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SCIENCE IN AUSTRALIA GENDER EQUITY

Athena Swan Institution Application

SAGE Silver Award

THE UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE AUSTRALIA

SAGE Silver Award Application Form

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GENDER EQUITY

SAGE Silver Award Application

Name of institution	University of Newcastle
Date of application	31 March 2024
Application prepared by	Ms Rachel Fowell, Manager EDI Dr Cassandra Lane, Athena Swan Qualitative Researcher Professor Jennifer Milam, PVC Academic Excellence
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Award Level	Silver
Date joined Athena Swan	Cohort One – January 2016
Word Count	Original application: 8685 words (not including prelims, tables, headings, and captions)

DECLARATION

I declare that the information presented in this application (including data) is an honest, original, accurate and true representation of the University of Newcastle, and that the original application complies with the 8,500-word limit (185 words over). Additional word count beyond this has been in response to peer review evaluation. NOTE: Reference is made to the five Cygnets that have been awarded. Readers are referred to those Cygnet applications for additional background on the five Key Barriers, as data and analysis are not repeated here. The Cygnets are publicly available on the SAGE webpages.

Jennifer Milam
Pro Vice Chancellor, Academic Excellence
Athena Swan Lead

Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands on which our campuses are located:

- The Awabakal and Worimi Peoples at our Newcastle City campus
- The Pambalong Clan of the Awabakal Nation - Newcastle campus at Callaghan
- Darkinung People - Central Coast campus at Ourimbah
- Gomeroi People - Tamworth
- Gadigal People of the Eora Nation – Sydney CBD

We also acknowledge and pay respect to the other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nations from which our students, staff, and community are drawn.

Artwork: Indigenous Education Strategy (2020)
Artist: Jasmine Craciun (Bachelor of Visual Communication 2018)
Alumna Jasmine Miikika Craciun is a proud Barkindji, Malyangapa designer and artist with a passion for telling the stories of, and communicating to, diverse groups of people.

DISCLAIMER

The University of Newcastle acknowledges that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples are two distinct racial groups within the term "Indigenous Australians". For the purposes of this document, "Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander" or "Indigenous" person means any person who is of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent who is recognised and accepted as such by other Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Peoples and who identifies as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. This document includes the use of the term 'non-Indigenous' to refer to Australians who do not identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS & ACRONYMS

AD-EDI	Associate Dean, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion
AMP	Academic Mentoring Program
APP	Academic Planning and Performance process
ASIABA	Athena Swan Institution Application Bronze Award
ASBA	Athena Swan Bronze Award
ASBAP	Athena Swan Bronze Action Plan
ASP	Athena Swan Principles
ASSAP	Athena Swan Silver Action Plan
ASQR	Athena Swan Qualitative Researcher
ASWP	Athena Swan Working Party
AWAM	Academic Work Allocation Model
AWEI	Australian Workplace Equality Index
CALD	Culturally and linguistically diverse
CEEHE	Centre of Excellence for Equity in Higher Education
CESE	College of Engineering, Science, and Environment
CHMW	College of Health Medicine and Wellbeing
CHSF	College of Human and Social Futures
CIFAL	International Training Centre for Local Authorities and Local Actors
CIT	Change and Improvement Team
CPCO	Chief People and Culture Officer
DIAP	Disability Inclusion Action Plan
DVCA	Deputy Vice Chancellor, Academic
DVCG	Deputy Vice Chancellor, Global
DVCRI	Deputy Vice Chancellor, Research & Innovation
ECP	Enabling Change Program
EDI	Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Unit
EDIC	Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee
ELT	Executive Leadership Team
ESL	English as a Second Language
GEDI	Gender Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion
GEPS	Gender Equity Pulse Survey
HoS	Heads of School
HRS	Human Resources Services
HRIS	Human Resources Information Services
HWEI	Health Wellbeing & Equality Index
IFS	Infrastructure and Facilities Services
INCA	Indigenous New Careers Award Program
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
LGBTIQA+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer, Asexual

OAE	Office of Academic Excellence
OISL	Office of Indigenous Strategy and Leadership
PVC	Pro Vice Chancellor
PVC AE	Pro Vice Chancellor, Academic Excellence
PVC CESE	Pro Vice Chancellor, College of Engineering, Science and Environment
PVC CHMW	Pro Vice Chancellor, College of Health Medicine and Wellbeing
PVC CHSF	Pro Vice Chancellor, College of Human and Social Futures
PVC ISL	Pro Vice Chancellor, Indigenous Strategy and Leadership
PVC RI	Pro Vice Chancellor, Research and Innovation
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SENG	School of Engineering
SEO	School Executive Officer
SIPS	School of Information and Physical Sciences
SME	Subject Matter Expert
SPP	Strategy, Planning, and Performance Unit
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
STEMM	Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics and Medicine
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, Cultural Organisation
UNITAR	United Nations Institute for Training and Research

SECTION 1 – LEADERSHIP AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Reflection

The University of Newcastle's Looking Ahead Strategic Plan 2020-2025 is based upon four key values: Excellence, **Equity**, Engagement, and Sustainability and is aligned with the United National Sustainable Development Goals (Fig 1).

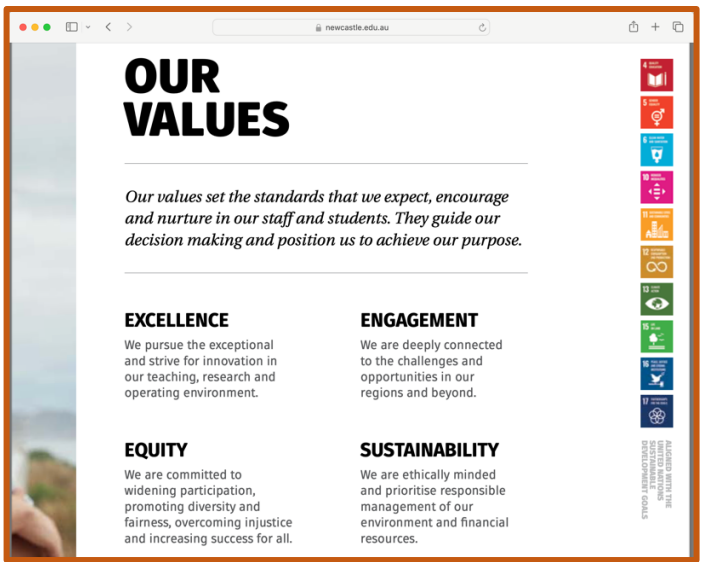


Figure 1. Equity is one of the four values underpinning the University's 2020-2025 Strategic Plan

The University has prioritised the values of Equity, and it takes great pride in the progress achieved since the **establishment of the Progress to Equity Plan in 2018** (Fig.2), **within the Athena Swan Institution Application Bronze Award**. This commitment underscores the University's dedication, despite challenges post-Covid, to cultivating an inclusive environment where all staff and students are afforded equal opportunities for success.

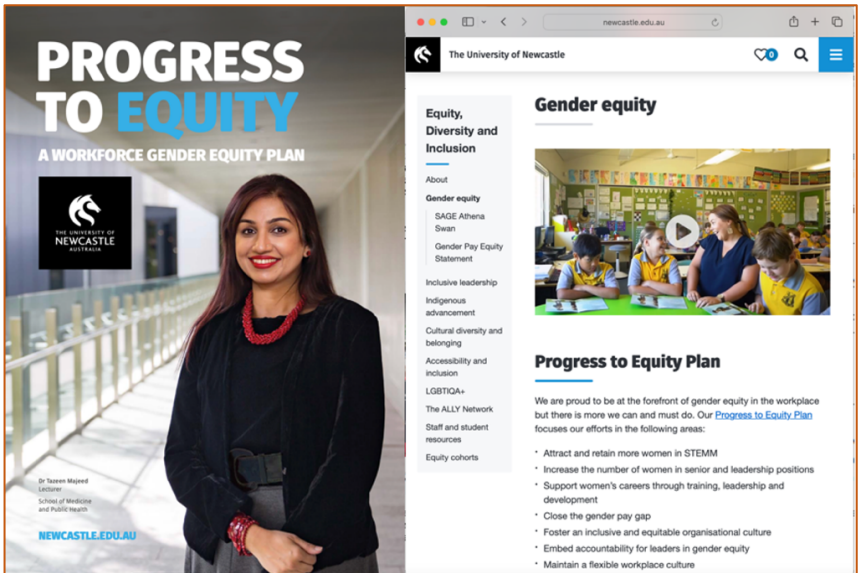


Figure 2. Progress to Equity Plan established in 2018 as part of Athena Swan Bronze Accreditation

Achievements

Achievement of **Silver Accreditation** remains a **2025 goal in the Looking Ahead Strategy** (Fig. 3), in addition to **KPIs** aimed at addressing the **underrepresentation of academic and professional women in senior roles** (Fig. 4). This publicly underscores the University's commitment to improving gender equity, diversity, and inclusion (GEDI).

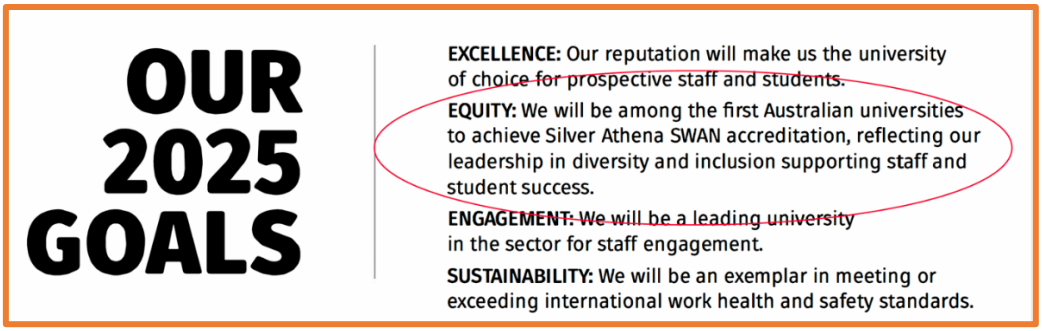


Figure 3. Looking Ahead 2025 Goals include achievement of Silver Athena SWAN accreditation, reflecting University leadership in GEDI supporting staff and student success

Looking Ahead KPI			Unit	Actual			Target	
				2021	2022	2023[1]	2024[2]	2025
Inspiring People								
Excellence	21	Industry / Donor Alumni NPS	%	N/A	N/A	N/A	TBC	TBC
Equity	22	Senior Academic Women	%	33.5	34.1	*36.0*	*36.7*	37.5
Engagement	23	Your Voice Staff Engagement	%	72.8	N/A	70	N/A	80
Sustainability	24	Safe Work Australia Maturity Score	#	2	2	2	3	3

[1] Data as at Q3 2023

[2] Blue shading indicates 2024 targets to be finalised once 2023 final result is known. Current 2024 targets are indicative based on 2023 Q3 performance.

[3] Q3 result is interim only and is a manual calculation, data is currently under review.

Figure 4. Implementation of Senior Academic Women KPI is measured and monitored through data capture made publicly available on the University's webpages

Athena Swan Principles (ASP) were mapped into the University's development of complementary strategies and policy work between 2020 and 2024, with senior leadership accountability (Table 1 and 1A). The University completed this work systematically to ensure that the resulting strategies, plans, and policies are inter-related and complementary in support of Athena Swan outcomes. The interrelationships and co-dependencies are **monitored by the Inspiring People Board** and **reported on to the Executive Leadership Team** (ELT) by the Chief People and Culture Officer (CPCO) and Pro Vice Chancellor, Academic Excellence

(PVCAE), who is the Athena Swan lead. Additionally, the Athena Swan focus in Silver on **intersectionality** has contributed to the institutional understanding of the entirety of this work as part of an EDI ecosystem at the University of Newcastle (Fig. 5).

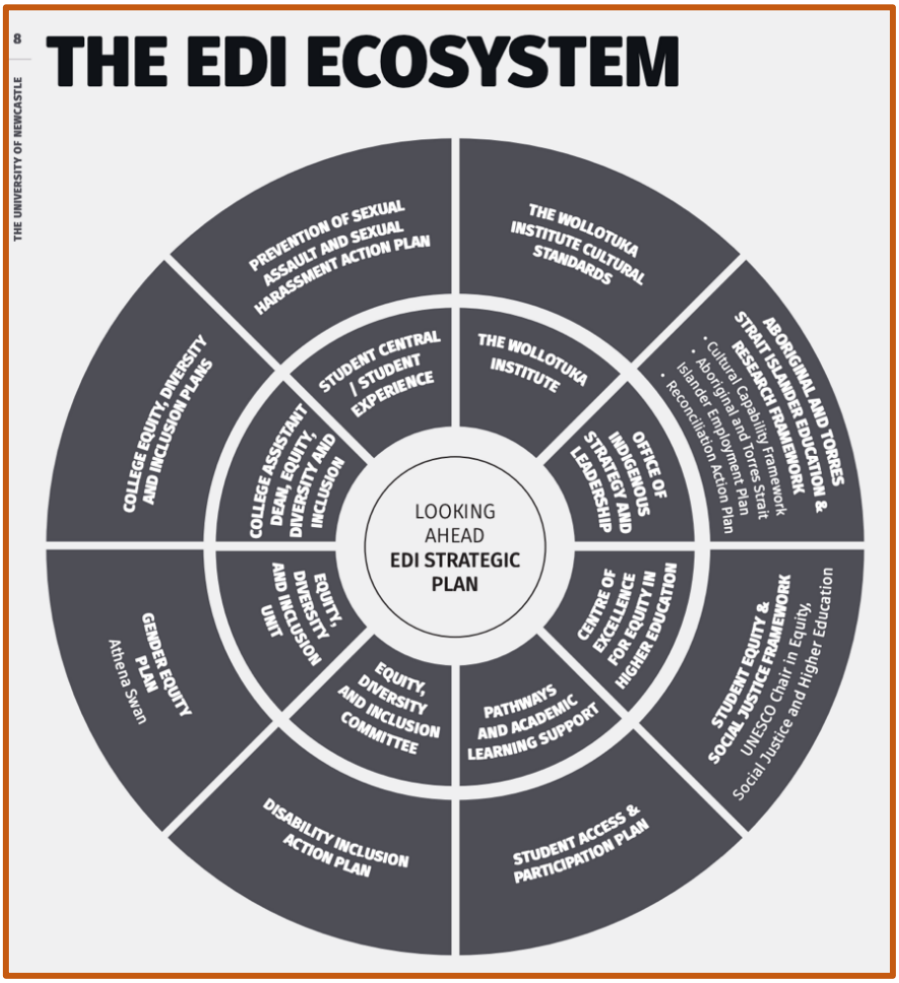


Figure 5 EDI Ecosystem set up as part of Looking Ahead

Table 1. Athena Swan Principles mapped to strategies and policy work developed post Athena Swan Bronze Action Plan (ASBA)

ASP	Strategy, framework, policy, procedure	Timeframe	Accountable leaders
1-9	Looking Ahead Strategy	2020-2025	VC
1, 2, 3, 4, 9	Inspiring People Strategy	2020-2025	CPCO, PVCAE
6, 7	Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy	2023-2025	DVCA, EDI Lead
7, 8	Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP)	2023-2025	DVCA, EDI Lead
5, 8	Maligagu Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Employment Strategy and Action Plan	2020-2025	PVCISL
5, 8	Indigenous Cultural Capability Framework	2020-2025	PVCISL
8, 9	Code of Conduct	2024	CPCO
9	Sexual Harassment and Discrimination Policy and Procedure	2024	DVCA
8, 9	Diversity and Inclusiveness Policy (addressing bullying and harassment)	2023	CPCO

Note: Table 1 (above) maps ASP by number in the first column against the strategy/framework/policy/procedure in the second column. Table 2 (below) provides additional evidence of that application.

Table 2. Athena Swan Principles and Evidence of Application

	Athena Swan Principle	Evidence of application
1	Ensure greater GEDI work is appropriately resourced, distributed, recognised and rewarded.	Embedding Athena Swan Silver Accreditation into the Looking Ahead Strategic Plan made GEDI work a responsibility of the entire ELT and resourced accordingly. GEDI work has been recognised in the Inspiring People pillar and communicated to all staff via The Loop (the University's weekly internal news source) and in all staff forums led by the Vice Chancellor. It has been rewarded through regular Celebrating Success ceremonies, the Vice Chancellor's Cygnet Awards, and annual University EDI Awards (Figs. 7 and 8).
2	Undertake transparent and rigorous self-assessment processes, analysing institutional structures, systems and cultures to identify barriers to attraction, retention and progress for staff, students and thus to GEDI.	Transparent and rigorous self-assessment was carried out through the five successful Cygnet applications. These were prepared and analysed by the ASWP, scrutinised by the EDI committee, presented to Academic Senate, and reviewed and approved by the ELT.
3	Design initiatives based on institutional data and national and global evidence of best practice.	72 out of 78 initiatives from the ASBAP were designed around the data presented in Bronze, tracked using institutional data post-Bronze; modified as required, according to quantitative and qualitative data collected during implementation and as resourcing allowed; and tested against global evidence of best practice. Examples can be found in the Cygnet awards and the publications (ie: fn 2) resulting from those activities.
4	Monitor, evaluate and publicly report on progress made, challenges experience and impact to inform continues improvement	Since 2020, the ASBAP has been monitored and evaluated by the ASWP using a traffic light system (Fig. 9). Progress made and challenges experienced was reported on to the Inspiring People Board and ELT on a quarterly basis. Reports were shared with the University communicated via articles in the LOOP, presentations at Academic Senate and all-staff forums, with Q&A to allow for greater input and engagement.
5	Actively incorporate Indigenous knowledges and perspectives to address specific inequities and injustices experienced by Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Island staff and students.	Indigenous knowledges and perspectives have been central to the EDI work of the University (see Table 1) and informed the intersectional work of Silver, including targeted recruitment in Cygnet 1, but especially in Cygnet 3. The latter Cygnet was entirely focused on the barrier of Cultural Capability to address specific inequities and injustices that informed the ASBAP initiatives.

6	Consciously consider all genders, recognising that gender is not binary and, that trans and gender diverse people face specific inequities because of their gender identities.	This ASP informed the creation of the University's EDI strategy (2023-2025), which moves beyond a binary understanding of GEDI (Fig. 5).
7	Take an intersectional approach to advancing gender equity, diversity & inclusion, recognising that people of any particular identity are not a homogeneous group.	To assist with collection of intersectional data, a comprehensive range of demographic questions (previously limited to gender) were added to surveys and other data collection points to allow deeper analysis through an intersectional lens. In growing its understanding of intersectionality since Bronze, the University became aware of the limitations on sole reliance of quantitative data (additive approach) and liaised with CEEHE to develop a program of qualitative work that identifies intersecting inequities to combat persistent injustices that impede transformative equity (see Table 11).
8	Engage with those most impacted by inequitable practice to proactively redesign and reshape structures, systems and culture.	The two half-day workshops with staff and students that developed the University's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2023-2025 included leads from the University of Newcastle Student Association Equity Guilds, our Enabling Program, and the Centre of Excellence for Equity in Higher Education, in addition to the ASWP and EDI committee. The PVC AE convened the first workshop as Athena Swan lead and Chair of the EDI Committee. This ensured proactive engagement with those most impacted by inequitable practices to redesign and reshape the primary strategy for shifting structures, systems and culture in the lead up to Silver.
9	Increase safety and wellbeing of staff and students by proactively and transparently preventing and responding to bullying, harassment gender-based violence and discrimination.	This has been a particular point of focus for the University's GEDI work (see Table 1) with several significant pieces of policy work completed post-Bronze to proactively and transparently prevent and respond to bullying, harassment and discrimination.
10	Embed change in institutional governance and accountability structures – actively and visibly champion and promote GEDI in our institutions; the Athena Swan Community and across the sector; and hold ourselves and other senior leaders accountable for driving sustainable transformative change.	Athena Swan is embedded in the University's governance and accountability structures as a KPI in the 2020-2025 strategic plan. This has made the ELIT champions of GEDI, which was promoted with each Cygnet success. The University contributes to the Athena Swan community through active participation in the regional and national meetings, as well as by serving on peer-review panels. The PVC AE and Manager of EDI have met with EDI/Athena Swan teams at other universities to advise on their Athena Swan work and cygnet progress.

Alignment between these interconnected policies and Athena Swan was further supported through the **strategic appointment of the Manager Equity, Diversity & Inclusion** to project manage the Athena Swan Cygnet – Silver program. This decision was based on the Manager's experience (Project Manager for successful Bronze Pilot) and direct involvement with

complementary work/strategies developed out of the EDI Unit and through close working relationships with key stakeholders such as Human Resources Services and Indigenous Strategy & Leadership via membership of the Inspiring People Board and Indigenous Employment Committee respectively.

We have reflected on examples of how this alignment has been achieved:

- The University's Athena Swan Bronze Action Plan (ASBAP) had a **focus on intersectional issues experienced by Indigenous staff and students** (Theme 9, actions 9.1-9.6). The resulting strategic alignment of Athena Swan program with Maligagu and the Indigenous Cultural Capability Framework has been addressed in more detail in our Cygnets and continues to be a point of intersectional focus for Silver in Key Barrier 3 (see below and refer to Cygnet 3).

- With the Athena Swan Charter's expanded focus on broader gender equality issues, not just those that affect women, the EDI Strategy (Fig. 6) reflects the University's maturity in addressing GEDI and **improving intersectional understanding of barriers** for women and other underrepresented groups on the path to Silver.

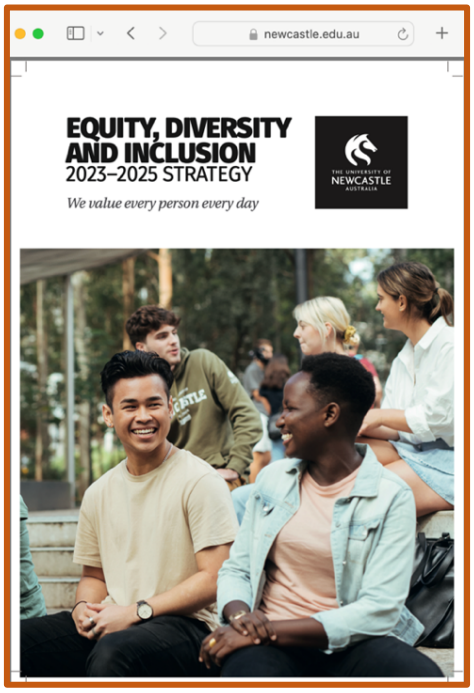


Figure 6. EDI Strategy developed in 2023 from the foundation of the University's commitment to Athena Swan Charter principles

A **strategic governance structure** was established in 2021 to enhance GEDI and Athena Swan initiatives (Fig. 7 and Table). The Athena Swan Working Party (ASWP) was formed under the leadership of the Pro Vice Chancellor, Academic Excellence (PVC-AE), who reports directly to the Vice Chancellor on GEDI matters at part of her remit and as co-Lead of the Inspiring People pillar of the University's 2020-2025 strategic plan. Responsibility for achieving the goal of Silver accreditation, and all associated GEDI KPIs, sits with the University Executive. The ASWP took charge of the ASBAP to monitor progress against the original 78 initiatives, to internally assess the program of work that would be evaluated through the Cygnet awards, and to provide input into the development of the Silver application plan. Membership of the ASWP includes the Manager EDI, the three College Associate Deans EDI (**roles created as part of the ASBAP**) and staff from across the University.

The ASWP meets monthly to participate in setting objectives and reviewing progress. The Manager EDI and Assistant Deans of Equity Diversity and Inclusion (AD-EDIs) are also members of the EDI Committee, which has a broader remit than gender equity and a current focus on implementing the DIAP between 2023-2025. As Athena Swan lead, PVC AE chaired the EDI Committee between 2020 and 2022. It is now chaired by the University Lead EDI. The ASWP maintains focus on GEDI and reports into the EDI Committee on a quarterly basis.

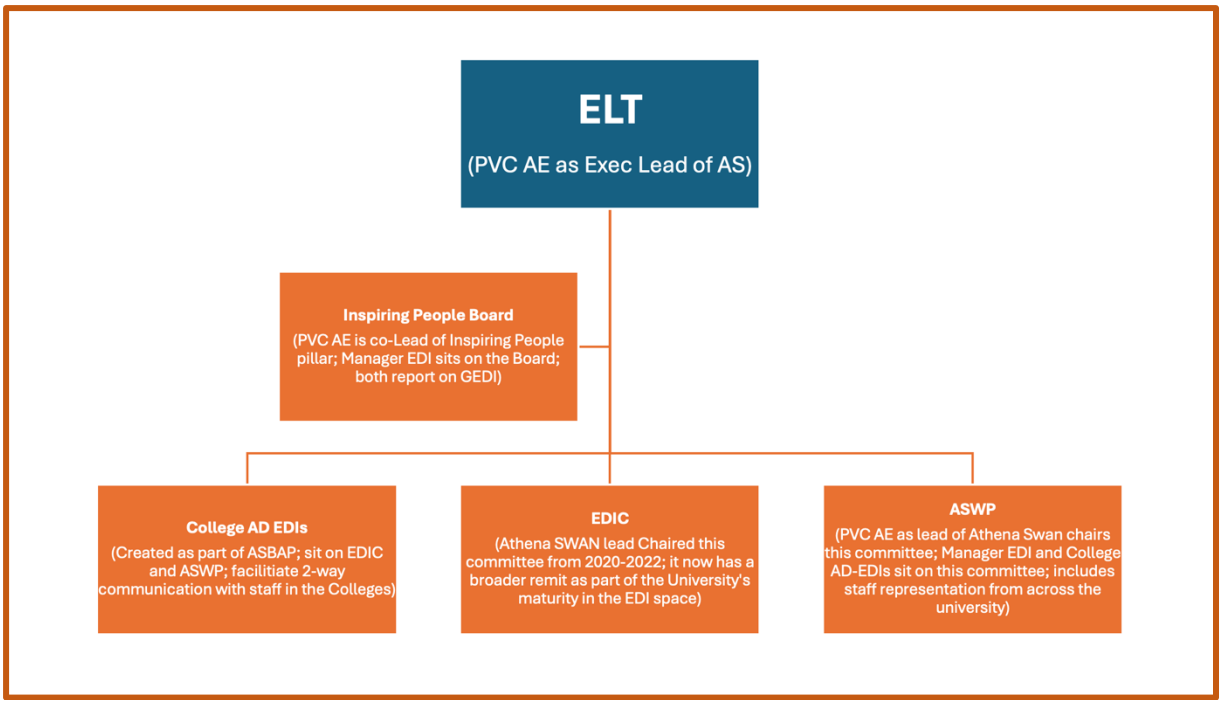


Figure 7. Athena Swan GEDI governance

Table 3 Additional Details Related to Athena Swan GEDI governance

Who is responsible for GEDI governance and progress against objectives?	GEDI governance and progress against objectives is a responsibility of ELT, led by PVC AE. It is a headline goal of the University's 2020-2025 strategic plan and is therefore carefully monitored by ELT and the Inspiring People Board (responsible for the people pillar of the strategic plan).
How is the University held responsible for progress?	Council, as the University's principle governing body, holds the Vice Chancellor and his executive accountable for progress. The ASBAP was agreed upon as the primary roadmap for making, tracking and evaluating progress between 2018 and 2025. As the Athena Swan lead, PVC AE provides regular updates to the Inspiring People Board (5 times per year), reports to ELT (2 per year), Academic Senate and Council (annually). Input is provided by the members of these governing bodies.
Detail the chair, composition, remit and authority of the ASWP.	PVC AE is Chair of the ASWP. Composition includes the Manager EDI, the three College AD-EDIs, staff members from across the University including early and mid-career researchers (ECR/MCR) and professorial representation. The ASWP remit is to monitor progress against the ASBAP, to interrogate data, to report on GEDI issues, and to communicate staff concerns. The authority of the ASWP is advisory and communicated upwards to ELT by the PVC AE. This has led to revision of policy and retention of key programs.

Resourcing for Athena Swan work towards Silver accreditation includes an Executive Lead (PVC AE), a Project Manager (University's EDI Manager), a Senior Data Analyst, an Athena Swan Qualitative Researcher (ASQR), and a Self-Assessment Team (ASWP) who, at times, were split into sub-working groups to support each Cygnet. The **strategic decision to incorporate ASQR expertise aligned with ASP 2, 3, 4 and 8** by ensuring that data collection and analysis was of high quality and sourced via a rigorous and transparent process, resulting in detailed insights that informed key barriers and actions. The specialist expertise of the ASQR to conduct one-on-one interviews (to supplement survey data) was extremely beneficial in accessing deeper insights into the lived experience of equity cohorts by providing a more personalised approach.

The **Vice Chancellor's Cygnet Award Fund** was established to re-energise work on the ASAP following Covid disruptions in 2020-2022. At this key moment, the Cygnet Award Fund **recognised and rewarded research focused on GEDI (ASP1)** and brought much needed research expertise from across the University into the Athena Swan program of work. This provided support for projects that informed the five Cygnet barriers through research, training, and community action (Fig. 8) – **actively and visibly championing and promoting GEDI in Newcastle (ASP 10).** In their content and approach, these **research and governance projects upheld ASP 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7 and 10**. One of these projects resulted in a peer-reviewed journal article published in 2024 by members of the ASWP in *Higher Education Quarterly*.[1] The article focused on targeted recruitment, with research developed from the University's second Cygnet Award in 2023, **demonstrating continued critical reflection** on this barrier through peer review(see below, Key Barrier 1).

