



BPA/SWIP Good Practice Scheme

General guidance

About the scheme

Following the publication in 2011 of the BPA/SWIP Report, *Women in Philosophy in the UK* (www.bpa.ac.uk/uploads/2011/02/BPA_Report_Women_In_Philosophy.pdf), the BPA/SWIP Committee for Women in Philosophy is pleased to launch its Good Practice Scheme. This involves a batch of policy documents, covering:

- Gender bias
- Conferences and seminar series
- Sexual harassment
- Staff-student relationships
- Caregivers
- Research projects
- Learned societies
- Journals

The Good Practice documents, along with some links to relevant further information, are available on the BPA Good Practice website (bpa.ac.uk/resources/women-in-philosophy/good-practice).

The documents have been approved by both the BPA and SWIP Executive Committees. Each lists a range of recommendations. The documents collectively cover departments (or equivalent units), learned societies, journals, and large-scale research projects based in the UK and Ireland. (Henceforth, please read 'department' as a generic term covering all of the above.)

Departments are requested to consider the relevant Good Practice documents in a departmental committee meeting (or equivalent), and to decide whether or not to adopt the relevant Good Practice policy.

Adoption of Good Practice policies: procedure

Where a department adopts a particular Good Practice policy, the Head of Department (or chair of learned society, lead journal editor, etc.) is requested to:

- (a) ensure that this is formally minuted in the meeting at which the decision is taken,
- (b) devise an agreed implementation plan (see below) including a specific timetable for implementation, and
- (b) inform the BPA, so that a list of subscribing departments (learned societies, journals) is publicly available on the BPA's website.

Departments may also wish to note publicly that they have adopted the relevant policy (e.g. on an appropriate webpage, in staff or student handbooks, etc.); please feel free to use the Good Practice Scheme logo. However, if you do not sign up to *all* of the policy documents, you should make it clear in anything you say publicly (e.g. in wording accompanying the logo) which policies you have adopted.

The BPA/SWIP Women in Philosophy Committee will not monitor subscribing departments', learned societies' or journals' activities; rather, we shall leave it in the hands of the departments (etc.) themselves to ensure that they abide by their own agreed policies.

Departments may wish to include 'BPA/SWIP Good Practice' as an annual agenda item for departmental/executive committee meetings, to ensure that plans have been, and continue to be, implemented.

What counts as 'adopting' a Good Practice policy?

1. Simply *deciding* to implement the recommendations does **not** constitute adoption of the relevant Good Practice policy. There must be a clear plan for actual implementation. This may involve a wide variety of activities, including adding/changing information in student handbooks, changing training or induction sessions for teaching assistants, assigning a particular role to a member of staff, etc. The department should deem itself to have 'adopted' the relevant policy only at the point where a clear plan has been drawn up. This must include a timetable for implementation (e.g. where information in student handbooks cannot be altered until the start of the next academic year).
2. The recommendations vary in their degree of specificity. In some cases, there is considerable flexibility in how the recommendation might be implemented (e.g. the department is merely asked to 'consider ways of' achieving some end). In such cases, we leave it up to departments (etc.) to make their own decision about whether the agreed changes or activities constitute adoption of the policy, since we recognise that different practical constraints will apply to different departments.
3. Similarly, many of the recommendations are open to different interpretations. For example, the Gender Bias document states that hiring panels should include at least

one woman unless ‘there are exceptional practical reasons why this is impossible’. Interpretations of ‘exceptional’ (not to mention ‘practical’ and ‘impossible’) may differ both between and within departments. In such cases, we simply leave it up to departments to interpret the recommendations for themselves.

4. We recommend that, where a department wishes to adopt a Good Practice policy in the sense described above, the HoD takes the bullet-pointed list of recommendations and supplements each bullet point with a clear list of changes or activities that the department intends to carry out in order to implement the recommendation, together with a clear timetable for completion. (The Good Practice documents are also available as Word documents from the website to facilitate this.) They may, of course, wish to delegate this task to the chair of a sub-committee – perhaps involving student and TA representatives. The resulting document should be approved at a departmental meeting and made available to all relevant people (including e.g. administrative staff and teaching assistants where necessary), so that it is easy to check whether the department has kept to its timetable and, thereafter, is continuing to adhere to its own policy.
5. We appreciate that not all groupings of philosophers in UK and Irish HEIs have any formal status (as a ‘department’ or ‘discipline area’ etc.), and that departments are bound by their own institutions’ existing policies and procedures. Hence there may be some recommendations that a particular department or group does not have the power either (a) to formally endorse or (b) to implement. In such cases, the group in question will be deemed to subscribe to the policy if (re (a)) it has ensured that the policy adopted is known and informally agreed by all members of the group, or (re (b)) it has adopted as many of the Good Practice recommendations as it reasonably can, given any impediments posed by its lack of formal status.
6. Where a grouping of philosophers is within a larger unit with other disciplines there are two ways that the policies might be adopted. It might be that only the philosophers decide to adopt the policies (in so far as this is possible for a non-departmental group; see (5) above). In this case, they count as adopting the policies only for the philosophers, which should be made clear in all documentation. However, it might be that the larger group decides to adopt the policies. In this case, the mixed unit counts as having adopted the policies.

A note on dissemination of information

Many of the recommendations involve informing relevant people about policies, procedures, etc. We have not specified how this should be done, but the spirit of the recommendations is that the relevant people should actually find this information out, and not merely that they could in principle get hold of it if they made a considerable effort to do so. We request that departments think carefully about how the relevant information is transmitted to colleagues and students. In general, including information in staff, student and teaching assistant handbooks is a good way of ensuring that the

information is available not just to existing staff and students but to future ones as well. In the case of learned societies, some information will need to be transmitted to applicants for conference funding and to conference organisers.

Please bear in mind that many of the potential problems that the Good Practice recommendations aim to address apply much more widely than just to the ways in which members of permanent academic staff interact with students (or each other). Issues such as gender bias and harassment apply across the board, to undergraduate, PGT and PGR students, teaching assistants, support staff, postdocs, and any honorary, visiting or emeritus staff as well as permanent academic staff.

This makes it especially important that departments think carefully about how information about policies and procedures is transmitted/made available.