



SAGE

SCIENCE IN AUSTRALIA
GENDER EQUITY

SAGE Cygnet Award Application

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La Trobe University: SAGE CYGNET #1

	✓ Current Cygnet	Barrier <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List the Barrier addressed in this Cygnet • List the Barrier for Cygnets already submitted
Institution-wide barrier	✓	Academic Promotion
Institution-wide barrier		Recruitment
Institution-wide barrier		Support for career interruptions and caring responsibilities
Sub-group barrier		Recruiting and retaining women staff in STEM
Sub-group barrier		Support for LGBTIQ+ and gender-diverse staff

Word limit – 2500 words (excluding the institutional context and excluding the action plan)

Section	Word Count
Key Barrier	56
Evidence of Barrier – Phase 1	231
Activities and Outputs – Phase 1	208
Evidence of Barrier – Phase 2	319
Activities and Outputs – Phase 2	583
Outcomes	799
Impact	189
Total	2,385

CYGNET AWARD APPLICATION: ACADEMIC PROMOTION



**LA TROBE
UNIVERSITY**



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

La Trobe University proudly acknowledges the traditional custodians of the lands where its campuses are located. We recognise that Indigenous Australians have an ongoing connection to the land and the University values their unique contribution to both the University and the wider Australian society.

SPECIAL THANKS

A very special thank you to everyone at La Trobe University who contributed to the preparation, feedback, and review of this application:

Elizabeth Hemsley, Data & Analytics

Leah Johansen, Leadership, Capability & Performance

Julie Underwood, Planning & Performance

Associate Professor Dr Catherine Padmore, Department of Languages & Cultures

Professor Stephanie Gras, Department of Biochemistry & Chemistry

Professor Susan Dodds, Academic Promotions Committee Chair

Further, a special thank you to Tamzen Armer, Athena Swan Lead from SAGE for their comprehensive review and feedback on the initial draft of this application.

And finally, a special thank you to Inge Clinnick from the La Trobe Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Team who coordinated and compiled the application.

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KEY BARRIER

Barrier to PROGRESSION – Academic Promotion

La Trobe has a talented pool of academic women at Levels A and B, but the academic promotions process impedes their advancement to senior positions.

Our work to understand and remove the Academic Promotion Barrier has taken place in two phases: Phase 1 (2017-2019) and Phase 2 (2019-2023). The structure of this Cygnet application reflects that.



EVIDENCE OF BARRIER

Phase 1 (2017 - 2019)

Gender Representation¹

In 2017, more women than men were employed at Levels A and B, however, the number of women dropped at levels C, D and E (Figure 1). Despite an overall balanced² proportion of men and women at higher Levels, the switch in gender representation at Levels D and E highlighted that there were significant barriers for academic women. The same trend can be seen with STEMM³ (Figure 2) and non-STEM disciplines (Figure 4). In STEM⁴ disciplines, more men than women were employed at all academic levels, widening at higher academic levels (Figure 3).

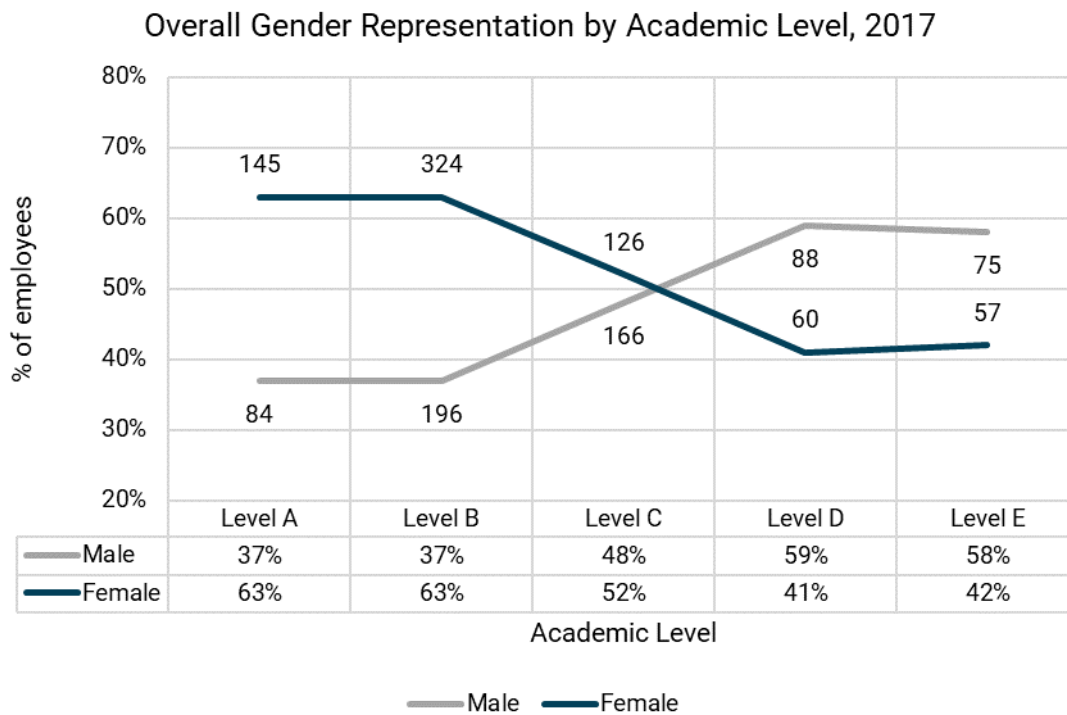


Figure 1: Overall Gender Representation (headcount) by Academic Level at La Trobe University, 2017

¹ Due to small numbers of non-binary and gender-diverse people captured in La Trobe systems, this cohort is not reported in some of the following graphs and figures to maintain individual anonymity.

² Gender balance is considered to be 40% women, 40% men, 20% people of any gender, in alignment with the principles of the Athena Swan Charter.

³ STEMM data includes La Trobe’s health and science schools.

⁴ STEM data includes La Trobe’s science, engineering and mathematics schools.

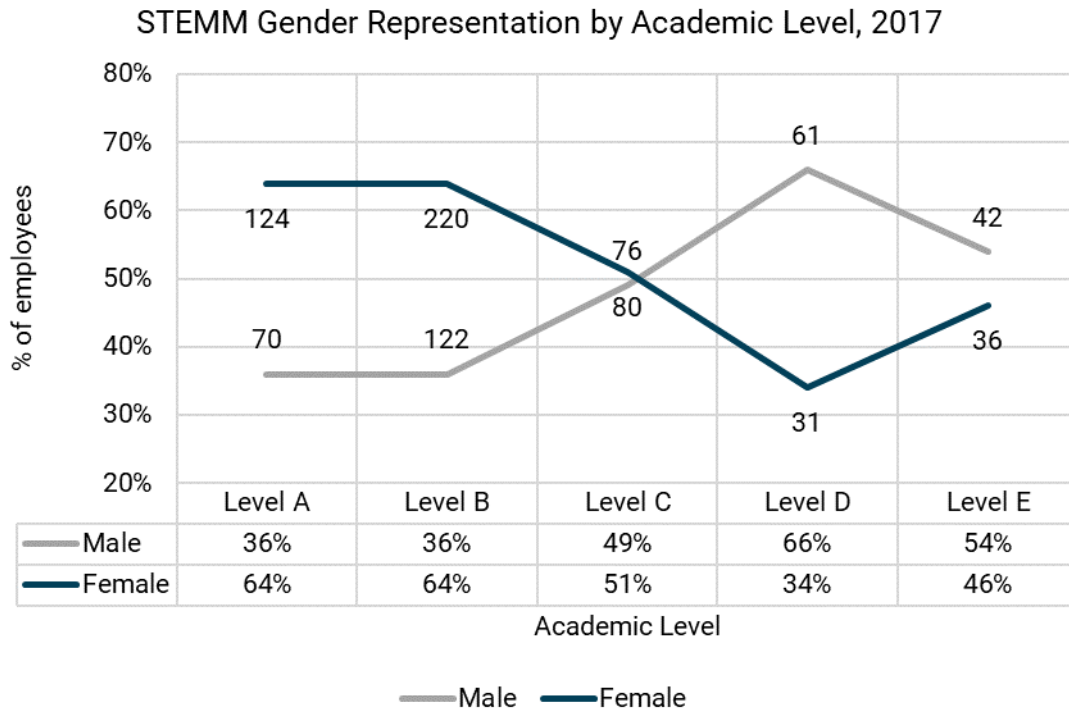


Figure 2: STEMM Gender Representation by Academic Level at La Trobe University, 2017

