

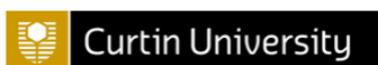
Good Practice Guide

**IF
THIS...
THEN
THAT...**

How to respond in challenging situations about gender equity

Developed by the SAGE Western Australian Regional Network

With the support of



About this Guide

This resource has been developed by the Science in Australia Gender Equity Limited (SAGE) Western Australian Regional Network (WARN), following a workshop it led at the Catalysing Gender Equity 2020 conference.

The Good Practice Guide contains scenarios that people commonly encounter in resistance to gender equity, diversity and inclusion and in these situations, people are often left feeling unable to respond appropriately. Therefore, each scenario is accompanied by a selection of responses that people can use to defuse potentially tense situations, correct misinformation and raise awareness of the importance of gender equity and diversity.

The Guide utilises an '**If this, then that ...**' model that is borrowed from the 'rehearsing narratives' (**If-then**)[†] approach in social psychology. **If-then scripts** link situational cues (i.e. good opportunities to act, critical moments) with potential responses that are effective in attaining goals or desired outcomes; for example, if situation X is encountered, then initiate behaviour Y in order to reach goal Z.

The scenarios/vignettes and suggested responses were compiled from WARN members and conference workshop attendees. Responses are also informed by relevant research. Users of the Guide should consider the particular context of their experience when selecting the most appropriate response from the options given.

Several relevant data sources and key gender equity information points, **many with a direct focus on gender equity in STEM**, are listed in the appendix to the Guide. Users are encouraged to refer to these for additional data that may strengthen their response.

The WARN invites users to share their thoughts and feedback on the usefulness of this Guide. Ideas to enhance the Guide through the addition of further vignettes and/or potential responses are also welcome. Thoughts, ideas and feedback should be submitted to sage@sciencegenderequity.org.au.

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[†] Gollwitzer PM (1999) 'Implementation intentions: strong effects of simple plans', *American Psychologist*, 54(7):493–503. doi:10.1037/0003-066X.54.7.493

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SCENARIOS

► Women-only events

When organising events and development programs, is it acceptable to selectively exclude people based on their gender as a strategy to improve gender equity or equality?

IF THIS... Why are women-only events (or spaces) needed?

THEN THAT...

- Gender equity should be everyone's responsibility, but as long as women are severely underrepresented in disciplines or leadership, they sometimes need the space to share and work together, without (men's) disruption.
- Research shows that women speak up less at 'all-gender' events (particularly those dominated by men) and when they do speak, they are not listened to as much and are interrupted more.¹
- The scheduling (often after hours) and location (requiring significant travel) of many events may preclude the attendance of primary carers, who are often women.
- A women-focused environment provides a comfortable (safe) space for potentially intimate and important conversations that are unlikely to occur in a broader group.
- Women-only events and development programs create a safe space with less discrimination and a focus, particularly on the challenges women face.² Also, they can give attendees more confidence in situations where they are often excluded.
- The data does not lie: women-only events/programs are one of a range of initiatives that can result in more equitable career progression for women.
- If we could remove the male privilege that still exists in academia,³ we would not need to create refuges (in the form of women-only events and spaces) from it.

IF THIS... Women-only events perpetuate a gender divide.

“ It is hypocritical to argue for improved gender equality/equity whilst supporting women-only events and not men-only events.

“ Allowing women-only events and programs is narrow-minded, sexist, and constitutes reverse discrimination.

THEN THAT...

- Strategies to improve equity for a minority group can feel like oppression to the privileged group.
- It's not discriminatory to hold an event that is tailored to one gender to solve problems that are largely specific to that gender.

IF THIS... We should also have men-only events.

THEN THAT...

- We have heard the arguments about why women-only events are needed and we know that men are currently overrepresented in many groups. What would the purpose of these men-only events be? Why do you believe there should be men-only events?
- What areas of discrimination or inequity for men would you focus on? For such an event to be non-discriminatory, it needs to focus on problems largely specific to men.

¹ Rogers BK (Spring 2020) 'When women don't speak', *Y Magazine*, accessed 5 May 2021. <https://magazine.byu.edu/article/when-women-dont-speak/>

² Debebe G, Anderson D, Bilimoria D and Vinnicombe SM (2016) 'Women's leadership development programs: lessons learned and new frontiers', *Journal of Management Education*, 40(3):231–252. doi:10.1177/1052562916639079.