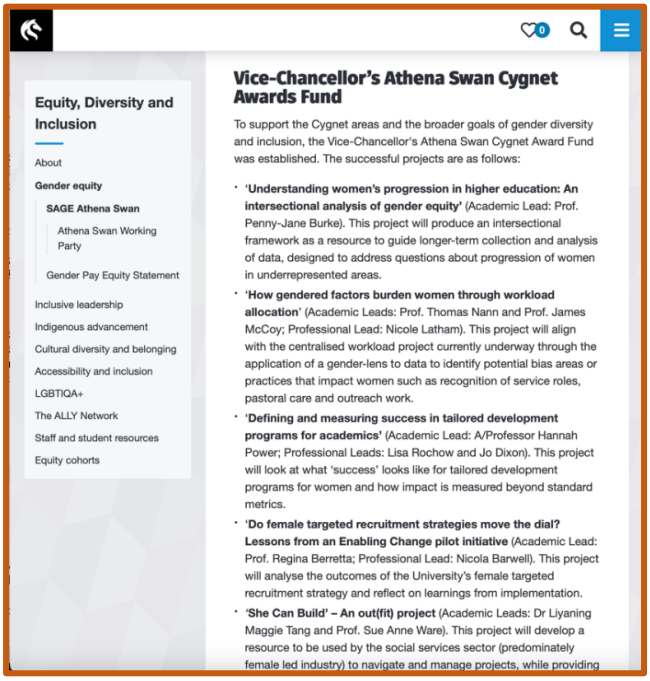


Figure 8. Vice Chancellor's Athena Swan Cygnet Award Fundand resulting publication by ASWP in *Higher Education Quarterly* (2024)

Staff contributions towards improving EDI are **rewarded** through the University's Staff Excellence awards, recognising the contributions of staff who drive and support EDI initiatives outside of their normal job requirements. A previous member of the ASWP received the EDI Award for her work in promoting GEDI in the College of Engineering, Science & Environment (CESE), **sending an important message** to the University community **about what is valued** (Fig. 9).

[1] C Lane, N Saronga, R Fowell, R Berretta, K Blackmore, L Momenzadeh, A Giacomini, S Ware, J Milam. "Does Targeted Recruitment Turn the Dial for Gender Equity? A Qualitative Study at an Australian University", *Higher Education Quarterly*. DOI 10.1111/hequ.12499

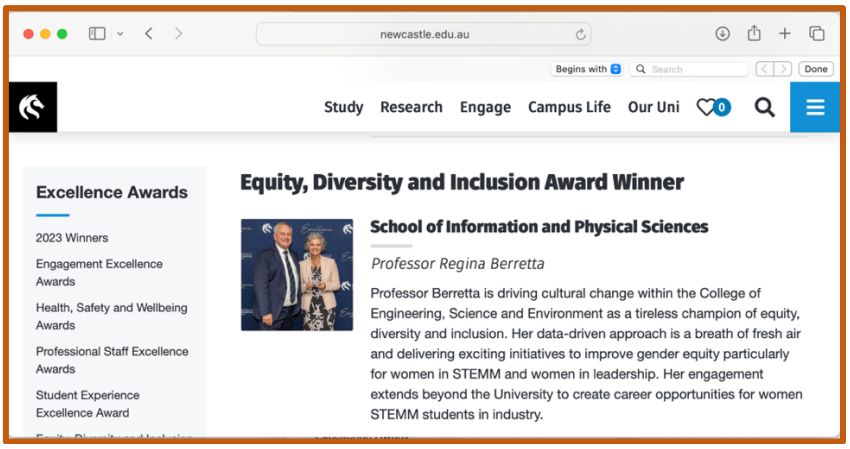


Figure 9. ASWP member Professor Regina Berretta, EDI Award Winner 2022

The University's **ASBAP comprised 78 actions** across nine themes, which were **incorporated into the five Cygnets** on the path to Silver. The **status of these actions was actively monitored**, with many rolled into the Cygnets as a concerted effort to reduce or eliminate key barriers to GEDI. This **ensured continuity of important insights and initiatives** developed as part of the Bronze process and socialised with the organisation at the time (Fig. 10).

Actions		Success Measure	Status Comments 2023	Status Code	Corresponding Cygnet Report
Theme 1: Representation, Leadership and Governance					
1.1	Appointment of one PVC Equity and Diversity. Appointment of three Women in Science Chairs (internally) at Level E for a term of four years.	One PVC Equity & Diversity and three Women in Science Chairs appointed by August 2018.	One EDI Lead at 0.4 FTE No current Women in Science Chairs		STEM Pipeline Barrier Cygnet
1.2	Creation of Assistant Dean, Equity and Diversity for each STEMM Faculty.	Three appointees in place by August 2018.	Each College has an AD EDI		STEM Pipeline Barrier Cygnet
1.3	Finalise organisational governance structure to embed the reporting and accountability framework within the institution.	New governance framework embedded by August 2018.	ASWG established. PVC AE is Lead/Chair. ASWG is a sub-committee to EDI Committee.		
1.4	Appointment of central resource to contribute to oversight and management of Action Plan.	One FTE dedicated resource in place by June 2018.	EDI unit Manager is 0.5 FTE appointment. Additional funds secured for casual Qualitative Research support.		
1.5	Appointment of Research Associate/Fellow	0.5 FTE dedicated resource in CEEHE in place by November 2018.	No funding.		
1.6	Increased focus on gender balance in HOS representation across STEMM Faculties upon recruitment of HOS roles	10% increase in female HOS by 2020.	CHMW: 4F, 0M, CESE: 3F, 2M; CHSF: 1F 3M At time of Cygent reporting female representation was 80% for CESE.		STEM Pipeline Barrier Cygnet
1.7	Audit gender balance on influential committees and advocate for change where terms allow.	10 institutional committees have increased gender representation by 20%.	Policy updated to increase female or non-binary representation from 33% to 40% minimum. Audit to measure increases.		
1.8	Encourage PVCs to delegate influential committee responsibilities to senior female academic staff (where appropriate) and acknowledge in workload allocation.	Increase in representation of women on UPC and EC from 33% to 50% by 2020.	EC: 6 of 16 = 37.5%. Audit UPC composition. Seek feedback from AD EDIs on PVC delegation in Colleges.		
1.9	Update internal communication channels profiling positive/successful female role models in STEMM.	Visibility of role models built into Communication Plan and web and other material updated regularly.	Seek update on next review date.		STEM Pipeline Barrier Cygnet
1.10	Finalise communication plan to support the Action Plan and other related gender equity initiatives.	Communication Plan finalised to support Actions and provide greater education/awareness to all staff.			
Theme 2: Recruitment, Retention, Remuneration					

Figure 10. ASBAP Tracker and Corresponding Cygnet Report

Of the 78 action items in the ASBAP, **only 6 have not been addressed**, and this was due to funding pressures resulting from the pandemic disruptions in the sector; the **remaining 72 actions are either completed or on track for completion**. Many of the original Bronze Actions (now part of Cygnets) that were implemented are embedded as business as usual – an important step in the University's GEDI maturity journey.

About the Data

This application predominantly relies on **three formal data sets** to collect information on progress from the perspectives of staff: a **staff-wide survey** (GEPS - described following), **qualitative interviews**, and **workforce data** sourced from Human Resources Information Systems (HRIS).

Table 3 (below) details staff characteristics from the first two data sets, displaying the diverse contribution to this application. Where possible, the data has been **disaggregated by gender and other subgroup characteristics.** For GEPS survey data, a comparison of results by gender (men vs women) is detailed in the following section (see Figure 12 and 13). For the other subgroups (Sexual Orientation, English as a Second Language (ESL), Disability, Carers, and Indigenous), we explored the data disaggregated; however, we are limited to **small samples and even smaller proportions contributing data per survey question** (noting that not all questions were answered by respondents). There are ethical considerations when reporting on small samples, particularly marginalised or underrepresented groups, as misinterpreting or misrepresenting data related to these groups can perpetuate stereotypes or biases. Moreover, small sample sizes present a challenge to ensure anonymity and confidentiality and increases the margin of error for any conclusions drawn from any subgroup comparison (poor reliability). We observed that **subgroup populations from the GEPS survey tended to respond less favourably for many indicators of equity**, particularly for the subgroups of 'Disability' and 'Indigenous'. Moreover, **when looking at gender within each subgroup, nearly every question was perceived less favourably by women compared with men**. Given the magnitude of data, disaggregated data related to subgroups, where deemed reportable, are included under the relevant Key Barriers in this report (e.g., data relating to 'Carers' is under Key Barrier 4).

It is **not possible to provide staff characteristics for the HRIS data from a single time point** as this information was sourced from different time points based on varying requirements for Key Barriers (i.e., due to temporal mismatch). It is also notable that diversity details beyond gender and Indigenous, such as Disability and CALD, are only disclosed by few staff on a voluntary and confidential basis through the HR online system. The **numbers reported are too low for these subgroups to report** in an ethical and statistically meaningful way (reasons defined above).

An intersectional approach has been central to Athena Swan efforts to date and remained a priority for the current application, to understand progress and inform action through an intersectional lens. The challenges of collecting intersectional data is well known in the literature and across the public sector.[2] As noted by the Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector, "*In collecting, analysing and reporting this data, organisations need to be sensitive to employee safety and privacy considerations and allow the discretion to self-identify*."[3] In some instances, disaggregated data are not presented due to employee safety and privacy considerations and as a result of allowing the discretion to self-identify. We have drawn

[2] Bauer, G. R., Churchill, S. M., Mahendran, M., Walwyn, C., Lizotte, D., & Villa-Rueda, A. A. (2021). Intersectionality in quantitative research: A systematic review of its emergence and applications of theory and methods. *SSM, Population Health*, *14*, 100798. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssmph.2021.100798.

[3] *Applying intersectionality to workplace gender auditing and analysis*. (2022, November 23). genderequalitycommission.vic.gov.au. https://www.genderequalitycommission.vic.gov.au/applying-intersectionality/workplace-gender-auditing-and-analysis

on findings for subgroups populations across data sets and incorporated insight through additional data described following.

Additional data were sourced from the literature,[4] qualitative insight, and participatory methods with Advisory Group members and other key contacts, and informal interviews (anecdotal evidence) from staff members. This allowed us to triangulate and enhance findings which informed the application. Intersectional insights were specifically drawn from key informant groups such as the Staff with Disability Network (established as part of the DIAP), the Indigenous Staff Network (as part of the Indigenous Employment Strategy), and University of Newcastle representatives on the SAGE CALD Special Interest Working Group (Fig. 11).[5] Across all data sets we have achieved high Information Power for this application.[6]

Fig. 11. The University's CALD SIG representatives presenting at the GEA Conference 2024

[4] For example, our Staff with Disability Network was consulted and provided additional literature to support the preparation of this application. See: Lindsay, S., & Fuentes, K. (2022). It is time to address ableism in academia: a systematic review of the experiences and impact of ableism among faculty and staff. *Disabilities*, *2*(2), 178-203; Mellifont, D., Smith-Merry, J., Dickinson, H., Llewellyn, G., Clifton, S., Ragen, J., ... & Williamson, P. (2019). The ableism elephant in the academy: A study examining academia as informed by Australian scholars with lived experience. *Disability & Society*, *34*(7-8), 1180-1199; and Saltes, N. (2022). 'It's all about student accessibility. No one ever talks about teacher accessibility': Examining ableist expectations in academia. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, *26*(7), 674-700.

[5] A further example of the University's ongoing efforts is the work carried out by professional staff members Ennia Jones and Taona Afful. In addition to presenting "Unveiling Invisibility: Making the Invisible Visible" at the 2024 International Gender and Education Conference, Jones and Afful are conducting a survey supported by the ASWP on the experiences of CALD women working in higher education in Australia.

[6] Malterud, K., Siersma, V. D., & Guassora, A. D. (2016). Sample size in qualitative interview studies: guided by information power. *Qualitative health research*, *26*(13), 1753-1760.

Table 3. Characteristics of staff from the staff-wide survey (GEPS) and the qualitative interviews.

	STAFF PERSPECTIVES DATA SETS	
CHARACTERISTIC	**GEPS[a] survey**	**Qualitative interviews**
	N=1135	**N=65***
Age		
• Years (median ± SD)	n/a	46 ± 8.9
Gender		
• Woman	741 (65%)	47 (73%)
• Man	317 (28%)	17 (26%)
• Prefer not to say	68 (6%)	1 (1%)
• I use a different term	4 (<1%)	
• Non-binary	3 (<1%)	
• Transgender or Gender Diverse	2 (<1%)	
Sexual Orientation		
• Heterosexual/straight	918 (81%)	61 (97%)
• Prefer not to answer	122 (11%)	2 (3%)
• Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Queer	75 (7%)	
• I use another term to describe	20 (2%)	
English as a Second Language (ESL)		
• Yes	191 (17%)	13 (21%)
• No	944 (83%)	50 (79%)
Carer of children		*Carer of children/others*
• Yes	611 (54%)	54 (86%)
• No	524 (46%)	9 (14%)
Carer of others		
• Yes	167 (15%)	
• No	968 (85%)	
Indigenous		
• Yes	41 (4%)	7 (11%)
• No	1094 (96%)	56 (89%)
Disability		
• Yes	83 (7%)	1 (2%)
• No	1052 (93%)	62 (98%)
Appointment		
• Academic	n/a	47 (75%)
• Professional	n/a	17 (25%)

[a]GEPS = 2024 Gender Equity Pulse Survey (***please note that numbers varied for each survey question, with some missing data resulting in lower subgroup sample sizes)***

*Characteristics data not disclosed from two participants; descriptive statistics adjusted accordingly

Note: Staff characteristics for HRIS data is not included as this information was sourced from different time points.

Learnings

To track the University's progress on GEDI, an institution-wide **Gender Equity Pulse Survey** (GEPS) was conducted in **2017**, prior to ASBA, and again in **2024**, prior to Silver submission (Fig. 12). The 2024 survey asked 25 questions, with additional open response boxes. A total of 39% (n=1728) of staff completed the survey in 2017 and 34% (n=1156) in 2024. Table 3 above displays participant characteristics for the 2024 sample which was representative of carers of children (54%) or others (15%), staff identifying as having a disability (7%), and English 2nd language (17%). Most participants identified as heterosexual/straight (81%) and for gender, as either a woman (65%) or a man (28%). The collection of additional demographic data will be used by the University to set a baseline for further learnings related to intersectionality in the Athena Swan Silver Action Plan (ASSAP).

Figure 12. A screenshot of the GEPS dashboard

Gender Equity Pulse Survey Results Analysed

The GEPS results were analysed by the ASQR and reviewed by the ASWP to evaluate institutional change since ASBA, including a comparison of results for respondents who identified as men (n=317; 28%) vs women (n=741; 65%) (Fig. 13). The proportion of surveyed staff selecting a different Gender option (i.e., 'I use a different term', 'Transgender or Gender Diverse', and 'Non-binary') were too low for comparison (n=9; 1%). Disaggregated data related to other subgroups, where appropriate to report, are included under the relevant Key Barriers in this report (e.g., data relating to 'Carers' is under Key Barrier 4.

QUESTION	RESPONSES OF 'AGREE' (%)						
	2024			2017			Change
	Men	Women	DIFF	Men	Women	DIFF	
Gender equality is an issue for women	29	33	-4	33	37	-4	0
Gender equality is an issue for men	30	13	17	32	19	13	4
Gender equality is an issue for non-binary and trans staff in my school/unit	17	17	0	NA	NA	NA	NA
Opportunities for advancement to senior levels are equally available to all genders	71	54	17	67	50	17	0
Staff of all genders have equal opportunities to network and collaborate for research	82	59	23	79	57	22	1
Senior leadership supports gender equity at the University	70	55	15	NA	NA	NA	NA
I have the flexibility I need to manage my work and caring responsibilities	88	85	3	84	84	0	3
Meetings are scheduled at a time appropriate to staff with caring responsibilities	79	73	6	71	71	0	6
The University actively prevents and discourages discrimination based on marital, parental, or reproductive status.	80	63	17	65	59	6	11
The University actively prevents and discourages indirect discrimination and unconscious bias regarding gender	77	60	17	64	56	8	9
Staff of all genders are equally encouraged to apply for promotion within my school/work unit	81	68	13	73	58	15	-2
The University proactively recruits and appoints women to senior positions and Council	68	48	20	67	49	18	2
Staff of all genders equally share significant service roles	79	57	22	69	52	17	5
Staff of all genders are paid the same salary for work of equal value	77	47	30	73	51	22	8
Workload is equally proportioned based on gender in my school/work unit	73	51	22	65	47	18	4
Gender equity considerations are taken into account for program design and implementation*	59	40	19	70	76	-6	25*
There is equal training and career development opportunities for all genders	79	70	9	76	68	8	1
If gender discrimination occurred for myself or a colleague, I would be comfortable raising it with a senior manager or HR/Equity professional	81	72	9	82	74	8	1
In my organisation, sex-based harassment is not tolerated	92	82	10	88	82	6	4
The University's policies and procedures support gender equity	81	76	5	78	77	1	4
Outdated gender role stereotypes currently exist through images and promotional material in my school/work unit	11	13	-2	11	13	-2	0
My immediate supervisor genuinely supports equality between all genders	88	90	-2	85	84	1	-3
The views of all genders are valued equally in decision making in my school/work unit	83	74	9	84	71	13	-4

*Different wording of question in 2017 and therefore should not be compared with that timepoint.
yellow box signifies a notable difference between genders.
green box signifies a potentially notable change when comparing the gender differences from 2017 and 2024.
Note: responses of 'agree' and 'strongly agree' are combined = 'agree'.

Figure 13. Comparison of results by gender (men vs women) from the GEPS

An integrative analysis of the **quantitative and qualitative findings** from the 2024 GEPS was presented by the ASQR across eight sections and was **mapped into the five Key Barriers** for Silver: *Gender Equality* (all KB); *Equal Opportunity* (all KB); *Intersectionality* (KB 3 in

particular); *Leadership* (KB 2); *Representation and Advancement of Women* (KB 1 and 2); *Work-Life Balance* with a particular focus on supporting carers (KB 4 and 5); *Communication and Transparency* (KB5); and *Sex-Based Harassment, Discrimination, and Unconscious Bias* (KB 1 and 4). These are detailed below, including a Table for each with the associated Key Barrier/s from the ASSAP.

Gender Equality

While a minority of staff agreed that gender equality was an issue at the University; more staff perceive it as a greater issue for women than men (Table 4 and Fig. 14). Regardless of perceptions, surveys indicated observable changes in the institutional culture and actions to support GEDI, whilst also highlighting work to address outstanding issues.

Table 4. GEPS results related to gender equality

Issue + *corresponding Key Barriers from the ASSAP*	Comparison of survey findings in 2017 and 2024
Gender equality *All Key Barriers – 1: STEM pipeline, 2: Career development, 3: Indigenous cultural competency, 4: Support for carers, and 5: Inequities in academic work allocation*	**Overall** • In 2024, a greater proportion (+13%) of respondents agreed that gender equality is an issue for women compared with those who agreed that gender equality is an issue for men (32% vs 19%). • In 2024 an additional question was added for a more gender-inclusive assessment, asking whether gender equality is an issue for non-binary and trans staff. For this question, 180 never responded (possibly indicating unfamiliarity among staff in regard to this subgroup) and nearly half of those that did (49%) were 'uncertain' (no significant difference between men and women in these responses; approximately 40% for each).[7] **Difference by gender** • In 2024, both men and women shared perceptions of gender equality as an issue for women and for non-binary and trans staff (i.e., that these groups experience inequities based on gender) with equal proportions of 'agree'; however, a greater proportion of men agreed that gender equality is an issue for men (+17% compared with women).

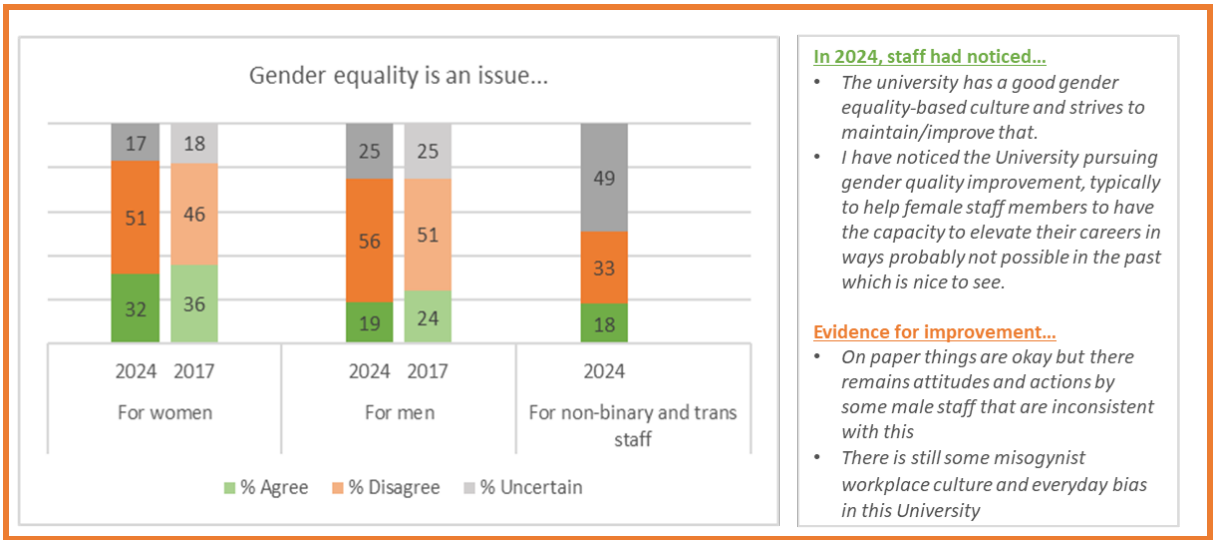


Figure 14. GEPS participant responses to questions of gender equality as an issue for women, for men, and for non-binary and trans staff (intersectional question added in 2024 survey only)

[7] This is highlighted in response to the SAGE Peer Review Panel querying '*Why wasn't data for this question included in the figure. The finding referenced (49% uncertain) is significant. Is there any difference in how men and women staff at this University perceive this?*'

Equal Opportunity

A key qualitative theme was the importance of equal opportunity in the University's GEDI pursuits. Fortunately, quantitative indicators showed high perceptions of equal opportunities available for staff of all genders (Fig. 15). A notable difference from 2017 was the increased proportion of staff agreeing that 'staff of all genders are equally encouraged to apply for promotion' (Table 5). This corresponds to a prominent qualitative theme, whereby many staff had noticed increases in women being promoted to higher-level positions.

Table 5. GEPS results related to equal opportunity

Issue + *corresponding Key Barriers from the ASSAP*	Comparison of survey findings in 2017 and 2024
Equal Opportunity *All Key Barriers – 1: STEM pipeline, 2: Career development, 3: Indigenous cultural competency, 4: Support for carers, and 5: Inequities in academic work allocation*	**Overall** • In 2024, far more respondents agreed vs disagreed that staff of all genders were equally encouraged to apply for promotion and provided opportunities to collaborate for research and for training and career development. **Difference by gender** • In 2024, a greater proportion of men than women perceived there to be equal opportunities for staff of all genders at the University, with 13-23% more 'agree' for each of the equal opportunity questions (Figure 14) *[like 2017]*[8]

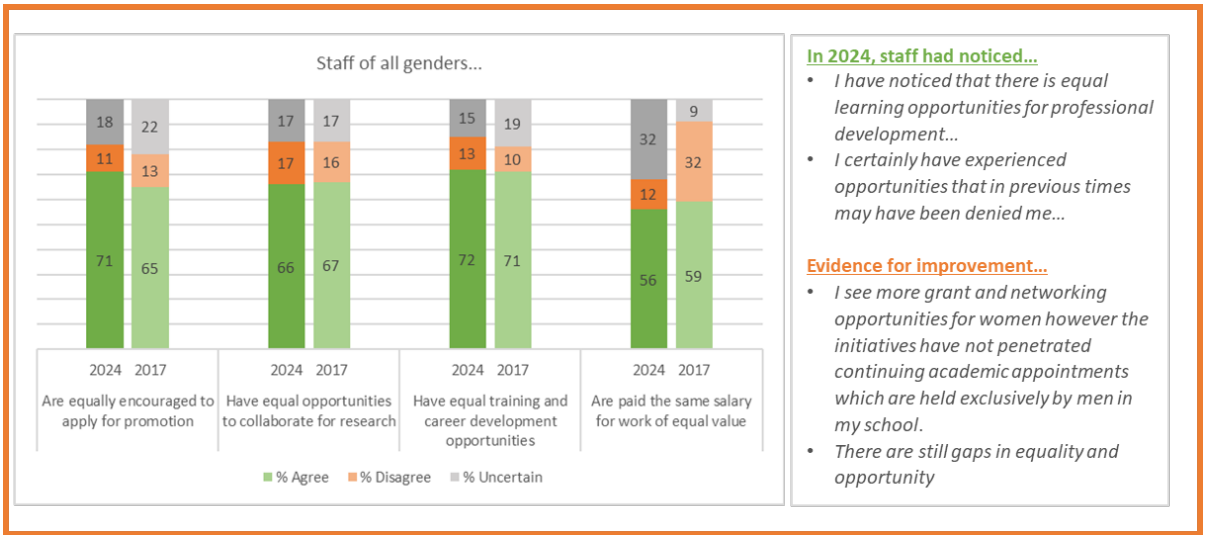


Figure 15. GEPS participant responses to questions relating to equal opportunities at the University

[8] **The SAGE Peer Review Panel responded: '*This consistently lower positivity from women about equal opportunity is brushed over quickly. Please provide a short reflection e.g. how does the Uni reckon with these findings, and how might they relate to next objectives and key barriers*?'** University Response: The University is well aware that there is lower positivity from women about equal opportunity. It is why we continue to subscribe to SAGE and participate in accreditation. While many universities have stepped away from their Bronze Action Plans, the University of Newcastle maintained commitment to its accountability in relation to Bronze (see above commentary around Figure 9). The five successful Cygnets focused on these actions under key barriers, which are the continued focal points for future GEDI impact, as detailed in this application. They align with key areas of ongoing concern related to: the attraction, retention, and progression of staff in disciplines where women and other cohorts remain under represented, despite some progress (STEM pipeline barrier); career development, support for carers, and equitable workloads which are needed to continue to reduce barriers to progression; and great understanding of intersectionality related to Indigenous cultural capability in the future.

Intersectionality

Staff indicated that it was critical for the University to adopt an intersectional approach in its GEDI work (Table 6). Staff had noticed success in the University's intersectional efforts, with more visibility of diverse identities among staff and students, greater attention to the needs and issues of diverse populations, and overall *"a general feeling that the University is open and inclusive*" (Fig. 16). However, a select number of surveys were in stark contrast, suggesting some gaps or inconsistency across the institution. Despite observable improvements and beneficial impacts of the University's intersectional approach, more work is needed in this area and will be addressed through dedicated Enabling Actions (EA4-EA7) that will support the key barrier areas. Staff indicated that it was critical for the University to adopt an intersectional approach in its GEDI work.

Table 6. GEPS results related to intersectionality

Issue + *corresponding Key Barriers from the ASSAP*	Comparison of survey findings in 2017 and 2024
Intersectional approach *All Key Barriers – 1: STEM pipeline, 2: Career development, 3: Indigenous cultural competency, 4: Support for carers, and 5: Inequities in academic work allocation. (in particular, Barrier 3)*	**Overall** • Like 2017 (negligible changes), most respondents agreed that the University's policies and procedures supported gender equity. • Far fewer respondents (48%) agreed that the University's policies and procedures considered intersectionality; and while only 9% disagreed, the remaining 43% were uncertain. • This represents a nearly even split between staff that noticed intersectionality within policies and procedures and staff that did not (48% vs 52%). **Difference by gender or other characteristics** • No observable differences *[like 2017]*

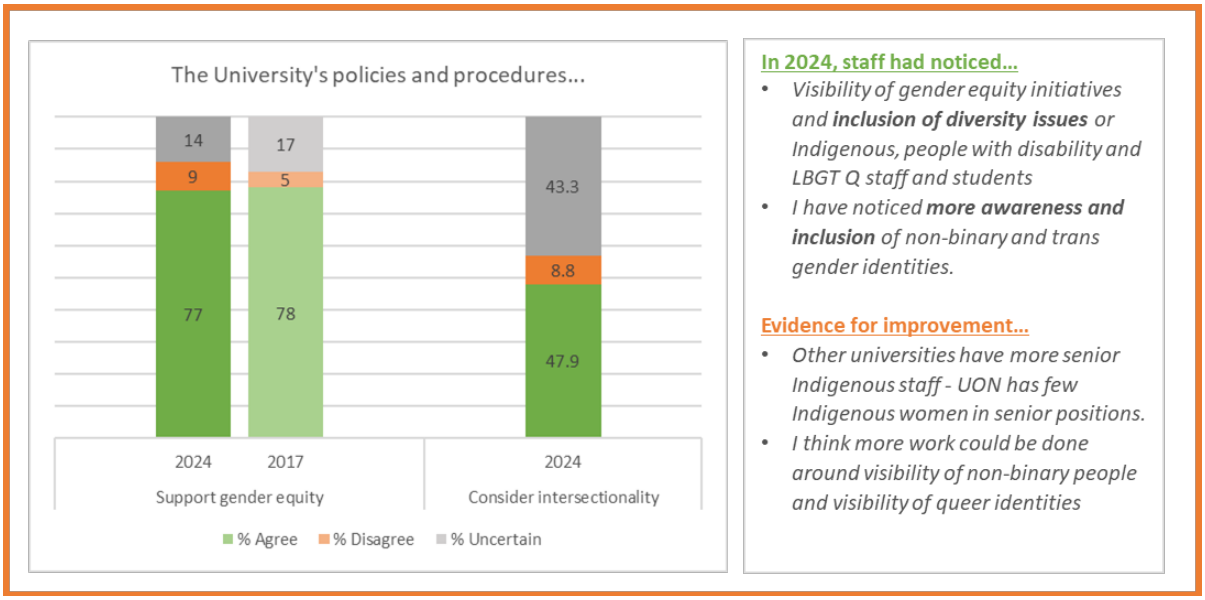


Figure 16. GEPS participant responses to questions relating to intersectional approaches

Leadership

Staff assigned high importance to leadership support for GEDI, achieved via "visible diversity" and active support (Table 7). In the qualitative data, staff comments relating to leadership support for GEDI were primarily critical or disapproving, with no staff reporting having noticed any improvements in leadership support (Fig. 17). Both qualitative and quantitative data direct action primarily to senior leadership, while immediate supervisors were more positively regarded to support GEDI. The installation of the Hon. Patricia Forsythe, AM, as the 8th Chancellor of the University in 2024 was commented upon by staff in the GEPS as a prominent example of the visibility of women in senior positions of leadership needed to drive gender equity in the future.