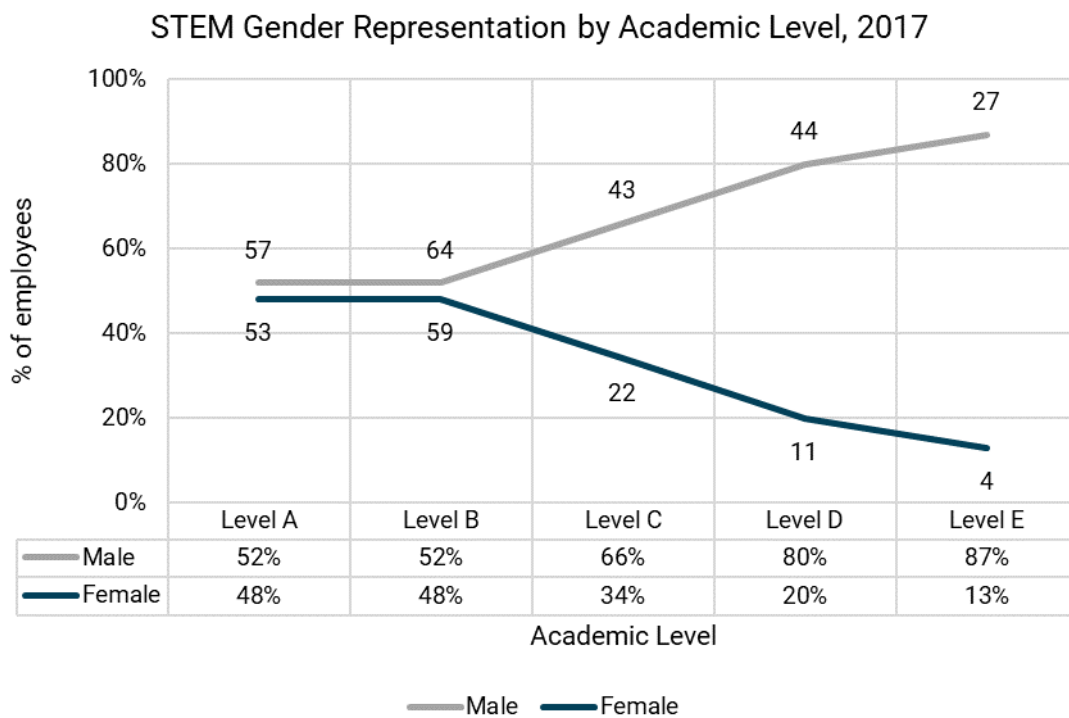


Figure 3: STEM Gender Representation by Academic Level at La Trobe University, 2017

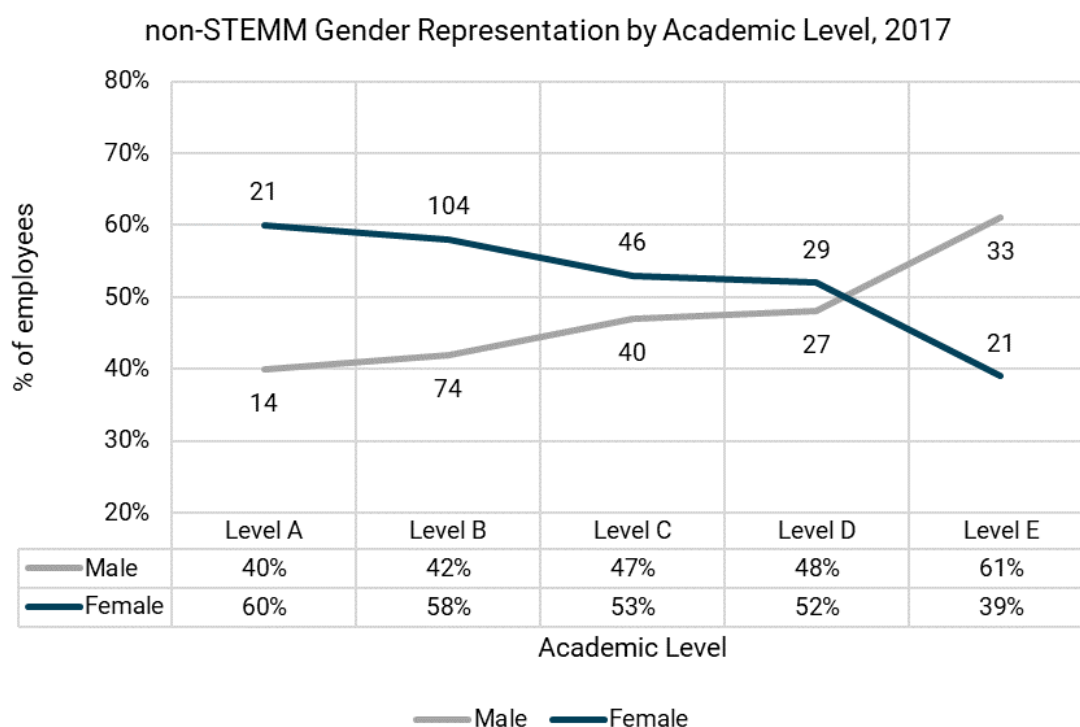


Figure 4: Non-STEMM Gender Representation by Academic Level at La Trobe University, 2017

Application and Promotion Data

Before 2018, La Trobe University had low promotion application rates⁵⁶, never exceeding 4.1%. This was low compared to other Australian Universities⁷ which had an average promotion application rate of 7.5% before 2018. Between 2015-2017 the La Trobe application rate was 3.7% and the Australian University average was 7.6%. At La Trobe University between 2015 – 2017, there were 123 applications for promotion. Despite high success rates⁸, the low number of promotion applicants suggested the existence of potential barriers for prospective applicants (Table 1). Focus groups run during Bronze Application self-assessment highlighted misconceptions about the promotions process including views that there was a mandatory period before reapplication, that Heads of Department (HoDs) were reluctant to support applications because of budgetary concerns, and promotions were only granted to staff with significant research portfolios.

⁵ Promotion application rates are the proportion of people who apply for promotion from an eligible cohort.

⁶ Promotion application rates are calculated by dividing the number of people who applied for promotion in a specific cohort by the total number of people eligible for promotion in that cohort and multiplying this by 100.

⁷ Comparative data is collected from the Australian Higher Education Industrial Association

⁸ Promotion success rates are calculated by dividing the number of people who were successful in promotion by the total number of people who applied for promotion and multiplying this by 100.

		STEMM		non-STEMM		STEM	
		Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
Level B	Eligible Number	333	180	146	142	63	47
	Applications	12	>6	6	>6	7	>6
	Application Rate	4%	3%	4%	3%	11%	6%
	Promotions	12	>6	>6	>6	7	>6
	Success Rate	100%	100%	83%	100%	100%	100%
Level C	Eligible Number	633	348	160	194	301	195
	Applications	14	15	12	6	>6	10
	Application Rate	2%	4%	8%	3%	1%	5%
	Promotions	14	15	11	6	>6	10
	Success Rate	100%	100%	92%	100%	100%	100%
Level D	Eligible Number	229	228	66	132	124	119
	Applications	7	15	6	>6	>6	10
	Application Rate	3%	7%	9%	4%	2%	8%
	Promotions	7	14	6	>6	>6	9
	Success Rate	100%	93%	100%	100%	100%	90%
Level E	Eligible Number	84	166	28	125	82	84
	Applications	6	>6	>6	>6	0	>6
	Application Rate	7%	1%	21%	1%	0%	1%
	Promotions	6	>6	>6	>6	0	>6
	Success Rate	100%	50%	50%	100%	0%	100%
Total Applications		39	37	30	16	12	24
% Applied		4%	4%	11%	3%	4%	5%
Total Promotions		39	35	25	16	12	23
% Successful		100%	95%	83%	100%	100%	96%

Table 1: Promotion Application Rates and Promotion Success Rates in STEMM, STEM and non-STEMM (2015-17)



ACTIVITIES AND OUTPUTS

Between 2017 and 2023, several targeted activities were implemented to try and reduce or remove known barriers to promotion (Figure 5). These have occurred in two phases.