³ Bulumulle KS (2015) *Interrogating what is male privilege in the academy* [PhD thesis], University of Adelaide, accessed 5 May 2021. <http://hdl.handle.net/2440/96724>

► Recruitment

Despite being more junior and having a shorter track record, a woman is the successful candidate based on her achievements relative to opportunity.

IF THIS... What happened to excellence/merit in recruitment?

THEN THAT...

- Merit is critical. However, how it is defined and measured remains a stumbling block and is a potential source of bias and discrimination.
- 'Selection on merit' is about choosing the applicant who has the greatest capacity to do the job, based on their qualifications, skills, knowledge, experience and potential for further development in the role. Their achievement 'relative to their opportunity' (R2O). The selection decision takes more into account than number of papers published or dollars earned.
- The selection panel wasn't just looking for someone with a similar background, capabilities and experience to current team members. It sought to expand the team by bringing in new perspectives, thinking and experience.
- Academic excellence is usually assessed against metrics which are arguably subject to bias, and don't necessarily take into account the opportunities that the applicant has had.

IF THIS... The men who applied had stronger records of achievement/was better qualified

THEN THAT...

- Academic achievement and qualifications were a selection criterion, but not the only one. Further, applicants would have been assessed against criteria, relative to their opportunities.
- The selection criteria were carefully constructed, published and assessed fairly.

IF THIS... I have no chance in this environment where women are parachuted in over men.

THEN THAT...

- Women are not parachuted in. However, women have not been competing on a level playing field! They are now being given a fairer go by accounting for the opportunities they've had when assessing their achievements and merit.
- Research shows that men have been advantaged in the past.⁴ Given that advantage, we are creating a fairer playing field, but that may feel as if men are now being disadvantaged.
- Since the academic workforce is currently declining in size, any increase in the proportion of women in the workforce or in leadership roles must decrease the proportion and number of men.

IF THIS... I (an applicant) know the position required teaching experience and that I haven't done much, but I could have quickly picked up the necessary teaching skills.

THEN THAT...

- I'm sure you could, but the appointee already demonstrates a high level of teaching skill!
- It often takes many academics quite a while to develop good teaching skills.
- There may be other more secure career options outside the organisation that might interest you. I can introduce you to a mentor to explore this, if you like.

⁴ Wu C, Fuller S, Shi Z and Wilkes R (2020) 'The gender gap in commenting: women are less likely than men to comment on (men's) published research', *PLoS ONE*, 15(4):e0230043. doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0230043.

Duncanson K, Weir N, Siriwardhane P and Khan T (6 October 2020) 'How COVID is widening the academic gender divide', *The Conversation*, accessed 5 May 2021. <https://theconversation.com/how-covid-is-widening-the-academic-gender-divide-146007>

► Affirmative action

Recently, some universities have used exceptions under the Equal Opportunity Act to advertise women-only academic positions. Both men and women have raised concerns about this.

IF THIS... If a woman really is good enough, why do we need women-only recruitment?

THEN THAT...

- We know there are outstanding women out there, even in disciplines where women are underrepresented, but they are not applying for the jobs we advertise generically. The experience in other institutions shows that identified positions such as these do attract some outstanding women applicants because they send a very clear message that more women on staff are wanted.
- The STEM culture favours men, who can often demonstrate strong track records thanks to an often-uninterrupted focus on research, whereas women may have taken significant career breaks due to caring and/or parental responsibilities.
- The organisation has not succeeded in attracting enough women in these areas, and it is determined to address this. It has set some ambitious targets such as ... (e.g. women comprising at least 40% of its senior leadership by 2024). Offering a few positions specifically aimed at recruiting women is part of its strategy to achieve these!
- Affirmative action in recruitment is one way of overcoming explicit and implicit biases in current recruitment practices.
- In some disciplines and in leadership, we need more women role models. Affirmative action recruitment is one way of achieving this.

IF THIS... Some women feel their role is devalued by affirmative action.

THEN THAT...