Table 7. GEPS results related to leadership

Issue + *corresponding Key Barriers from the ASSAP*	Comparison of survey findings in 2017 and 2024
Leadership *All Key Barriers – 1: STEM pipeline, 2: Career development, 3: Indigenous cultural competency, 4: Support for carers, and 5: Inequities in academic work allocation (in particular, Barrier 2)*	**Overall** • Like 2017, the quantitative indicators were strong relating to leadership at the University (negligible changes). • Noticeably more staff agreed that gender equality was supported by their immediate supervisor (88%) compared with senior leadership (59%). **Difference by gender** • No observable difference between genders in perceptions of immediate supervisor support for gender equality *[like 2017]* • In 2024, a greater proportion of men than woman (+15%) agreed that senior leadership supports gender equality *[question not asked in 2017]*

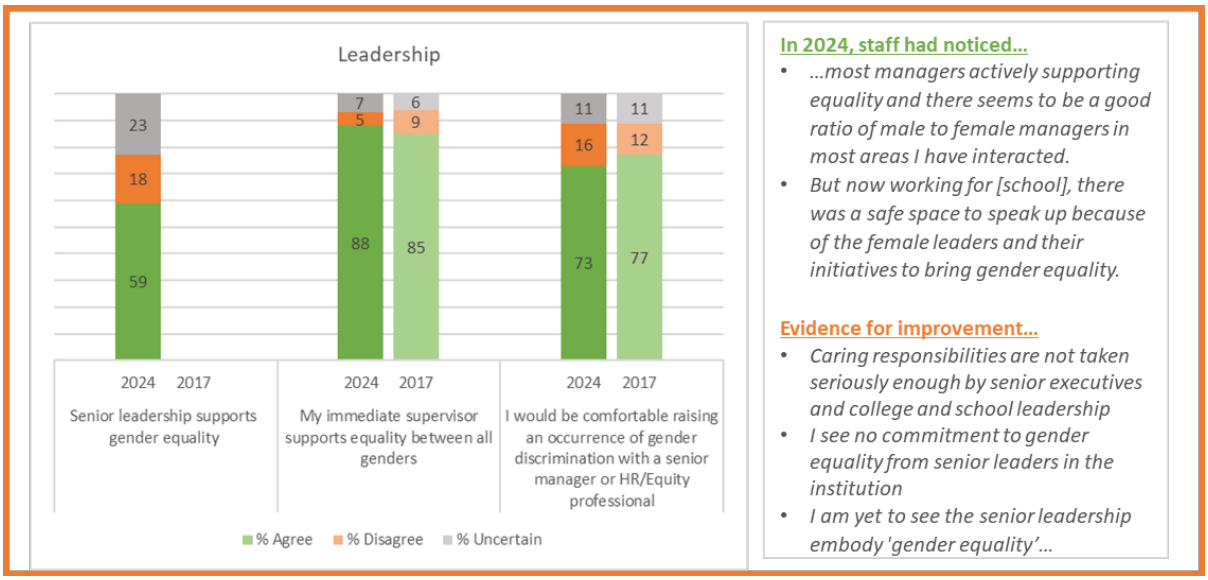


Figure 17. GEPS participant responses to questions relating to Leadership

Representation and Advancement of Women

Qualitative insight showed a noticeable shift towards more equal gender ratios in fields and positions traditionally dominated by men, including an increase in women promoted to higher-level positions and assuming leadership roles. Despite observable improvements in gender representation and advancement of women, the data also showed more work is needed in this area, and especially targeting senior leadership roles (Table 8) and (Fig. 18).

Table 8. GEPS results related to the representation and advancement of women

Issue + *corresponding Key Barriers from the ASSAP*	Comparison of survey findings in 2017 and 2024
Representation and Advancement of Women *Key Barriers 1: STEM pipeline, and 2: Career developmentt*	**Overall** • In 2024 just over half of respondents (53%) agreed that the University pro-actively recruits and appoints women to senior positions and council (negligible changes from 2017). • Compared with 2017, substantially fewer respondents agreed that gender equity considerations are accounted for in program design and implementation, decreasing from 74% to less than half (47%). • The high number of respondents that were 'uncertain' (37%) warrants improved action and/or communication of the University's efforts to consider gender equity in program design and implementation. **Difference by gender** • In 2024, compared with women, a greater proportion of men agreed that: the University proactively recruits and appoints women to senior positions and council (+20%); and that gender equity considerations are considered for program design and implementation (+19%). *[Similar findings in 2017]*

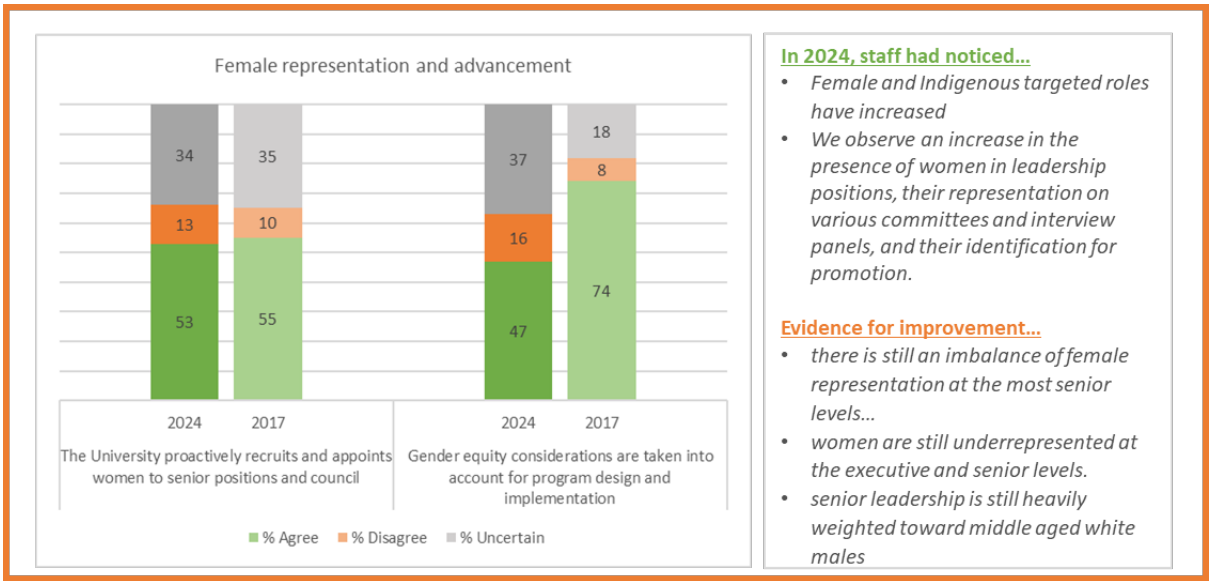


Figure 18. GEPS participant responses to questions relating to recruitment and representation

Work – Life Balance (Supporting Carers)

Many of the positive changes reported by staff were related to new or improved policies, practices, and programs aimed at promoting work-life balance (in particular, flexible work arrangements). The quantitative indicators similarly reflected primarily positive sentiments in this regard (Table 9) and (Figure 19). This is fortunate as staff felt it critical for the University to provide comprehensive support for work-life balance.

Table 9. GEPS results related to work-lifeife balance and supporting carers

Issue + *corresponding Key Barriers from the ASSAP*	Comparison of survey findings in 2017 and 2024
Work – Life Balance (Supporting Carers) *Key Barriers 4: Support for carers, and 5: Inequities in academic work allocation.*	**Overall** • Nearly ¾ of respondents reported positively on the indicators related to work flexibility and support for parents and carers. **Difference by gender and carer-status** • No observable differences *[like 2017]*

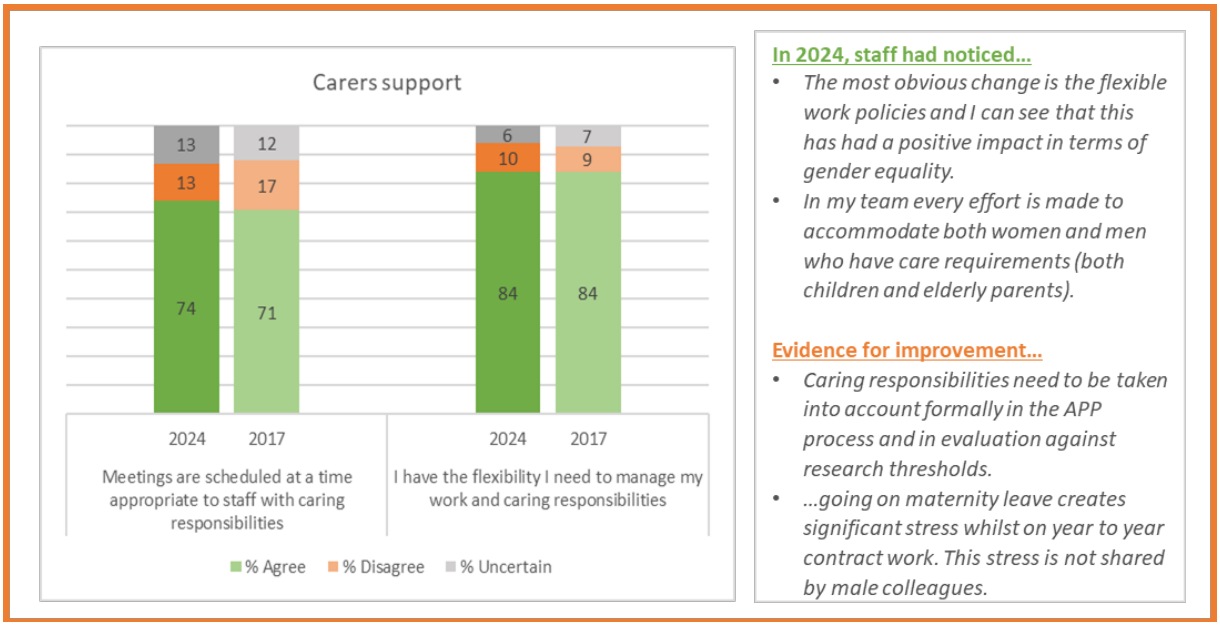


Figure 19. GEPS participant responses to questions relating to supporting carers

Communication and Transparency

Some staff had noticed effective communication and transparency for GEDI initiatives and outcomes while others were not aware of any changes or actions (Table 10). This may reflect limitations in dissemination strategies across the institution, impacting on staff awareness or understanding. The content of marketing materials appeared to be adequately reflective of current GEDI standards, as demonstrated in the quantitative indicators (Fig. 20) and supplemented with qualitative insight.

Table 10. GEPS results related to communication and transparency

Issue + *corresponding Key Barriers from the ASSAP*	Comparison of survey findings in 2017 and 2024
Communication and Transparency *Key Barrier 5: Inequities in academic work allocation.*	**Overall** • Only 13% of staff agreed that marketing materials used outdated gender role stereotypes (in both 2017 and 2024) **Difference by gender** • No observable differences in 2024 *[like 2017]*

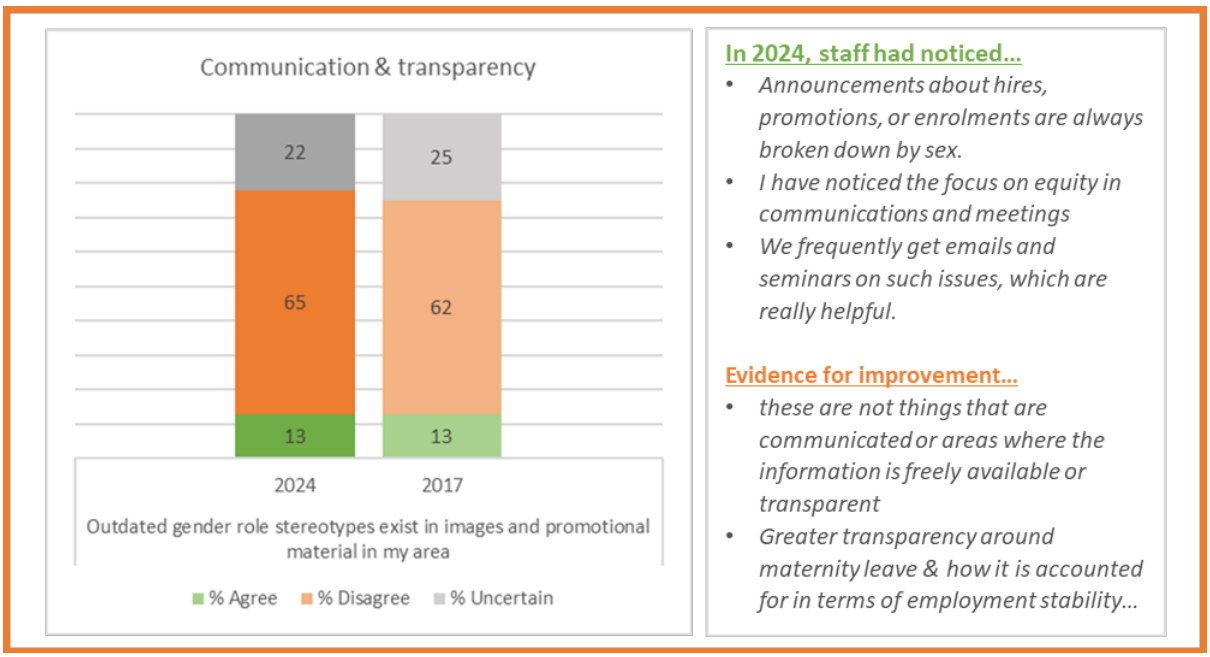


Figure 20. GEPS participant responses to questions relating to communication

Sex-Based Harassment, Discrimination, and Unconscious Bias

Staff assigned high importance to ensuring the University holds a firm stance against any form of sex-based discrimination or negative behaviour (Table 11). Based on the quantitative indicators (Fig. 21), most staff perceived this to be upheld; however, significantly more men than women 'agreed' that the University prevented discrimination (Fig. 13). Qualitative responses on this topic, albeit small, detailed unfavourable experiences of women.

Table 11. GEPS results related to sex-based harassment, discrimination, and unconscious bias

Issue + *corresponding Key Barriers from the ASSAP*	Comparison of survey findings in 2017 and 2024
Misconduct *Key Barriers 1: STEM pipeline, and 5: Inequities in academic work allocation*	• 84% of staff agree that sex-based harassment is not tolerated. This is unchanged. • 64% of staff agree that indirect discrimination and unconscious bias is prevented and discouraged - an improvement of 5%. • 67% of staff agree that discrimination based on marital, parental and/or reproductive status is actively prevented and discouraged- an improvement of 6%. **Difference by gender** • A greater proportion of men than woman perceived that the University actively prevents and discourages gender-related discrimination, bias, or harassment, with 10-17% more 'agree' for each of the corresponding questions. *[This difference suggests an increased disparity between perceptions of men and women in relation to these issues, which the University is addressing through a new Code of Conduct and revised Sexual Assault and Sexual Harm Policy and Procedure launched in 2024.]*

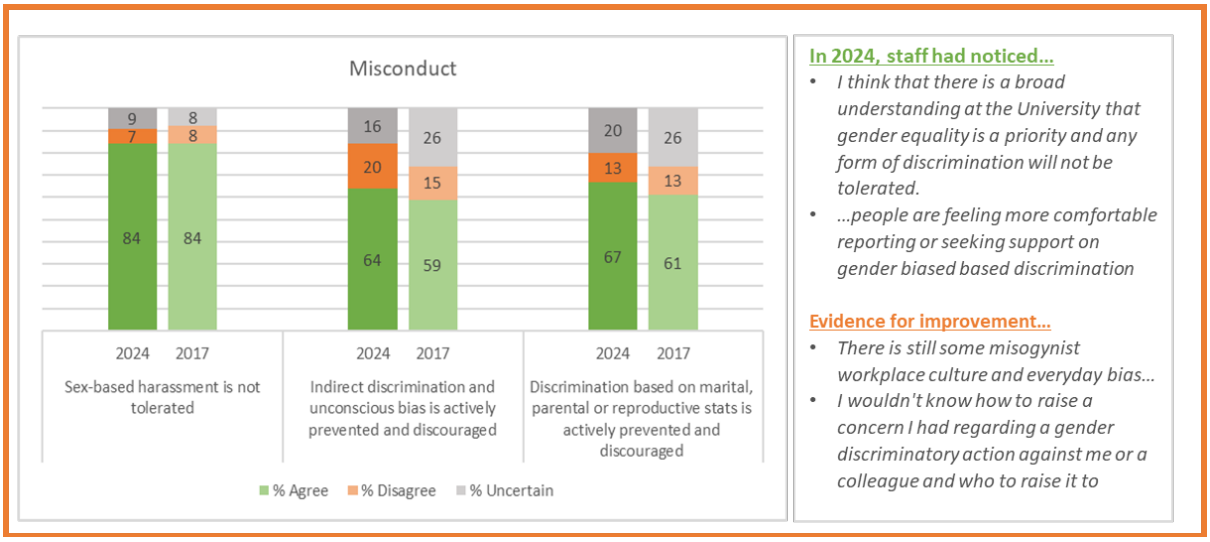


Figure 21. GEPS participant responses to questions relating to misconduct

Remaining Challenges and Key Enablers

The University of Newcastle has become more aware of the behavioural change required to drive cultural change across the institution. The incremental improvements found through the GEPS between 2017 and 2024 demonstrate that the Cygnets have helped to reduce barriers, but that systemic change is 'sticky'.

Although we saw minimal changes when comparing the GEPS results in 2017 and 2024, this may be due to social trends. Specifically, since Bronze, there has been increasing societal action towards, and growing awareness of, equality in the workplace.[9] As a result, it is likely that the GEDI expectations of staff would be higher in 2024 than 2017. Regardless of changes and improvements (as evidenced in our Cygnet reports), the overall 'standard' or 'bar' for GEDI is elevated.

We also know through the rich qualitative and quantitative datasets acquired for our Cygnet applications and as part of the 2024 GEPS, that while the majority of our ASBAP initiatives have been completed with positive outcomes and impact (see Cygnets 1-5), there were also less favourable results indicating a continued need to **drive behavioural change** on the pathway from Silver to Gold.

Throughout the Cygnet journey, the University **communicated** to leadership groups and staff through various platforms including 18 presentations, 2 staff forums, 6 news articles, 1 all-staff emails, 2 webinars, and 3 staff-wide surveys. All included discussion sessions, opportunities to provide feedback through Q&A, and facilitated chat function/SLIDO interaction and polling.

The number of ASWP meetings held in the last three years was 13 ASWP meetings and 33 ASWP Sub-Group Meetings. These meeting facilitated **two-way conversation** amongst a diverse membership of staff that represented a range of backgrounds. Although membership of the ASWP changed over the years, post ASBA, it has included women and men of different career levels (Professors, early- and mid-career researchers, postdocs), staff in academic and professional roles, Indigenous and CALD women, and a range of disciplines drawn from across the university. The Manager EDI also included staff from her office at different meetings, to gain insights from non-binary, neurodivergent, and staff with disability.

The perspectives and insights from different equity groups were prioritised in discussions around specific barrier themes. Moreover, these smaller sub-groups contributed towards an environment where other staff felt comfortable to share their lived experiences, providing an in-depth understanding of the unique challenges faced by equity cohorts. This knowledge collectively assisted with action plan development. In addition, consultation with a broad range of equity cohorts took place as part of the development of the EDI Strategy and key insights from this process complemented information gained through Athena Swan efforts.

Further, the inclusion of College AD-EDIs (x3) on the ASWP and the EDI Committee, provided an additional conduit for two-way communication with a broader number of staff from the respective colleges. The AD-EDIs would escalate issues/ideas raised from staff in

[9] See the most recent Australia's Gender Equality Scorecard from the Workplace Gender Equality Agency: https://www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2022-23%20WGEA%20Gender%20Equality%20Scorecard.pdf

their respective College EDI Committees to the ASWP and EDI Committee for consideration, and report back to their respective Committees on outcomes.

Surveys including the GEPS, People Experience Survey, and Your Voice Survey provided additional means by which staff could feed into the development of strategies and actions. Also, one-on-one interviews undertaken for the five Cygnets themes, which are carried through to Silver, provided rich feedback from purposefully chosen marginalised staff cohorts and was instrumental in shaping actions. This included CALD and Indigenous women, as well as carers (both men and women). Extensive consultation and workshops for the EDI Strategy and Disability Inclusion Action Plan (both launched in 2023) also ensured staff (and students) had an opportunity to shape EDI work. As a result, the University has seen an increase in awareness of the Athena Swan gender equity initiative (Fig. 22) and senior-most leadership of the Vice Chancellor supporting the progress from Bronze to Silver Award (Fig. 23).

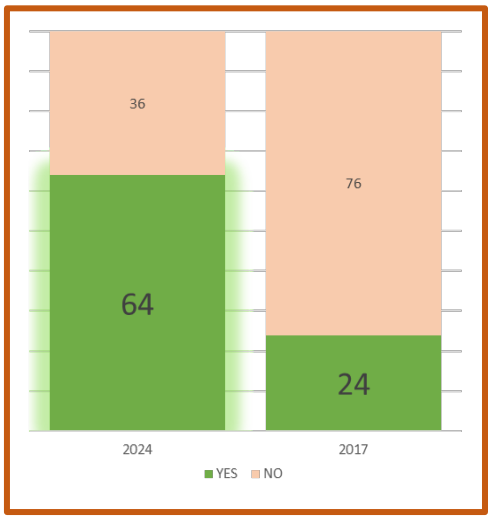


Figure 22. Staff awareness of the Athena Swan Gender Equity Initiative at the University was 40% higher in 2024 than in 2017

Figure 23. Members of the ASWP celebrate 5 Cygnet Awards with the Vice Chancellor

A thorough exploration of the data nevertheless determined that **engagement** could be improved to ensure more staff are assisting to operationalise the plan and model the behaviours required to support the Silver Action Plan. To this regard, a Communication and Engagement Strategy has been identified as a ***key enabler*** for our Athena Swan Silver Action Plan (ASSAP EA.1). As this is also a significant change initiative, a Change Management Plan is another ***key enabler*** (ASSAP EA.2) that will support the behaviour change needed to ensure our leaders are equipped, enabled and are active role models in driving the behaviour change needed. Both will be developed in the Office of Academic Excellence (OAE), where leadership of Athena Swan sits alongside the university's Internal Communications staff and Change and Improvement Team.

Central to the development of the Cygnets was access to **data** to assist with identifying priority areas, establishing baselines and assessing progress. However, the Cygnet process highlighted a number of challenges in the collection of GEDI and related data. Most available data was not originally collected for the purpose of GEDI reporting, which led to limitations in what was available and how it was presented. In addition, data sources were not centralised which delayed access. There was also limited **intersectional** data collected and where intersectional data did exist, there were low numbers (see 'About the Data' section).

Reflecting on these experiences, the University has identified that strong data support is integral to the ongoing success of the ASSAP and has included the development of data dashboard as a ***key enabler*** (ASSAP EA.3).

The University has also identified the need for a dedicated research project that will collect nuanced intersectional data and facilitate organisational maturity in moving away from an 'additive approach' (relying solely on demographic data) to one which also addresses the ongoing existence of oppressive and unequal structures in the Higher Education sector (another ***key enabler -*** ASSAP EA.4).

As part of the Cygnet process, the University invested in a pilot research project undertaken by the University's Centre of Excellence for Equity in Higher Education (CEEHE), funded through the Vice Chancellor's Athena Swan Cygnet Awards. The report, "Understanding women's progression in higher education: an intersectional analysis of gender equity" scoped four themes to guide the University's approach to intersectionality in the ASSAP (Table 12):

Table 12. Themes to guide the Intersectional approach for ASSAP

	Identified Theme	Analytical Framing
1	Exploring gendered identities, experiences and, practices	How are different identities, experiences and/or practices valued, included and/or excluded? Does this lead to a (sense) of exclusion/marginalisation/not belonging for some participants? In what ways is this gendered? How is identity, experience and/or practice expressed in the context of the 5 Cygnets?
2	Exploring structures, methods, resources and policies	Examine structures (e.g. contracts, workload frameworks, academic promotion criteria, etc) that effect women's progression. Identify the resources (e.g. research time, research space, mentoring, funding, etc) that contribute to the (lack of) women's progression. Consider the policies (e.g. study leave, personal leave, conference attendance, overseas travel, etc) that can create possibilities for women's progression. How do identities, experiences and practices of gender, and other intersecting differences, relate to structure, methods, resources and policies to constrain, limit or generate opportunities for women's progression? Are there other differences that matter that are not visible from the focus on women?

3	Exploring the cultural contexts and practices in which intersectional inequities are produced	What are the cultural dimensions that impede and/or enable women's progress in relation to other differences that are identified by participants as mattering? Consider this at multiple levels of the immediate (unit, research or program team, etc.) local (College, School, Centre, etc.) and Institutional (University) work contexts and the ways participants are situated within these across intersections of difference, power and inequity. What are the contested values (the best way of being an academic – e.g. getting grant money v teaching) circulating around the 5 Cygnets and how do these relate to different forms of institutional mis/recognition and personal/professional sensibilities of value?
4	Examining intersecting inequities in representation	This focuses on the political dimensions of women's progress and intersections of difference that attend to voice, representation, decision-making and/or influence. This might consider how participants describe their capacity to contribute to meetings, committees, the development of strategy and policy, etc. It will take into account how different identities, values and knowledges are represented, or not, in the systems, processes and practices across the 5 cygnet areas.

In addition, the University is contributing to the SAGE Cultural Diversity Interest Group, with two CALD members of staff (reporting into the ASWP) focused on improving the University's maturity around intersectionality. These staff members will be presenting at the Gender and Education Association conference in 2024, on behalf of the ASWP, and are supported to carry out a nation-wide survey of CALD women in the Australian Higher Education Sector. The findings will inform intersectional aspects of the ASSAP as a **key enabler (ASSAP EA.5)**.

The University is also seeking to better understand the experiences of its LGBTIQA+ staff and students as part of our intersectional journey. The University has a very active ALLY program and ALLY Network and its EDI Unit has undertaken a number of projects and advocacy work in support of the LGBTIQA+ community. Despite these efforts, more data and analysis are required to provide a richer picture of the experience of our LGBTIQA+ community to inform future strategies **(ASSAP EA.6).**

The establishment of the University's UNESCO Chair in Equity, Social Justice, and Higher Education in 2023 (Fig. 24) with its collaborative program of work (Table 13) is an important **key enabler (ASSAP EA.7)**.

Table 13. Collaborative program of work led by the UNESCO Chair

1	Identify intersecting inequities and combat persistent injustices that impeded transformative equity
2	Develop new research and programmatic strategies for transformative equity, drawing from cutting edge theories and praxis from the field
3	Promote redistribution of higher education resources and opportunities to marginalised groups and communities

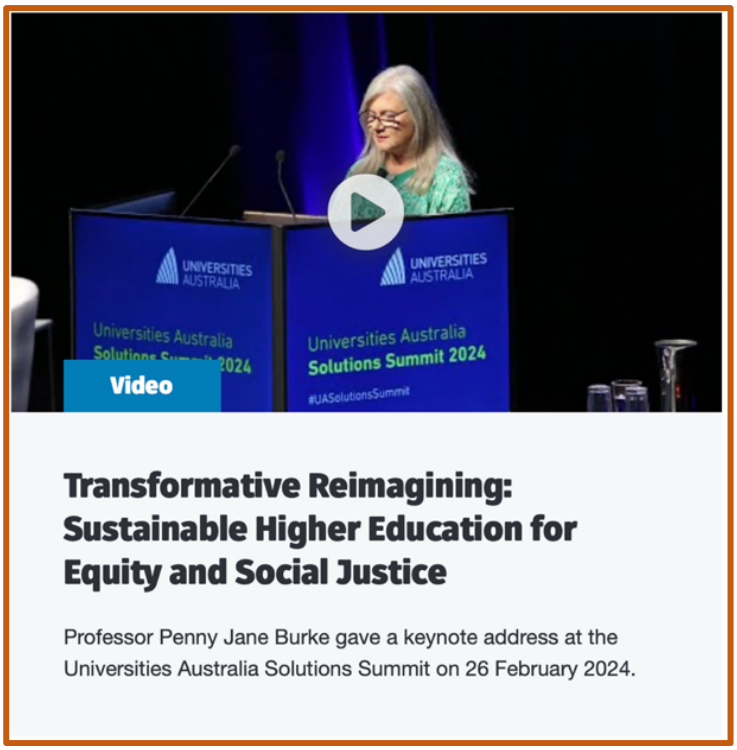


Figure 24. University of Newcastle UNESCO Chair, Professor Penny Jane Burke addressing the University Australia Solutions Summit on intersectional approaches to higher education

The University also hosts CIFAL, the only United Nations training centre in Australia and New Zealand (Fig. 25). As a **key enabler (ASSAP EA.8)**, CIFAL has selected 'Equity, Indigenous Knowledges and Transformative Education' as a focus area in 2024 to support the work of Athena Swan in making progress against SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 5 (Gender Equity) and to link the ASSAP to UNITAR accredited training around these prioritised SDGs.

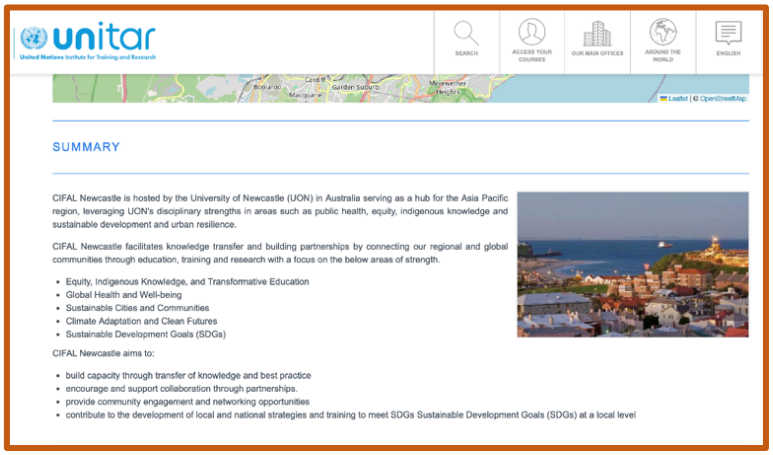


Figure 25. University of Newcastle CIFAL Centre focus on SDGs 4 and 5

Additional learnings include the impact of the University's Athena Swan commitment to **ensuring the longevity of key GEDI programs**. For example, during the financial fallout from the Covid crisis, the University continued to commit resources to its Women in Leadership and Women in Research programs, due to the ASBAP and related KPI (Fig. 26).

