

Gender equity and inclusion policy *for speakers and session chairs at ASI events*

Document control

File name: **ASI Gender equity inclusion policy.docx**
Responsible position: WI Councilor
Date approved: June 2018

Version: 2
Contact: Vanessa Bryant, Kim Jacobson
Next review date: June 2021

Background

Gender equality is achieved when people are able to access and enjoy the same rewards, resources and opportunities regardless of gender. To support the Australasian Society for Immunology's commitment to gender equity, ASI seeks to ensure that there is an equal representation of men and women as speakers and session chairs at all ASI scientific meetings and symposia, etc.; and at meetings financially supported by ASI. This visible display of gender equity will contribute to an equal number of females and males being acknowledged for their achievements, provides opportunities for emerging research leaders and increases the diversity of role models for meeting attendees. It is anticipated that this practice will be adopted more broadly as one mechanism to address gender imbalance and differential visibility in the medical research sector.

In addition to the ASI annual national scientific meeting, ASI state branches also hold annual meetings, as well as a number of special symposia and affiliated meetings each year for local members. ASI has made great efforts, particularly in recent years, to achieve gender equality at all meetings. This policy seeks to formalise this commitment and support organising committee members to ensure that there is an equal representation of men and women as committee members, speakers and session chairs at all future ASI and ASI-sponsored events.

Gender equity at ASI will have the legacy effect of ensuring that both females and males have equal opportunity of being acknowledged for their achievements, which will promote emerging research leaders and an increased diversity of role models in the Australian scientific research community. Further, to support inclusiveness and diversity, this committee will seek to ensure that students, early career researchers and (senior) academics from all backgrounds are encouraged to participate in all aspects of the conference regardless of gender, gender expression, sexual orientation, ethnicity, nationality, disability, religion or age.

The underlying reasons for the current dominance of male speakers and chairs are:

- (1) Men continue to occupy the most senior roles and therefore enjoy greater visibility
- (2) Women tend to self-nominate less frequently than equally qualified men
- (3) Women tend to be nominated by senior men less frequently than equally qualified male colleagues
- (4) Women are more frequently unable to take up invitations than men, so to achieve equal representation at the final conference/symposium more women need to be invited to speak or chair

The approaches described below address each of these key factors and will ensure that the ASI is proactive in ensuring gender equity at annual meetings and symposia.

Objectives

This policy seeks:

To achieve equal representation of males and females as speakers and session chairs at all ASI conferences, symposia, scientific meetings etc; and at conferences supported by ASI.

Scope and exclusions

This policy applies to all ASI symposia including conferences, symposia organised by members that is supported by ASI, financially or in-kind contributions (including advertising).

Excluded from this policy are affirmative action initiatives such as the 'Women Initiative' events and awards that specifically seek to promote female members.

Procedure

1. Initial information for organising committee

When planning begins for a new conference, the organising committee will be made aware of this policy via the Women's Initiative Councillor and Meeting co-ordinator or Local Councillor (and previous conference reporting, as outlined below). This policy will also be widely communicated within the society and published on the ASI and conference webpage to ensure high levels of awareness.

2. Included information when requesting self-nomination

When calling for self-nominations, the organising committee will include a statement to the following effect: *'Please remember women tend to self-nominate less frequently than men so every effort should be made to counter this tendency to ensure gender equity.'* This should be noted in the minutes as having been discussed at conference/symposia organising committee meetings.

3. Included information when requesting nominations

When calling for nominations for prizes or honorary roles such as chairing of sessions, the organising committee will include a statement to the following effect: *'We strongly encourage you to consider gender equity in your nominations as, in keeping with ASI's policy, we are committed to selecting an equal number of male and female nominees as speakers and chairs and giving equal access to awards.'* This statement should be included in any nomination forms. This should be discussed and noted in the minutes at organising committee meetings.

4. Selection of speakers from nominees, abstracts and invitation of speakers

The organising committee is encouraged to invite equal numbers of male and female invited speakers both national and international. The committee is advised to have a surplus of female speakers on their list of invitees, in case women invitees are unable to accept invitations to speak. If a preponderance of men is nominated, a second round of requests for female nominations should take place, and a proactive effort should be made to find appropriate female speakers, to ensure gender equity in the final speaker list and session chairs.

All efforts will be made to ensure selection of abstracts that result in oral presentations at national conferences and local meetings have equal representation of male and female speakers. In addition, all

efforts will be made to promote students and early career researchers in both speaker representation as well as chairing and networking opportunities with more senior delegates, through such initiatives as oral presentations across conference sessions (by selecting either or both a student and early career researcher to speak at each workshop and symposium sessions) and social events targeted towards ensuring parity of access to networking opportunities.

5. Checks when arranging final speakers and session chairs

Final lists of speakers and chairs should be circulated to all members of the committee to be endorsed at a committee meeting, with final approval made by the local organising committee chair(s). Where gender equity balance has not been achieved, the organising committee should briefly document the steps that have been taken and note barriers encountered and report to ASI council.

Local organising committees that have completed their conference/symposia are encouraged to write a brief report summarising the meeting that includes specific reference to performance in terms of gender equity and inclusion. This could be accompanied by summaries of any questionnaire results collected, as stated below – eg by conference organisers such as ASN events. This report is to be forwarded to ASI council and the succeeding ASI organizing committee.

6. Event evaluation

Where formal evaluation of event participants is undertaken there should be a question included regarding this policy, such as: *‘Australasian Society for Immunology 20yy is committed to ensuring diversity, such as gender equity, among speakers and chairs. Was this commitment adequately demonstrated at this event? Did it have an impact on you as a participant?’*

7. Monitoring

The Gender Equity and Inclusion document is included as a downloadable file in all ASI conference (and branch) webpages. The ASI executive council and WI councillor will monitor the outcomes achieved and report annually to the succeeding conference organising committee, with successive committees striving to achieve gender targets if not met. This document will be reviewed and updated every 3 years.