I know this,⁵ however, affirmative action:

- aims to build a level playing field for all and specifically, for women, is legally sanctioned action taken to reduce discrimination against them. Women can and do make valuable contributions, but they often have fewer opportunities.
- in recruitment or promotion, the criteria are still applied stringently. Merit and achievement remain crucial and are considered relative to opportunity.
- is generally seen as a catalyst for change, rather something that will exist forever. Without disruptors such as affirmative action recruitment, it would take decades to achieve gender equity in some sectors/disciplines and in leadership positions.
- It is hard to argue against this. But there are strict rules (for example, the WA Equal Opportunity Act) that dictate when affirmative action can be taken. Organisations must be able to justify the need for affirmative action policies or practices to provide equal opportunities for a group that has been systematically excluded. The organisation used a special exemption to this Act to advertise women-only positions.

Have 'Stats & Facts' that help show 'doubters' the current/local situation (refer to the Appendix), such as:

- Did you know in [department/school/program], x% of research staff are women?
- Did you know our current Faculty leadership is x% women?

⁵ Heilman, ME (1996) 'Affirmative action's contradictory consequences', *Journal of Social Issues*, 52(4):105–109. doi: 10.1111/j.1540-4560.1996.tb01852.x

IF THIS... Affirmative action imposes unfair burdens on today's men, who should not be held responsible for injustices committed in the past.

THEN THAT...

- While today's men may not discriminate or be directly responsible for the structural barriers impacting women's career development/progression, they have benefited (and continue to benefit) from its effects.
- A diverse and gender-balanced group brings a greater depth of ideas, innovation and better outcomes to an organisation. Affirmative action may appear unfair to men, but without it, gender equity is many years away, or may never be achieved in some instances.

IF THIS... Isn't this just moving the deck chairs – 'poaching' women from one institution to another?

THEN THAT...

- 'Poaching' is a risk and is one of the reasons that universities are trying to attract women academics with non-standard backgrounds (e.g. from industry or after extended career breaks).
- 'Poaching' is a risk, and that's why institutions and recruitment companies should try much harder to find and recruit more of the outstanding women who are out there. Institutions must also nurture and promote their up-and-coming women staff.

► Part-time work

Many academics (of any gender) are reluctant to work part-time because they believe it will hinder their track record, their performance will not be assessed relative to their opportunities and that it will, for example, limit their opportunity for promotion or appointment to leadership roles.

IF THIS... If I work part-time, my productivity will decrease, negatively impacting my career.

“ If I work part-time, I’ll have no chance of getting a promotion (or a continuing position, contract extension, leadership position, project grant, etc.).

THEN THAT...

- It is probable that your productivity will decrease, depending on how part-time you are, but there are ways to reduce its impact on your career development (such as using achievement relative to opportunity policies).
- Increasingly universities, funding bodies etc. are taking factors such as working part-time or career breaks into account when assessing performance, achievement and potential. They are also training decision-makers and leaders to better assess achievement relative to opportunity.

IF THIS... Why would I work part-time? Chances are that I would be expected to do as much work as my full-time colleagues.

“ My job responsibilities cannot be met if I work part-time.

“ I won’t be treated as a proper member of the team if I’m not here all the time.

THEN THAT...

- You will need to negotiate an appropriate workload and redistribution of responsibilities with your manager when you go part-time.
- It is your manager’s responsibility to ensure you will remain a valued contributor to the team.
- The institution is encouraging part-time work arrangements and expecting managers and group leaders to fully support its part-time staff.

IF THIS... A policy of achievement relative to opportunity undermines academic standards.

THEN THAT...

- To the contrary, such a policy ensures that diverse careers and life experiences are fairly and appropriately considered when assessing academic achievements and performance.

IF THIS... I (a man) am concerned about what my colleagues will think if I go part-time!

“ Men are more likely to be discriminated against requesting to work part time

THEN THAT...

- The more men that work part-time, the more this practice will be normalised and become part of the workplace culture.
- It is true, men are more likely to be discriminated against in these circumstances.⁶ However, the more men that work part-time, the more this practice will be normalised.

⁶ Sanders M, Zeng J, Hellicar M and Fagg K (3 February 2016) ‘The power of flexibility: a key enabler to boost gender parity and employee engagement’, *Bain & Company brief*, accessed 5 May 2021. <https://www.bain.com/insights/the-power-of-flexibility#>

► Manager engagement

A manager claims to be committed to gender equity, but does not 'walk the talk'.