Figure 26. Call for Women in Leadership applications in 2024

Similarly, the framework has required these and other GEDI programs to identify success measures and to use data in support of evaluation. On the pathway to Silver, we learned the **need to collect data systematically** and to **use data-informed evaluation to refine programs** going forward, specifically **in relation to intersectionality**, which at present is still inadequate.

Action Plan (Enabling Actions)

ENABLING ACTIONS					
Ref	Rationale/Evidence	Actions & Outputs	Timeframe (start & end)	Person / Group responsible for implementing action	Senior Leader accountable for action delivery
EA.1	Work of Athena Swan not sufficiently understood across the organisation. Additionally, lack of engagement with program from individuals outside of core groups such as ASWP, EDI and HR.	Develop a Communication and Engagement Plan that ensures students and staff understand Athena Swan work and its alignment with other key strategies. Plan will also identify how and when updates on progress will occur and how staff and students can get involved.	May – Nov 2024	Manager Staff Engagement, CIT	PVCAE
EA.2	ASBAP not approached as a change initiative from the start, leading to delays in setting up a roadmap and a comprehensive plan with timeline and milestones.	Develop a Change Management Plan for pathway from Athena Swan Silver to Gold accreditation.	May – Nov 2024	Program Planning Manager, CIT	PVC AE
EA.3	No central repository exists for easy extraction of data required for Athena Swan monitoring and reporting.	Development of BI dashboard for reporting on all data related to Silver Action Plan.	May – Nov 2024	OAE SPP HRIS	PVC AE

EA.4	Limited intersectional data due to limited demographical data and limitations with analysis based solely on categorising individuals through an 'additive approach' where analysis should also include addressing the ongoing existence of oppressive and unequal structures.	Co-created resources to collaboratively develop intersectional equity work and co-formed professional learning and development opportunities.	2024-2026	CEEHE EDI OAE	UNESCO Chair PVC AE
EA.5	Limited intersectional data focused on the issues faced by CALD women	Qualitative survey completed to inform University's approach to support in ASSAP.	2024-2025	EDI OAE	PVC AE
EA.6	Limited intersectional data focused on the experience of LGBTIQA+ staff and students	Collect intersectional data through surveys such as HWEI, AWEI and through the University's ALLY program and associated initiatives to support ASSAP.	2024-2026	EDI	DVCA
EA.7	Limited institutional understanding of the impact of intersectionality	Collaborative program of work (theories and praxis) addressing intersecting inequities	2024-2026	CEEHE	UNESCO Chair
EA.8	Limited connection between ASBAP and Training Programs in CIFAL Newcastle	Leverage the program of work in CIFAL Newcastle related to SDG 4 and SDG 5 to improve training in areas related to the key barriers and to raise the profile of the University in these areas to enhance the GEDI value proposition.	2024-2026	CIFAL Executive Director	PVC AE

SECTION 2 – KEY BARRIERS TO ATTRACTION, RETENTION, AND/OR PROGRESSION

KEY BARRIER 1: STEM PIPELINE

Difficulty attracting women academic staff and students into College of Engineering Science & Environment (CESE) – in particular, to School of Information and Physical Sciences (SIPS) and School of Engineering (SENG).

Evidence of Barrier

Despite progress since Bronze towards increasing the representation of women staff and students in CESE, continued focus is required to improve gender diversity further (Fig. 27).

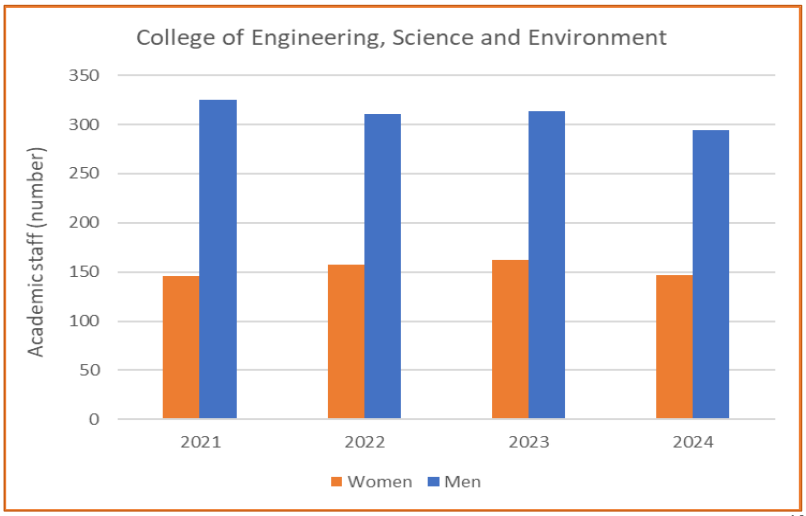


Figure 27. CESE academic staff representation by gender from 2021-2024[10]

Of the five Schools in CESE, SENG and SIPS continue to have the lowest representation for women academic staff (23% and 22%, respectively), despite improvements since ASBA (Fig. 28 and 29).

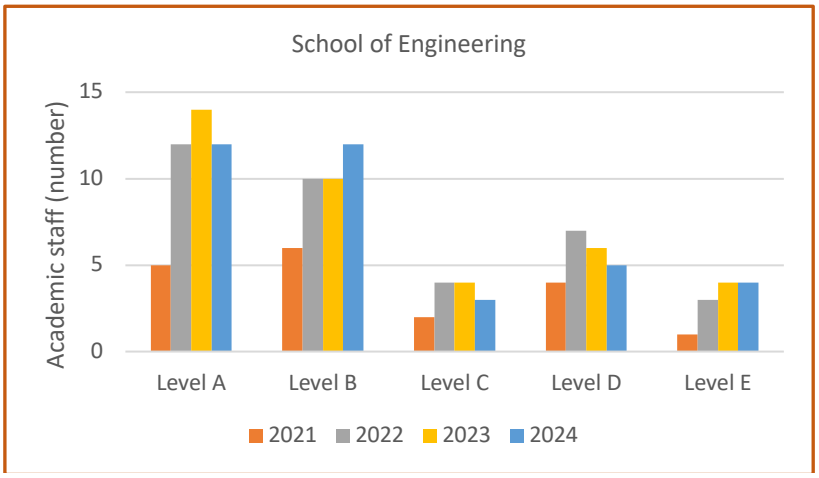


Figure 28. Representation of women academic staff in SENG 2021-2024

[10] See Cygnet 1 for additional data from ASBAP and post-Bronze. In 2021, the University restructured. Cygnet 1 combined data sources to interrogate these issues pre- and post-Bronze. For the ASSA, we have chosen to focus on data from 2021 onwards to set a baseline for Silver following restructure.

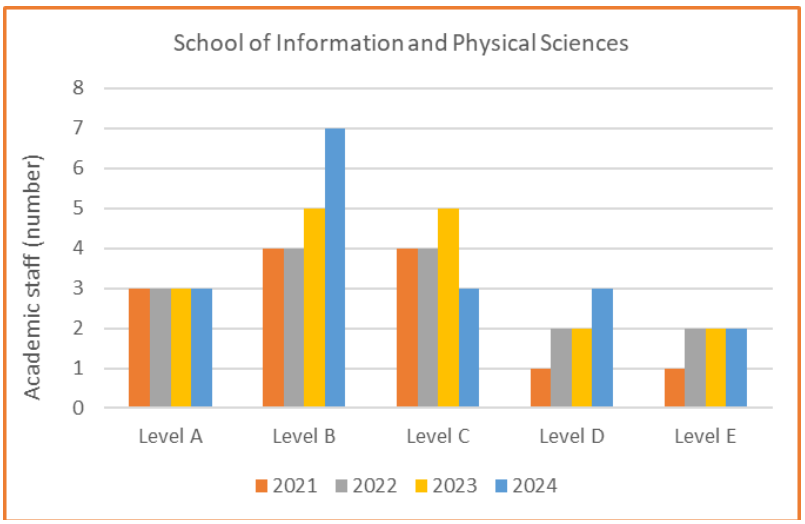


Figure 29. Academic women staff representation in SIPS 2021-2024

With students critical to the STEM pipeline, this remains a focus for the coming years. Moreover, with low representation of academic women in the College, students struggle to be what they cannot see, therefore increasing students and academic staff is symbiotic in nature.

Table 14. Post-Bronze data sources (quantitative and qualitative) used to gain insight and provide evidence of the barrier

TYPE OF DATA	CYGNET REPORT SOURCE	NEW SOURCE (2024)
Quantitative (analysed via descriptive statistics)	• 2021 'Your Voice' employee engagement survey • College and School staff data • Staff Recruitment data • Enabling Change data • Student Marketing data • Student enrolment & retention data • Indigenous student data • HunterWiSE Outreach data	• GEPS (survey of 1156 staff) • CEEHE mixed methods survey of over 200 students
Qualitative (analysed via thematic analyses)	Interviews with 22 CESE academic staff of various levels *[55% women/45% men; 9% Indigenous]*	• 'Gender Pulse' open-ended questions • Athena Swan Working Party insights and feedback • Webinar feedback from staff • EDI Committee/College EDI Committee feedback • Synthesised findings from in-depth interviews of 65 staff *[75% women/25% men; 75% academic/25% professional; 11% Indigenous]* • CEEHE Equity Project including in-depth interviews with 27 CESE staff and 24 students

As a result of the Cygnet evidence combined with new data sources in 2024 (Table 14), the University identified five sub-issues which continue to contribute to the barrier for building a STEM pipeline.

Sub-barrier 1: Low number of women applying for roles and accepting roles.

In 2021, the University restructured, resulting in a large-scale recruitment drive as part of its Enabling Change Program (ECP). In 2021, 24% of women were shortlisted for an interview and 27% were recruited, an increase in numbers in part due to roles targeting women (Cygnet #1). In 2023, another targeted campaign took place in SENG with low application rates and only two positions (22%) filled by women (Table 15).

Greater numbers of women applicants are required to move the dial towards more equal distribution of genders – particularly in SENG and SIPS where representation of women is the lowest. This is particularly relevant for **recruitment targeting women,** where application rates to date have been relatively low.

Table 15. Campaign targeting women in SENG 2023

	Women applicants as % of overall total	% of interviewees identifying as a woman	Offer accepted by a woman candidate	Offer rejected by a woman candidate	Offer accepted by a woman candidate
Lecturer	11%	33%	No appointment		
Lecturer	21%	100%	1		
Lecturer	17%	25%			1
Lecturer	26%	50%			1
Snr Lecturer	18%	50%		1	
Snr. Lecturer	11%	33%	1		1
A/Professor	24%	100%	No appointment		
A/Professor	41%	100%	No appointment		

These low rates can, in part, be attributed to a relatively small number of women academics in a highly competitive market; however, the University recognises that it can do more to attract greater numbers of women candidates through the following actions (Table 16):

Table 16. Actions to attract women candidates into STEM positions

ASSAP 1.1a	Development of an Employee Valuation Proposition for women/women in STEM
ASSAP 1.1b	Development of pro-active sourcing strategies
ASSAP 1.1c	Collecting information on why women are not applying and/or rejecting offers to better inform future recruitment strategies

Sub-barrier 2: Implementation challenges with initiatives targeting women

As reported in Cygnet #1, the University took the opportunity to pilot a **Recruitment Strategy Targeting Women** as part of its ECP in CESE in 2021. 11 of the 16 targeted (academic) positions were filled; 45% (n=5) were women, 55% (n=6) were men, and 5 roles were unfilled. Further success was limited due to relatively low numbers of women applying (noting some roles were for the hardest to fill disciplines), and additional challenges at the time, such as relocation issues due to the Covid pandemic and implementation issues. In the 2023 targeted

campaign with SENG (mentioned above), low application rates were a contributing factor to the limited success.

Qualitative interviews for Cygnet #1 with selection panel members highlighted that women were often underrepresented on targeted recruitment panels and/or the 'lone voice' in advocating for women candidates. Our Cygnet data also showed a correlation between higher numbers of women panel members with appointments of women applicants. On this basis, the University has committed to a minimum of 50% women representation for any targeted or identified roles (ASSAP 1.2)

Our evaluation of the Pilot also highlighted inconsistent understanding and application of the targeted recruitment strategy by key stakeholders. To rectify this, a **Targeted and Identified Recruitment Guide** will be developed for the Talent Acquisition Team to provide Hiring Managers with a guide that clearly outlines the strategy and process for targeted recruitment (ASSAP 1.1a). To complement this guide, training will be developed for Chairs and panel members to ensure consistent understanding of the process and what role they play (ASSAP 1.1b). Lastly, the Talent Acquisition Team will look at systems and/or process improvements to ensure applications from women and men are separated to ensure women are considered first, in line with the principles of targeted selection (ASSAP 1.1c).

In addition to the above, selecting an increased number of roles for Identified or Targeted recruitment will provide more opportunities for the appointment of women. A diversity plan for each School will be developed as part of the annual planning process including determination as to which roles should be identified or targeted (ASSAP 1.4). The University will also ensure that shortlisting KPI's for SENG and SIPS are developed to ensure increased numbers of women being considered at interview stage (ASSAP 1.5)

As many academic staff are employed by direct appointment at the local level, rather than centralised competitive recruitment which ensures more rigour (e.g. interview panels), the University will review the gender diversity of these appointments to ensure that this process is not contributing to gender imbalances in these Schools (ASSAP 1.6).

Sub-barrier 3: Lack of Succession and Retention Planning to ensure progression and retention of women staff.

In addition to increasing the number of women through competitive recruitment methods, the University recognises that other key strategies are required to build and maintain the pipeline of women for CESE. The University must not only attract women to CESE, but also nurture and retain those staff through a supportive culture and opportunities for career progression. The representation of women academic staff in CESE decreases the higher the academic level (Fig. 30), so it is important to address this issue through complementary actions (Table 17).

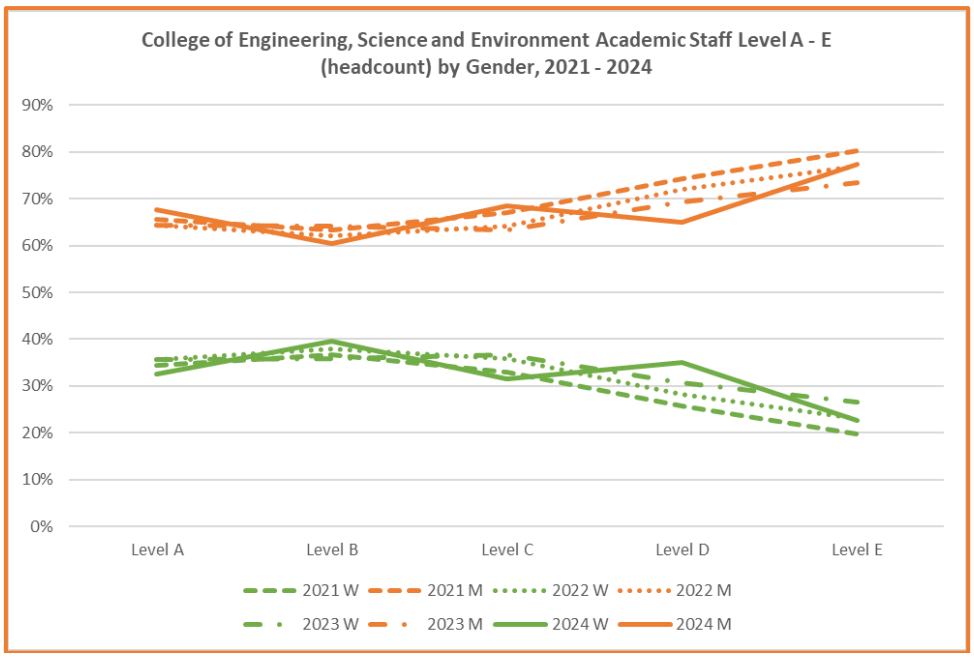


Figure 30. CESE Pipeline by Gender 2021-2024

Table 17. Actions to address succession and retention in CESE

ASSAP 1.7a	Undertake Talent Reviews
ASSAP 1.7b	Develop succession and retention plans
ASSAP 1.7c	Analyse exit survey and interview data for CESE collected by HRS
ASSAP 2.2	Provide Career Development Support

As highlighted in Cygnet #2 and in Figures 31 and Table 15A below, women in CESE have a strong promotion success rate; however, greater numbers of women are required to apply (in comparison to men) in order to achieve gender parity by building the pipeline through to senior levels.

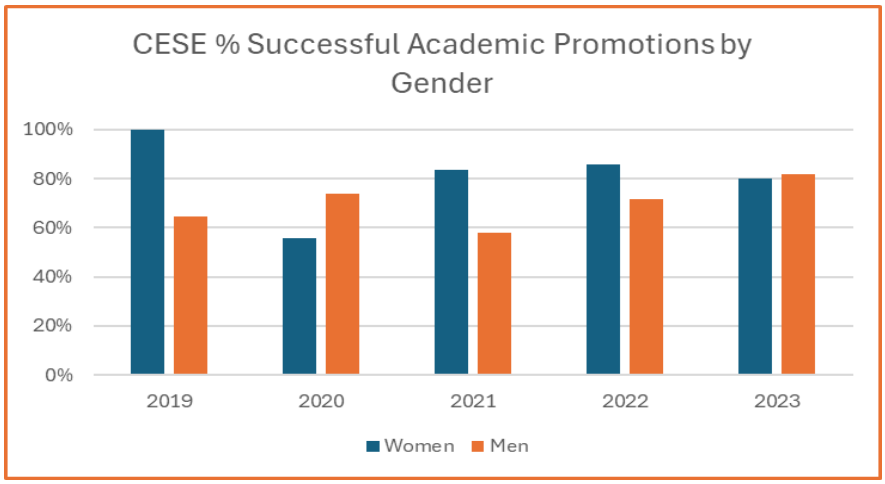


Figure 31. Percentage of success rates CESE

For example, while total application and success rates (relative to cohort size) are higher for women than men in CESE between 2020-2023, the total number of men being promoted remains higher (Table 18). This signals that the ASBAP actions reviewed in Cygnet 2 have

been working, but women need ongoing support through the promotions process to maintain and build the pipeline further.

Table 18. Summary of Academic Promotions in CESE by number and percentage

Year	Gender	Total CESE	Applied		Successful	
			Applied	% of Total	Successful	% of Total
2023	Women	144	15	10.4%	12	8.3%
	Men	266	22	8.3%	18	6.8%
2022	Women	140	14	10.0%	12	8.6%
	Men	260	14	5.4%	10	3.8%
2021	Women	130	6	4.6%	5	3.8%
	Men	264	19	7.2%	11	4.2%
2020	Women	125	9	7.2%	5	4.0%
	Men	264	19	7.2%	14	5.3%
2020-2023	Women	539	44	8.2%	34	6.3%
	Men	1054	74	7.0%	53	5.0%

Women need to be encouraged to apply for promotion through dedicated career planning conversations as part of annual performance reviews and workforce planning. In addition, a greater number of women entering the pipeline as part of talent acquisition strategies will also assist to tip the scales, especially at senior levels.

In addition to the data provided focused on promotion success rates, Tables 19 and 20 below provide additional data insights on successful promotions and terminations to population. The data highlights that women are not leaving in greater numbers to population than men (with the exception of 2022 data for SIPS); however, due to the low population of women to start with, retention of the existing population is crucial as well as attracting more women through recruitment.

Table 19 Summary of Promotions and Terminations to Population for SENG

School of Engineering	2020					2021					2022					2023				
	Total	W	W %	M	M %	Total	W	W %	M	M %	Total	W	W %	M	M %	Total	W	W %	M	M %
Headcount	139	21	15%	118	85%	134	18	13%	116	87%	169	36	21%	133	79%	155	38	25%	117	75%
Promotions	4	0	0%	4	100%	2	0	0%	2	100%	4	1	25%	3	75%	8	2	25%	6	75%
Promotions to population			0.0%		3.4%			0.0%		1.7%			2.8%		2.3%			5.3%		5.1%
Terminations	33	5	15%	28	85%	47	4	9%	43	91%	49	7	14%	42	86%	47	10	21%	37	79%
Termination to population			24%		24%			22%		37%			19%		32%			26%		32%

Table 20 Summary of Promotions to Population and Termination to Population for SIPS

School of Information and Physical Sciences	2020					2021					2022					2023				
	Total	W	W %	M	M %	Total	W	W %	M	M %	Total	W	W %	M	M %	Total	W	W %	M	M %
Headcount	53	11	21%	42	79%	55	13	24%	42	76%	80	15	19%	65	81%	83	17	20%	66	80%
Promotions	1	0	0%	1	100%	2	0	0%	2	100%	2	1	50%	1	50%	5	3	60%	2	40%
Promotions to population			0.0%		2.4%			0.0%		4.8%			6.7%		1.5%			17.6%		3.0%
Terminations	9	2	22%	7	78%	12	3	25%	9	75%	20	6	30%	14	70%	14	2	14%	12	86%
Termination to population			18%		17%			23%		21%			40%		22%			12%		18%

Sub-barrier 4: Low numbers of women students in CESE

As noted in Cygnet #1, increases in enrolments for SIPS and SENG have occurred since Bronze however, as these numbers are relatively small, further improvements are required to ensure higher proportions of women students contributing to the STEM pipeline (Fig. 32).

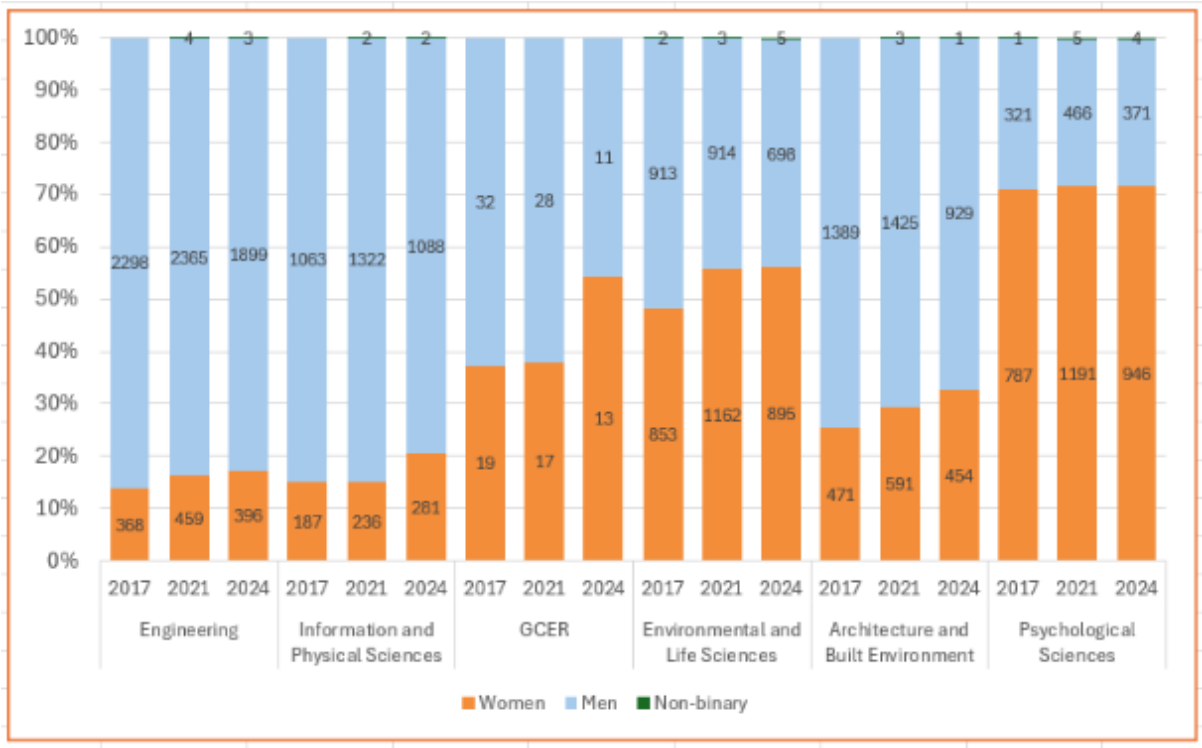


Figure 32. Number of women student enrolments in CESE by School (2017 – 2024)

The percentage of women students currently enrolled in SENG is only 17% and for SIPS is 20% (Table 21). In addition, the percentage of women Indigenous students in CESE is only 1.4%, in SIPS it is 1.5% and in SENG it is 2.4%.

Table 21. Current student enrolments by School for CESE

PROGRAM	2024			
	Women	Men	Non-binary	TOTAL
Architecture and Built Environment	454 (33%)	929 (67%)	1*	1384
Engineering	396 (17%)	1899 (83%)	3*	2298
Environmental and Life Sciences	895 (56%)	698 (44%)	5*	1598
Global Centre for Environmental Remediation	13 (54%)	11 (46%)	0	24
Information and Physical Sciences	281 (20%)	1088 (79%)	2*	1371
Psychological Sciences	946 (72%)	371 (28%)	4*	1321
Total	**2985 (37%)**	**4996 (63%)**	**15***	**7996**
*proportion < .01				

The University is committed to improving these numbers in the coming years through the following actions (Table 22):

Table 22. Actions to address low numbers of women students in CESE

ASSAP 1.8	Campaign to attract more women students to STEM
ASSAP 1.9	Survey data to understand better challenges for women students in STEM
ASSAP 1.10	Review retention rates for women students and develop exit survey for those that left
ASSAP 1.11	Retention of Indigenous students in STEM is less than non-Indigenous students in STEM
ASSAP 1.12	Scoping of potential long-term study to evaluate links between high school engagement and Uni choices
ASSAP 1.13	Leverage HunterWiSE outreach program through scholarship initiatives and additional schools

Sub-barrier 5: Equity culture within CESE

The University's Centre of Excellence for Equity in Higher Education is currently conducting a pilot project evaluating equity within CESE (Fig. 33), led by the UNESCO Chair in Equity, Social Justice, and Higher Education. Taking an intersectional approach, the tangible outcomes of this research will be applied on the pathway to Gold. This includes the generation of practical recommendations and pedagogical resources that enhance staff awareness, as well as co-formed professional learning and development opportunities.

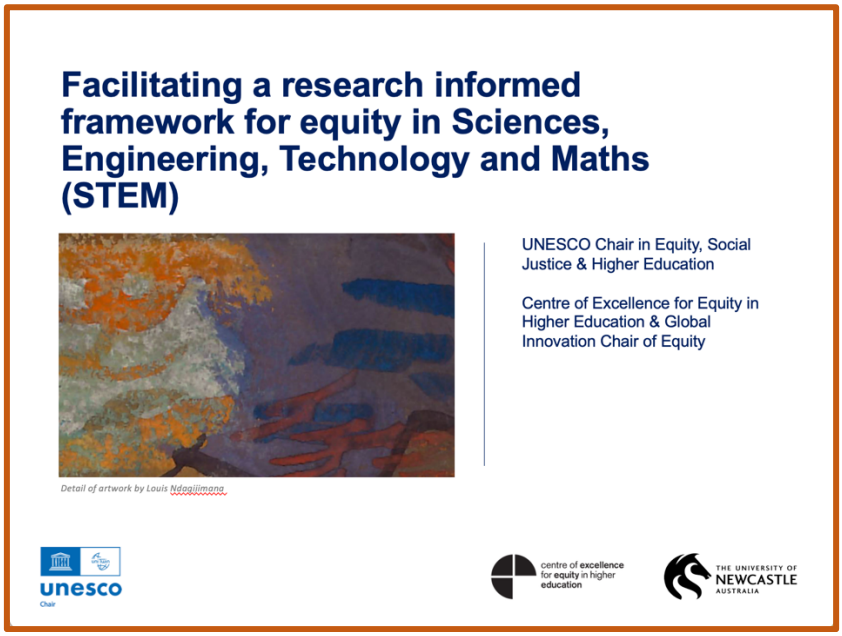


Figure 33. Research project underway in support of ASSAP

The research draws attention to how institutional cultures and practices not only shape understandings of equity, but also reproduce hierarchies and multidimensional**,** intersecting inequalities (Table 23).

Table 23. Research-informed framework for equity in STEM

Maldistribution	of access to networks, opportunities, resources, time, space
Misrecognition	of bodies of knowledge and people associated with "difference" – unequal cultural value order
Misrepresentation	from decision-making processes
Parity of participation	not about numbers but capacity to participate as an equal peer

Survey participants from the project (Table 24) agreed that greater numbers of women in STEM was indeed progress towards advancing gender equity however multidimensional inequalities frame the ways people participate in STEM environments.

Table 24. Data sources from the Framework for Equity Facilitative Workshop

Survey 1	2022 -	41 participants	Anonymous qualitative survey open to all staff across the College	In-depth staff interviews as follow up (27 to date)
Survey 2	2023 -	200+ completed	Mixed methods survey	In-depth follow up interviews (24 to date)

The project has shown that even though more women (and other underrepresented groups) may now be present in STEM, they do not necessarily feel represented, included nor recognised (Table 25).

Table 25. Example qualitative data from the Framework for Equity Qualitative survey

SOURCE	**EXAMPLE EXCERPT**
Survey 1	*We have a very diverse staff now and a very good representation of females in the school. But what I still see is often the females are still given the roles that are less likely to lead them to promotion.* (academic woman)
Survey 2	*One of our senior lecturers came to the six of us and literally said, "Look, it's all well and good. I get this whole diversity thing and women in science and all that, blah-blah-blah, but you do realise that if you're going to actually work in this field, you're going to have to actually buckle in and get some work done. There's none of this standing around chit-chatting stuff. We actually need some results." I just saw these four young girls just cringe.* (student woman)
Survey 2	*It's divisive because instead of talking about whatever the content is…it's, "This is how it is for everybody else and then we're going to have one lecture on how it is for Indigenous people"* (student of undisclosed gender)

As a result of these insights, CESE will apply the tangible outcomes of the research project – for example, generate the practical recommendations and pedagogical resources that enhance staff awareness of equity (ASSAP 1.14) to assist with shaping a more equitable culture for all within the College.