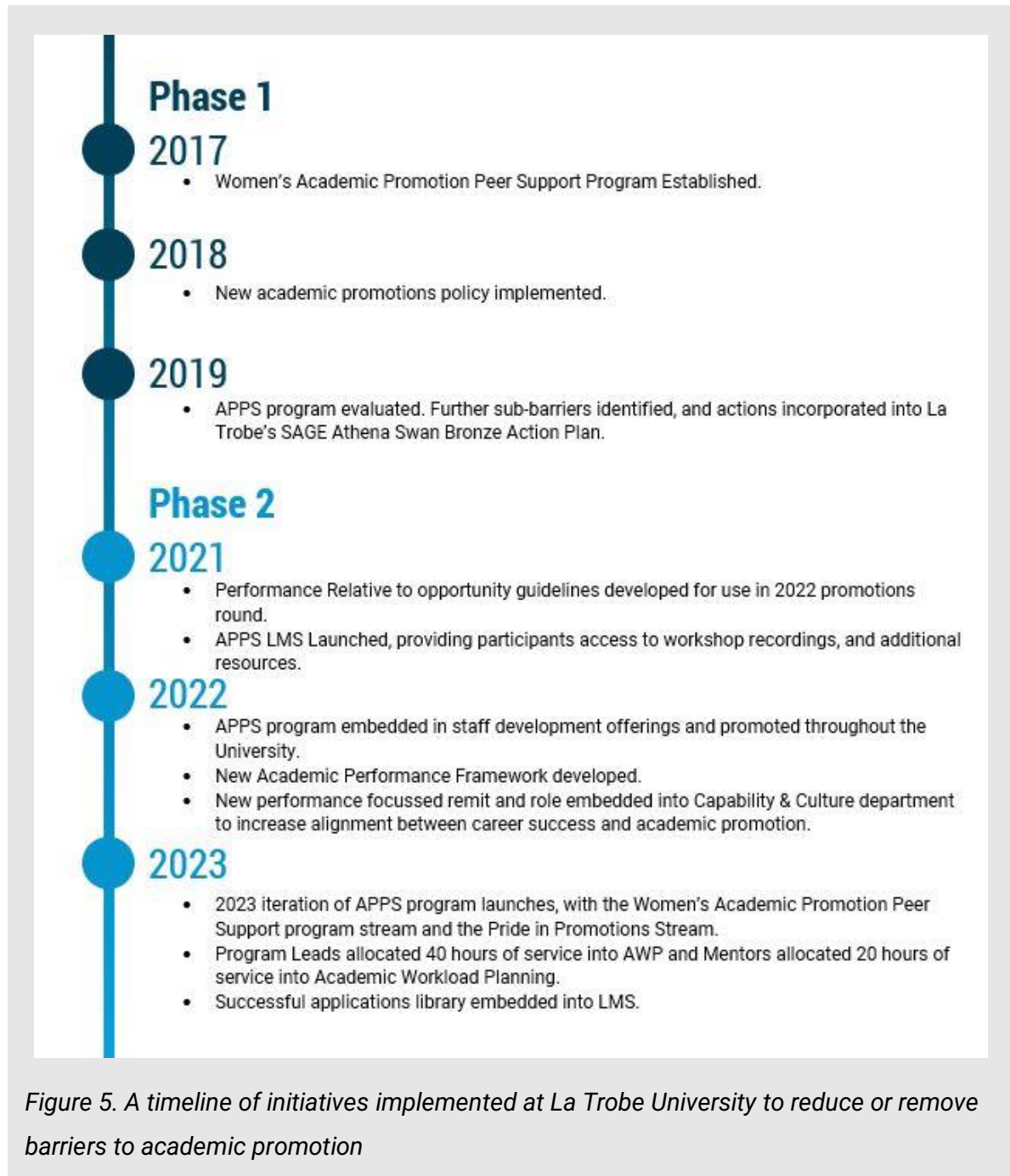


Figure 5. A timeline of initiatives implemented at La Trobe University to reduce or remove barriers to academic promotion

Phase 1 (2017 - 2019)

Academic Promotion Peer Support Program

Misconceptions and concerns raised in the focus groups were addressed through a pilot program launched in 2017 – the Academic Promotion Peer Support (APPS) Program⁹. The APPS program seeks to address the gender imbalance in senior academic positions by encouraging academic women and gender-diverse staff (academics) to apply for promotion. The program has three components: regular workshops, group mentoring and a dedicated Learning Management System (LMS) site. Women seeking promotion can register to be part of the APPS program regardless of whether they are seeking to apply for promotion that year or following years.

Academic Promotions Policy

A major overhaul of the Academic Promotions Policy in 2018 simplified the process and removed some of the barriers which seemed to disproportionately affect women. These included:

- Removing the requirement for external assessors for applications to Level B or C.
- Introduction of a section for those who do not hold a doctorate to demonstrate doctoral equivalence.
- Movement away from a two-step application process to a one-step application process.

Whilst the refreshed policy addressed several systemic barriers, many sub-barriers remained.

⁹ The APPS program is also formerly known as WAPS (Women's Academic Promotion Peer Support Program).



EVIDENCE OF BARRIER

Phase 2 (2019 - 2023)

Evaluation of the APPS Program

The APPS Program was evaluated in 2019 and three persistent sub-barriers to academic promotion were identified.

Sub-barrier 1: Staff need more support for framing promotion applications in terms of performance relative to opportunity.

The APPS workshop on 'framing your interrupted career' has always been the most well-attended and participants often indicated a need for more support and guidance to frame their applications in terms of performance relative to opportunity.

Sub-barrier 2: Women encounter a lack of encouragement from School Deans, Heads of Department and Line Managers to apply for promotion.

Participants identified a lack of encouragement and support from Deans, Heads of Department and Line Manager to apply for promotion as a barrier. Another issue was that promotion conversations were not always linked to annual performance review discussions, resulting in promotion discussions not being held.

Sub-barrier 3: The Academic Promotion Peer Support Program is run voluntarily.

The program is run voluntarily by senior women academics who volunteer as APPS Program Leads and mentors. The work involved in running the program impacts time available for other academic activities and is therefore potentially detrimental to the career progression of program leaders and mentors.

In 2022, for a variety of reasons, including staff departures, loss of institutional knowledge through the university's transformation and challenges posed by COVID, the APPS program was not sufficiently resourced by the University. This meant that the program leads were not allocated the 40 hours of service required to run the program in their Academic Workload Plan. In addition, the APPS program and the new Pride in Promotions stream were not sufficiently or widely advertised leading to low registrations for participation. Whilst the program was run in 2022 due to the hard work and dedication of the program leads, the lack of sufficient resourcing and administrative support from the university resulted in a poor experience for the program leads and low participant numbers. These issues have now been rectified.



ACTIVITIES AND OUTPUTS

Phase 2 (2019 - 2023)

Sub-barrier 1: Staff need more support for framing promotion applications in terms of performance relative to opportunity.

- *Output a: APPS program includes more support for women with interrupted careers/caring responsibilities.*
- *Output b: New Relative to Opportunity Guidelines developed and used by Academic Promotions Committee to assess 2022 promotion applications.*

The Assessing Performance Relative to Opportunity Guidelines for Decision Makers were developed in 2020 and used by the Academic Promotions Committee to assess 2020 and 2021 applications. These guidelines explained how principles for assessing achievements relative to opportunity should be applied by decision-makers when making assessments of career progression or

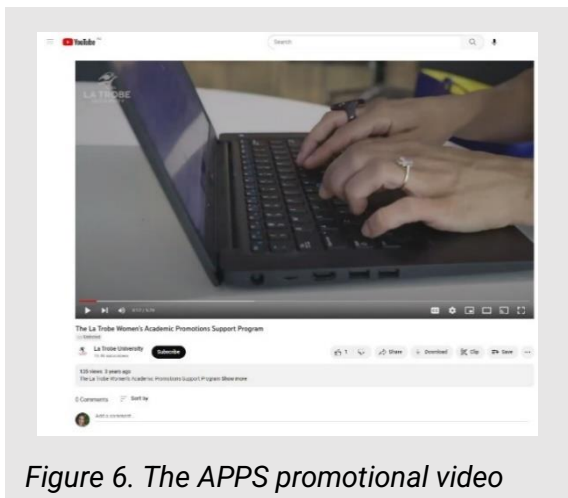


Figure 6. The APPS promotional video

achievement. They were redeveloped in 2021 to consider the impact of COVID-19 on academic performance and were used by the Academic Promotions Committee to assess 2022 promotion applications. The guidelines are shared as part of the Academic Promotions documentation to improve transparency of the assessment process.

In 2023, a successful applications library was added to the resources available on the LMS, available to APPS program participants. These included examples

of performance relative to opportunity statements, and a range of applications from all academic levels.

In addition, the 'framing your interrupted career' recording was uploaded on the LMS for staff to view during the 2023 promotions round. In 2023, panel discussions also discussed how staff can frame their applications in terms of performance relative to opportunity.

Sub-barrier 2: Women encounter a lack of encouragement from School Deans, Heads of Department and Line Managers to apply for promotion.

- *Output a: Career Success materials for managers include a prompt to encourage women to apply for promotion.*

In 2022, Career Success guidance to line managers was intended to include encouraging conversations about academic promotion and informing staff about the APPS program. However, that year, Human Resources underwent a restructure and revised its strategic plan, which meant that the delivery of outputs for this sub-barrier was delayed.

However, a new role was appointed in late 2022 to oversee performance. This includes developing a Performance Strategy and Framework for 2023 and mapping out improvements to Career Success in 2024. This mapping will improve the University's use of Career Success to promote performance and better support career advancement. As the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Team and the Performance role are now housed in the same department, this will ensure increased alignment so performance discussions can set staff up for success with their academic promotion (Further Action 1.3).

Sub-barrier 3: The Academic Promotion Peer Support Program is run voluntarily.

- *Output a: APPS Program embedded in University Staff Development offerings.*
- *Output b: APPS Program Leaders allocated 40 hours of service in their Academic Workload Plan to run the Program.*

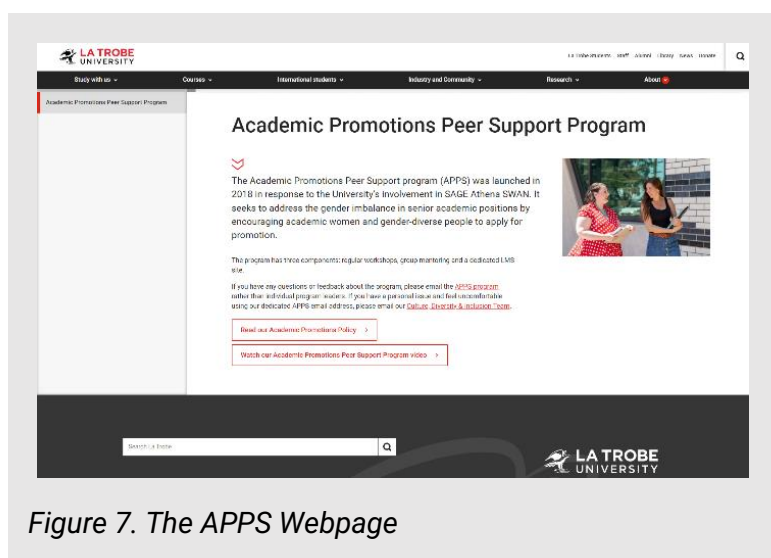


Figure 7. The APPS Webpage

The new Equity, Diversity and Inclusion team was formed in late 2022 as part of the new Capability & Culture Department. This resulted in the APPS program being incorporated into the university's suite of capability offerings, which also included the Mentoring@LaTrobe program and the Capability Program. The incorporation of the APPS program into staff development offerings will ensure that

the program is sufficiently resourced and supported each year.