IF THIS... My manager (a man) says the right things about gender equity but doesn't do anything to improve the situation.

THEN THAT...

- Could you talk to your manager about this?
- Is there anyone with whom you can discuss what your manager could be doing?
- Your manager is not alone! Research shows that whilst most men acknowledge that there is a problem, not enough are willing to or believe that they can do anything about it.⁷
- Research identifies three major barriers that undermine men's support for gender initiatives: apathy, fear and real or perceived ignorance.⁸ Do you think any of these apply to your manager? If yes, here are some strategies that might help:
 - Apathy: raise awareness of the benefits of gender equity and the costs of inequity.
 - Fear: point out role models and invite them in.
 - Ignorance: share information – they may not have the lived experience.

IF THIS... My manager says gender equity is important. It's on his to-do list; he just has more pressing issues to deal with.

THEN THAT...

- Can you show him that improving gender equity may have a positive impact on some of his 'pressing issues'? (provide an example related to local issues)
- You could suggest that your manager lets you or others take action to improve gender equity.

IF THIS... My manager only says they are committed to improving gender equity because their boss says they have to!

THEN THAT...

- How do you know that? Maybe they just don't know what to do.
- What do you want your manager to do first? How can you/we convince them that it is important to improve gender equity?

IF THIS... I wish my manager would do more to improve gender equity, but if I say something to them, it will likely be a career-limiting move.

THEN THAT...

If you don't feel comfortable about talking directly to them, is there someone else (a peer or in HR) you can talk to who might be willing/able to talk to your manager?

You could ask your manager if/how you might help advance gender equity.

⁷ Verastegui C, Jorna F, Boddington J and Morphet S (2019) *Better together: increasing male engagement in gender equality efforts in Australia*, Bain & Company, accessed 5 May 2021. <https://www.bain.com/insights/better-together-increasing-male-engagement-in-gender-equality-efforts-in-australia/>

⁸ Prime J and Moss-Racusin CA (2009) *Engaging men in gender initiatives: what change agents need to know*, Catalyst, accessed 5 May 2021. <https://www.catalyst.org/research/engaging-men-in-gender-initiatives-what-change-agents-need-to-know/>

► Academic promotion

It is easier for a man to be promoted than a woman, especially at higher levels.

IF THIS... [Woman] was only promoted because some selection panel members wanted to promote STEM women. [‘Stronger’ man] was not promoted. This is a case of reverse discrimination!

THEN THAT...

If speaker was not on the panel

- What are you basing your conclusion on? Only those at the selection meeting have seen all the applications and heard the discussion about these.
- The panel makes its decisions carefully, taking into account the promotion guidelines.
- I think all panellists had to complete unconscious bias training before the meeting.
- The panel was balanced (positional power, STEM/non-STEM and gender) and well-placed to assess the applications.

If speaker was on the panel

- Did you raise your concerns with the panel?
- The panel assessed each application against the organisation’s performance framework, and accounted for achievements relative to opportunity.
- I believe the respective line managers agreed with the panel’s decisions.
- It is not up to the panel to fill in gaps in an application.

IF THIS... The promotion panel applied different standards for men and women.

THEN THAT...

- The promotion criteria were clearly communicated and were the same for all applicants.
- It is more likely that the panel tried to level the playing field for women by taking into account performance relative to opportunity.

IF THIS... The organisation is likely to lose [outstanding male staff member] whose application was unsuccessful despite his ‘readiness’ for promotion.

THEN THAT...

- [Outstanding male staff member] could speak to his line or executive manager about his career aspirations and role here.
- [Outstanding male staff member] could speak to his line or executive manager if he is concerned about the support he is getting, and what he needs to do to be promoted.

IF THIS... The organisation has promotion policies and procedures that are designed to be transparent and fair to all genders, but that’s not how it plays out.

THEN THAT...

- All panellists have received relevant training, including about mitigating unconscious bias.
- The policies and procedures are creating a more level playing field, but this may feel as if it is disadvantaging men.

► Gender pay gap (GPG)

The GPG measures the difference between the average earnings of women and men in the workforce. The GPG is often confused with unequal pay for the same job.

