity statement and the ACEMS Code of Conduct. Participants were invited to discuss various aspects of these documents. Some of the comments made during and after the seminar are summarised below.

What is ACEMS doing about equity, diversity, ethical conduct and harassment?

All ACEMS members are required to adhere to our Equity and Diversity statement and the ACEMS Code of Conduct. These documents are publicly available on the ACEMS website.

ACEMS is also in the process of establishing an Equity and Diversity Committee that will provide leadership on these issues.

In order to meet our equity and diversity targets, we need to encourage positive attitudes to understanding why diversity might be lacking so that we can work towards combatting these problems.

What is the role of equity and diversity targets in recruitment?

Equity and diversity aims and targets need to be considered when making appointments in ACEMS. In practice, this means that panels should be balanced with respect to diversity, and candidates should be selected based on a balanced set of objectives that include equity, diversity, merit, fit and other important issues. It is acknowledged that this is not easy, and that issues and concerns about the way such targets are met within small research groups are not unique to ACEMS. All ACEMS appointment processes should adhere to the law and HR guidelines.

Does ACEMS support flexible work options?

As part of its commitment to equity and diversity, ACEMS supports flexible work arrangements such as working part-time or off-campus, and changed start and finish times. These are in line with the employing university and national regulations (www.fairwork.gov.au/). Such arrangements may be required for many reasons, including but not limited to family responsibilities, disability or age.

To help put this commitment into practice, one suggestion is to gather some good examples of where these arrangements have worked well in ACEMS and in similar research groups. This will be considered by the ACEMS Equity and Diversity Committee.

Is there a difference between general poor professional behaviour and harassment?

Sometimes a distinction is made between these. For example, general poor professional behaviour by an individual might be shouting or bullying directed at anyone or everyone in the workplace, whereas harassment might be defined as repeated, targeted shouting or bullying directed at an individual or subgroup such as junior staff. The ACEMS Code of Conduct includes both of these as forms of harassment and does not condone any such behaviour by or towards ACEMS members.

Is bullying a form of harassment?

The ACEMS Code of Conduct includes bullying as a form of misconduct that is not condoned.

Workplace bullying is defined as “repeated and unreasonable behaviour directed towards a worker or a group of workers, that creates a risk to health and safety” (worksafe.qld.gov.au).

Sometimes perceived unreasonable behaviour can be due to a misalignment of expectations about deliverables. This might be managed by having a clear work plan and dates of delivery. If the issue cannot be resolved or the poor behaviour is repeated and is affecting your physical or mental health, contact a senior member of ACEMS or the relevant authority in your organisation (e.g. student services in the university).

How should ACEMS members respond to harassment?

If the harassment is mild and it's the first time that you have encountered such behaviour by this individual, one approach is to assume in the first instance that no serious offence was meant and tell the person that you don't like it or that you are uncomfortable with that behaviour. Very often, the issue can be resolved amicably.

If you don't feel empowered to say something, or if the harassment is sustained or more severe, then tell someone: a person you trust, a member of the ACEMS Equity and Diversity Committee, or a relevant authority in the organisation in which you work.

If the harassment is a criminal act, report it to the police and inform a senior member of ACEMS.

It's preferable if an event is reported as soon as possible, but a report can be made at any time.

If you have experienced harassment or a similar painful experience in the past, and you wish to talk about it, you are encouraged to contact the counselling services in your organisation. A list of contacts at the ACEMS nodes is given below.

Counselling contacts at ACEMS nodes

QUT - <https://www.qut.edu.au/about/services-and-facilities/all-services/qut-psychology-and-counselling-clinic?ref=25416>

University of NSW - <https://www.counselling.unsw.edu.au/>

University of Queensland - <http://www.uq.edu.au/student-services/counselling-services>

University of Melbourne - <http://services.unimelb.edu.au/counsel/home>

University of Adelaide - <https://www.adelaide.edu.au/counselling/>

University of Technology Sydney - <https://www.uts.edu.au/current-students/support/health-and-wellbeing/counselling-service-and-self-help>

Monash University - <https://www.monash.edu/health/counselling>