ACTION PLAN (Key Barrier 1: STEM PIPELINE)

KEY BARRIER 1: STEM PIPELINE						
Ref	Rationale/Evidence	Actions & Outputs	Timeframe (start & end)	Person / Group responsible for implementing action	Senior Leader accountable for action delivery	Desired Outcomes and Impact
1.1	Implementation of a Pilot targeting women was impacted by limited understanding of the process by key stakeholders (Recruiters, Panel members, Chairs).	a. Develop guidelines for identified and targeted recruitment. b. Develop training and awareness of process for Recruiters and panel members. c. Improve system or process to ensure applications from women are considered BEFORE those from men.	2024	Talent Acquisition EDI AD EDIs	CPCO DVCA	Guideline developed and utilised by key stakeholders. 100% of panellists complete training. No concerns raised by panellists or candidates about process. 50% increase in number of women candidates put forward for interview.
1.2	Greater nos. of women on targeted recruitment panels contributes to increased number of women appointed.	Commit to 50% women on panels (equal representation) for all future roles targeting women.	2024 and ongoing	Talent Acquisition EDI AD EDI	CPCO DVCA PVC CESE	Minimum 50% women on panels (equal representation) achieved for all targeted panels.
1.3	Targeted Selection Pilot demonstrated limited success in appointing a woman largely due to low numbers of women applying for targeted roles.	a. Develop an Employee Value Proposition for women at the University – particularly in STEM. b. Develop pro-active sourcing strategies for targeted and identified roles – search, new marketing campaigns international v domestic.	2024 Develop 2025 - 2026 Pilot 2027 Review	Talent Acquisition EDI AD EDI CESE	CPCO DVCA PVC CESE	Achieve and maintain 40/40/20 representation in SIPS and SENG.

		c. Assess the perspective of females to ascertain rationale for not applying or rejecting offers.				
1.4	Greater number of roles selected for women-targeted or identified recruitment required	Utilising data dashboard, develop a diversity plan for each School/Unit as part of annual planning process including determination as to which roles should be identified or targeted.	2024 and annually thereafter	Talent Acquisition HR BPs CESE – HOS CESE AD EDI	CPCO CESE PVC	50% increase in number of women-targeted roles in SIPS and SENG.
1.5	Further increases in the representation of women required in SENG & SIPS.	Set and track shortlisting KPI's for SENG & SIPS. Retention plans for Levels B to E.	2024	HOS – SENG HOS – SIPS AD EDI CESE HR BP CESE	PVC CESE	20% increase in number of women being appointed to and SENG and SIPS.
1.6	Direct appointments may be contributing to higher numbers of men staff.	Review data on the gender balance of direct appointments and grant-funded appointments where no competitive recruitment campaign has taken place.	2024	Talent Acquisition/ EDI AD/EDI	CPCO DVCA PVC CESE	Data insights provide evidence to inform potential gender strategies with direct appointments if required.
1.7	Women representation decreases the higher the level of the role.	a. Hold annual Talent Reviews to identify high potential academic and professional women. b. Develop career development plans and succession plans. c. Review exit survey and interview data.	2024 and annually thereafter	Talent Acquisition/ CESE - HOS CESE AD EDI	CPCO CESE PVC	20% increase in representation of women at level E in CESE.

1.8	Greater number of women students required to build the pipeline for STEM.	Campaign to engage and attract more women students to apply for STEM degrees through dedicated web page.	2024/2025	M&C Future Students	DVCG	10% increase in enrolments by students in STEM degrees.
1.9	Data required to better understand the experience of women students and women Indigenous students in schools dominated by men.	Develop survey and/or run focus groups to better understand challenges and opportunities for existing students.	2024/2025	AD EDI CEEHE	PVC CESE DIR CEEHE	10% increase in number of women students and 50% increase in students both women and Indigenous in SIPS and SENG.
1.10	Improve tracking of retention rates of women students in underrepresented areas.	Review retention rates for women students and develop exit survey for those that have left.	2024/2025	SPP HOS AD EDI CESE	DIR SPP	Retention rates for women students increases by 10% in SIPS and SENG.
1.11	Retention of Indigenous students in STEM is less than non-Indigenous students in STEM.	Initiate establishment of Indigenous Students in STEM network at the University.	2024/2025	Indigenous Student Advancement Team, Wollotuka	PVC ISL Director, Wollotuka PVC CESE	Retention rates for women Indigenous students increases by 50%.
1.12	More data insights required into links between high school engagement programs with University degree choice of female students.	Scoping of potential long-term study to evaluate links between high-school engagement and University degree choices.	$10K invested in 2023 Scoping 2024 Review 2025	SPP ASWP HunterWiSE	ASWP	Longitudinal study established for local outreach program.
1.13	Low number of women students enrol in STEM degrees.	Leverage HunterWiSE outreach program through scholarship initiatives and additional schools.	$40k invested in 2023-2024 Review impact 2025	HunterWiSE Future Students M&C	ASWP	Women enrolment in STEM degrees increases by 10%.
1.14	Numbers of underrepresented groups (e.g. women) are increasing in CESE but their experience of 'equity' differs from other groups.	Apply the recommendations from CEEHE's Equity Research Pilot Report to improve culture and review progress.	2024 – 2026	CESE – HOS AD EDI CEEHE	PVC CESE DIR CEEHE	Cultural change demonstrated through staff and student survey evaluation and retention rates.

KEY BARRIER 2: Career Development

Evidence of Barrier

Cygnet #2 report highlighted the progress the University had made since Bronze via the delivery of a range of initiatives that facilitated capacity building and career progression for women. These programs weren't focused on 'fixing' women, rather recognising additional and unique systemic challenges women often face in comparison to their peers who are men, such as non-linear career paths. Although improvements in the representation of women is evident since Bronze, representation of academic women declines the higher the academic level (Fig. 34) and is more prevalent for Indigenous women, women with a disability, and women from CALD backgrounds.[11] For this reason, the University has carried through this barrier to ensure further progress is made in this space. In addition, some of the University's career development programs are relatively new or being reshaped based on Cygnet #2 reflections and require ongoing data collection and evaluation to ensure that they are delivering measurable outcomes for the individual and the organisation. A focus on Indigenous Women, Women with a Disability and Women from CALD background is supported by dedicated Silver actions and complementary Institutional strategies such as the Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP) and the Indigenous Employment Strategy and Action Plan (see above, Figure 5, Table 1 and Table 2).

Insights from the DIAP consultation and the Staff with Disability Network provides rationale for the low disclosure of disability. '*Many responses from staff highlighted difficulties and fears associated with identifying as disabled at the University. A number of staff reported encountering stigmatising beliefs, stereotypes, or negative comments which made them feel uncomfortable. Some staff expressed concerns and fears around disclosing disability and/or asking for reasonable adjustments in the workplace, wary of being treated badly because of making their needs known'*. Institutional work mentioned above as part of the DIAP will seek to improve the experience and environment whereby staff with disability have greater confidence to disclose.

[11] Additional insights were also gained from a literature review by the members of the EDI team and the University's representatives on the CALD Special Interest Group.
See: *The impact of mentoring and sponsorship opportunities for marginalised women*. (n.d.). CEDA. https://www.ceda.com.au/newsandresources/opinion/leadership-diversity-inclusion/the-impact-of-mentoring-and-sponsorship-opportunit; Mapedzahama, V., Laffernis, F., Barhoum, A., & O'Leary, J. (2023). Culturally and racially marginalised women in leadership: A framework for (intersectional) organisational action. In *Diversity Council Australia*. https://www.dca.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/carm_women_synopsis_online.pdf; and references in footnote 4.

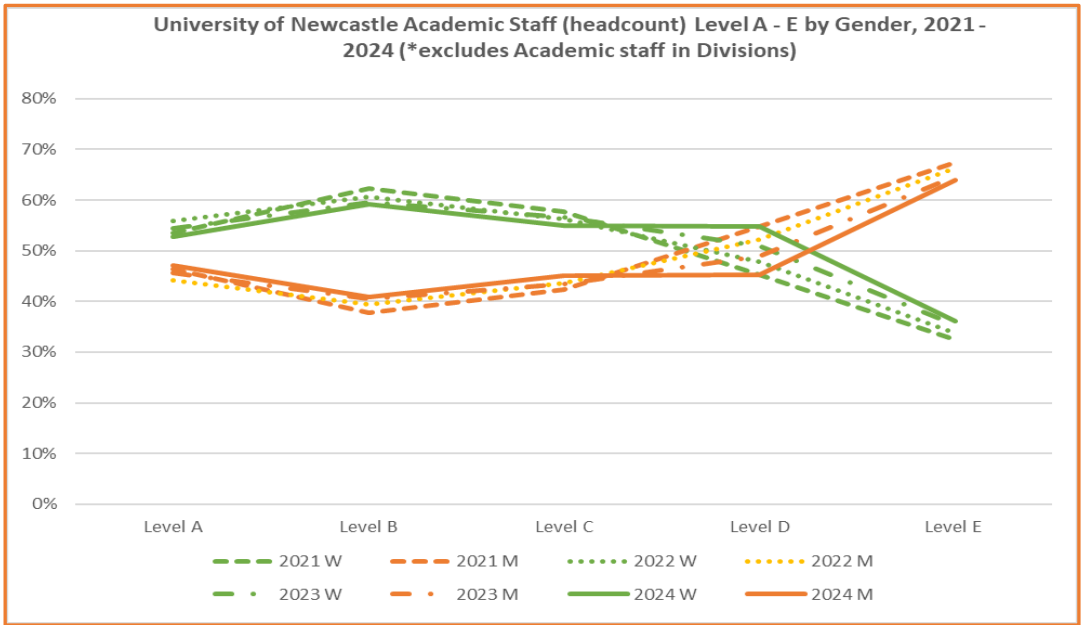
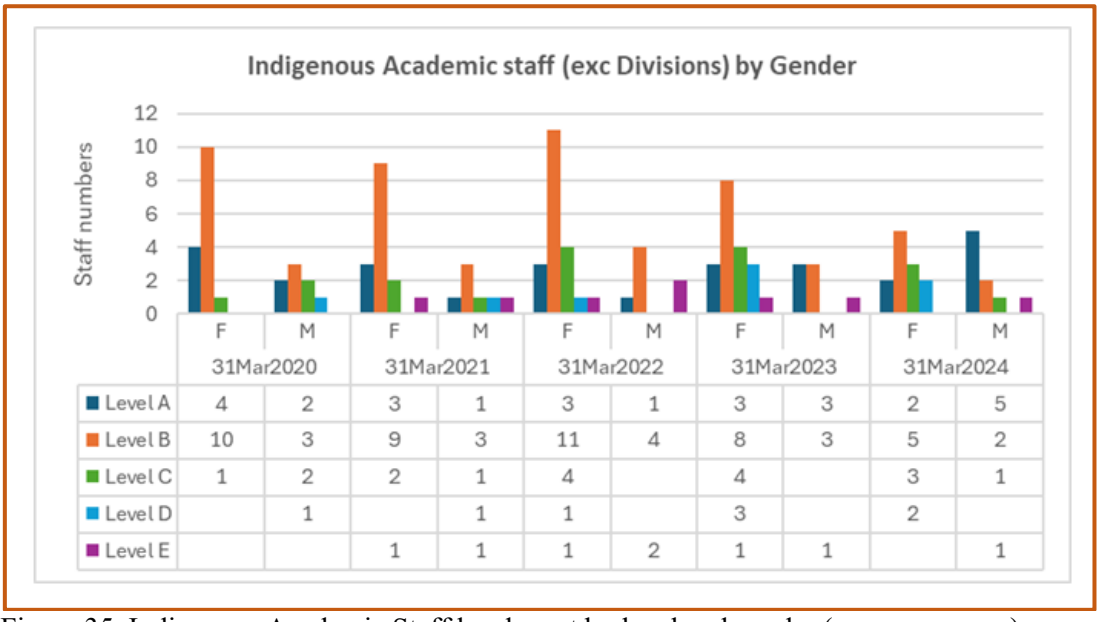


Figure 34. University pipeline by gender (men vs women).

Figure 35 highlights career progression challenges for Indigenous Academics (both men and women) with 86% of Indigenous academic staff clustered at Level C or below and only 14% representation at senior academic levels i.e. Levels D and E.



	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M
	31Mar2020		31Mar2021		31Mar2022		31Mar2023		31Mar2024	
Level A	4	2	3	1	3	1	3	3	2	5
Level B	10	3	9	3	11	4	8	3	5	2
Level C	1	2	2	1	4		4		3	1
Level D		1		1	1		3		2	
Level E			1	1	1	2	1	1		1

Figure 35. Indigenous Academic Staff headcount by level and gender (men vs women)

As a result of the Cygnet evidence combined with new data sources in 2024 (Table 26), the University identified five sub-issues which continue to contribute to the barrier for career development.

Table 26. Post-Bronze data sources (quantitative and qualitative) used to gain insight and provide evidence of the barrier.

TYPE OF DATA	CYGNET REPORT SOURCE	NEW SOURCE (2024)
Quantitative (analysed via descriptive statistics)	• 2021 and 2023 'Your Voice' staff engagement survey • 2023 Employee Experience survey • Parental leave data • Promotions data • Special Studies Leave data • Women in Research Fellowship data • Women in Leadership data • Mentoring data • PRD/APP data • Indigenous HDR data	• GEPS (survey of 1156 staff)
Qualitative (analysed via thematic analyses)	• In-depth interviews with 17 women *[64% academic/36% professional]* • Input from Research Advantage team that delivers and evaluates WiR program	• 'Gender Pulse' open-ended questions • Athena Swan Working Party insights and feedback • Webinar feedback from staff • EDI Committee/College EDI Committee feedback • Synthesised findings from in-depth interviews of 65 staff *[75% women/25% men; 75% academic/25% professional; 11% Indigenous]* • Input from CALD women participating in the SAGE Cultural Diversity Special Interest Group

Sub Issue 1: Research output challenges for women and other equity cohorts

Research Output Calculation

For research output with multiple authors, each author on the output is considered uniquely, for example, if an output has two authors, a man and a woman, each individual is counted as one authorship. It conveys that in assessing authorship, each individual author is counted separately regardless of the total number of authors or their genders. This ensures that each author receives individual recognition for their contribution to the research output.

Category 1 Research Output

Research publications captured in the University's system NURO are reviewed and categorised by the Research Performance, Excellence and Impact team for inclusion in the Annual Research Publications Collection - used for internal and external reporting. For reporting purposes, eligible publications are reviewed by University staff and categorised as either:
A1 – original research monograph, B1 – original research, scholarly length chapter, C1 – original research, peer reviewed journal article, or E1 – original research, peer reviewed, fully published conference paper. In addition, for other eligible Books, Chapters, Journal Articles and Conference Papers will be review and classify based on the framework above.

Non-Traditional Research Output

Eligible Non-Traditional Research Output are categories as N1 and is part of the Category 1 Research Output. The assessment guidelines provide the principles that underpin the collection and assessment processes of NTROs, including detailed criteria and output ratings by type of

NTRO in order to formally recognise, encourage and reward academic researchers. Each NTRO submitted to the University must be accompanied by a research statement and include: Research background: field, context and research question; Research contribution: innovation and new knowledge; and Research significance: evidence of excellence.

A research statement of no more than 250 words/2000 characters as per the Australian Research Council (ARC) guidelines is required upon submission of each NTRO for assessment. The Research Statement should also include where possible evidence of engagement and potential for future impact. Other supporting documentation or evidence of peer review should also be attached at the time of submission including: Print or electronic critical or scholarly essays or citations, articles, reviews conference papers etc., acknowledging the research output and written by peers; Recognition through shortlisting, prizes, awards or honours, reviewed and judged by a panel of peers, selection for further exhibitions, events or publications; Commissioning through a peer review process; and competitively funded grant schemes.

Observation

Despite the success of programs developed to address this key barrier in Bronze (see Cygnet #2), men continue to produce a higher percentage of research outputs (Fig. 32) and hold a higher percentage of research income (Fig. 33) than women. Achieving research metrics is integral to career progression and promotion; however, achieving these metrics can be challenging for women. This is due in part to carer responsibilities (Cygnet #4 and Key Barrier 4 below) but also due to a lack of equal opportunity for research collaborations (see Fig. 13 GEPS). Moreover, the intersectional impact on equal opportunity for other equity cohorts has not been properly considered in the past (see Fig. 14 GEPS).

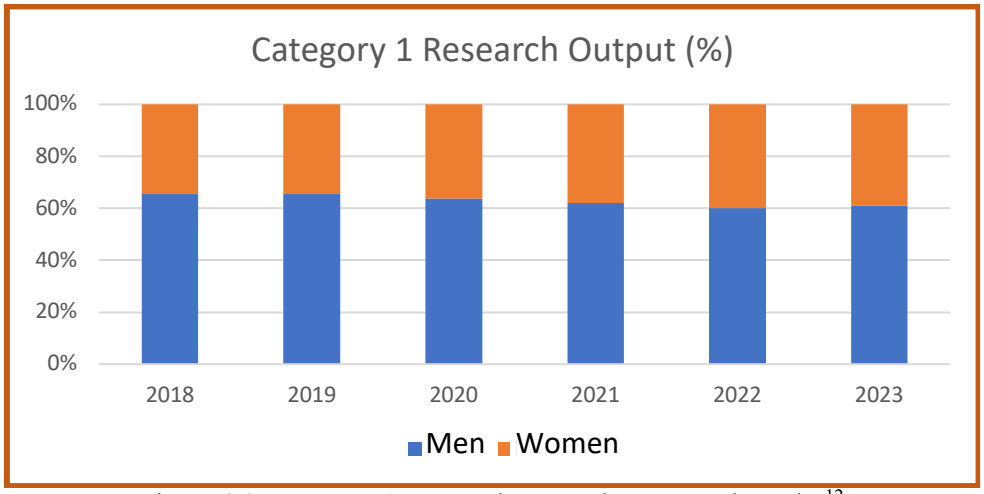


Figure 36. Category 1 Research output by year and gender[12]

Figure 36 is the primary guide for Sub Issue 1. Additional data is provided in Figures 37-40. This disaggregated data demonstrates that the greatest disparity exists in CESE, which connects with Key Barrier 1 and the ongoing challenges with the STEM pipeline.

[12] Only University of Newcastle authors are included in this data set. Non-Traditional Research Outputs (NTROs) are included in this data, as the University has formal guidelines for recognising NTROs, which are evaluated and recorded by the NTRO committee.

Figure 37. Research outputs by gender, disaggregated by gender, University wide. (Top: Percentage of Staff. Bottom: Percentage of Category 1 Output)

Figure 37 illustrates a decline in staff counts across all levels (A to E) from 2018 to 2023 University-wide, with a more significant decrease among staff who identify as women, as opposed to men. Concurrently, the percentage of Category 1 outputs shows an increasing trend for men across most levels, while women's output percentages generally decline. These trends highlight a growing gender disparity, emphasising the importance of advancing current targeted strategies to retain female staff and promote gender equity in output contributions.

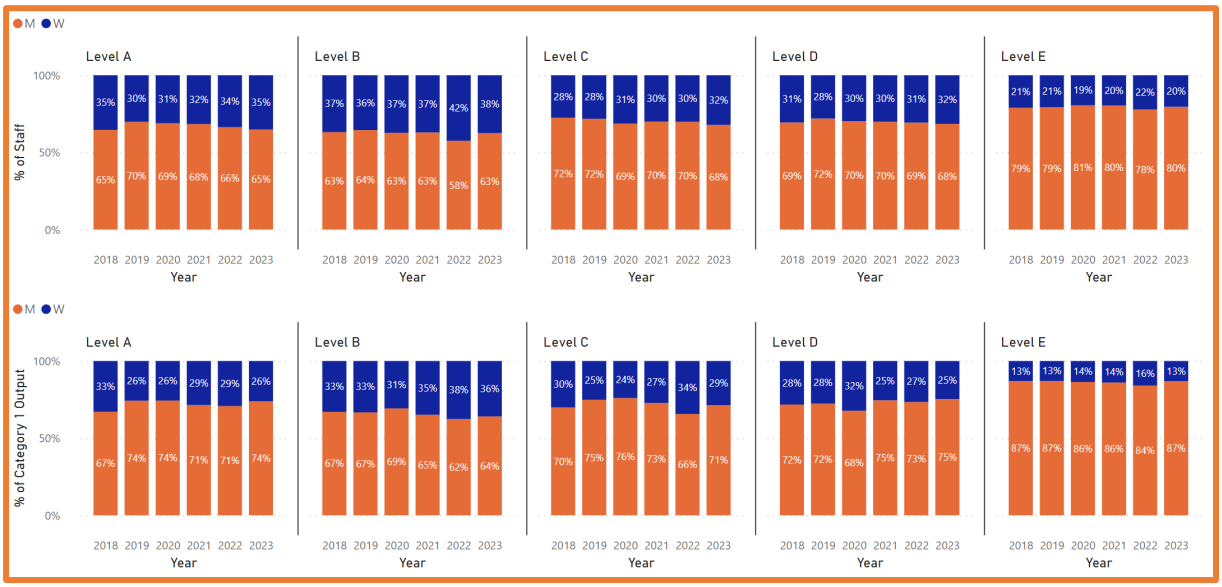


Figure 38 Refined data in relation to gender and academic level in the College of Engineering, Science and Environment. (Top: Percentage of Staff. Bottom: Percentage of Category 1 Output)

Figure 38 reveals ongoing issues with women's representation in the College of Engineering, Science, and Environment, which includes STEM disciplines. From 2018 to 2023, there is a noticeable decline in staff counts across all levels (A to E), with a more significant decrease among women compared to men. Concurrently, the percentage of Category 1 outputs shows an increasing trend for men across most levels, while women's output percentages generally decline. These trends highlight a growing gender disparity, emphasising the need to advance

and consistently apply targeted strategies to retain women as staff and promote gender equity in output contributions. Addressing these persistent issues is crucial for fostering a more inclusive and diverse environment in STEM.

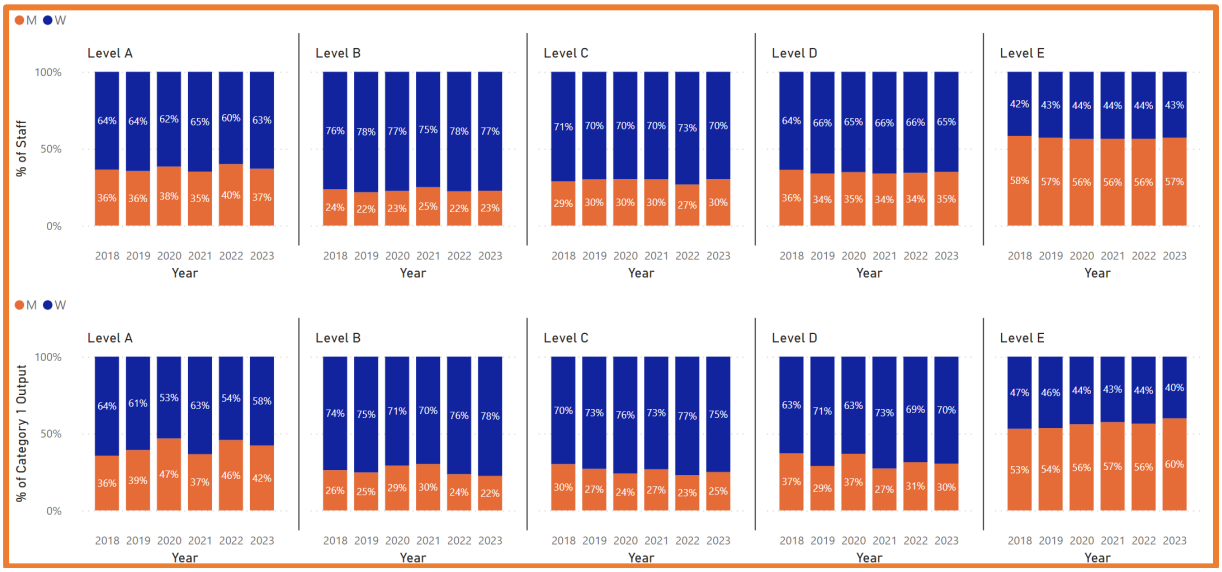


Figure 39 Refined data in relation to gender and academic level in the College of Health, Medicine, and Wellbeing. (Top: Percentage of Staff. Bottom: Percentage of Category 1 Output)

Figure 39 for the College of Health, Medicine, and Wellbeing reveals that the underrepresentation of women is not an issue for this college. From 2018 to 2023, staff counts across all levels (A to E) show a more significant decrease in men compared to women. Concurrently, the percentage of Category 1 outputs indicates a higher contribution from women across most levels, while men's output percentages remain relatively lower and fluctuate. These trends highlight that the college does not face the same gender disparities seen elsewhere, as women's representation and output contributions are strong. It remains important, however, to ensure that both genders are equally supported and retained to maintain this balance. Moreover, increased use of qualitative and intersectional data will be important going forward to understand differences of experience and challenges faced by different equity cohorts. This will be a focus, post-Silver, as the University continues to mature in its collection of demographic data, noting the ongoing difficulties discussed in 'About the Data' section above.

Figure 40 for the College of Human and Social Futures reveals a mixed representation of gender across staff levels (A to E) from 2018 to 2023. Women are consistently represented in greater numbers than men at several levels, particularly at levels B and C, where the disparity is most pronounced. Concurrently, the percentage of Category 1 outputs is higher for women across most levels. These trends demonstrate that the underrepresentation of women is not an issue in this college. However, similar to the College of Engineering, Science and Environment, maintaining gender balance and supporting both genders equally is crucial to sustaining a diverse and inclusive academic environment.

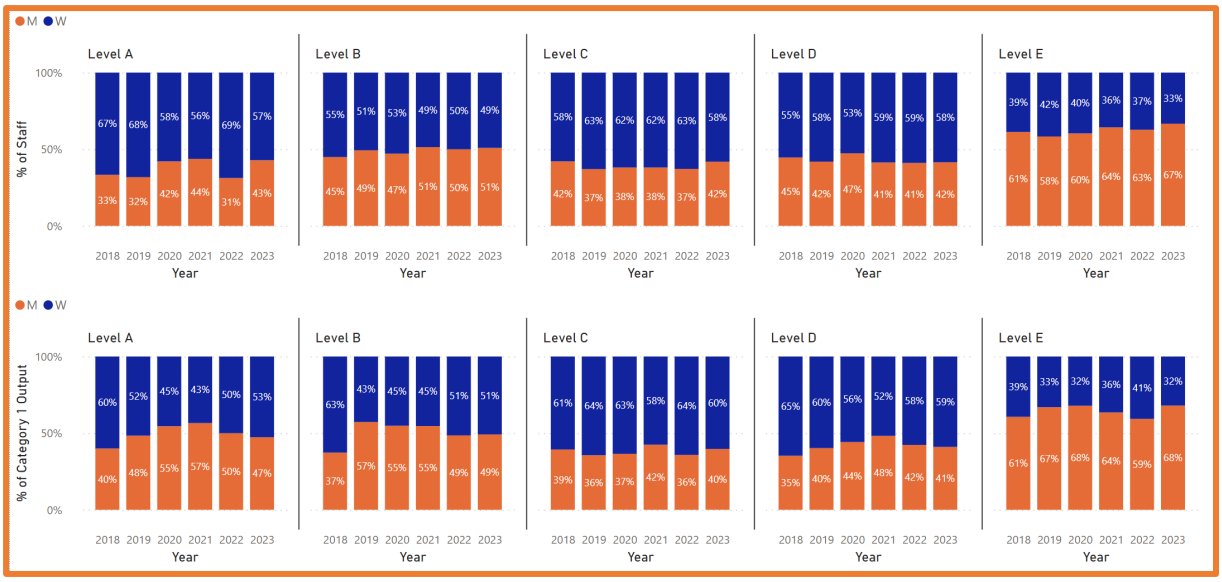


Figure 40 Refined data in relation to gender and academic level in the College of Human and Social Futures, which includes disciplines contained within the ARC panels of the Humanities and Creative Arts and the Social Behaviour and Economic Sciences. (Top: Percentage of Staff. Bottom: Percentage of Category 1 Output)

Research Funding Calculation

The external research income excludes embargoed grants, the net research funding (Figure 41) represents the grant amount allocated to a particular staff member. For example, if a research grant of $100,000 was awarded to a team of two academics, one man and one woman. The academics are awarded the net research funding based on the agreed percentage split which is recorded in the system. In this case, if both academics have a 50/50 split, then each man and woman academic will receive $50,000 net research funding.

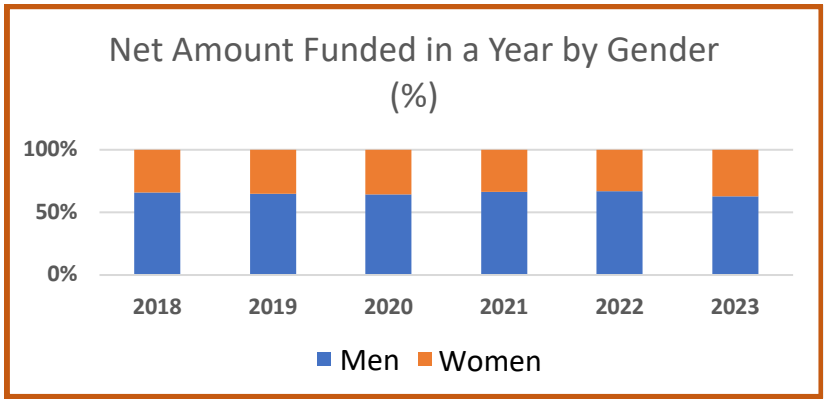


Figure 41. Net research funding by year and gender.