IF THIS... Is the Gender Pay Gap real?

THEN THAT...

- A quick scan of the applications for SAGE Athena Swan Bronze accreditation⁹ shows that there is a significant gender pay gap (often more than 10%) in the higher education sector.
- Refer the person to the data sources (see Appendix) on the current Gender Pay Gap in Australia and in their specific state or industry.

IF THIS... This is a whole-of-organisation issue – there's nothing I as a manager can do!

THEN THAT...

- It is a whole-of-organisation issue, but it's also important that departments, sections and divisions are aware of this problem because they can contribute to strategies to reduce the gap.
- Many SAGE Athena SWAN action plans (see your institutions¹⁰) include measures to reduce the GPG. Most of these relate to recruitment and staff development and reward, but others relate to flexible work arrangements, family-friendly employment, the pooling of women in lower-level positions and attracting more women back into the workforce after career breaks.

IF THIS... The GPG arises in part because women are predominantly in more junior roles, and in part because men are more successful in negotiating higher salaries and loadings.

THEN THAT...

- Yes, this is correct. This is a key issue for the GPG that institutions are trying to address. There are often historical and structural barriers that keep women in junior roles and in part-time positions.
- As more women reach senior levels and fill leadership roles, the gap will reduce; however, this is not currently happening at a steady or desirable pace.
- Strategies to mitigate the GPG in the higher education sector include: increase the number of women who successfully negotiate, ensure greater transparency of salaries and loadings, and appoint more women into senior roles. These strategies would help to reduce the GPG.
- One of the biggest challenges is to increase the number of applications from men and women respectively for these roles.
- Organisation should review above award salaries and loadings and then develop an action plan to address any inequities for the future.

IF THIS... It's not a man's fault that he has a higher paid position.

THEN THAT...

- That's arguably the case, but it's also true that decisions about who gets the position and how much that person will be paid are often made by male-dominated committees or male managers.

⁹ Science in Australia Gender Equity (n.d.) *SAGE cohort applications*, SAGE website, accessed 5 May 2021. <https://www.sciencegenderequity.org.au/cohort-applications/>

¹⁰ Action plans are located at the end of the applications for an Athena Swan Award: Science in Australia Gender Equity (n.d.) *SAGE cohort applications*, SAGE website, accessed 5 May 2021. <https://www.sciencegenderequity.org.au/cohort-applications/> Action plans are living documents. More up-to-date versions may be found on the institution's website.

▶ 'Just joking ...'

An attempt is made to 'sanitise' an offensive comment by claiming it was a joke.

IF THIS... A colleague or manager makes an offensive comment to you or about you, and then tries to mitigate this by adding 'Just joking'

THEN THAT...

- Don't laugh... ignore it! Or if you feel confident to do so, respond with:
 - I don't get the joke... why is it funny?
 - I don't think that was funny. In fact, I think it was insulting!
 - I know you were 'just joking', but what you said is not funny...
 - I don't believe that you were 'just joking', and what you said is untrue/rude/makes me feel really uncomfortable.
- Tell the colleague or manager how you feel:
 - That feels rude rather than funny to me!
- And if the response is 'Get a sense of humour!', say:
 - I have one, I just don't think [whatever you said] is funny – in fact, it is offensive!

IF THIS... You observe a colleague or manager making an offensive comment to a third person, and then trying to mitigate this by adding 'Just joking'

THEN THAT...

- Don't laugh. Call the perpetrator out:
 - I don't think that's funny.
 - That's really rude or offensive!
- If you can't say something like that to the perpetrator, at least tell the targeted person that you did not agree with the comment.
- If you feel it is necessary, report the incident to your line manager or HR representative.

► 'It's not fair ...'

The push to improve gender equity (for women) is disadvantaging men in most areas because gender equality is a zero-sum game.

IF THIS... Affirmative action is unfair because it gives one group of people an advantage at the expense of another!

“ Affirmative action does more harm than good/Affirmative action is past its day!/Affirmative action is reverse discrimination

THEN THAT...

