

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion for Branches and Sections

This document serves as a reference for branches and sections of the Statistical Society of Australia to help improve diversity in the structure of the councils, making events more inclusive and welcoming, and making actions and operations more equitable.

This document was originally developed by the Equity, Diversity and Inclusivity Committee in April 2021. This version was updated in March 2022. The Section on Reconciliation, Country, and Australia's First Peoples was updated in September 2022

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Preamble

The Statistical Society of Australia is committed to providing a safe and welcoming space for all members, attendees of events, and volunteers on councils and committees. All members of the SSA must adhere to the [Code of Conduct](#), which among other things outlines behaviours and practices which are unacceptable. This document focuses on suggestions for positive behaviours and changes that Branches and Sections could engage in to make their events and operations equitable, diverse, inclusive, and welcoming.

Internal Operations

Diversity in Leadership

To improve diversity and representation in leadership positions, Branches and Sections should proactively make diversity the focus of recruitment for leadership positions. When considering diversity, examining what groups have historically been under-represented in leadership positions and formulating targets will help. For example, to improve gender balance, a branch or section could alternate between having men and women or non-binary or gender diverse people in leadership positions. Another option could be tracking the gender balance over the last N leaders and recruiting future leaders from under-represented groups.

Recognising Volunteers

It is important to keep in mind that the Branches, Sections, and subcommittees of the SSA are run by people volunteering their time and energy to the Society. It is also important for all members of a Branch Council or Section Committee to be respectful and collegial in all interactions, and particularly important that people in leadership positions within these councils and committees work towards promoting such an environment. This includes acknowledgement of contributions and ensuring that no individuals are overloaded with activities.

Hiring Social Enterprises

For many events Branches and Sections need to hire services, such as catering for workshops. Branches and Sections could consider hiring social enterprises; this is another way which Branches and Sections can contribute to social good.

Shining a Spotlight on Members

Branches and Sections could, given the capacity, consider featuring an individual member in newsletter items or social media posts, for example. Some members may be reluctant to volunteer themselves for such items, so Branches and Sections could query the membership database and directly approach individual members, rather than asking people to volunteer themselves. When selecting members to promote, they may need some encouragement and assistance, so providing a list of questions for them to answer can help.

The goal of this is to promote diversity through representation, so featuring a diverse range of members in any such activity is recommended; with the joint aims of promoting the diversity of the SSA and empowering all of our members. Under-represented groups may feel less confident, less capable, and less willing to volunteer. It is important to note there is an important line between tokenism and empowerment. The goal is to support someone to engage, not to tell them what to do or say. The Biostatistics and Bioinformatics Section already features a member profile in their newsletter - check it out for an example.

Reconciliation, Country, and Australia's First Peoples

Branches and Sections should ensure that the Traditional Owners of the land on which an event is held are acknowledged. You can refer to the SSA's Guidelines for Acknowledgement of Country, available here: <https://statsoc.org.au/Guidelines>

The SSA encourages Branches in particular (since Branches are connected to particular geographical locations) to foster a relationship with the Traditional Owners of the lands on which they run events, for example engaging a Welcome to Country service at the start of the year or a special event. Engagement could also come in the form of donations to or sponsorship of events run by a local Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation.

External Operations and Events

Accessible Events

There are many considerations involved in making your events accessible. Here are some examples to consider when planning your events:

- Is the physical venue accessible? An accessible events checklist is available from the Australian Network of Disability here: <https://www.and.org.au/pages/event-checklist.html>
- Is the physical location accessible by public transport?
- If your event is running into the night, is there adequate street lighting for people to safely make their way back to cars or public transport?
- Have you planned events to run at a variety of times? People with caring responsibilities or other commitments may not be able to make it to events that start at 6pm.
- Are you able to stream the event (e.g. via Zoom) as well as host it in-person? Many SSA members are unable to attend in-person events due to travel times.
- If you are streaming your event, consider recording the event and making it available online for people who were unable to attend. Make sure to get permission from speakers if you plan to do this.

Welcoming Events

All events that the SSA hosts should be welcoming for all attendees. At each event it may help to have a door greeter to welcome attendees as they arrive. Some attendees will not have been to an SSA event before, so might not know what to expect. In welcoming people to the event, having the door greeter be both welcoming and informative can help overcome the uncertainty of new attendees - for example, if your event has half an hour of nibbles and chatting before the main event, say something along the lines of "Thanks for coming along! The talk is starting at 6pm so feel free to have some nibbles and chat while you're waiting".

Also keep an eye out for attendees who are standing by themselves or seem to want to join in on conversations. Invite them over and make them feel welcome and part of the conversation,

showing them that they're part of the community. Of course, not all attendees will want to engage in conversation - but some will.

Diversity in Speakers

When planning events for the year, build diversity into the speaker lineup - diversity in gender, ethnicity, age, ability, career stage, for example. Keep track of how diverse events are by tracking diversity in a spreadsheet and reporting back at each branch/section meeting - this keeps diversity in mind as you discuss events throughout the year. If this information is not captured, consider starting with capturing gender diversity - how many speakers are men? If the proportion is above 50% start working towards having more gender-diverse speakers for events.

If you are planning an event with multiple speakers (e.g. a panel), ensure that you have diversity in the group of speakers.

Diversity in Venues

Consider hosting events at a variety of venues. Historically the SSA has been tied to universities, which has meant members and locations for events have been predominantly academic. Such venues can often be booked without a fee. While other event spaces may incur a booking fee, Branches and Sections could seek out local businesses in the statistics/data science industry, with the aim of building a mutually beneficial relationship; they may sponsor events held at their premises.

By varying the venue (either at different universities or non-academic venues) events feel less exclusive and more accessible to people outside of academic institutions. Hosting events online, or as hybrid events, also helps to make events more accessible.

Funding Opportunities

If you are putting on a workshop or ticketed event, consider reserving at least one spot for a student statistician from an under-represented group, enabling them to attend free of charge. For example, providing free attendance for an Indigenous student statistician. A formal application process could be useful, allowing the Branch or Section to keep track of applicants, to reach out to them when relevant opportunities arise.