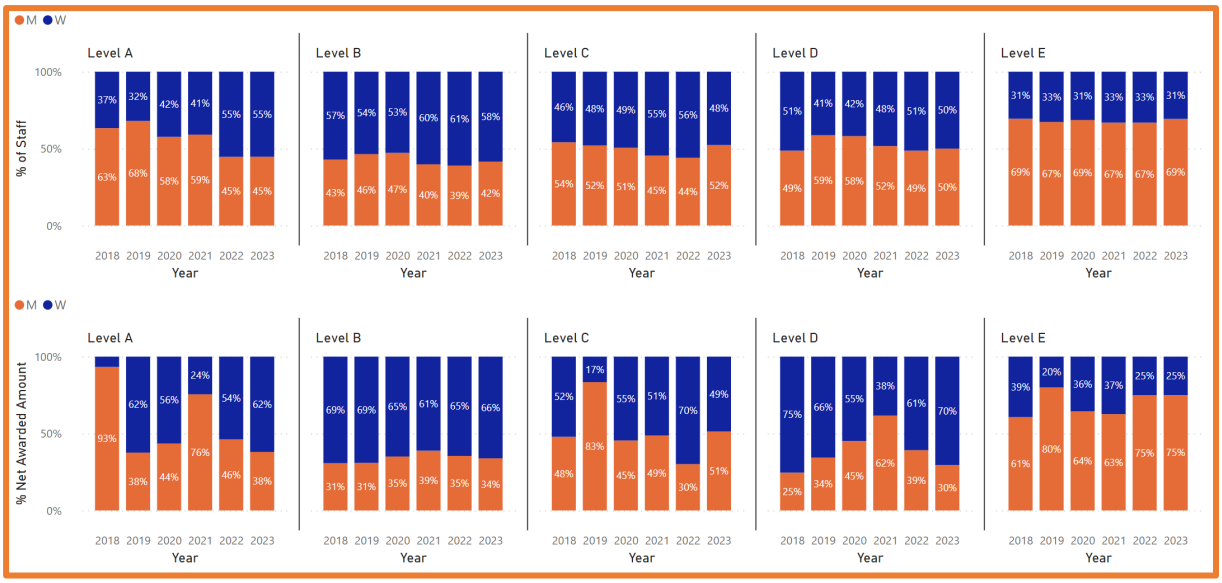


Figure 42. Net research funding by gender and academic level across the University (Top: % of Staff. Bottom: Percentage of Net research funding)

The university-wide charts (Figure 42) illustrate that from 2018 to 2023, there is a general decline in staff counts across levels A to E, with the representation of women decreasing more significantly than men. This trend underscores the need to address the decreasing number of women. Despite this decline, women consistently secure a higher net amount of research grants compared to men across most levels. In 2018, the weighted ratio of research grants for women was 39.0%. By 2023, this ratio increased to 51.2%. This indicates that, on average, women received a higher proportion of research grants in 2023 compared to 2018 across all academic levels, highlighting an improvement in the overall weighted ratio of grant distribution to women. Continued support is essential to enhance their success in obtaining research grants to maintain gender equity in both representation and research contributions.

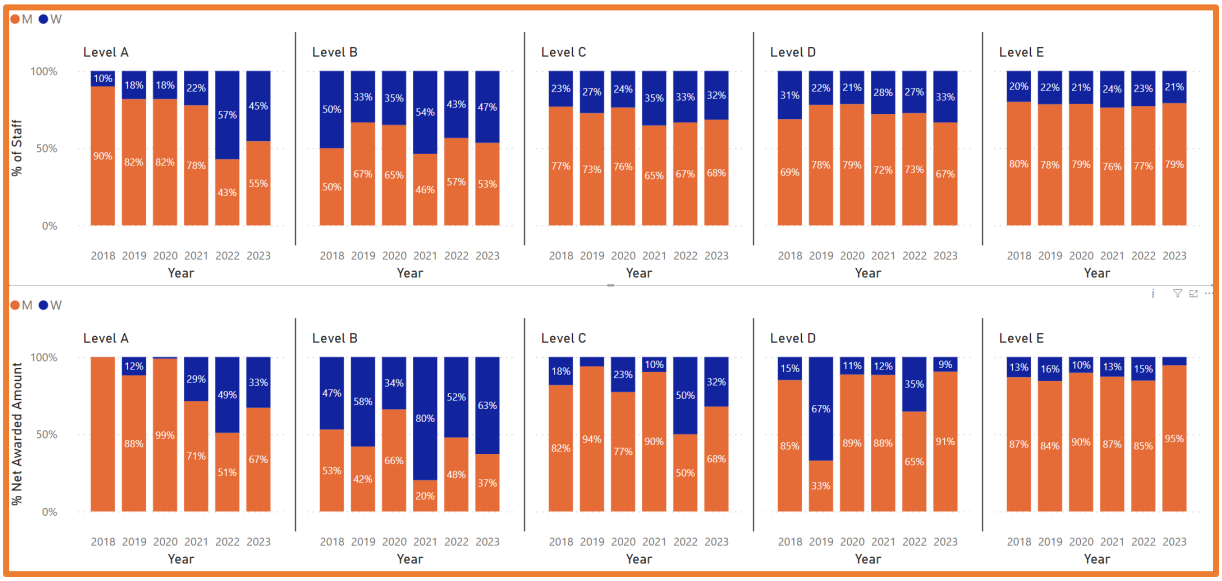


Figure 43. Net research funding by gender and academic level for College of Engineering, Science and Environment. (Top: Percentage of Staff. Bottom: Percentage of Net research funding)

The overall trends in Figure 43 for the College of Engineering, Science and Environment shows a general decline in staff counts for both genders across all levels, with the number of men decreasing more significantly in some levels. Despite these changes, men still dominate the

field in terms of overall numbers, which is a challenge for STEM disciplines. While, women perform well in Level B, the dominance of men is validated by the significant income brought in by men through research grants, particularly in Level D and Level E. The increase in the proportion of grants secured by women in recent years indicates successful efforts to improve gender equity in research funding. However, the field remains male-dominated, underscoring the need for continued support and initiatives to bolster female representation and success in STEM disciplines.

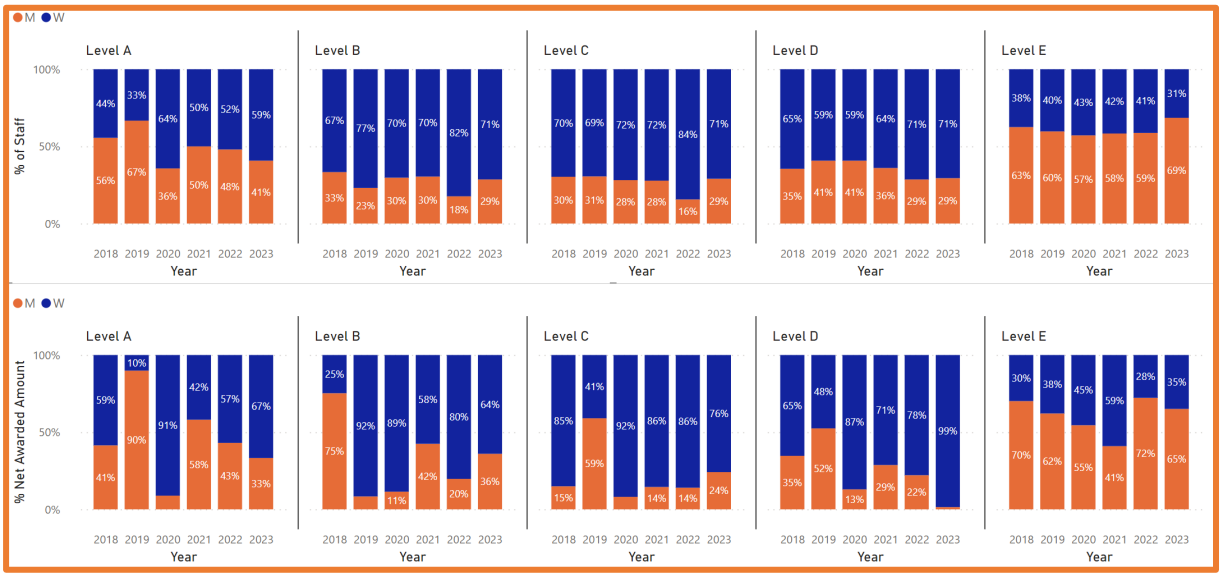


Figure 44. Net research funding by gender and academic level for College of Health, Medicine, and Wellbeing. (Top: Percentage of Staff. Bottom: Percentage of Net research funding)

The overall trends (Fig. 44) indicate that the College of Health, Medicine, and Wellbeing generally has higher representation of women across all levels compared to men. This is reflected in the research grant distribution, where women have seen significant improvements in their share of grants from 2018 to 2023. Women have either achieved or maintained parity or surpassed men in grant acquisition across most levels, highlighting successful efforts in supporting women. This contrasts with the typical male-dominated trend seen in many other STEM disciplines, particularly in College of Engineering, Science and Environment.

Figure 45. Net research funding by gender and academic level for College of Human and Social Futures. Top: Percentage of Staff. Bottom: Percentage of Net research funding)

In Figure 45, the overall trends indicates that the College of Human and Social Futures has higher representation of women across all levels compared to men. This is reflected in the research grant distribution, where women have seen significant improvements in their share of grants from 2018 to 2023. Women have either achieved or maintained parity or surpassed men in grant acquisition across most levels, highlighting successful efforts in supporting women. These improvements suggest effective initiatives to promote gender equity in both staff representation and research funding within the college.

To address this continued barrier to equal opportunity, due to the success of the **Women in Research (WIR) Fellowship Program** as highlighted in Cygnet #2, taking an intersectional approach, the University has decided to take a broader view to **include other equity cohorts** that may benefit from the fellowship support and funding (see also Barrier 4, sub issues 6 and 7). Focus areas will include gender, disability, CALD and Indigenous at Levels B, C and D. In addition, there will be a new 'Excellence Stream' to the program that will focus on Levels C and D and again academic staff from equity cohorts will be prioritised. The program will provide mentoring and flexible funding over an 18-month period to assist academic staff to focus on research outputs. (ASSAP 2.1)

Sub Issue 2: Low number of promotion applications by women and career development discussions

As highlighted in Cygnet #2, although women have a strong success rate with promotion, greater number of academic women are required to apply (in comparison to men) to achieve gender parity at senior levels. As women often wait longer to apply for promotion (despite being ready), career conversations as part of the **Academic Planning and Performance (APP) process** are essential. Although the number of academic women who participated in APP increased from 57% (2018) to 70% (2022) greater increases in uptake by academic women is required to optimise opportunities for career progression discussions (ASSAP 2.2a). Qualitative insights from Cygnet #2 also highlighted the profound influence managers/supervisors can have in supporting career development however capability to have those conversations varied greatly. As such, the University will ensure that managers/supervisors are equipped with skills and resources to optimise the career development conversation as part of APP (ASSAP 2.2b). See Table 27 for summary of actions.

Table 27 Actions to support Career planning

ASSAP 2.2a	Increase participation in APP to facilitate career progression discussions.
ASSAP 2.2b	Build capability of Managers to have career progression conversations as part of APP.

Sub Issue 3: Requirement for mentoring and sponsorship programs

As reported in Cygnet #2, the University implemented a suite of development and mentoring programs to support career progression for women. The **Academic Mentoring Program** (AMP) Pilot which provides career development in research, teaching and engagement was piloted in 2021 and launched as an annual university program in 2022. The number of academic women participating as mentees in this program (79% in 2021 and 86% in 2022/2023) provides the rationale for the continued delivery and evaluation of this important program (ASSAP 2.3). Success of the AMP also led to the development of a parallel **Professional Mentoring Program** in 2023.

As part of its Cygnet reflection journey, the University has recognised that 'sponsorship' is also essential for career progression of women, particularly when an intersectional lens is applied to recognise the additional challenges for women with a disability, Indigenous women, and those from CALD backgrounds. A sponsorship program would recognise and address the systemic inequity that exists for women with different equity contexts experience across the full employee life cycle. Where mentorship is modelled around someone sharing knowledge, guidance and feedback, sponsorship is about a senior leader creating opportunities for someone more junior and/or from an underrepresented equity cohort.[13] On this basis, the University will pilot a **GEDI Sponsorship Program** for Women and other underrepresented groups in 2025 (ASSAP 2.4).

University of Newcastle representatives on SAGE's CALD Special Interest Group provided the following summary of the challenges and why sponsorship is an appropriate support:

Sponsorship is crucial for the career advancement of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) women in academia for several reasons:

1. *Sponsorship provides access to opportunities such as grants, research projects, and leadership positions that may otherwise be challenging to attain due to systemic barriers or limited visibility. Sponsors actively advocate for CALD women, ensuring their consideration for these opportunities and thus enhancing their professional growth.*[1]
2. *Sponsorship contributes significantly to the visibility and recognition of CALD women's achievements within academic settings. CALD women often face obstacles in gaining recognition for their contributions, and sponsors play a pivotal role in promoting their accomplishments both within the institution and across the broader academic community.*[1]
3. *Sponsors offer invaluable career guidance, mentorship, and advice tailored to the unique challenges faced by CALD women in academia. This guidance is instrumental in navigating institutional politics, developing leadership skills, and making strategic career decisions.*[1]
4. *Sponsorship facilitates the establishment of professional networks and connections, which are essential for collaborations, obtaining feedback on research, and accessing resources that can support career progression.*[1]
5. *Sponsorship helps challenge stereotypes and biases that CALD women encounter, thereby fostering a more inclusive and equitable academic environment. By actively promoting the skills, capabilities, and contributions of CALD women, sponsors contribute to breaking down barriers to their advancement*[1]

In sum, sponsorship is integral to supporting CALD women in overcoming barriers, accessing opportunities, and advancing their careers in academia. It provides essential guidance, advocacy, visibility, and networking opportunities necessary for their professional development.

[13] https://hbr.org/2021/06/dont-just-mentor-women-and-people-of-color-sponsor-them

Sub Issue 4: Lack of leadership development opportunities for Indigenous staff

The **Thirri Wirri Leadership Program** is an external program run by highly experienced First Nations facilitators and presenters. The program uses evidence-based practices from current research, as well as maximising the amount of lived experience the team has on their own leadership journey as industry experts. The University has set up an ongoing relationship whereby places are offered to two Indigenous staff in their **Impact Leadership Programs** delivered in March and October annually.[14] The engagement with this program was part of implementation of the **'Maligagu' Employment Strategy** (Priority 3 Development and Advancement). Two staff members have successfully completed the program in October 2023 with both staff members now acting in higher levels, one by secondment and the other has increased her professional staff level from HEW 8 to HEW9.

As of March 2024, two staff are currently enrolled in the program and two will be offered places in the October program with the aim to encourage four staff per year to attend and increase this number once there is budget in College areas, so this is embedded as ongoing opportunity for development. The program is open to both academic and professional staff though an EOI process prior to the course commencing. The EOI is open to all Indigenous staff in a leadership role who have at least one direct report. (ASSAP 2.5) This is a cross-cutting action that also supports reducing Key Barrier 3 (see below).

Sub Issue 5: Insufficient succession planning for women

As a result of the University's Cygnet journey, it became apparent that there was insufficient succession and retention planning for key diversity groups, such as academic women and Indigenous staff, despite the University making good progress with increasing representation of both these groups. This sub issue is compounded in CESE, where inadequate pipelines exist (see Key Barrier 1). To address these issues, the University will develop a new succession planning framework that incorporates diversity factors (ASSAP 2.6), with a dashboard and schedule of reporting that includes the number of women at each level that tracks movements monthly (ASSAP 2.7)

[14] First Peoples Leading – Impact is a program tailored for First Nations people who are experienced team and people leaders. The structure consists of 5 expert led workshops delivered online, 3 x 1 to 1 coaching sessions with a senior executive coach as well as access to a suite of learning materials in various formats.

ACTION PLAN (Key Barrier 2: Career Development)

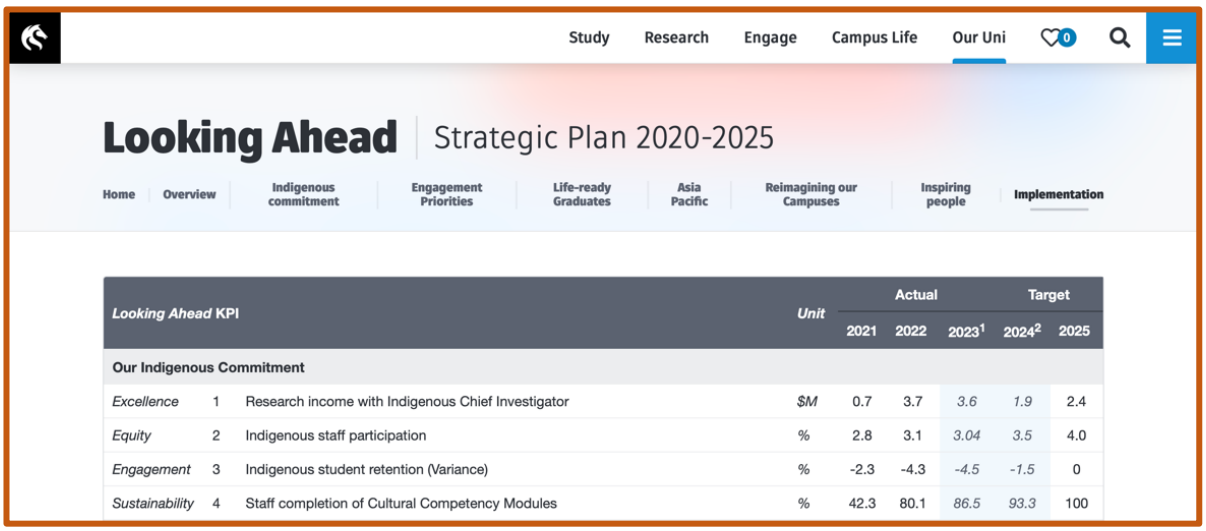
KEY BARRIER 2:						
Ref	Rationale/Evidence	Actions & Outputs	Timeframe (start & end)	Person / Group responsible for implementing action	Senior Leader accountable for action delivery	Desired Outcomes and Impact
2.1	Equity cohorts face additional challenges that may prevent them from achieving research metrics required for career progression.	Roll out Equity Research Fellowship Program that provides mentorship and flexible funding to support equity cohorts to achieve research metrics.	June 2024 and ongoing (18-month program)	PVC RI RA Team	DVCRI	10% increase in research outputs and/or career progression for equity cohorts (e.g. Women, Indigenous, CALD, Disability).
2.2	Career Planning critical for progression and retention of women.	a. Ongoing evaluation of PRD/APP engagement through monthly reporting of participation rates to HOS and Executive. b. Career Planning workshops held for staff and Career coaching provided for Managers.	2024 and annually thereafter	HRS/CAD HR BPs	CPCO	95% participation rate of PRD/APP by professional and academic staff. Managers equipped to have career conversations with staff and evaluated through survey data.
2.3	Key mentorship programs support women with career progression	Analysis of Academic Mentoring Program, Professional Staff Mentoring Program, Live Learn Lead and Women in Leadership with diversity lens.	2024 and annually thereafter.	HRS/CAD EDI	CPCO	Continued monitoring and evaluation of key programs to demonstrate impact on career progression.
2.4	Formal sponsorship program required to complement existing mentoring and developing programs.	Pilot GEDI Sponsorship Program for women, with a focus on those from underrepresented groups	2025	HRS EDI	CPCO DVCA	10 women participate in Pilot and if successful - implemented on annual basis.

2.5	Lack of development and advancement opportunities for Indigenous staff	Support Indigenous staff to attend the Thirri Wirri Indigenous Leadership program and evaluate impact on career progression.	2024 and annually thereafter.	OISL	PVC ISL	Minimum of 4 Indigenous staff participate annually. Career progression evident through increase in HEW or Academic level or other achievement.
2.6	University wide Succession planning that includes diversity focus	Develop Succession Planning framework that incorporates diversity factors.	2024	HRS EDI	CPCO DVCA	Framework developed to support succession planning.
2.7	Improved visibility and reporting of career advancement of women	Develop dashboard and reporting that includes # of women at each level, track movements monthly.	2024	HRS	CPCO	Improved tracking options to evaluate current female focused strategies and KPIs.

KEY BARRIER 3: Indigenous Cultural Competency

Evidence of Barrier

Since Bronze, the University has committed to increasing Indigenous representation in both its staff and student cohorts, and to improving its understanding of intersectionality as a barrier to the attraction, retention, and progression of Indigenous women and other under-represented groups (such as Indigenous women with a disability). The University's Strategic Plan prioritises these important KPIs and reports regularly on their progress (Fig. 46).



Looking Ahead KPI			*Unit*	Actual			Target	
				2021	2022	2023[1]	2024[2]	2025
Our Indigenous Commitment								
Excellence	1	Research income with Indigenous Chief Investigator	$M	0.7	3.7	*3.6*	*1.9*	2.4
Equity	2	Indigenous staff participation	%	2.8	3.1	*3.04*	*3.5*	4.0
Engagement	3	Indigenous student retention (Variance)	%	-2.3	-4.3	*-4.5*	*-1.5*	0
Sustainability	4	Staff completion of Cultural Competency Modules	%	42.3	80.1	*86.5*	*93.3*	100

Figure 46. Public Reporting of Our Indigenous Commitment KPIs

Currently, the University has 3.12% Indigenous staff representation and 4.8% of our domestic students are Indigenous. Despite these strong figures overall, the University is aware of lower representation of Indigenous academic staff in comparison to professional staff (See Cygnet #3 for supporting datasets). Moreover, Indigenous academic staff face an additional barrier related to institutional understanding of their research achievements, which results in the perception that they are less 'research active' than their non-Indigenous peers. This can impact their career progression and opportunities for promotion.

Underpinning the ability to attract, retain and support Indigenous staff and students (including Indigenous academics), is the ability to provide a culturally capable workplace and University environment where Indigenous staff and students feel safe and respected. As reported in Cygnet #3, the University made significant progress with work, such as the roll out of its comprehensive cultural capability training program; however, there is more that can be done (internally and externally) to improve the experience of Indigenous staff, students, and the wider communities served by the University.

As a result of the Cygnet evidence combined with new data sources in 2024 (Table 28), the University identified five sub-issues which continue to contribute to the barrier for Indigenous cultural capability.

Table 28. Post-Bronze data sources (quantitative and qualitative) used to gain insight and provide evidence of the barrier

TYPE OF DATA	CYGNET REPORT SOURCE	NEW SOURCE (2024)
Quantitative (analysed via descriptive statistics)	• 2021 and 2023 'Your Voice' staff engagement survey data • RAP Barometer data • Cultural Competency data • Employee Experience survey data • Indigenous staff and student data • Indigenous cadetship data • Recruitment data	• GEPS (survey of 1156 staff)
Qualitative (analysed via thematic analyses)	• Testimonials from Indigenous staff • Survey of staff upon completion the Cultural Capability Training	• Athena Swan Working Party insights and feedback • Webinar feedback from staff • Synthesised findings from in-depth interviews of 65 staff *[75% women/25% men; 75% academic/25% professional; 11% Indigenous]* • Input from OISL and Wollotuka Institute staff

Sub Issue 1: Limited number of Indigenous academic staff

At the University of Newcastle, there are low numbers of Indigenous Academic staff (n=29) in comparison to Indigenous Professional staff (n=65) and Indigenous Academic staff representation declines the higher the academic level (Fig. 47).

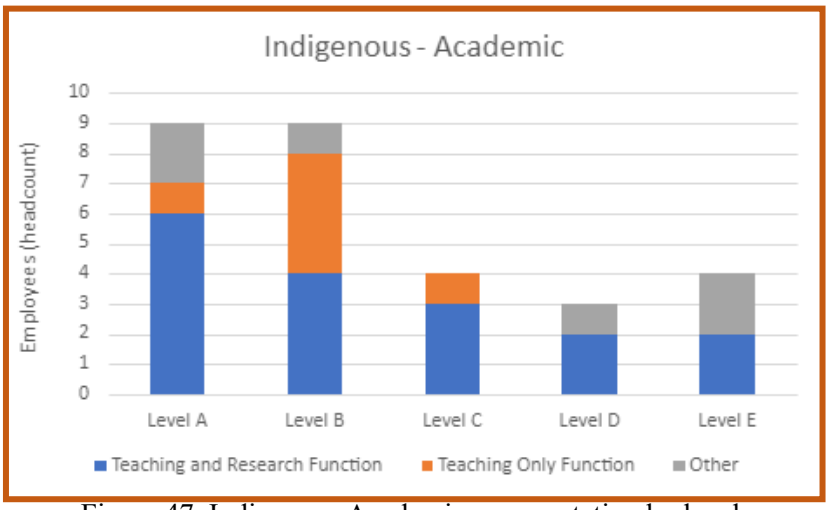


Figure 47. Indigenous Academic representation by level

In addition, the number of Indigenous academics in the sector is small and this creates a competitive market. To assist in building and retaining existing Indigenous academic staff, the University will:

Table 29. Actions to build and retaining Indigenous academic staff

ASSAP 3.1a	Focus on strategic sourcing to identify potential Indigenous academic staff
ASSAP 3.1b	Utilise Indigenous identified and targeted recruitment strategies to assist with greater numbers of Indigenous academic applicants and appointments
ASSAP 3.1c	Amplify the value proposition for Indigenous staff to work at the University

Due to the limited numbers of Indigenous academics across the sector, the University has adopted a 'grow your own' approach by supporting Indigenous students through a Level A/PhD support program. As part of the ASBAP, an Indigenous New Career Academic (INCA) program was piloted. While the results of the program were positive (with 2 PhD students supported through to graduation who have been retained in academic positions), it was determined that a more individualised approach should be taken going forward. This decision was informed by the University's Cultural Capability Framework (see Cygnet #3), which recommends a culturally responsive approach.

The ASBAP INCA action was therefore rescoped in 2020, with funding subsequently redirected to dedicated PhD scholarships for Indigenous candidates with top-up funds. Furthermore, Indigenous PhD students are supported by the new Indigenous Higher Degree Research Networking Program (see Cygnet #3). This program (established in 2020) provides a culturally responsive and supportive space to share HDR experiences and opportunities for academic skill development (ASSAP 3.2). This strategy will assist in fuelling the pipeline with junior academics who can be nurtured to progress to more senior academic roles.

Sub Issue 2: Low levels of recognised research activity from Indigenous Academics

Indigenous Academics have reported to the ASWP the need to provide tailored and culturally responsive support, so they can expand their research activities and track record to progress in their careers. The University has therefore developed several actions to address this sub issue (Table 30; see also Key Barrier 2, Sub Issue 1, and ASSAP 2.1):

Table 30. Actions to support Indigenous research activity

ASSAP 3.3a	Identified places for Indigenous academics in Research Advantage programs
ASSAP 3.3b	Tailored support for Indigenous staff applying for grants
ASSAP 3.3c	Allocation of Indigenous Research Mentors
ASSAP 3.4	Appointment of Research Lead

In addition to the research support mentioned above, the University also recognises the value of non-traditional research outputs (NTROs) in contributing to institutional recognition of Indigenous research and related career progression. The University acknowledges traditional and contemporary Indigenous cultural practices and ways of learning, knowing, and creating can take many forms. It supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and other First Nations research to be recognised and promoted as significant and valuable research outputs that are impactful at a national and global level.

In 2020, the University's Executive Leadership Team endorsed the NTRO Framework and Guidelines and agreed to embed recognition of NTROs into the University's guidelines, policies, and procedures related to academic performance expectations and promotion processes. In 2023, the University expanded this framework by adding an Indigenous academic representative to the NTRO committee and revising the guidelines to include Indigenous ways of knowing and creating as an area of focus. This resulted in recognition of three outputs under the revised guidelines, which were reported to the Executive Leadership Team to raise awareness and understanding amongst senior leadership in December 2023 (Fig. 48). As part of the ASSAP, the University commits to providing tailored support for Indigenous academics to have their research evaluated as NTROs. (ASSAP 3.5).

Figure 48. 2021-2023 NTRO Report

Sub Issue 3: Lack of research and capability building opportunities for Indigenous staff

Data shows that only one Indigenous academic staff member participated in the Special Studies Program (SSP) (Sabbatical Leave) since Bronze. Insights sourced recently from staff in the Wollotuka Institute highlighted the lack of engagement with the SSP program was based on challenges for Indigenous staff to be away from family and community for extended periods of time. In addition, low numbers of Indigenous Academic staff can result in existing staff being stretched to cover a number of responsibilities impacting their time to engage with the program to further their research.

To address this sub issue, a Pilot Exchange Program for Indigenous Academic staff will be developed (ASSAP 3.6) to allow Indigenous staff to go away for shorter periods of time. The University will work with Indigenous Academic staff to ensure the organisation makes space for them to take time to build their research profile. Moreover, it will open-up the Pilot Exchange Program to Indigenous Professional staff to build capability and support advancement.

In addition, the University will evaluate its Indigenous Leadership Program Pilot (launched in 2023, see above, Key Barrier 2, Sub Issue 4) to determine its effectiveness in supporting our Indigenous staff (ASSAP 2.5).

Sub Issue 4: Lack of capability of Colleges/Schools to include Indigenous perspectives across the curriculum.

Indigenisation of curriculum is important to ensure a welcoming space for Indigenous students. This is achieved by recognising and embedding Indigenous knowledges in curriculum and, building cultural capability of non-Indigenous students through a deeper understanding of Indigenous culture, which assists in providing an environment where Indigenous students can thrive. To date there has been a lack of resources that Colleges can refer to support Indigenisation of curriculum. To assist in this regard, a resource platform was created in 2023

(Fig. 49), post ASBA and Cygnet #3, by the Wollotuka Institute and OISL (hosted by the Library) that can be accessed by all Colleges (ASSAP 3.7a).

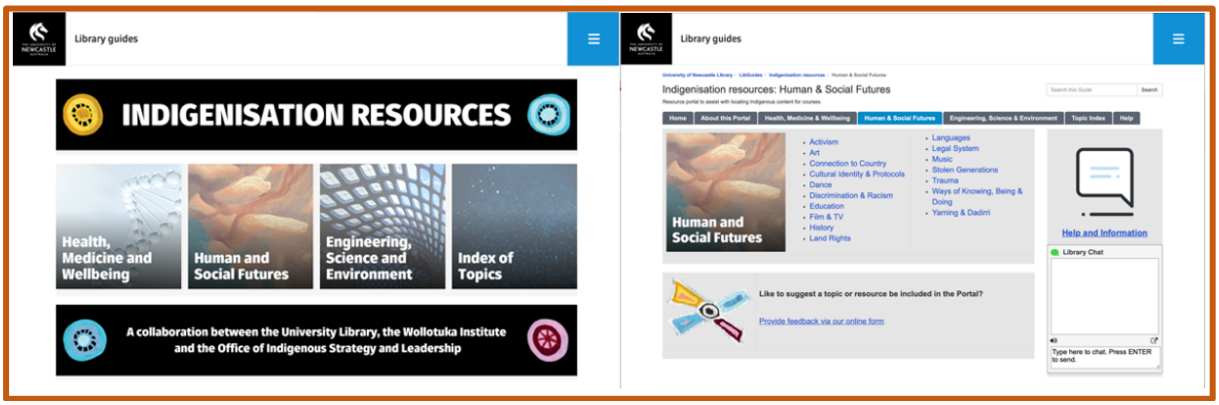


Figure 49. Resource platform to support Indigenisation of the curriculum

This is part of a wider initiative to embed culturally responsive graduate attributes into all programs (Fig. 50) and will assist with the development of a Framework for Indigenisation of the Curriculum to be rolled out across the University between 2024 and 2026 (ASSAP 3.7b).