In 2023, this administrative peer support from the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Team enabled improved program planning, updated program content, improved advertising of the program to academic

staff and liaison with Heads of Department to advocate for program leads to be allocated 40 hours of service in their Academic Workload plan to lead the program, as well as 20 hours of service for mentors to dedicate to supporting their mentees. Furthermore, increased support led to the introduction of a successful applications library and the new Pride in Promotions stream within the APPS program.

The Pride in Promotions stream was created primarily to ensure that trans and gender-diverse staff, can access the benefits that the APPS program provides. Those who may identify as both women and LGBTQIA+ staff were able to elect which stream they wanted to participate in during the 2023 iteration of the program.

Demographic data was collected from 2023 APPS participants, which indicated that the program would benefit people from all marginalised identities, particularly those who are culturally and linguistically diverse. Due to the program's popularity and efforts to take an intersectional approach, the program will become available to anyone from a marginalised group¹⁰ from 2024 onwards (Further Action 1.2).

¹⁰ In 2024, the program will be open to women, LGBTQIA+ staff, those with a disability or chronic illness, neurodiverse staff, Indigenous staff, parents and carers.

OUTCOMES

Outcome a: Increase in APPS participation by Q2 2022.

Annual APPS program participation has fluctuated, with 30-40 staff participating in APPS in 2018, 2020 and 2021 (Figure 8¹¹). The introduction of the new Promotions Policy (2019) resulted in a spike of 169 promotion applicants – due to changes in timing and processes, the APPS program did not run that year. Those promoted in 2019 participated in the APPS program in 2018. 2022 was a disruptive year, with an organisational transformation resulting in a lack of adequate administrative support for the program and therefore lower participant numbers.

After incorporating the APPS program into La Trobe’s staff development offerings in 2023¹², over 90 mentees participated in the program across the two streams: 76 mentees in the Women’s Academic Promotion Peer Support stream and 14 mentees in the Pride in Promotions stream.

La Trobe must continue to encourage women to apply for promotion and participate in the APPS program, where participants have an 86% success rate compared to a 79% success rate for non-participants. In 2021¹³ La Trobe’s promotion application rate was 9.5%, exceeding the average of 8.9% amongst other Australian Universities (Australian Higher Education Industrial Association). Furthermore, the promotion success rate for women 85%, exceeding that of men at 83%. The APPS program has improved understanding of the promotion process and barriers to promotion beyond APPS participants to include new members of the Academic Promotions Committee, Heads of Department and Deans, and across the University.

¹¹ Figure 8 represents the number of APPS participants who have formally applied for promotion. There are many more staff who have participated in the program from year to year who have not applied for promotion, however, this data set is incomplete.

¹² 2023 data is not captured in Figure 8 as promotion outcomes will be announced after this report is written.

¹³ 2021 was the latest year that data was available at the time this report was written

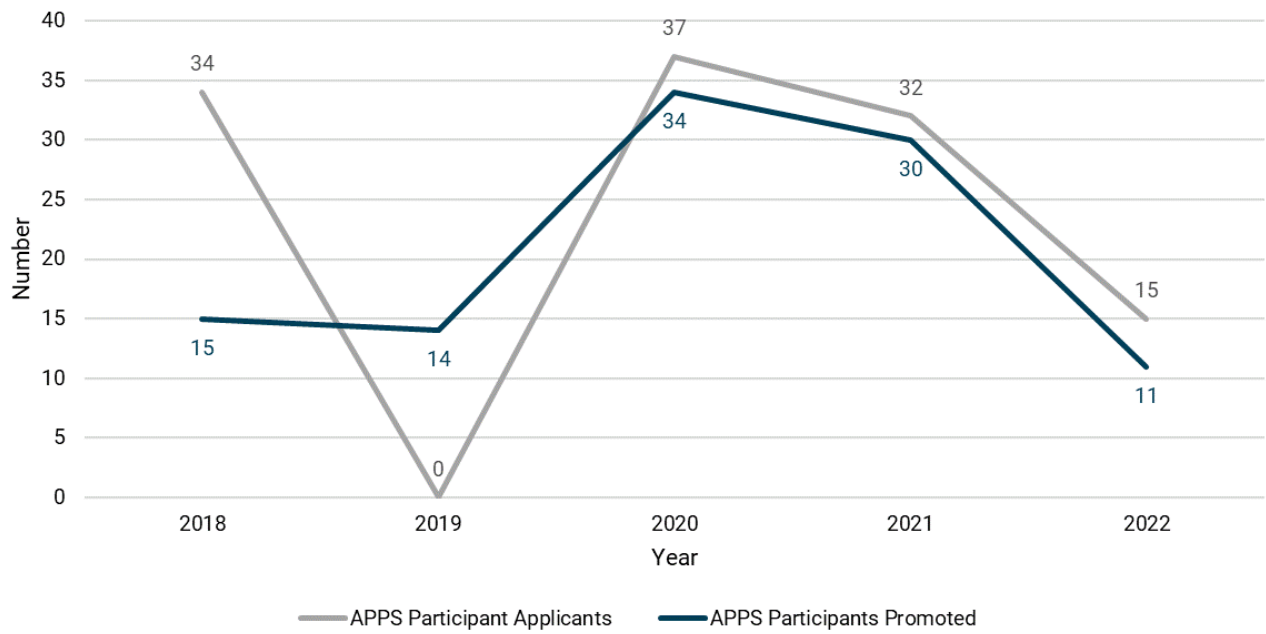


Figure 8. The Number of APPS Participants who have applied and been successful in promotion from 2018-2022

Outcome b: Proportion of eligible staff applying for promotion to be equal for each gender at each level.

In non-STEM disciplines, women outnumber men in applications and promotions at Levels B, C and D and are equal at Level E. In STEM disciplines, applications from women are double that of men at Level B. This changes at the higher levels, where the number of men receiving promotions at D and E levels are double and triple respectively. Promotion application rates have increased across La Trobe, with STEM disciplines having higher application and promotion success rates than non-STEM disciplines.

		Medicine		non-STEM		STEM	
		Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
Level B	Eligible Number	0	0	307	88	135	132
	Applications	0	0	21	6	18	9
	Application Rate	0%	0%	7%	7%	13%	7%
	Promotions	0	0	20	>6	18	8
	Success Rate	0%	0%	95%	83%	100%	89%
Level C	Eligible Number	0	0	1019	438	180	193
	Applications	0	0	99	49	30	29
	Application Rate	0%	0%	10%	11%	17%	15%
	Promotions	0	0	87	40	24	25
	Success Rate	0%	0%	88%	82%	80%	86%
Level D	Eligible Number	0	1	485	306	90	132
	Applications	0	1	61	32	16	27
	Application Rate	0%	100%	13%	10%	18%	20%
	Promotions	0	1	45	26	14	24
	Success Rate	0%	100%	74%	81%	88%	89%
Level E	Eligible Number	0	13	218	171	65	138
	Applications	0	0	18	18	>6	22
	Application Rate	0%	0%	8%	11%	8%	16%
	Promotions	0	0	13	13	>6	19
	Success Rate	0%	0%	72%	72%	80%	86%
Total Applications		0	1	199	105	69	87
% Applied		0%	7%	10%	10%	14%	15%
Total Promotions		0	1	165	84	60	76
% Successful		0%	100%	83%	80%	87%	87%

Table 2: Promotion Applications and Success Rates in Medicine¹⁴, STEM and non-STEMM (2019-22)

¹⁴ Whilst STEMM and STEM categories were used for baseline data, La Trobe University has since mapped each of its Schools (those that existed prior to and after the University's transformation) as under STEM, Medicine, or non-STEM disciplines. This mapping is more accurate and reduces duplication between disciplines that would be classified as both STEMM and STEM. Future actions intend to map each department and role under each of these categories.

Outcome c: Increase in application success rates from women who have submitted a Performance Relative to Opportunity (PRO) statement with their promotion application by Q4 2023

The success rate for those who submit a PRO statement has been higher consistently for each year since data collection began in 2019 (Table 3). The benefits of submitting a PRO statement with a promotion application are evident – women who do are 7% more likely to be promoted than those who do not submit a PRO statement.