- Affirmative action is an attempt to level the playing field and be fair in an unfair world.
- If you consider 'fairness' in the short term, then most people would likely agree that actions favouring one group are likely to disadvantage those not in that group. But if the first group has been systematically disadvantaged for a long time, then it may well be fair to provide group members with a temporary advantage to redress this disadvantage. This is recognised in law by, for example, the provision of exemptions under the various State Equal Opportunity Acts.
- Continued affirmative action is likely unfair, but may be perceived as fair as a temporary intervention to address the sustained disadvantage experienced by a specific group.

IF THIS... It's not fair that I can't apply for that women-only position or grant.

“ It's not fair that I can't attend that women-only leadership/development program.

THEN THAT...

Refer to ► *Women-only events* and ► *Affirmative action scenarios*.

IF THIS... It's not fair that gender equity initiatives focus on women. Men are underrepresented or the disadvantaged group in some areas, such as nursing and primary teaching.

THEN THAT...

- It is important that we don't lose sight of men in these situations. But the reality is that women and other genders are usually the disadvantaged groups.
- In many universities, there are gender equity initiatives that support increasing the proportion of men in underrepresented areas such as nursing

APPENDIX

Data resources related to gender equity

It is an underlying principle of the SAGE Athena Swan approach that claims, and arguments are based on rigorous evidence wherever possible. The tables below list some reputable data sources on the state of gender equity, in Australia and worldwide, that users of this Guide may find helpful. These resources highlight recent trends in the gender equity data, particularly for women and girls in STEM.¹¹

Australian resources

* indicates time series datasets that are updated annually.

Source	Description
	<p>WGEA Data Explorer* https://data.wgea.gov.au/organisations</p> <p>Interactive visualiser for national workforce and pay gap data, by industry and organisation.</p> <p>Gender Equity Insights 2021: Making it a priority https://www.wgea.gov.au/publications/gender-equity-insights-series</p> <p>Annual analysis of trends and promising policies/practices based on WGEA data.</p> <p>Gender Strategy https://www.wgea.gov.au/gender-strategy</p> <p>Explains what a gender strategy is and why organisations should have one. Also, provides links to creating a gender toolkit and case studies etc.</p>
	<p>STEM Equity Monitor* https://www.industry.gov.au/data-and-publications/stem-equity-monitor</p> <p>National data on girls' and women's participation in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education and employment.</p>
	<p>Women in STEM Decadal Plan (2019) https://www.science.org.au/support/analysis/decadal-plans-science/women-in-stem-decadal-plan</p>
	<p>Contains an overview of STEM education and workforce data. Barriers and solutions to increasing female participation in STEM are listed in the appendices, with references to the source literature.</p>
	<p>Science in Australia Gender Equity Limited (SAGE) data https://www.sciencegenderequity.org.au/gender-equity-in-stem/</p> <p>Gender distribution of university students and academic staff by level, for STEM and non-STEM disciplines.</p>

¹¹ Links were correct as of 6 May 2021.



Gender indicators, Australia*

<https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/people-and-communities/gender-indicators-australia/latest-release>

National data on economic security, education, work–family balance and representation in leadership roles.



Australian Gender Equality Council
working for balance

Australian Gender Equality Council Resources

<https://www.agec.org.au/resources/australias-gender-statistics/>

Collection of Australian gender equality statistics and reports from various sources.



Australian Government
Australian Research Council

Gender and the Research Workforce Report

<https://dataportal.arc.gov.au/ERA/GenderWorkforceReport/2018/>

Interactive report on the Australian university research workforce by level, status, function and field of research. Based on 2018 ERA (Excellence in Research for Australia) data – next ERA to take place in 2023.

Global resources

Source	Description
	Global Gender Gap Report 2021 https://www.weforum.org/reports/global-gender-gap-report-2021 Annual report on economic, education, health and political outcomes by region/country.
 United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization	Women in Science http://uis.unesco.org/en/topic/women-science Fact sheets on the percentage of female researchers by country. For how to measure gender equality in science and engineering at a population level, see these working papers: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. SAGA Science, Technology and Innovation Gender Objectives List [PDF] http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/saga-sti-objectives-list-wp1-2016-en.pdf2. SAGA Toolkit [PDF] http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/saga-toolkit-wp2-2017-en.pdf
 ELSEVIER	Elsevier's reports on gender in research https://www.elsevier.com/connect/gender-report Periodic reports on publication outputs, citations, awarded grants and collaborations by country/region and subject area from 2015 onwards.