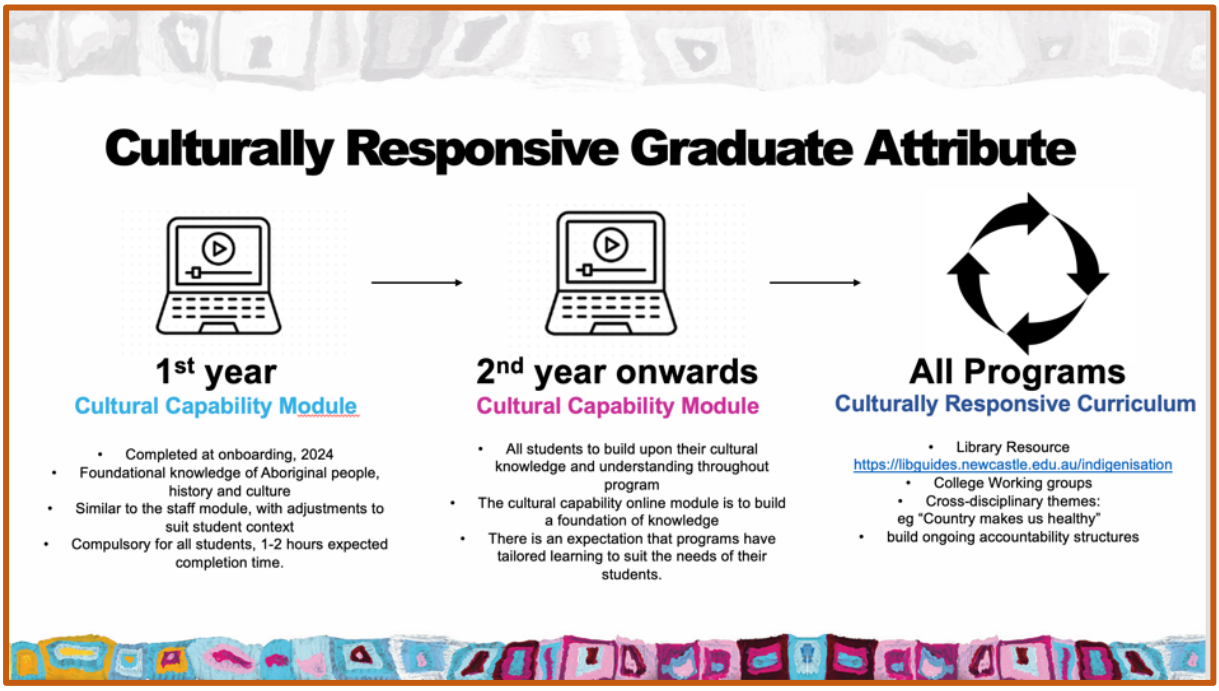


Figure 50. Culturally Responsive Graduate Attributes developed in 2023-2024
to support the development of a Framework for Indigenisation of the Curriculum 2024-2026

Sub Issue 5: Inadequate Indigenous community consultation

In 2024, the University launched a sector-first initiative titled 'Research our Way', a collaboration with the Hunter Medical Research Institute, Hunter New England Local Health District (HNELD) and Awabakal Limited. This Aboriginal Health Research Strategy is a revolutionary approach to health research, led by local Aboriginal communities and Aboriginal people living across the regions. The Strategy is a 5-year action plan that includes a community panel – Wukul Yabang (meaning 'one path') - that is consulted for proposed health research involving Aboriginal people (Fig. 51) The objectives of this Strategy will, amongst other

objectives, raise the profile of existing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research and researchers and develop the cultural capability expectations and pathways of learning for non-Indigenous researchers. The University is committed to implementation of this strategy (ASSAP 3.8) and, as the strategy above is focused on research, the University will also pilot a consultative structure between the College of Health, Medicine & Wellbeing and local Indigenous people for non-research advice (ASSAP 3.9).

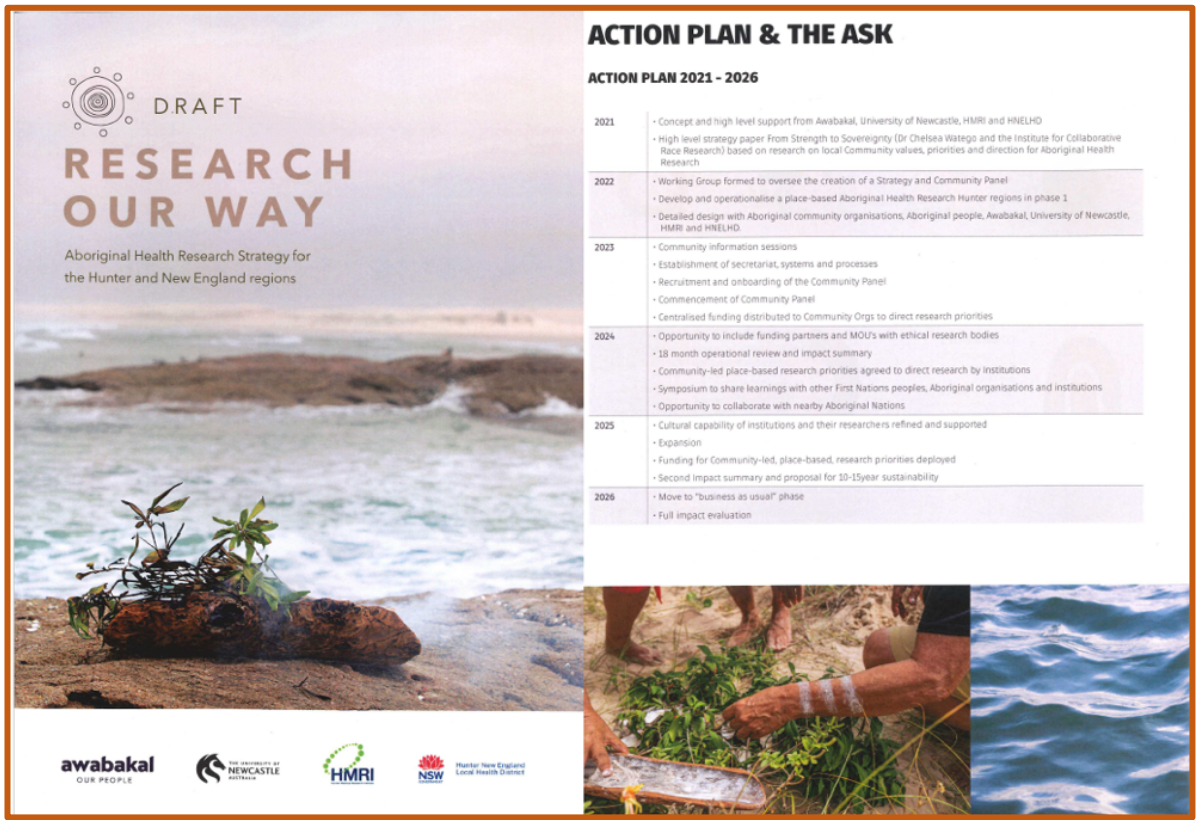


Figure 51. Draft 'Research Our Way' Strategy and Action Plan, launched March 2024

With all of these actions, the University will monitor the intersectional impact of these initiatives, specifically for Indigenous women and other under-represented groups through improved data collection processes (see Enabling Action 1.3).

ACTION PLAN (Key Barrier 3: Indigenous Cultural Competency)

KEY BARRIER 3: Indigenous Cultural Competency						
Ref	Rationale/Evidence	Actions & Outputs	Timeframe (start & end)	Person / Group responsible for implementing action	Senior Leader accountable for action delivery	Desired Outcome and Impact
3.1	Low numbers of Indigenous applicants for Academic roles.	a. Strategic sourcing of Indigenous academic candidates b. Review recruitment practices for targeted or identified roles to ensure culturally informed candidate care. c. Ensure value proposition for Indigenous staff is promoted as part of recruitment.	2024	Talent Acquisition OISL	CPCO PVC ISL	20% increase in number of Indigenous academics applying for roles and 20% increase in Indigenous academics being appointed to roles.
3.2	To increase staff participation rates and reach population parity, Indigenous HDR Students are supported to do PhDs and retained in the University's workforce.	a. Dedicated Indigenous PhD scholarship support packages. b. Ongoing evaluation of HDR Networking Program for Indigenous students.	Annually (10 per year; plus up to $20k top up funds) 2024 and annually thereafter	Wollotuka OISL R&I	PVC ISL DVCRI	10+ Indigenous students undertaking higher degree research per year.
3.3	To increase lack of Indigenous participation in key Research Advantage programs.	a. Create identified places for Indigenous participants. b. Tailored programs for Indigenous Academics apply for grants. c. Allocation of Indigenous Research Mentors	2024 and annually thereafter	PVC R&I RA Team Research Grants Indigenous Research Lead	DVCRI	5 Indigenous academics engaged with RA program annually.

3.4	Lack of Indigenous Research Lead to support PVC-IS&L.	Recruitment of Indigenous Research Lead	2024 – 2025	OISL R&I	PVC ISL DVCRI	Appointment of Indigenous Research Lead
3.5	Indigenous Knowledges and Practices need to be recognised and valued for career progression and promotion.	Training in recognition of Non-Traditional Research Outputs for Indigenous academic staff; use in APP and promotion.	2024 and annually thereafter	OISL R&I	PVC ISL DVCRI DVCA	10% increase in number of Indigenous NTROs recognised annually.
3.6	Capability building opportunities required for Indigenous staff that balance time away with cultural responsibilities.	Pilot Academic and Professional Staff Exchange scheme.	2025	HRS IS&L	CPCO PVC ISL	Pilot is successful and rolled out as annual exchange scheme leading to career development for Indigenous staff.
3.7	Lack of resources that Colleges can access to support Indigenisation of curriculum.	a. Create and finalise resource platform with Library for access by Colleges. b. Develop Framework for Indigenisation of Curriculum.	2024 2025	Library OISL	PVC ISL DVCA	Resource platform built and available for use through Library. 50 new resources added to the platform.
3.8	Aboriginal people have not had sufficient say on who, what and where research is conducted, how it is used and how it is stored.	Implement Aboriginal Health Research Strategy 'Research our Way' for the Hunter & New England Areas.	2024 - 2028	OISL R&I UON HMRI HNELHD Awabakal	PVC ISL DVCRI	Greater outcomes for Indigenous communities. Increase in cultural capability of non-Indigenous researchers
3.9	Need for consultative structure for Colleges to access advice (non-research) from local Indigenous people.	Pilot consultative structure with CHSF to access advice from local Indigenous people.	2024	OISL CHSF	PVC ISL PVC HSF	Consultative structure for CHSF piloted and reviewed.

KEY BARRIER 4: Support for Carers

Evidence of Barrier

Despite significant actions and progress demonstrated through Cygnet #4, support for Carers remains a key barrier for the University of Newcastle. Quantitative and qualitative outcomes sourced for Cygnet #4 and more recent qualitative insights extracted from the 2024 Gender Pulse Survey highlighted the need for additional actions to assist with greater awareness and uptake of a range of carer supports by both women and men and the provision of key services such as childcare.

Demographic data asked as part of the University's Your Voice Staff Engagement Survey in 2023, identified that 46% (1147) of respondents were carers of children (parents) and 10% (265) were non-parent carers (such as disability care, eldercare). This data provides useful context for prioritising the needs of carers who make up over 50% of our workforce. Of those that identified as carers and disclosed their gender, 80% were women and 20% were men.

We have drawn on data collected post-Bronze actions (follow-up data). This includes the data sources originally used for the 2023 Cygnet report, as well as new data collected since submission to enhance our understanding of the key issues for carers (Table 31). We identified 7 sub-issues (detailed below) which continue to contribute to the barrier for carers.

Table 31. Post-Bronze data sources (quantitative and qualitative) used to gain insight and provide evidence of the barrier.

TYPE OF DATA	CYGNET REPORT SOURCE	NEW SOURCE (2024)
Quantitative (analysed via descriptive statistics)	• 2021 and 2023 'Your Voice' staff engagement survey • 2023 Employee Experience survey • Parental leave data • Flexible Work toolkit data • Flexible Work Arrangement data • Special Studies Leave data • Wellness Resources data • Childcare data • Breastfeeding Friendly Workplace data	• GEPS (survey of 1156 staff)
Qualitative (analysed via thematic analyses)	Interviews with 17 carers *[82% women/18% men; 53% academic/47% professional; 12% Indigenous]*	• 'Gender Pulse' open-ended questions • Athena Swan Working Party insights and feedback • Webinar feedback from staff • EDI Committee/College EDI Committee feedback • Synthesised findings from in-depth interviews of 65 staff *[75% women/25% men; 75% academic/25% professional; 11% Indigenous]*

Sub-Issue 1: Insufficient numbers of (0-2) age group childcare spaces on campus

Feedback sourced via employee engagement surveys (Your Voice 2023 and Staff Experience 2023) and interviews for Cygnet #4 in September/October 2023, highlighted the value of onsite childcare services to University staff (Fig. 52). Staff interviews identified that childcare was

the most prominent concern for parents of young children to return to work and fulfill job responsibilities. The provision of an on-site-childcare saved time with commutes and gave comfort to parents that their children were nearby in case of illness or an emergency. The proximity and excellent reputation of the childcare centre, resulted in high demand for the 0-2 age group places, with many staff missing out or having to go on long waiting lists. This is particularly challenging for staff who are returning from parental leave and looking to re-engage with the workplace.

SUPPORT	EXAMPLE QUOTE FOR IMPACT
Childcare	Carer03: *So that was fabulous having that at the Callaghan Campus, that really helped with managing things and quality of life. The fact that I could just drop him [child] and then walk two minutes to my office was really excellent, just knowing that he was nearby and it's really high quality care as well. It's a really fabulous institution. So yeah, we're really, really happy with that. I'm really grateful to have that available.*

Figure 52. Interview quote from Cygnet #4

While the plan was to commence construction on a new purpose-built childcare care at the Callaghan campus in 2024 (see Cygnet #4), due to the substantial rise in construction costs with no additional contribution available from the operator, the University Council took a decision at the end of 2023 not to progress the childcare project.

The proposed approach to achieve delivery of a new childcare centre at Callaghan, with a higher percentage of places for children aged 0-2 year old places, will be for land to be made available to a developer/operator to construct and operate a centre for an extended period of time (Fig. 53). The Strategy team are currently scoping the relocation of a number of activities from the eastern side of campus that will free up space for development opportunities. In identifying opportunities and new uses on the eastern side of Callaghan, the delivery of a childcare centre will be one proposed use.

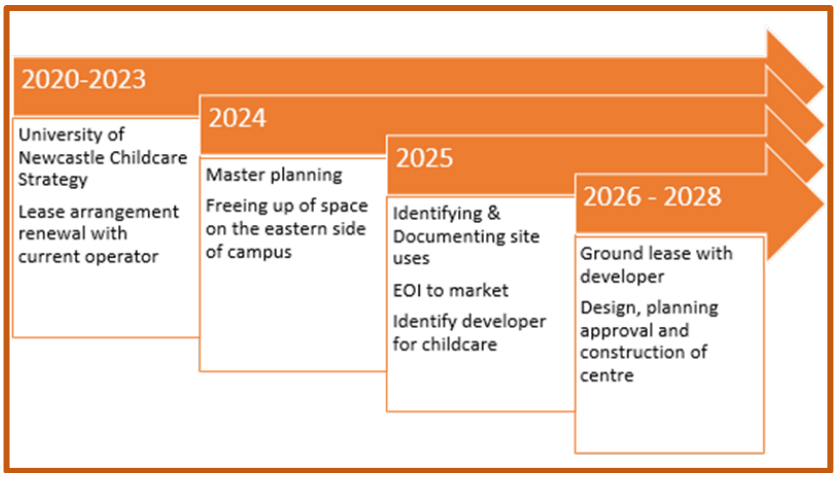


Figure 53. Timeline for the development of a new Childcare centre at Callaghan

It should be noted that there are currently three childcare centres operating on University campuses, with Kooinda Workbase Child Care Centre exclusively for students and staff to maximise availability of spaces (Fig. 54). The operator continues to work within the designs of the centres to achieve the maximum number for 0-2yr places and to provide places for the demands of University staff and community that use the centres. (ASSAP 4.1)

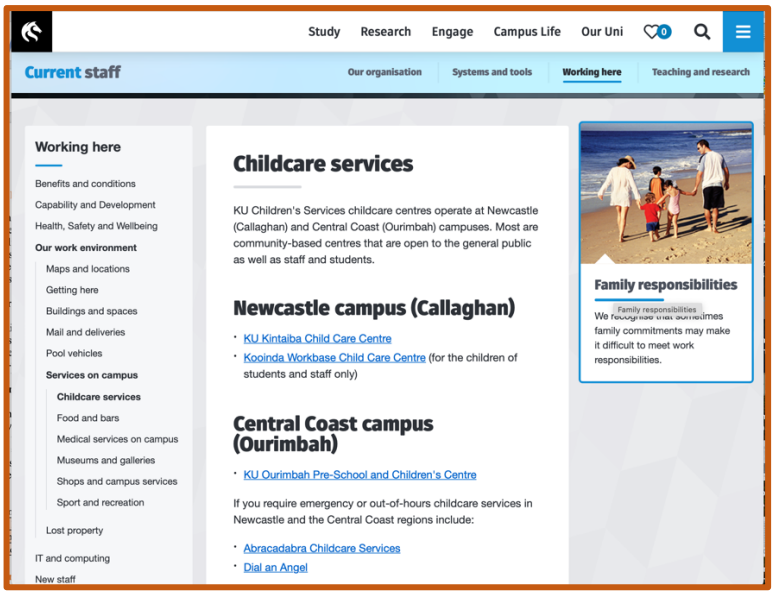


Fig. 54 Childcare Centres located on University of Newcastle campuses

Sub-Issue 2: Low uptake of Parental Leave and formal Flexible Work Arrangements by men

Parental leave bookings are made almost exclusively by women, with only one booking made by a man over the 2022/2023 reporting period (Table 32) and limited visibility of non-binary staff.

	Women	Men
Ongoing Full-time	18	1
Ongoing Part-time	67	0
Fixed Full-time	13	0
Fixed Part-time	35	0
Grand Total	**133**	**1**

Table 32. Staff uptake of Parental Leave by gender for the 12-month period (2022 -2023; WGEA submission)

Additionally, the increase in the overall number of staff using formal flexible work arrangements (FWAs) described in Cygnet #4, although including an increase in men applicants, was predominantly due to women (Fig. 55).

Figure 55 shows uptake by employment type and Table 33 shows uptake by level using 2023 data as an example as there is consistency across all years. The data shows that FWAs are predominantly used by women in professional staff positions at HEW Levels 5 to 7. FWAs are utilised to a lesser degree by women academic staff and mostly used at Levels B & C. Uptake by men remains low overall.

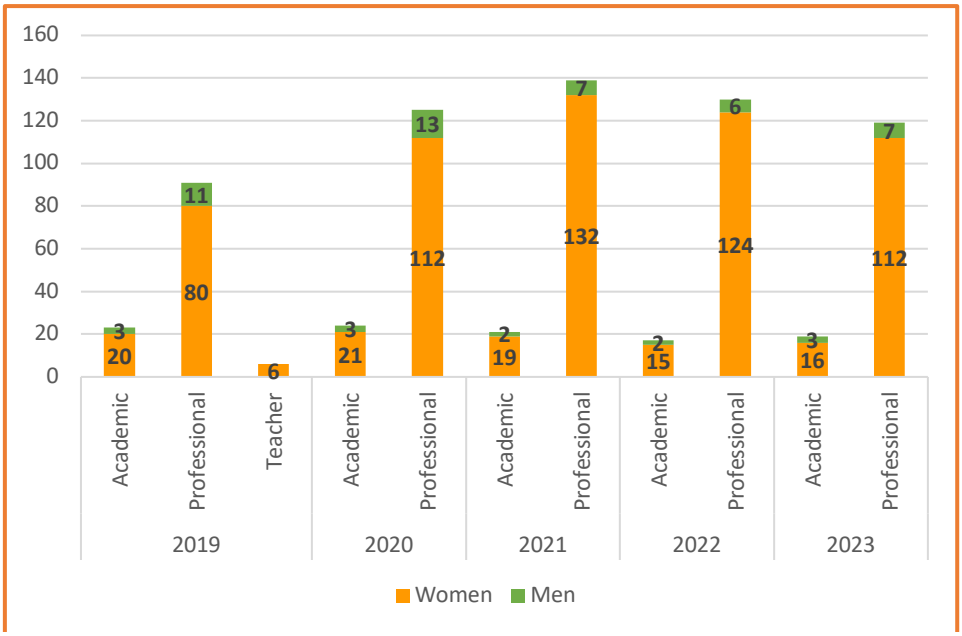


Figure 55. FWAs by gender and employment type (Distinct Count)

The data shows that professional women take a proportionally higher amount of FWAs (8%) based on their population size compared to academic women i.e. 2% using 2023 as example. Increasing awareness of FWAs to academic women (and men…see below) is part of the ASSAP 4.2. While academic women in the University have historically had more control over their working hours to accommodate work/life balance issues related to childcare through informal scheduling practices at the local level, automatic timetabling brought in during 2023 has increased the scheduling of courses between 8am and 6pm in 2023, creating unforeseen challenges for working parents. Staff brought their concerns to the ASWP in 2023/2024 and the University is now directing academics to use FWAs to resolve conflicts between timetabling and carer's responsibilities.

Table 33. 2023 FWAs by Level (Count)

		Women	Men
Academic	Level A	1	0
	Level B	8	2
	Level C	4	0
	Level D	2	1
	Level E	1	0
Professional	HEW 4	10	3
	HEW 5	21	1
	HEW 6	39	0
	HEW 7	22	2
	HEW 8	13	1
	HEW 9	6	0
	HEW 10	1	0
	Snr Exec	1	0
Total		***128**	**10**

*Distinct Count includes one person with two positions.

The University has a responsibility to contribute to societal change by providing a culture that encourages and normalises men taking parental leave and/or sharing in caring duties. As such the University will promote the option for men to take parental leave and FWAs, as well as

showcase exemplars of men to inspire others – particularly in academic areas where the uptake by men is lower than professional staff men. In October 2023, as part of Cygnet #4, the University's parental leave materials were revised to promote new entitlements and to encourage uptake of parental leave by men and other underrepresented staff (Fig. 56)

Fig. 56. The University's Parental and Surrogacy leave information was updated in 2023 to include examples of men and other underrepresented groups use of entitlements

Building off this Cygnet work in Silver, managers will be trained in having conversations with staff to ensure local support, not just centrally (ASSAP 4.2). Additionally, through the reporting and governance framework established for academic work allocation outlined in Barrier 5, Sub-Issue 2, FWAs will be monitored to ensure that diverse needs and schedules of staff, are considered in the allocation of work. Further details are captured in ASSAP 4.6.

Sub-Issue 3: Keep in Touch program and resources for Carers under utilised

2023 data sourced from the Employee Experience (Flexibility/Carers) survey and qualitative interviews, highlighted a lack of awareness of resources to support staff with caring responsibilities. The University will communicate the full suite of support available to staff on a more regular basis to ensure staff are better informed as to carer support options. (ASSAP 4.3b). In particular, the data showed a lack of awareness of the University's **Keep in Touch Program** (supporting staff going on – and returning from parental leave) and/or feedback that the program was under-utilised due to its limitations. To this regard, the University decided to pilot a **new online Keep in Touch Program** for better connection with its staff and if successful, will implement on an ongoing basis. (ASSAP 4.3a). The University will also prioritise continued accreditation with the **Breastfeeding Friendly Workplace** to ensure that facilities are best practice for staff (and students) with breastfeeding needs are well catered for. (ASSAP 4.3c). Table 34 provides a summary of these actions:

Table 34. Keep in Touch Program and resources/facilities for carers

ASSAP 4.3a	New Online Keep in Touch Program for staff on and returning from parental leave
ASSAP 4.3b	Regular communication on caring resources for staff with caring responsibilities
ASSAP 4.3c	Continued accreditation with the Breastfeeding Friendly Workplace

Sub-Issue 4: Inconsistent consideration of carer needs and core working hours by Managers

Findings across all qualitative data sources showed varied experiences of staff with caring needs based on the level of understanding and support provided by their respective Manager. The University will focus various actions to build the capability of managers/leaders across the organisation to better understand and support the needs of carers (ASSAP 4.4a). In addition, data also highlighted the challenges for staff with caring needs when required to attend meetings outside of core hours. A pilot of core meeting times between the hours of 9.30 am and 2.30 pm (with zoom options) and scheduling of meetings on days to suit part-time staff, is underway in the College of Health, Medicine & Wellbeing and if successful, institutional recommendations will be made for consideration by executive. (ASSAP 4.4b)

Sub-Issue 5: Academics with carer responsibilities allocated teaching at non-core times

Feedback from the AD EDIs and University EDI Lead signified that some academic staff with caring responsibilities were being timetabled to teach outside of core hours despite equity requests made prior. The University must balance a number of factors in the timetabling of teaching, including accommodating for staff with genuine caring needs to ensure they are not unfairly burdened. Currently, academic staff with a formal FWA cannot be allocated to teach in non-core hours. It remains challenging, however, to determine from the remaining staff requests, those which are preferences versus those with genuine need. To ensure greater visibility and fairness around timetabling for academic staff with carer needs, a review of the timetabling process will occur for affording greater flexibility to those with the greatest need. (ASSAP 4.5)

Sub-Issue 6: Challenges for staff on fixed-term contracts to access carers support

In Cygnet #4, the University highlighted carer supports afforded to academic staff in key centralised programs such as Women in Research Fellowships and the Special Studies Program by way of funding to care for and/or travel with children. Fixed-term contract status was not an impediment to participating in these programs and/or receiving funding to support carer needs. Post Cygnet submission, however, qualitative evidence revealed (via formal interviews and insight from key informants including ASWP members) that fixed-term contract status was an impediment to eligibility for some College based conference/travel support. On that basis, the University commits to reviewing College-based conference/travel grant funding processes to ensure fixed-term contract and caring status is not an impediment for academic staff on fixed-term contracts. (ASSAP 4.6)

Sub-Issue 7: Inadequate support for academics with research responsibilities whilst on Parental Leave

Women Academic staff who take extended career breaks for parental leave are often required to play ‘catch-up’ in relation to their research. This can be particularly challenging for those that also choose to return part-time as they balance 40/40/20 responsibilities. Research (particularly in a clinical setting) can stall or be outdated very quickly if an academic staff member is away for a significant period of time and there is no one to continue experiments, for example. Achieving research metrics is a critical component of promotion criteria, so

women taking career breaks for parental leave are disadvantaged against their colleagues who are men.

As a result, the College of Health, Medicine & Wellbeing will pilot a Research Support Scheme for women academic staff on parental leave through the provision of funding for a Research Assistant (ASSAP 4.7). This scheme will also complement the current Women in Research Fellowship Scheme which is being broadened to become an Equity Research Fellowship Program (see Barrier 2) which will continue to provide flexible funding that can be used for caring needs such as after school childcare.

In addition to the sub-barriers identified above, the University also recognises the impact of caring responsibilities on women with disabilities and will ensure flexible work arrangements, such as telecommuting, flexible scheduling and part-time options to accommodate the diverse needs and schedules of women with disabilities so they can carry-out care-giving responsibilities effectively (ASSAP 4.8).

ACTION PLAN (Key Barrier 4: Support for Carers)

KEY BARRIER 4: Support for Carers						
Ref	Rationale/Evidence	Actions & Outputs	Timeframe (start & end)	Person / Group responsible for implementing action	Senior Leader accountable for action delivery	Desired Outcome and Impact
4.1	Insufficient childcare spaces (0-2 age gap) on campus, impacting on parents returning to work.	Provision of University land (Callaghan Campus) for a developer/operator to build and run a new childcare centre for an extended period of time.	2025 and ongoing	IFS	COO	10% increase in 0-2 spaces for childcare allowing staff to return to work post parental leave.
4.2	Low uptake of men (compared to women) taking Parental Leave and formal Flexible Work Arrangements (FWA). Lesser use of FWAs by academic compared to professional women.	Improve culture by encouraging men and non-binary staff to take parental leave and FWAs through local and centralised communication tools.	2024 and ongoing	HR EDI AD EDIs	CPCO DVCA College PVCs	20% increase in men utilising FWAs and 100% increase in men taking parental leave. 20% increase in women holding academic positions utilising FWAs.
4.3a	Enhanced Keep in Touch Process required to allow staff on parental leave to feel connected and re-engage with workforce.	Implement Keep in Touch online platform if six-month pilot proves successful.	2024 and ongoing	HR EDI	CPCO DVCA	Maintain strong parental leave return rates and increased staff experience/satisfaction.
4.3b	Staff balance work responsibilities with caring responsibilities and require flexibility.	Promote resources for carers on quarterly basis	2024 and ongoing	HR EDI	CPCO DVCA	Increased awareness by staff with carer responsibilities of resources and supports.
4.3c	Best practice facilities are required for breastfeeding mothers returning from parental leave – including well equipped rooms and rooms part of all new build designs.	Maintain Breastfeeding Friendly Workplace Accreditation	2024 and Ongoing	EDI IFS	DVCA COO	BFW Accreditation achieved and breastfeeding mothers are supported on campus.