		PRO Submitted		No PRO Submitted		Total Applicants	
		Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
2019	Applications	44	11	55	58	99	69
	Promotions	40	10	44	48	84	58
	Success Rate	91%	91%	80%	83%	100%	84%
2020	Applications	30	6	28	40	58	46
	Promotions	25	>6	23	35	48	40
	Success Rate	83%	83%	82%	88%	80%	87%
2021	Applications	38	8	25	33	63	41
	Promotions	34	8	20	24	54	32
	Success Rate	89%	100%	80%	73%	88%	78%
2022	Applications	28	9	18	28	46	37
	Promotions	23	8	14	23	37	31
	Success Rate	82%	89%	78%	82%	80%	84%
Total Promotions		122	31	101	130	223	161
% Successful		87%	91%	80%	82%	84%	83%

Table 3: Promotion Applications and Success Rates, for women and men who submitted a PRO statement with their promotion application (2019-22)

Outcome d: Gender balance target of 50% (+/-5%)¹⁵ at Levels D and E in all schools

At La Trobe, the number of women in Level D now outnumber men and women continue to outnumber men in Levels A, B, and C (Figure 9). The proportion of men and women in Level E has remained relatively stable. Alarming, there are less than half as many women in Level C as there are in Level B, a trend that has not changed since 2017.

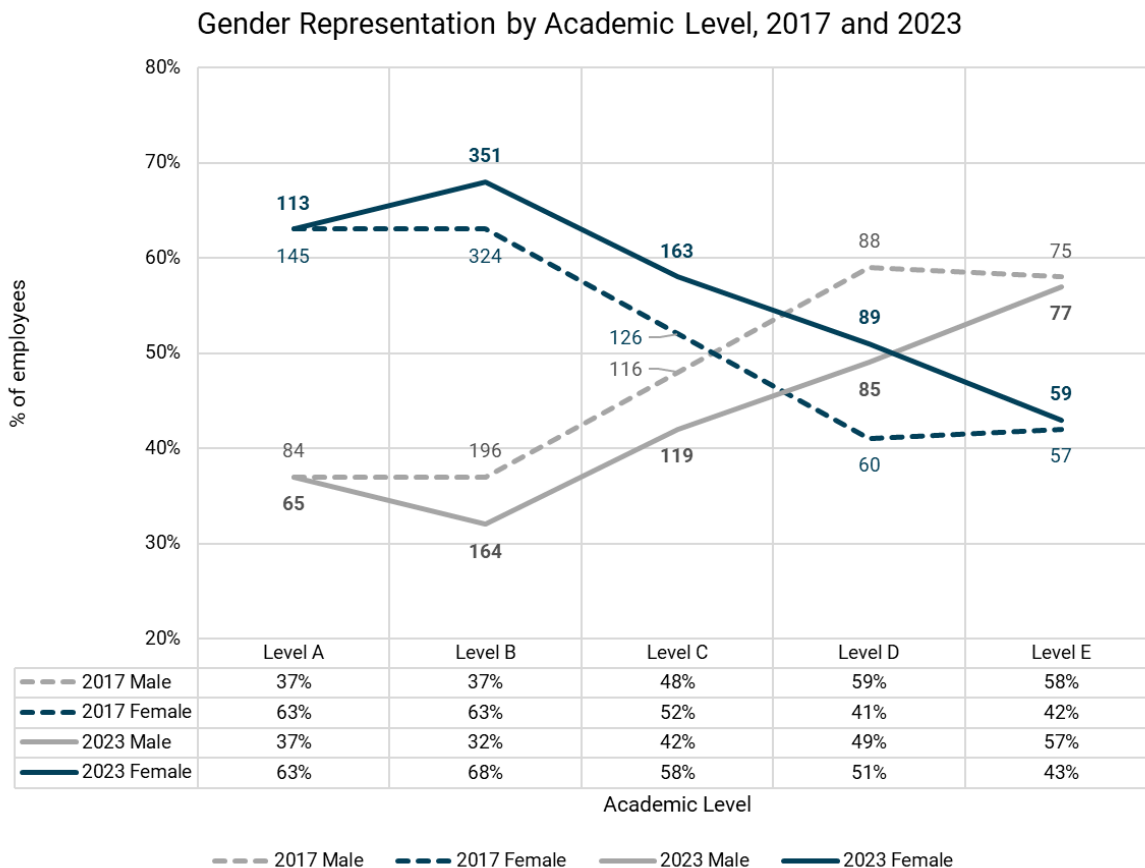


Figure 9. Gender representation by academic level, 2017 and 2023

¹⁵ The original outcome suggested a 50% target; however, data has been analysed using SAGE Athena Swan’s definition of *gender balance*, which is considered to be 40% women, 40% men and 20% people of any gender, in alignment with the principles of the Athena Swan Charter. This acknowledges the existence of non-binary and gender-diverse people and better captures reality when working with small numbers.

La Trobe's STEM Schools

Men continue to outnumber women across all academic levels within the School of Computing, Engineering and Mathematical Sciences (SCEMS), particularly at Levels D and E. In the School of Agriculture, Biomedicine and the Environment (SABE), women represent 40% of staff at Level D and 25% at Level E. Despite this, there is now a higher proportion of women in SCEMS in 2023 compared to 2018¹⁶ and a narrowing gender divide in SABE (Figure 10).

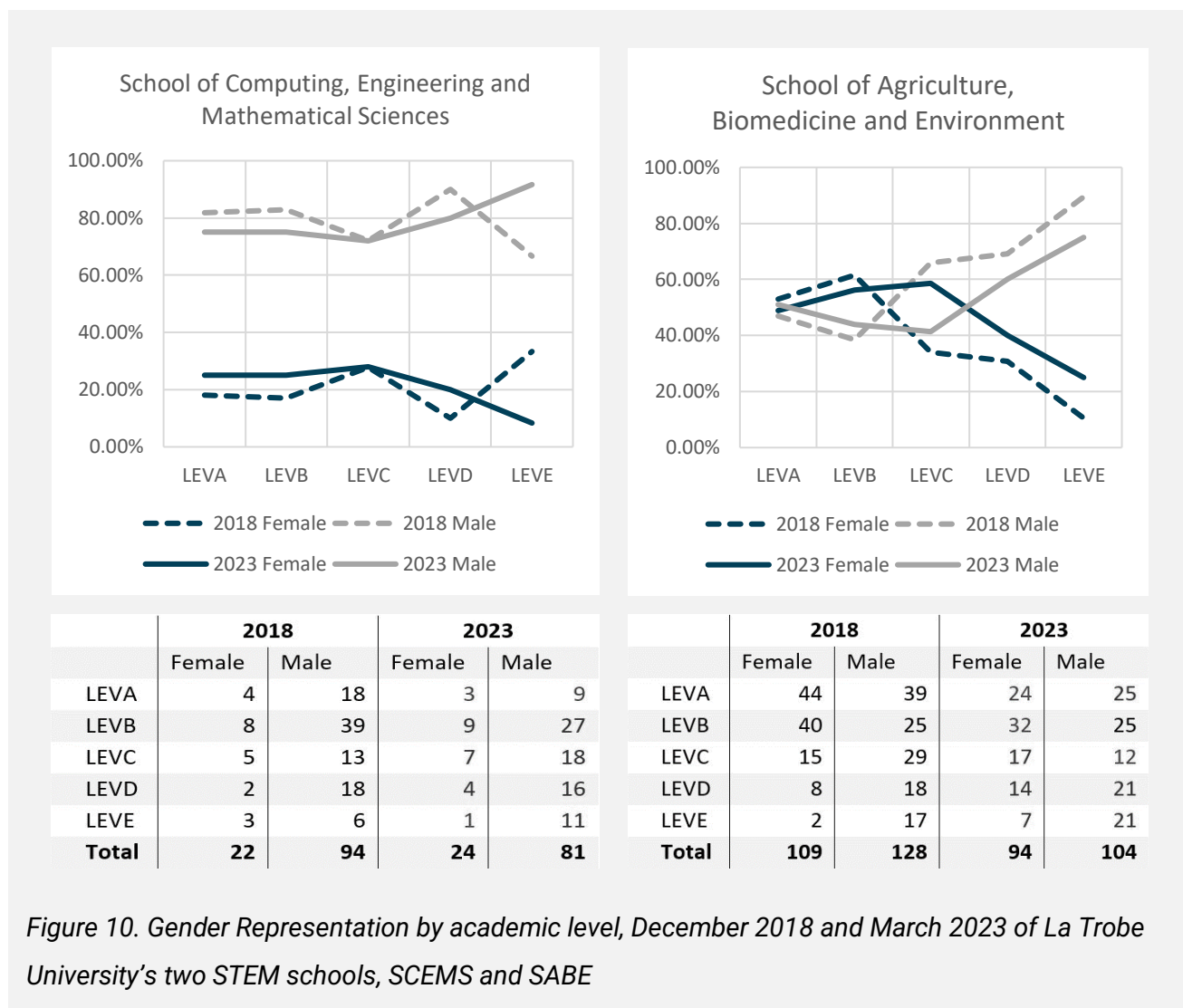
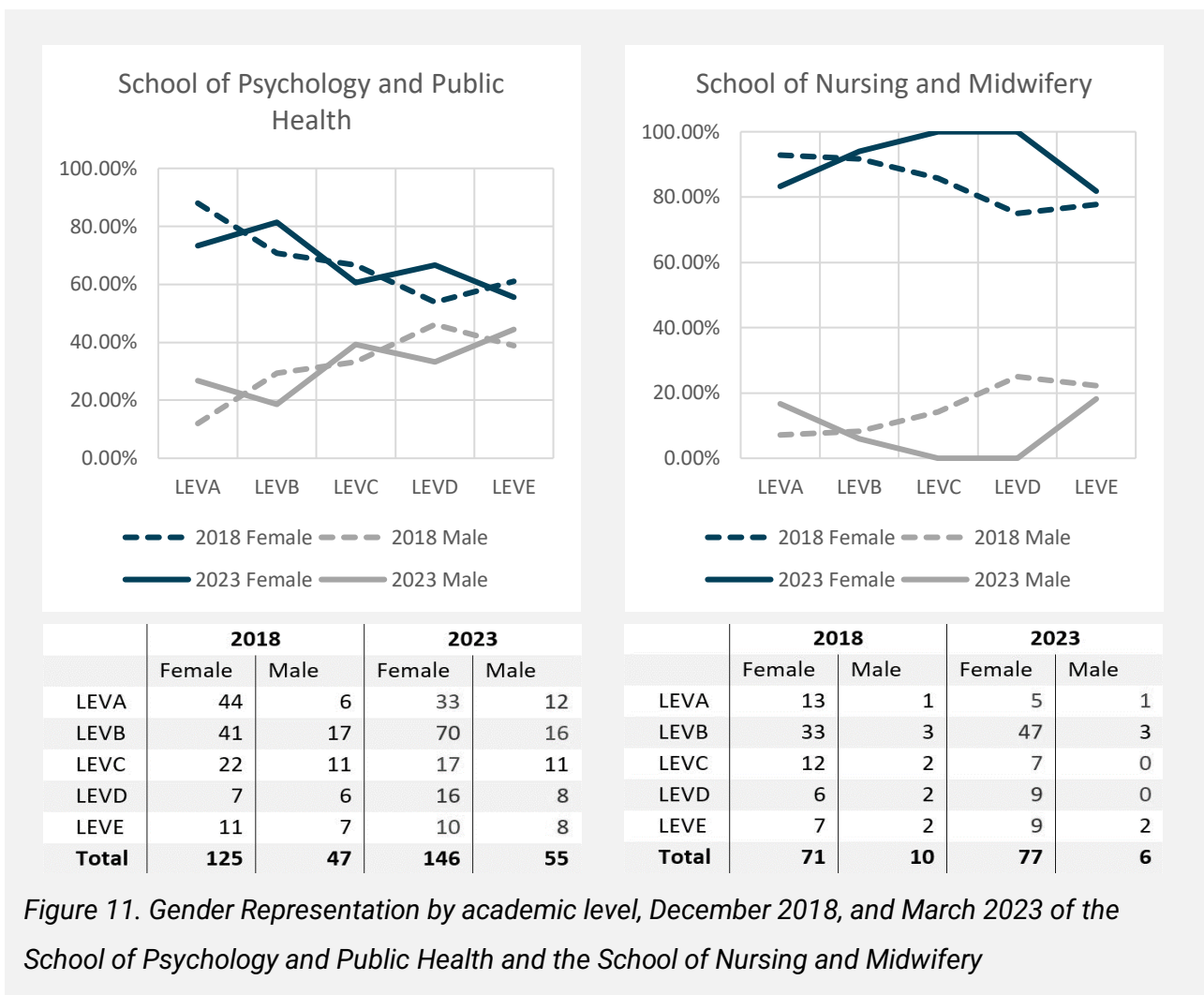


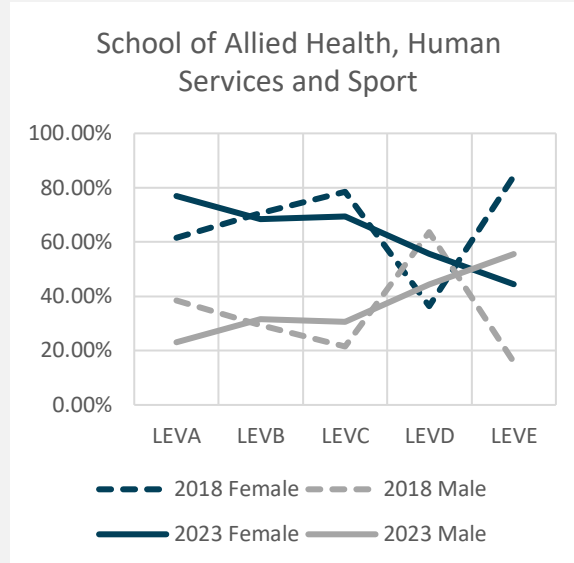
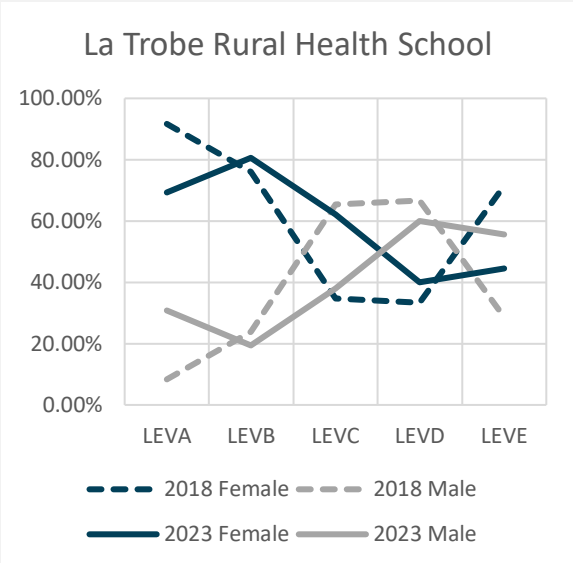
Figure 10. Gender Representation by academic level, December 2018 and March 2023 of La Trobe University's two STEM schools, SCEMS and SABE

¹⁶ Whilst La Trobe has overarching gender representation by academic level for 2017, 2018 was the earliest year that data could be found for gender balance by school.

La Trobe's Health Schools

Women greatly outnumber men at every academic level in the School of Nursing and Midwifery. Whilst the School of Psychology and Public Health still need to achieve gender balance across most Levels (Figure 11), gender balance has been achieved at Levels D and E in the La Trobe Rural Health School and the School of Allied Health, Human Services and Sport (Figure 12). While women outnumber men across all four schools, it is evident that women's progression from Level B to Level C falls dramatically, leaving a smaller proportion of women at Levels D and E.





	2018		2023	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
LEVA	11	1	9	4
LEVB	54	17	54	13
LEVC	9	17	18	11
LEVD	2	4	8	12
LEVE	5	2	4	5
Total	81	41	93	45

	2018		2023	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
LEVA	8	5	20	6
LEVB	55	23	65	30
LEVC	22	6	25	11
LEVD	4	7	10	8
LEVE	16	3	8	10
Total	105	44	128	65

Figure 12. Gender Representation by academic level, December 2018, and March 2023 of the La Trobe Rural Health School and the School of Allied Health, Humans Services and Sport

La Trobe's Arts and Social Sciences Schools

Across the School of Education, the School of Humanities and Social Sciences and the La Trobe Law School, there is a clear gender divide. Whilst the La Trobe Business School has achieved gender balance across all academic Levels, the gender divide in the School of Education is widening (Figure 13). There is no clear trend in the La Trobe Law School due to fluctuations in gender balance from year to year and level to level. Whilst gender balance has not been achieved at Level D of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, there are now proportionally more women than men across all academic levels (Figure 14).