4.4a	Understanding by Manager of flexibility requirements for staff with caring responsibilities varies across the organisation.	Training resources developed for all Managers to better support staff with carer responsibilities.	2024/2025	HR EDI AD EDIs	CPCO DVCA College PVCs	Training resources utilised by Managers. Evaluation of capability achieved through Staff Engagement survey data.
4.4b	Scheduling of meeting times in core hours varies across the University as no centralised policy exists.	Consider development of Institutional Policy once outcome of trial in CHMW is known.	2024/2025	HR EDI ADEDI CHMW	CPCO DVCA PVC HM&W	Insights from Pilot inform future Policy development.
4.5	Academics with carer responsibilities are allocated teaching at non-core times.	Review process of equity considerations for timetabling requests.	2024	EDI Timetabling	DVCA	Insights from review inform potential updates to strategy to assist genuine caring needs.
4.6	Challenges for women on fixed term contracts to access carer support. Greater number of women occupy fixed term contracts.	Review support programs such as conference grants (centralised and localised) to ensure fixed term status is not an impediment to eligibility.	2024-2025	AD EDIs	College PVCs	Women on fixed term contracts accessing key support at College level.
4.7	Lack of support for female academic staff on parental leave to ensure research progresses in their absence and remains current.	Pilot Research Assistant support for academic in CHM&W.	2024-2025	AD EDI CHMW	PVC HMW	Research outputs maintained while on extended parental leave. If Pilot successful, roll out in CHMW with potential consideration by CESE & CHSF.
4.8	Flexible accommodations and policies that accommodate the needs of women carers with disabilities, such as disability-specific workstations and flexible workloads.	Flexible work arrangements such as telecommuting, flexible scheduling, and part-time options, will be provided to accommodate the diverse needs and schedules of women with disabilities who are carers, allowing them to balance their work and caregiving responsibilities effectively.	2024 and ongoing	HRS EDI	CPCO DVCA	Women with disabilities who are carers will experience a balanced workload management approach that accommodates their dual roles, leading to improved work-life balance, job satisfaction, and overall well-being.

KEY BARRIER 5: Inequities in Academic Work Allocation

Evidence of Barrier

Inconsistent work allocation practices and lack of transparency remains a Key Barrier at the University of Newcastle despite progress made on the ASBAP and the major change program related to Academic Work Allocation Model (AWAM) carried out between 2021 and 2023. The AWAM Program of works was established as a three-phased program (Fig. 57). Phase one was focused on establishing the foundational framework, phase two was the implementation of the pilot, and reviewing and collecting data. The program is now transiting into the third phase, towards full embedment with strong established governance, and improved equity and transparency (as reported in Cygnet #5).

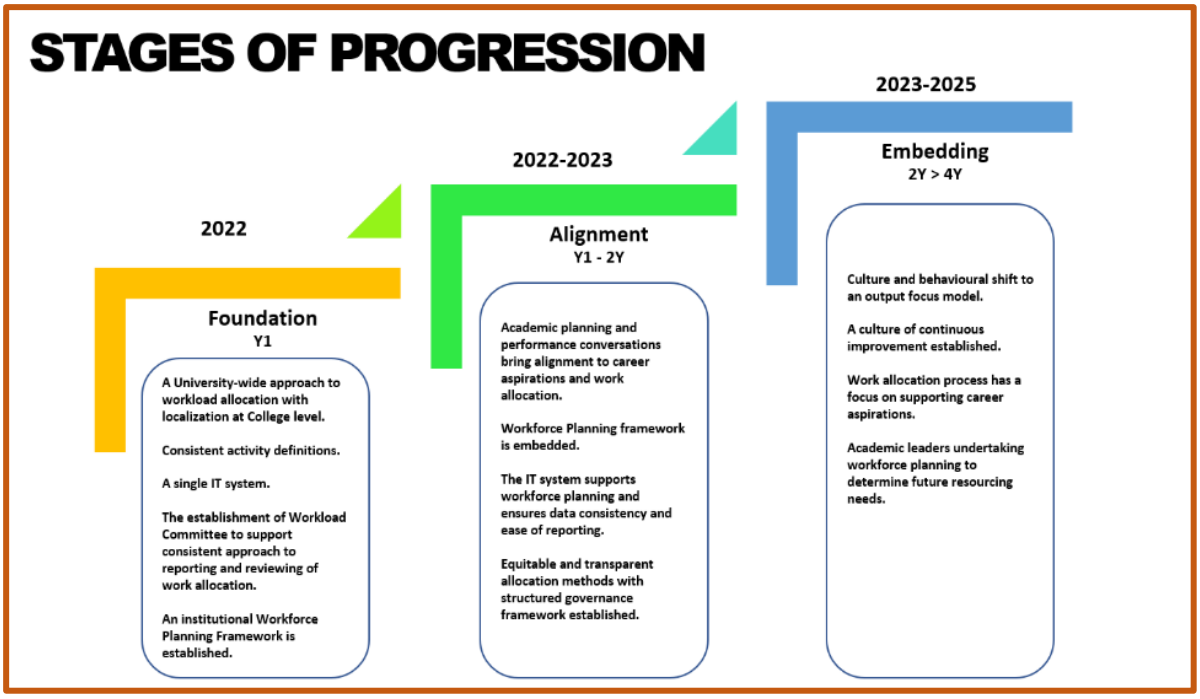


Figure 57. AWAM stages of progression

The quantitative data from the 2024 University GEPS showed an increase from 2017 in the proportion of staff who agree that workload is equally proportioned based on gender in their school or work unit: (increase of 8.2% for men 4.3% for women). However, with a differential of 21.8% in 2024, women reported much lower levels of agreement than men (Fig. 58). Qualitative results findings from Cygnet #5 and the 2024 GEPS, and more recently the insights (quantitative, and qualitative) from the WAMs allocation system indicate that despite a positive shift in the perception of equity in the allocation of academic work at the University, challenges and complexities remain, and must be addressed to ensure the goals of equity, fairness and transparency are realised more broadly.

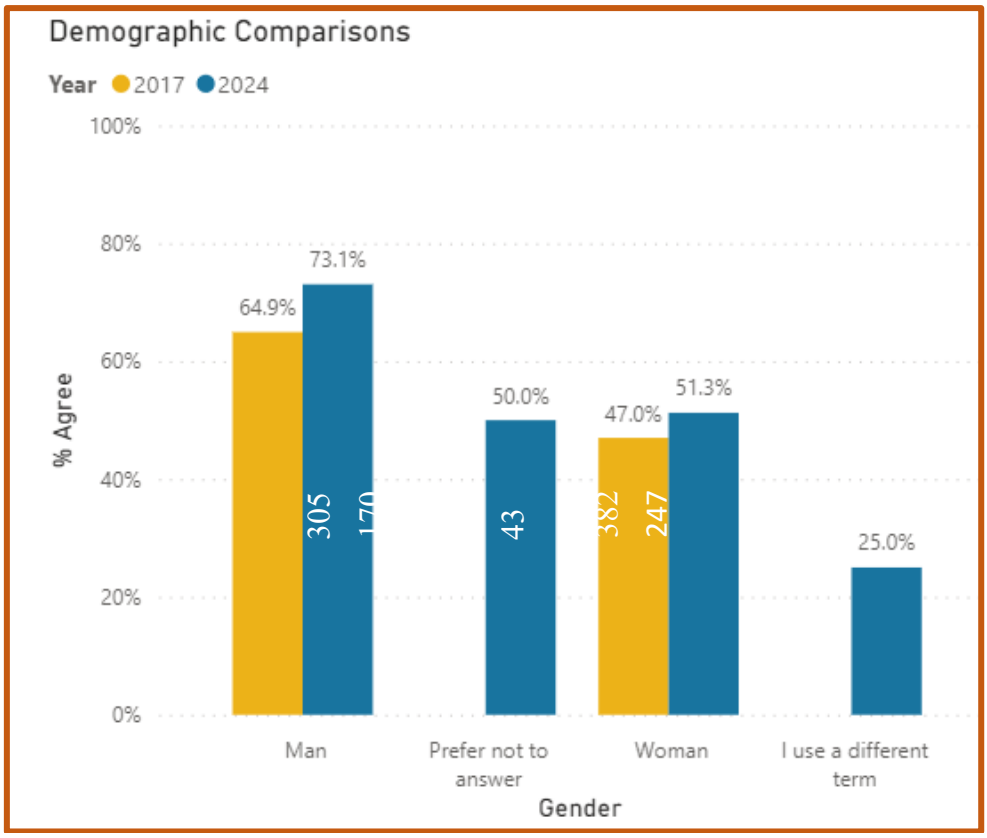


Figure 58. Percentage and headcount of staff who agree workload is equally proportioned based on gender in (my) school/work unit
(*note: data for 'prefer not to answer' and 'I use a different term' are not available for 2017)
(**note: the datasets for non-binary, transgender and gender diverse were too small to disaggregate visually for 2024)
Source: 2024 Gender Pulse Survey Results

The University sought best practice guidance from ACON when asking gender demographic questions as part of surveys (see Figure 46A).

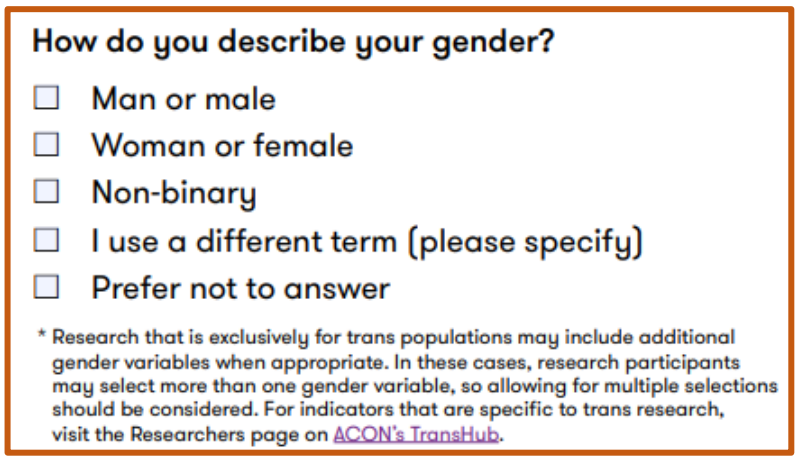


Figure 59 – ACON recommended gender categories

Since submission of the Cygnet #5 in October 2023, the University has gained further insights for work allocation through new data sources. This is outlined in the table below.

Table 35. Post-Bronze data sources (quantitative and qualitative) used to gain insight and provide evidence of the barrier

TYPE OF DATA	CYGNET REPORT SOURCE	NEW SOURCE (2024)

Quantitative (analysed via descriptive statistics)	• 2021 and 2023 'Your Voice' staff engagement survey 2023
	• Employee Experience survey
	• Significant staff engagement and consultation 2021-2022 that included:
	  ○ 3 all-staff consultations rounds
	  ○ 3 all- staff forums
	  ○ 38 College, Division and School-level workshops
	  ○ 2 NTEU staff Consultative Committee meetings
		• GEPS (survey of 1156 staff)
		• Review and analysis of data in the WAMs IT system.

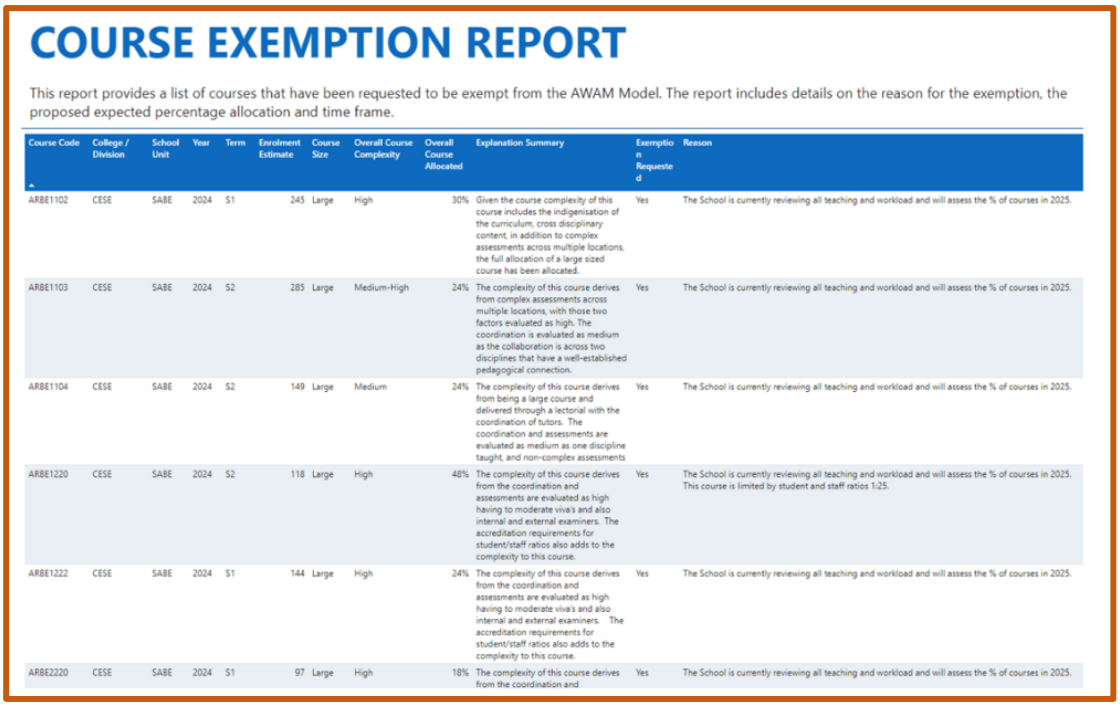
Qualitative (analysed via thematic analyses)	Synthesised findings from in-depth interviews of 15 staff. *[77% women/23% men; 60% academic/40% professional; 23% Indigenous]*	• 'Gender Pulse' open-ended questions • Athena Swan Working Party insights and feedback • Qualitative feedback from stakeholders – PVC & HOS session January 2024

As a result of the Cygnet evidence combined with new data sources in 2024 (Table 35), the University identified five sub-issues which continue to contribute to the barrier of inequities in academic work allocation.

Sub Issue 1: Consistent application of the Model

The 2023 qualitative evaluation of 14 staff showed the multifaceted nature of work allocation on both operational and cultural aspects of University operations. It provided a good cross section of feedback from staff with eight overarching recommendations. The University has commenced reviewing and addressing the recommendations since Cygnet #5 submission in October 2023, with further efforts planned across 2024 and 2025.

For example, the evaluation indicated a need to ensure that AWAMs is adaptable for Schools that may not fit the typical format, as well as courses with low enrolments *and* a high level of responsibility for course coordination. To address this feedback an exemption report was established at the commencement of 2024. This allows an avenue for Heads of School to identify courses that do not fit within the model, provide details on what they are doing to review the course, or alternatively seek permission for the course to remain outside of the model due to institutional requirements (Fig. 60).



COURSE EXEMPTION REPORT

This report provides a list of courses that have been requested to be exempt from the AWAM Model. The report includes details on the reason for the exemption, the proposed expected percentage allocation and time frame.

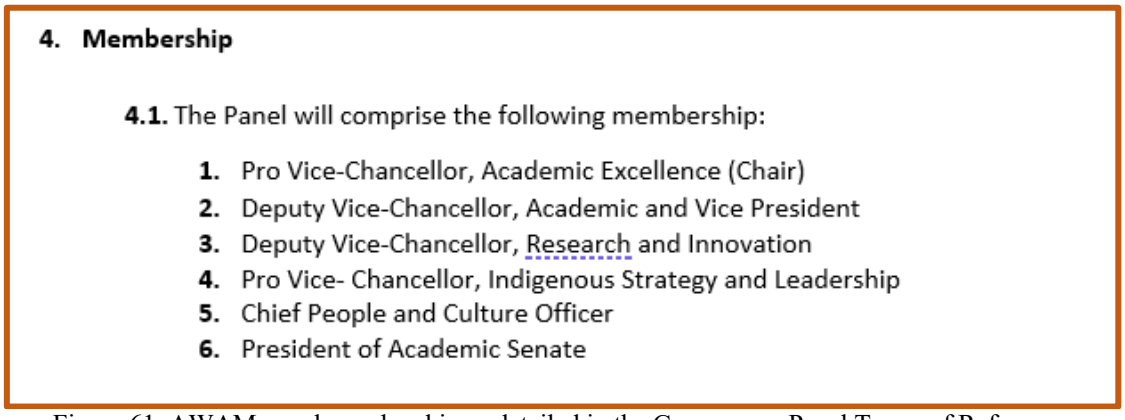
Course Code	College / Division	School Unit	Year	Term	Enrolment Estimate	Course Size	Overall Course Complexity	Overall Course Allocated	Explanation Summary	Exemption Requested	Reason
ARBE1102	CESE	SABE	2024	S1	245	Large	High	30%	Given the course complexity of this course includes the indigenisation of the curriculum, cross disciplinary content, in addition to complex assessments across multiple locations, the full allocation of a large sized course has been allocated.	Yes	The School is currently reviewing all teaching and workload and will assess the % of courses in 2025.
ARBE1103	CESE	SABE	2024	S2	285	Large	Medium-High	24%	The complexity of this course derives from complex assessments across multiple locations, with those two factors evaluated as high. The coordination is evaluated as medium as the collaboration is across two disciplines that have a well-established pedagogical connection.	Yes	The School is currently reviewing all teaching and workload and will assess the % of courses in 2025.
ARBE1104	CESE	SABE	2024	S2	149	Large	Medium	24%	The complexity of this course derives from being a large course and delivered through a lectorial with the coordination of tutors. The coordination and assessments are evaluated as medium as one discipline taught, and non-complex assessments	Yes	The School is currently reviewing all teaching and workload and will assess the % of courses in 2025.
ARBE1220	CESE	SABE	2024	S2	118	Large	High	48%	The complexity of this course derives from the coordination and assessments are evaluated as high having to moderate viva's and also internal and external examiners. The accreditation requirements for student/staff ratios also adds to the complexity to this course.	Yes	The School is currently reviewing all teaching and workload and will assess the % of courses in 2025. This course is limited by student and staff ratios 1:25.
ARBE1222	CESE	SABE	2024	S1	144	Large	High	24%	The complexity of this course derives from the coordination and assessments are evaluated as high having to moderate viva's and also internal and external examiners. The accreditation requirements for student/staff ratios also adds to the complexity to this course.	Yes	The School is currently reviewing all teaching and workload and will assess the % of courses in 2025.
ARBE2220	CESE	SABE	2024	S1	97	Large	High	18%	The complexity of this course derives from the coordination and	Yes	The School is currently reviewing all teaching and workload and will assess the % of courses in 2025.

Figure 60. AWAM Course Exemption Report

Despite the qualitative evaluation in October 2023 providing valuable insights into both the positive aspects of the Model and areas for review, a larger sample of academic staff will assist to determine impact at each academic level and to assess consistency of application across schools (ASSAP 5.1).

Sub Issue 2: Unintended inequities

Initial data analysis and qualitative evaluation provided evidence of inconsistent approaches to the application of the AWAM Model across the University that may lead to unintended inequities. Achieving consistency in application and level of transparency is integral to enhancing equity cohort outcomes. The AWAM Governance Panel (Fig. 61) and the wider roles and responsibilities governance framework (Fig. 62) provide a mechanism for regular institutional review, additionally some schools have started to establish local committees to further support regular analysis.



4. Membership

4.1. The Panel will comprise the following membership:

1. Pro Vice-Chancellor, Academic Excellence (Chair)
2. Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Academic and Vice President
3. Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research and Innovation
4. Pro Vice- Chancellor, Indigenous Strategy and Leadership
5. Chief People and Culture Officer
6. President of Academic Senate

Figure 61. AWAM panel membership as detailed in the Governance Panel Terms of Reference

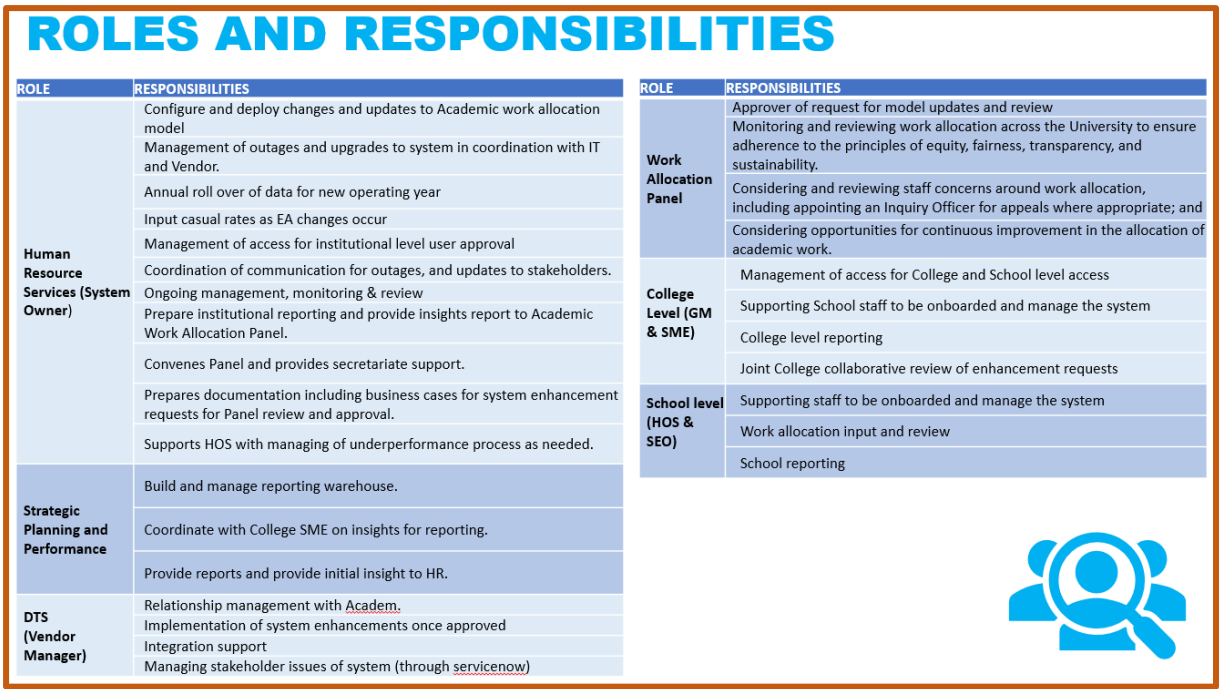


Figure 62. The AWAM Governance Framework - Roles and Responsibilities

Furthermore, as identified in Cygnet #5 the shared governance structure embedded into the design of the framework (Fig. 63) enables staff to raise requests for reviews and appeals of work allocation where it is felt that equitable and fair distribution of work allocation has not occurred.

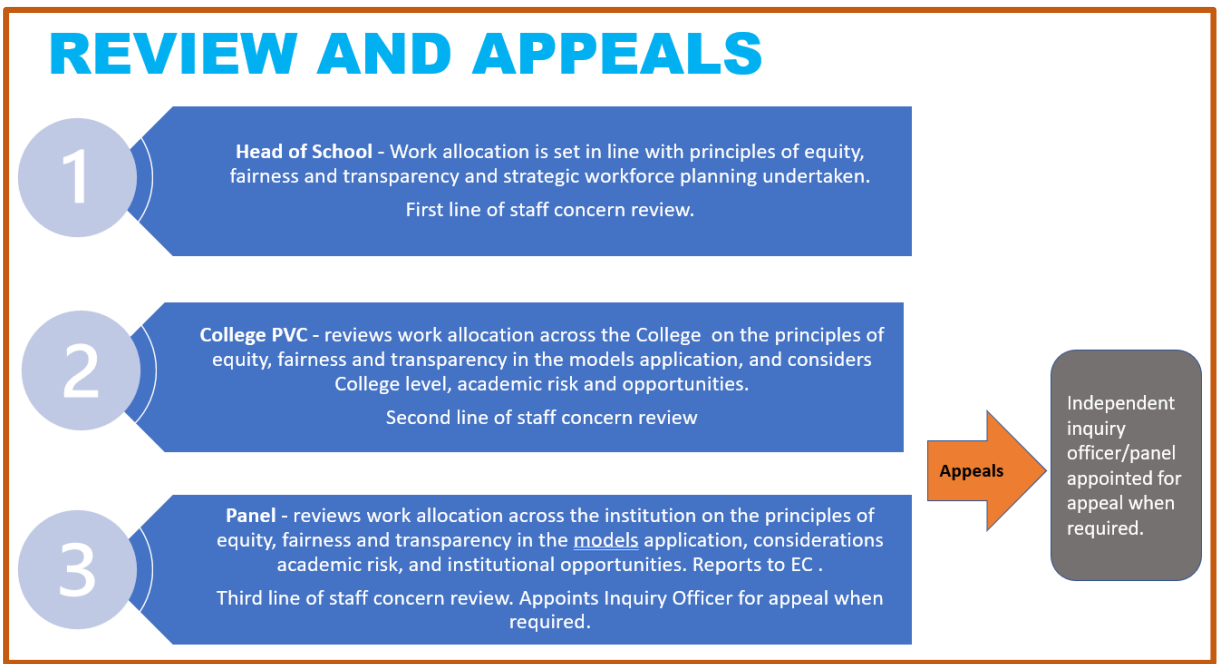


Figure 63. Shared governance structure embedded into the new academic work allocation framework

Reporting has been established that enables College and School level review of academic data by gender and across academic level (Fig. 64).

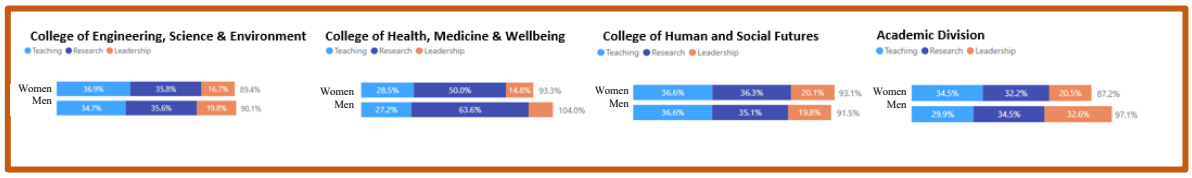


Figure 64. Current Dashboard Analysis, by Gender

The next phase of embedding the Model across the University will establish a holistic review and reporting framework of allocations with a specific focus on equity considerations. College audits will be undertaken to review and analysis distribution and rotation of leadership roles and course allocations across gender, academic level, culturally and linguistically diverse and Indigenous cohorts.

Furthermore, Cygnet #4 describes the increase in the overall number of staff using formal flexible work arrangements (FWAs). As outlined in Barrier 4, a review of the correlation between these FWAs and academic work allocations will also be undertaken to determine that diverse needs and schedules of staff, and particularly staff with disabilities and carers, are considered in the allocation of work to allowing the balance of work and caregiving responsibilities effectively. Additionally, transparency will be further increased through enhanced dashboard reporting for staff and leaders (ASSAP 5.2).

Sub Issue 3: Linkage between career goals and work allocation

Feedback sourced for Cygnet #5 in October 2023 by the independent ASQR indicated that establishing shared accountability of work allocations through formalised mechanisms was desired by academic staff. Staff indicated a desire to ensure that staff preferences and career goals were heard and accounted for. The University Academic Planning and Performance (APP) process provides the platform for recording agreement of both career goals and performance expectations. Currently 58.5% of academic staff having a completed their 2023 APP review. To support enhanced engagement with this process, and linkage between setting of career goals and work allocation, the University will work with academic leaders to encourage meaningful and impactful conversations on future career aspirations, promoting the completion of this through the system which allows for monitoring progress towards the goals for all academic staff. The goal will be to have 100% of academic staff with teaching and research goals completed and with linkages to career goals and allocations clearly defined. Additional training support will be provided to our academic leaders and academic planning and performance advisors to support and enhance these conversations (ASSAP 5.3).

Sub Issue 4: Immature workforce planning practices

The University has been limited by varying and ad hoc data sources for academic work allocation. However, as the WAMs IT system grows in data maturity it will provide a rich source of information that will inform data-driven decision making for workforce planning. The University will leverage insights to identify skills gaps and ensure equitable distribution of resources occurs to optimisation workforce and provide institutional sustainability and growth (ASSAP 5.4).

Sub Issue 5: Staff attitudes and organisational culture

The culture within schools and the attitudes towards academic work allocation has impacted on the implementation of the unified model across the University. Data sourced for Cygnet #5 indicated that while there is a growing positive attitude towards the Model, areas are also challenged with the emotional attachment some staff have to previous models. To reinforce the positive impacts that the whole of institutional approach to academic work allocation is having for staff, the University will work with Colleges and Schools to develop and communicate case studies that show how the approach is facilitating equitable, transparent, and fair outcomes. Additionally establishing transparent regular ongoing feedback and insights from staff will support an enhanced culture of continuous improvement (ASSAP 5.5).

ACTION PLAN (Key Barrier 5: Inequities in Academic Work Allocation)

KEY BARRIER 5: Inequities in Academic Work Allocation						
Ref	Rationale/Evidence	Actions & Outputs	Timeframe (start & end)	Person / Group responsible for implementing action	Senior Leader accountable for action delivery	Desired Outcome and Impact
5.1	Further evaluation required with a large sample of academic staff to determine impact at each academic level and to access consistency of application across schools.	Survey all academic staff on AWAM's using Work allocation Principles Matrix-based questions to supplement current qualitative data.	June/July 2024	EDI SPP HR Academic Excellence	PVCAE	Comprehensive data sets that highlight results across different academic levels (by gender) and patterns across Schools.
5.2	Ensuring key principles are maintained in the ongoing use of AWAMs through the consistent application of work allocation expectations across all areas of the University	Further embed AWAM in Schools with a focus on equity considerations. Review of work allocations occurs regularly. Review of allocation and rotation of leadership role allocations. Transparency is further increased through enhanced reporting.	Dec 2025	Heads of Schools EDI Assistant Deans EDI ASWP AWAM governance panel	College PVCs & DVCA	Data demonstrates work allocation principles are being adhered to. Work allocation equity is normalised and reinforced across all areas of the University. 20% increase in staff satisfaction in relation to fairness of workload allocation – particularly by women.
5.3	Communication channel between academic staff member and Head of School required to link career goals with work allocation.	Promote Academic Planning and Performance process as opportunity to link career goals with workload allocation.	Dec 2024	HR HoS	HR CPCO	Academic career goals align to the strengths and interests of individuals, as well as the University's needs.

5.4	Immature workforce planning practices informed by limited work allocation data review.	Review of allocations identifies skills gap. Equitable distribution of resources occurs to optimisation workforce.	Dec 2027	HoS HR	CPCO College PVCs and DVCA	Regular review of work allocations occurs and informs strategic workforce planning to provide institutional sustainability and growth.
5.5	Staff attitudes and organisational culture towards a unified work allocation model continues to be mixed.	Reinforce positive impacts of unified work allocation model through the development and communication of case studies that promote the equitable, transparent and fair outcomes achieved. Continue to seek feedback and insights from staff to establish practices of continuous improvement to the allocation of academic work.	Jun 2025	OAE College SMEs SEOs HOS	PVC AE	20% increased staff satisfaction in relation to distribution of academic work. A positive culture of continuous improvement in relation to academic work allocation is established.