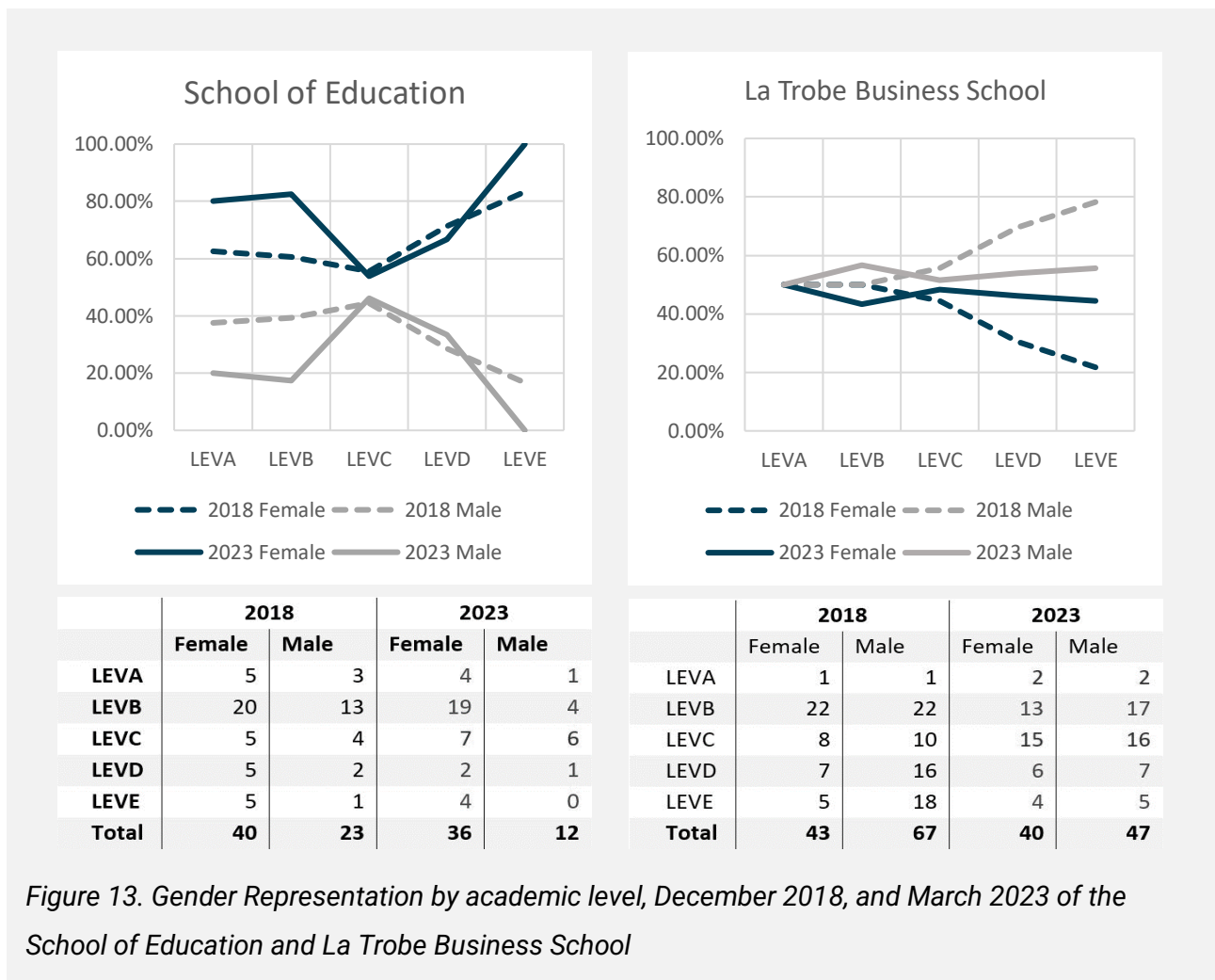
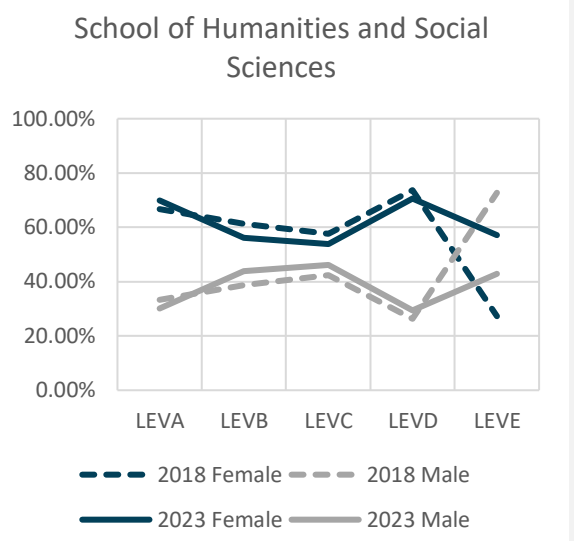
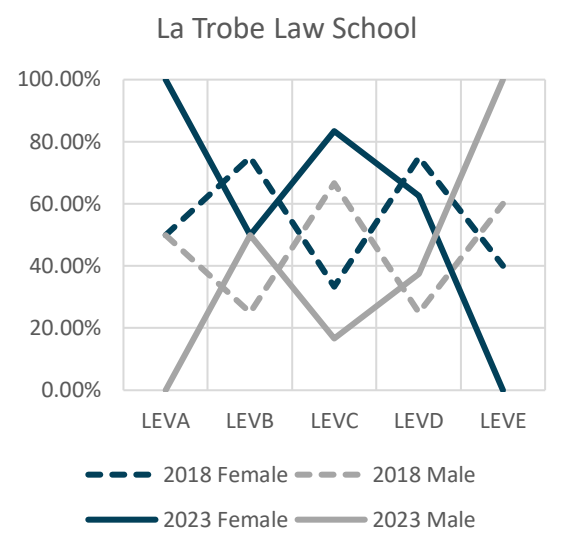


Figure 13. Gender Representation by academic level, December 2018, and March 2023 of the School of Education and La Trobe Business School



	2018		2023	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
LEVA	1	1	3	0
LEVB	15	5	5	5
LEVC	3	6	10	2
LEVD	6	2	5	3
LEVE	4	6	0	2
Total	29	20	23	12

	2018		2023	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
LEVA	8	4	7	3
LEVB	38	24	27	21
LEVC	30	22	28	24
LEVD	14	5	12	5
LEVE	3	8	8	6
Total	93	63	82	59

Figure 14. Gender Representation by academic level, December 2018, and March 2023 of La Trobe Law School and the School of Humanities and Social Sciences



IMPACT

Qualitative feedback gathered annually after each APPS round has been overwhelmingly positive and through two small focus groups (mostly teaching focussed academics from Levels B and C) with the APPS participants from 2023, it was identified that the APPS program has had an invaluable impact for many staff. Through this feedback several overarching themes were identified, including;

- the **supportive nature** of the groups and mentors
- the **usefulness** of the successful applications library in the LMS
- the importance of having **support from school Deans**, Heads of Department, and managers
- the **intensity** of the promotions process

The impact of changes to the Policy and the APPS program is reflected in the sentiments from APPS participants below:

There's a lot of self-doubt when you start the promotions application, you think 'oh I'm not eligible', or 'it's all a bit too hard', but it was **incredibly valuable** to know everyone in my group was on the same page and we were all **able to share that same vulnerability and self-doubt**

Now that we can demonstrate PhD equivalence, it shows that the promotions process now recognises the **quality and importance** of teaching focussed disciplines

The program and the resources provided made the process **so much easier** and this year, I feel like I nailed it. I **learnt how to write about myself** and my individual contribution the work, that in my discipline, is inherently collaborative and you don't want to disrespect the roles of other colleagues in your team

Being grouped with people from different disciplines was helpful because **other people could see the value in your achievements** and go 'highlight that!'. Overall, it was a **worthwhile experience**

It was wonderful to **share information** and experiences in a **supportive** setting

My mentor was very insightful and **supportive**, she was very quick to respond to any questions and gave me detailed and **specific feedback** on my application which was really helpful

Being grouped with other teaching focussed academics was good as we **all had similar issues** with applying and finding appropriate evidence

I think the program is terrific. I had already approached a senior staff member in another College to mentor me but the **additional information** and **practical benefits** of participating in the program **reduced my stress** and made writing the application easier

I was encouraged by my mentor to believe in myself and to **view my achievements in a positive way**

As a mentor, I found mentoring a group of aspiring women going for level D **rewarding**. I was happy to share my lessons learnt and experience.

Whilst there were a range of positive sentiments about the APPS program and the support provided, several remaining barriers were highlighted, including aspects of the Academic Promotions process that were perceived to be lengthy, intense and unfair, which are summarised in the following quotes. It is evident that while progress has advanced to develop a more equitable promotions process there is more to be done to make it a less laborious process (Further Actions 1.1-1.4).

There's **so much pressure** with having just one promotions round in a year, and there's **poor timing** because the promotions deadline falls in week 12. If you miss the promotions deadline, or if you're unsuccessful, then you have to wait an entire year until you can be considered for promotion again

There's a **perception** that you need a four or a five [rating] in Career Success to be eligible to apply for promotion, or at least, show that you're working at the level that you're applying for. Which is **unfair** when under the table, your manager gives you that four or five, but when it comes to parity, the university gives you a three

I work in a centre at La Trobe that's funded by a government department and brings in millions, but I've previously been told by the school that **I can't apply for promotion** because **they can't afford to pay me** at the rate of the next level up

There's a general consensus that if you want to be promoted quicker, it's **easier to apply for a job somewhere else** at another institution, and I've seen so many highly talented colleagues leave La Trobe because of this

Going for promotion is **basically a two-year process**, and I've advised people who are thinking about promotion to start now, you need the lead time and it's too difficult if people aren't given enough time

An annual survey was sent to APPS mentees and mentors in May 2023 at the completion of the program. The purpose of the survey was to ask participants perspectives of the program, including what worked well, what didn't work well and aspects of the program that could be improved. The survey conducted in 2023 was sent directly to all APPS participants, via Microsoft Forms and included 11 questions, as outlined below:

1. What were the most memorable/beneficial aspects of APPS 2023?
2. What are your suggestions for improving the APPS program?
3. If you applied for promotion this year, did participation in the APPS program motivate you to complete and submit your application?
4. Was the mentoring arrangement useful?
5. Were the resources on the LMS useful?
6. Was the timing of the program suitable? (i.e. would it be better if the program started earlier in the year?)
7. Any other comments?
8. Would you be interested in participating as a mentee next year?
9. Would you be interested in participating as a mentor next year?
10. Would you be interested in participating as a program lead next year?
11. Would you recommend the APPS program to other colleagues?

La Trobe received 24 responses to the survey.

Main themes captured in the survey include:

- The collegiate nature of the mentoring groups;
- The positive support provided by mentors;
- The constructive feedback provided to applicants;
- The formation of connection and sense of community; and
- The resources on the LMS were useful, especially examples of previous applications.

Following the survey, two focus groups were conducted in June 2023. 14 people registered to participate across both focus groups, with five people attending across both sessions. Four focus group participants were teaching-focused academics, and one was research-focused. Two focus group participants were from regional campuses and three were from the Melbourne (Bundoora) campus. Three focus group participants were at academic level B, one was at level C, and one was at level D.

Whilst the survey asked questions that focused on the APPS program itself, the purpose of the focus groups was to seek insights and feedback on whether any structural barriers to promotion continue to exist. Qualitative data collected from these sessions was used to inform the further actions section of this application.

Six questions were asked during focus groups:

1. What impact has the APPS program had?
2. How has it helped with your promotion application?
3. How could the program be improved?
4. What other supports could be provided for those wishing to apply for promotion?
5. What barriers to academic promotion remain?
6. How can the promotions process be more accessible, particularly for teaching-focused academics/people from regional areas?

Main themes captured in the focus groups include:

- The feeling of safety and support and being vulnerable in terms of self-doubt with mentors;
- The difficulty of finding referees as a teaching focussed staff member;
- The intensity and lengthiness of the promotions process;
- Being unsure of the requirements needed to apply for promotion and what is needed to be successful; and
- La Trobe's career success process and how it impacts the promotions process.

Qualitative Feedback Limitations

There were several limitations in obtaining qualitative feedback. These included low registration numbers, despite promoting the focus groups for a period of two weeks, and therefore, low attendance numbers in the focus groups. Whilst we do not know for certain the reason behind the low registration and attendance rates, we speculate that due to the academic promotions process being lengthy and intense, people may not want to engage with the topic after having submitted their promotion applications.

In order to improve the collection of qualitative data in the future to identify further barriers to promotion, as well as future cygnet applications, we intend to implement the following:

- Conduct a 'pulse' survey with program participants halfway through during the APPS program.

- Increase the promotion of focus groups for future cygnet applications by promoting them for several weeks in advance through multiple staff communication channels such as the La Trobe News and All Staff Updates.
- Collect qualitative feedback from all academic promotion applicants through an annual survey that is conducted after promotion application results are released.
- Conduct annual interviews with the Academic Promotions chair to seek feedback on whether there is an increase in the quality of applications from year-to-year.



FURTHER ACTION

Reference	Rationale/Evidence	Actions & Outputs	Timeframe (start & end)	Person/Group responsible for implementing action	Senior Leader accountable for action delivery	Desired Outcomes/ Targets/ Success Indicators
1.1	<p>Rationale: The work involved in running the APPS program impacts on time available for other academic activities thus is potentially detrimental to the career progression of Program Leaders and mentors. While Program Leads were allocated 40 hours of service in their Academic Workload Plan in 2023, feedback provided by Program Leads indicated that they were not encouraged by Deans to ensure that the APPS program was incorporated into their service allocation.</p>	<p>Action: Develop a process in conjunction with the Academic Workload Planning team to ensure the APPS offering is integrated into November AWP discussions.</p> <p>Output: Continue to provide APPS program leads with 40 hours of service to run the APPS program.</p> <p>Output: Mentors are allocated 20 hours of service to mentor the mentees.</p>	<p>Start – Q4 2023 End – Continuing</p>	Equity, Diversity and Inclusion	Provost	<p>Desired outcome: Running the APPS program and participating as a mentor is not burdensome and the contribution of mentors and program leads is recognised.</p> <p>Success Indicator: Positive feedback is provided from mentors and program leads about the support provided through the duration of the program</p>
1.2	<p>Rationale: While La Trobe had a historical focus on gender equity, the 2023 Employee Experience Survey has demonstrated that staff from other marginalised groups are less engaged than the average staff population. Opening the APPS program to other populations will ensure that staff from all marginalised groups can access the support they require.</p>	<p>Action: Reinforce an intersectional approach by providing staff with the opportunity to choose their mentors and mentoring groups.</p> <p>Output: The APPS program will be open to staff who identify as women, CALD, LGBTQIA+, Indigenous, those with a disability and neurodiverse staff.</p>	<p>Start – Q1 2024 End – Continuing</p>	Equity, Diversity and Inclusion	Academic Promotions Committee Chair (DVCRIE)	<p>Desired outcome: A holistic, intersectional APPS program is offered.</p> <p>Success indicator: Increased participation in the APPS program from women, CALD, LGBTQIA+, Indigenous, those with a disability and neurodiverse staff</p>

1.3	<p>Rationale: Perceptions from APPS participants indicates that there is a misconception that applicants require a four or a five career success rating to be eligible to apply for promotion.</p>	<p>Action: Develop guidance as part of the new performance strategy and framework to shift focus away from purely a Career Success number ratings to an emphasis on productivity and behaviours including La Trobe’s Cultural Qualities, noting that currently, career success rating are included in the Dean Report for promotion applications.</p> <p>Output: Include further guidance in the Career Success system and accompanying guidelines for line managers / HoDs / Deans to guide academic promotion academic promotion conversations – this may include education that performance is based on productivity and behaviours, and that even though the Career Success rating is an important data point, it is not imperative for staff to have obtained a 4 or 5 to be deemed suitable for promotion.</p>	<p>Start - Q1 2024 End - Q2 2024</p>	<p>Leadership, Capability and Performance</p>	<p>EDHR</p>	<p>Desired outcome: The Career Success process sets staff up for success to start considering when they might be ready to prepare their applications and apply for promotion.</p> <p>Success Indicator: Positive feedback is provided about the positioning of career success to successfully set staff up to apply for academic promotion.</p>
1.4	<p>Rationale: Consistent feedback provided by APPS participants indicate that Deans and HoDs are reluctant to support staff to apply for promotion due to concerns that the school cannot financially support staff at the next academic level</p>	<p>Action: Raise awareness among Deans and HoDs about the importance of recognition and career progression for staff and begin collecting annual data on whether staff felt supported by their School Deans at the end of each promotion round</p> <p>Action: Develop a promotions roadmap for future promotion applicants to self-assess whether they are ready to apply for promotion to ensure clarity of the</p>	<p>Start - Q1 2024 End - Continuing</p>	<p>Leadership, Capability and Performance</p>	<p>Academic Promotions Committee Chair (DVCRIE)</p>	<p>Desired outcome: Applicants feel empowered to have honest career development and progression conversations with their line managers.</p> <p>Desired outcome: Applicants feel supported by their Deans and HoDs to apply for promotion</p>

		<p>process and understand steps that they will need to take and conversations they need to initiate to set themselves up for a successful promotion application.</p> <p>Output: The Leadership, Capability and Performance team to support the development of leadership and capability workshops, to be delivered and facilitated by the DVCRIE (academic promotion committee chair) to Deans, HoDs and emerging leaders to highlight the importance of promotion on employee engagement and retention.</p> <p>Output: Evaluate through a survey how much applicants felt supported by their Deans, HoDs and Line Managers at the end of each application round.</p> <p>Output: Promotion applicants feel empowered to have honest career development conversations with their line managers.</p>				<p>Desired outcome: staff are actively encouraged by line managers, HODs and Deans to participate as mentors and Program Leads.</p> <p>Success Indicator: Feedback indicates that applicants feel fully supported by their Line Managers, Deans and HoDs.</p>
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ABBREVIATIONS

Acronym	Meaning
APPS	Academic Promotion Peer Support Program
HoDs	Heads of Department
LMS	Learning Management System
PRO	Performance Relative to Opportunity
SABE	School of Agriculture, Biomedicine and Environment
SAT	SAGE Athena Swan Self-Assessment Team
SCEMS	School of Computing, Engineering and Mathematical Sciences
STEMM	Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, Medicine
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics
WAPS	Women's Academic Promotion Support Program

GLOSSARY

Word	Definition
Academic Promotion Peer Support Program	A peer mentoring program offered at La Trobe. The program consists of Program Leads, and groups of mentors and mentees and aims to support marginalised groups such as women and LGTBQIA+ staff to apply for promotion.
Capability Program	The Capability Program offers a range of development opportunities for all staff and is offered in various modes to suit preferred learning styles.
Career Success	Career Success is La Trobe's online performance development system. It forms part of La Trobe's suite of products and services that supports high performance, capability and career development. Career Success is the platform used to record and capture the goals and feedback to support high performance over the year, and is available for all fixed term and permanent staff.

External Assessors	The Dean (or equivalent) nominates independent external assessors to provide an objective, expert assessment of the application claims. Assessors must have no relationship with the applicant.
Mentoring@LaTrobe	A program designed to assist La Trobe staff in establishing an effective mentoring partnership.
Pride in Promotions	A stream of the original WAPs program that was initiated to open the program to include LGBTQIA+ staff
Program Leads	Within the APPS program, the program leads have a number of responsibilities, including the provision of expert guidance and advice to the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion team on how the program should run year to year, facilitate and troubleshoot issues between mentors and mentees in their group if needed and also mentor the mentors.
Self-Described	Self-Described includes non-binary and gender-diverse people who do not describe their gender as male or female
STEMM	Prior to La Trobe University's restructure, STEMM and STEM abbreviations were used at La Trobe. The definition of STEMM included La Trobe's health disciplines.
STEM	La Trobe currently uses the STEM definition, with the two schools, SCEMS and SABE falling under these disciplines.
Sub-barriers	Whilst the academic promotion process is a major barrier to progression for many academic women at La Trobe, there are several smaller barriers within the process itself that can be addressed to progress the dismantlement of the overall major barrier.

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